

Ready to go

Part 1

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Note: This text is a computer generated transcript of the sermon. In some cases it may contain errors.

[00:00:00] Exodus chapter 12 verse 1 And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months.

It shall be the first month of the year to you.

Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of the month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.

And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbor next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls. Every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb.

[00:01:04] Your lamb shall be without blemish a male of the first year.

Ye shall take it out from the sheep or from the goats, and ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month, and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper doorpost of the houses wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire and unleavened bread, and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire, his head with his legs, [00:02:02] and with the pertinence thereof.

And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning, and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it, with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand.

And ye shall eat it in haste.

It is the Lord's Passover.

For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast.

And against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment.

I am the Lord.

And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are. [00:03:03] And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you when I smite the land of Egypt.

Turn with me to Ezekiel chapter 12.

Again, we're reading from verse 1 to verse 16.

Ezekiel chapter 12.

The word of the Lord also came unto me, saying, Son of man, [00:04:01] thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which have eyes to see and see not.

They have ears to hear and hear not, for they are a rebellious house.

Therefore, thou son of man, prepare thee stuff for removing, and remove by day in their sight.

And thou shalt remove from thy place to another place in their sight. It may be they will consider, though they be a rebellious house.

Then shalt thou bring forth thy stuff by day in their sight as stuff for removing.

And thou shalt go forth at even in their sight as they that go forth into captivity.

Dig thou through the wall in their sight, [00:05:05] and carry out thereby.

In their sight shalt thou bear it upon thy shoulders, and carry it forth in the twilight.

Thou shalt cover thy face that thou see not the ground, for I have set thee for a sign unto the house of Israel.

And I did so as I was commanded.

I brought forth my stuff by day as stuff for captivity, and in the evening I digged through the wall with mine hand.

I brought it forth in the twilight, and I bear it upon my shoulder in their sight.

And in the morning came the word of the Lord unto me, saying, son of man, hath not the house of Israel, the rebellious house, [00:06:06] said unto thee, what doest thou?

Say thou unto them, thus saith the Lord God, this burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them. Say, I am your sign.

Like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them. They shall remove and go into captivity. And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth.

They shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby. He shall cover his face that he see not the

ground with his eyes. Mine net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare.

And I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans. [00:07:04] Yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there. And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands, and I will draw out the sword after them.

And they shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall scatter them among the nations and disperse them in the countries.

But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence, that they may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come.

And they shall know that I am the Lord.

May the Lord bless the reading of that word to our hearts. [00:08:07] Afternoon, I think it would be in the three words, ready to go, ready to go.

Did you notice in both these passages that we read together, there were people that were ready to move off. The children of Israel were ready to move off out of the land of Egypt.

And then in the book of Ezekiel, those highly favored people in their land, through their disobedience, had forfeited the place that God had given them.

And now they were ready to go off into captivity. And the prophet Ezekiel is chosen by God to be a sign to them of not only their prince.

He said, I am a sign of the prince, but also of the whole people, the whole nation that [00:09:05] would be carried away into captivity. So, ready to go.

I wonder if that could describe us, ready to go. Are we marked as people that are ready to go, ready to drop everything that we've been singing about in our hymns, are not to be compared with Christ, or with the glorious things that are there above where Christ is.

We profess these things. We speak of them.

But are they so real to us that we are ready to go? The prophet, we notice, had a word from God.

And it was interesting as I was looking at both these scriptures to see how they are introduced.

[00:10:02] The passage in Exodus 12 says, the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt.

The Lord spake to them in the land of Egypt. And that caused me to look back through the book of Exodus and on through all the books of Moses, in fact, to see the interesting way in which God spoke to his people.

In the very first revelation of God to his servant, he spoke out of the bush.

God spoke to him out of the bush that was burning, you remember, and was not consumed. God spoke to him out of the bush.

And then later on, the next chapter, chapter 4, we find God spoke to Moses. The Lord spoke to Moses in the land of Midian, just where he was, in the land of Midian, [00:11:01] where he had fled because he was afraid of the king's anger. God spoke to him just there where he was. Then in this chapter and in other chapters here in the neighborhood of this part that we read, we find the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, sometimes, in the land of Egypt, just where they were, bondsmen, slaves, under the hard bondage of Pharaoh.

