

The Feast of Passover and the Lord's Supper

Read Mark 14:12-21

Jesus the Author or Life

Jesus often operates outside of the natural order of the world, in Mark 14 Jesus commands some of the disciples to “go into the city” and follow a set of instructions regarding a very explicit series of events that would take place. To go follow a man they did not know, into a house they had not been to, to prepare a room that they had not previously set aside for their purposes.

Later, while reclining at the table eating, Jesus continues to display is sovereignty of God at work by foretelling His betrayal at the hand of one of the twelve present with him at the time. This is not a charge to the one who will betray him to repent and turn from their path, but a proclamation of his continuing plan and authorship of the narrative of history.

Jesus here builds a credibility in what He foretells so that the disciples (and by extension us) will know with certainty the authority with which he speaks. Without such authority, he would have to right to take what was a central pillar of the Jewish faith, the Commemorative Passover First, and proclaim that He is the truer and greater point of Israel’s adherence to the commemoration of God’s passing over of their fathers.

Israel and the Commemorative Meal

In Exodus 12-13, the story is told of Israel’s salvation from the 10th and final plague in Egypt. The angel of death passed through the land of

Egypt and struck down the firstborn son of each household. Unlike the previous plagues, when God withheld His judgment from the Hebrews' area of residence in Egypt, God only withheld the 10th plague from those who had the blood of a lamb covering their doorposts outside their homes, regardless of what people they belonged to. When God saw the blood covering, He passed over that house, sparing them from death.

At the same time, a family feast was instituted to commemorate the event. In Exodus 12:1-28, this Passover meal is outlined. The people of God are commanded to repeat this meal throughout their generations, as a statute forever. The day in which they celebrate the Passover meal each year is to be a "memorial day."

1. What does this mean?
2. What is God intending for the Passover Feast to actually be in the life of the people of Israel?

Reliving the Event

First, the Passover is relived in the Passover meal. In Exodus 12:24-27, Moses writes, "You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" It is clear that the observance of the Passover celebration was always meant to be a remembrance and re-enactment of the event itself, **even for those who weren't there**. Consider Deuteronomy 16:3,

"You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste—that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt."

At this point, Moses is speaking to the next generation of Hebrews who were born after the Exodus. They weren't personally saved in the Passover and brought out of the land of Egypt. Yet, they are to experience this meal as a way to relive the Passover for themselves as a people. They are