God spoke to them just there where they were. And as we go on through the book, we find later in the place that was prepared, God speaks in the wilderness.

He speaks in Mount Sinai to Moses.

We find this in two or three chapters later on from chapter 25 onward. The Lord spoke to Moses in Mount Sinai, the place he'd chosen. He called Moses up to be with himself [00:12:01] to receive those wonderful revelations that we read of in the further chapters. Then when we come to the next book, the book of Leviticus, we find the place of which God has spoken to Moses in the mountain was prepared. The sanctuary that God said they should choose for him is ready. His glory has filled it. And so we find the very beginning of that book of Leviticus.

The Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tabernacle, in the tent of meeting.

The place was there, and God chose that place to speak to his servants.

And again, in the wilderness of Sinai, it says later on. Then later on, as we come to the book of Numbers, we find this expression, the two brought together in the wilderness of Sinai, in the tent of meeting.

And then we come to the latter part of that book, [00:13:01] where they almost got to the borders of the land. We find God spoke to Moses, the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron in the plains of Moab, in the Jordan of Jericho. What does all this mean? Why do we need to have our attention drawn to this? We find in the book of Ezekiel, the word of the Lord came to me in this very place of the captivity by the river Kibar.

It means this, that God has a word for us just where we are. In the epistles to the churches in the Revelation, we find this expression, I know.

One thing he says, I know where thou dwellest. I know just where you are, God says. I know just where you are, and I can speak to you just where you are.

It may be in the wilderness. It may be keeping your sheep. It may be in the most unfavorable place, [00:14:01] in a hard bondage.

But God's word comes to us just there where we are. This is the wonderful comfort I find in reading through this book of Ezekiel. We find in the first chapter a revelation of God's glory to him.

In chapter 2, God says, now, Ezekiel, you've seen this. Glory, I want you to tell my people. Tell them how glorious I am. Tell them of my glory.

That's what God has entrusted his people with today, isn't it? He gives them first a glimpse of himself, and then says, reveal that. Tell people what you know about me. Tell them of my glory.

But a very hard task was his indeed.

God said, I know they're not going to listen to you. I know they were not here. I know at the very outset they were not here, for they are rebellious people.

And in this chapter, we read in chapter 12 again, he says, son of man, thou dwellest in the midst of a rebellious house, which [00:15:03] have eyes to see and see not. They have ears to hear and hear not, for they are a rebellious house.

What a dreadful task, isn't it? To speak to people that are not going to hear, eyes to see and they will not see, ears to hear and they will not hear. But God says, back in chapter 2, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear, they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

Whether they will hear or not, the task of the prophet is to make God's word known.

This is the task that has been entrusted to us, to make him known, to make his word known. And so we find this expression, I believe it comes in 49 times in this book of Ezekiel, the word of the Lord came to me. The word of the Lord came to me, not just [00:16:02] for his own benefit, but that he should pass it on, so that he can say constantly, I believe 200 times in this whole book, thus saith the Lord God.

Thus saith the Lord God. With all the authority of the word of God that came to him, he can pass it on to a people that are not going to listen to him at all. But they shall know, says God, that a prophet has been in their midst, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. And so to bring it home to the people, he is asked to do all sorts of things. There's a wonderful book, isn't it, Ezekiel, where we find the prophet not just speaking, but doing, constantly doing, acting the things that God wants to drive home to these people.

They won't listen to his words. God said, perhaps they'll watch what you do. [00:17:04] Some people have said, what you are speaks so loud that I can't hear what you say.

This may be true of many Christians, I'm afraid. What we are doesn't bear out what we profess.

But the prophet had to do both. He had to speak and he had to act these things that God gave him to do. So here, he has to act as one that is ready to go.

He is to remove all his belongings out by day.

And then in the evening, he's to break through the wall and carry this on his shoulder. What does it mean? The people say, what does it mean? What are you doing?

Son of man, God says, has not the house of Israel said to you, what doest thou? [00:18:01] Say unto

them, thus saith the Lord God, this burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem and all the house of Israel that are among them. Not only their prince, Zedekiah, that unfaithful prince who broken his oath to the heathen king, but all the people who had failed to listen to the word of God, who had filled the temple of God with idolatry, as we see in chapter 8, who said the Lord does not see. God isn't interested in what we're doing. God said, I'm going to take them away. Let them see in you a sign of what's going to happen to them. You be ready to go.

When they say, what does it mean? You say, you too must go.

What a difference between these two journeys. In the 12th of Exodus, we find people that are going out of a land of bondage to a land flowing with milk and honey, [00:19:04] going to the promised land.

In the other, we see those that are in the promised land, but have been unfaithful tenants being taken away into captivity, from which many of them would never return. What a difference. And this is just the difference, isn't it? The God has set between those that are his and those that are not his.

In the chapter just before, the one that we read, chapter 11 of Exodus, this verse caught my eye. God says that she may know how the Lord doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. People say, you make yourself different. No, no, no.

God had put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel.

God had made the difference, and he was going to show it. Just as now, in this book of Ezekiel, [00:20:05] God was showing the difference between those that served him, as Malachi says, and those that fear him not. And I'd like to draw attention now to some of these differences that you might notice if you were able to look at these people in the houses of the children of Israel. Already in the former plagues, we find that from the third onward, God has made a difference.

Most striking, we find that during the plague of darkness, there was light in the houses of the children of Israel. In all the other houses and in the whole land of Egypt, darkness could be felt. But in the houses of God's people, there was light.

Isn't that the difference today?

You come into a Christian home.

[00:21:03] What makes it different? What makes it different is that the light is there. That light should shine. I'm afraid it doesn't always shine as it ought. But the light is there, and the light, too, is in the heart of all those that are Christ's. The difference had been made.

The apostle says in the Ephesian letter, ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.

Walk as children of light.

There is our responsibility.

But now that we come to this last plague, there was something even more striking. We find here that

in all the houses of the Egyptians, a great cry should be heard throughout all the land, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it anymore. But against any of the children of Israel [00:22:03] shall not a dog move his tongue against man or beast, that ye may know how the Lord hath put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. What was the difference?

In every Egyptian house, there was death. In every house of the people of Israel, there was life. Isn't that the difference between Ezekiel and the people that were around him? They professed to live, but he says, you're dead. You're dead.

There's no life for God.

Isn't this the position today of the people of God? Life in the midst of death.

All around us, we are confronted with death. I'm just saying how many of our friends have passed away during these last two or three months. We came home from a funeral in December, and my wife said, well, I hope that's the last one this year. [00:23:02] And half an hour later, I went upstairs and said, it isn't. I just had news of another friend who'd passed away. And we began the new year again with laying to rest one of our friends.

These, happily, were those that had gone to be with Christ. But on every hand, we are surrounded by those that are not only going to die, but are dead, already dead in trespasses and sins as we were once.

We were dead, but now we are alive, alive.

What a wonderful life this is. We think of the contrast again, as the apostle speaks, that we were children of wrath. The sentence of death was upon us.

But now, in Romans, it says, you're children of the living God, children of the living God. We have the same life in us that Christ has. The same life that is in the living God is in us. [00:24:04] Just as God first breathed into the first man that breath of life, he became a living soul, so now we have the very breath of God in us. Every believer in the Lord Jesus, we live because he lives.

What a distinction it was. There was also a distinction on the outside.

We can't always see the distinction, can we? We see sometimes a crowd of people go past. I always find it interesting in a terminus or in a busy street to watch the people going past and to look at the faces, to see the expressions of those faces. Once in a while, you see a face that seems to portray something of the peace and joy of Christ. And often, you find in speaking to these people, there's a response straight away. They have, written upon their faces even, the joy of Christ. [00:25:03] It should always be so, certainly, unless sometimes we're mistaken in this. But with the houses of the children of Israel, there was a mark to be seen.

Not by the Egyptians, not by the children of Israel, because they were inside the houses, but by the Lord.

When I see the blood, I will pass over you.

It wasn't something that was for people outside to see. It was God's sign.

They were covered by the blood. Reminds us of the words, again, of the New Testament.

Nevertheless, the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his.

The Lord knoweth them that are his. We can't always tell. Sometimes we may be deceived. There are some people that know all the right words to say, [00:26:03] and yet we fear their hearts are far from him. But the Lord knoweth them that are his.

Ah, yes, but it has another side to it, hasn't it? And that every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity. That's the other side of this seal, isn't it? The Lord knoweth those that are his, but each of his own has the responsibility to live according to that life that is in them. So there was light. Now there is life.

Also, we may say there was a distinction here that those who had been slaves were now set free.

There was liberty there. So long, hundreds of years, they'd been under the heel of the oppressor. Now had come the glorious day of liberation. [00:27:02] What a day this was.

No wonder they were ready to go. No wonder they had to eat this feast in haste, their shoes on their feet, the staff in their hand, ready to go because they were liberated.

They were freed from the bondage of Egypt. We're told to stand fast in the liberty who is Christ has made us free, aren't we? There was a time when we were under bondage. But the Lord Jesus, we read, came to destroy him that had the power of death and to set at liberty his slaves, those that through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. We've been set free.

Liberty, the liberty of the children of God. What do we know about that? Liberty, we were talking about it the other day when we were considering the raising of Lazarus.

[00:28:05] He came forth, but he was bound hand and foot. The Lord said, loose him and let him go. And we were reminded that so many of God's people have life, but they haven't yet got this liberty to stand fast in this liberty where with Christ has made us free.

To be free, just as Christ is. He's gone beyond all the claims of the law.

He died to that, and so have we.

There was no claim for those faithful ones in the day of Nebuchadnezzar when they were cast into the fiery furnace. All the claims of the law had been fulfilled upon them, but they came out alive, alive from the dead.

In glorious liberty, the king couldn't carry out [00:29:02] the threat against them anymore, because the sins had been carried out, and they were free. Daniel himself, in the later chapter, when he was cast into the den of lions, the law could do no more. The law of the meat and persons could do no more to him. When he came out in the morning, a living man, he was free. And so are you and I, beloved

brethren, sisters. In Christ, we've died to sin, died to the law, and today we live unto God.

What do we make of this liberty? Do we enjoy it to the full? I'm sure we don't, really.

It's ours.

One of the fruits of the work of Christ is glorious liberty. There was something else that characterized these people. Do you notice two or three times in this chapter [00:30:01] we find the children of Israel carried out, as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron, so did they.

They carried it all out. They were obedient.

The characteristic of these people was obedience.

This is the characteristic of the people of God. The characteristic of these people in Ezekiel's day was disobedience.

They were repeating the old words of Satan, hath God said, the Lord seeth not.

And the words of the New Testament again come to us, that once we were children of disobedience, but now we're told, as obedient children, yes, as obedient children, now we're no longer children of disobedience, but now we're brought into the liberty, this is a wonderful thing, [00:31:04] not to please ourselves, the liberty of obedience. You may say it's a contradiction in terms, it isn't at all. There was a time when we thought we were free. There was a time when we sought to do our own will. Where did it bring us? It brought us under the bondage of sin. But now we've been set free to obey this glorious law of liberty in Christ.

As obedient children, we're told, to desire the sincere milk of the word, and to grow in grace, and to pursue this course. As obedient children, this is the characteristic of the children of God. Obedience to the very word of God.

How do they show their obedience? First of all, by applying the blood, by killing the lamb, and applying the blood on each side and above the door.

[00:32:04] Then next, they obeyed by feeding upon the lamb, and also in the way they fed upon it.

It says here constantly, as Moses commanded, so did they.

Again and again, we find this note of obedience. Just as it was commanded, so they did. Later on, when we find the various instructions given for the building of the tabernacle, we find God saying, and see that thou do it according to the pattern shown thee in the mount. There wasn't to be any deviation from God's pattern. And at the end, we find that God has to admit that it has all been done faithfully, and the glory of God comes down and fills that earthly tabernacle, because the work had been carried out faithfully [00:33:02] in obedience to the revealed will of God.

And this is the secret, isn't it, of liberty, the secret of joy, the secret of fruitfulness in this world.

It springs from this obedience, not only in the larger picture, the larger scale, but in the very details.

They might have said, well, we shall eat the lamb, but we'll eat it our own way. No, God had told them just how they were to carry it out. Not a bone was to be broken.

They were not to boil it. It was to be roast with fire, the head with the legs, with the pertinence thereof. It was to be eaten in haste, with their loins girded and their shoes on their feet and their staff in their hand. They were to be ready to go to eat it in haste.

[00:34:03] They did it, just as God said.

Sometimes we may say, well, in a general way, I want to obey God, but I want to obey God in my own manner. So often we mistake this for partial obedience.

It isn't.

It is disobedience.

It cannot really be partial obedience, because partial obedience is pleasing myself, and that's disobedience. And so often, when it comes to the details laid down in scripture, we have to have an opened ear.

We have to have an obedient heart, a willingness to obey this Word of God.

They did it just as it was decreed.

As Moses commanded, so did they.

When it comes to the manner of salvation, it can only be by the blood of Christ. [00:35:02] When it comes to the way in which we are to serve God in this world, it must again be in obedience to the apostles' doctrine that we find in the New Testament. God hasn't left us any vagueness as to how we're to live in this world. The details are put so plainly in the epistles as to how we're to behave. And yet so often we say, if it were only clearer. It doesn't cover my particular circumstance or this particular detail. No, because we're not willing to see our details in the part of the New Testament that we read.

Is there all right if only we are willing to be obedient?

God says, if you be willing and obedient, you shall eat of the good of the land. Ready to go.

They were ready to leave Egypt, ready to leave the bondage, ready to go into the wilderness with all that lay before them, ready to go on to the promised land [00:36:02] that God had prepared for them. Does this characterize you and me? Are we ready to go? I think of the words of the Lord Jesus. And he says, let your loins be girded, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto men that look for their Lord. What sort of people are they that look for their Lord?

What do you think the houses in Egypt meant to these people?

They weren't worth very much anymore. What do you think the furniture of those houses was worth to these people? I don't think it meant very much to them anymore. What about all the various things

that meant so much in the days before, while they were slaves?

Do you think they counted those things anymore? Of course they didn't. They packed everything up just as they found it. [00:37:02] Stuff for removing, as Ezekiel's told.

Prepare stuff for removing, just as much as you can carry, and get out.

They did just that.

What a change in values. The things that have meant so much to them for all these years mean nothing at all anymore.

They were going out. They got something better.

Does this characterize us today? It should do, shouldn't it?

Sometimes we get so tied up with the things of this world that if God were to say to us today, and I've sometimes challenged my own soul upon these lines, just as he said to Abraham, get out to a land that I will show thee.

I wonder how long it would take us to get ready. I wonder how long before we got rid of all that rubbish we've accumulated.

I wonder if we could be ready just as he, [00:38:01] to get up and go.

And yet, we believe that the Lord Jesus is coming. This was a New Year message, wasn't it really, for these people. It was to be a new year. Their calendar was to be altered. It was to start from this day. It was a new beginning altogether. Egypt was finished, and the years of Egypt's bondage were over.

This month shall be to you the beginning of months, he says. It's the beginning of a new year for you, beginning of a new life.

You're to be ready to go.

If we believe the Lord Jesus is really coming before six o'clock this evening, I wonder if our mind would turn back to those things that we've left undone, the things we've left that ought to have been cleared up, to the things that we've accumulated and shouldn't have accumulated. I wonder if we knew that he was coming this evening, [00:39:06] if this day would have been carried out differently, if we should have behaved ourselves in a different manner. And yet, this is our hope, isn't it? This is our glorious hope, our expectation. As we wake up in the morning, what a glorious day for Christ to come. Do you wake up like that? I trust we do indeed. What a glorious day for the Lord to come.

May we indeed be as those who were ready to go, our loins girt about, our staff in our hand, and what are we feeding upon?

The lamb, nothing but Christ, the Christ of God.

We sometimes think, don't we, God is satisfied with Jesus. We are satisfied as well.

Is he your glory and your joy today? He will be for eternity, won't he? As we feed upon him, we have more than enough.

[00:40:06] As we look for his coming again, may we indeed be ready to go.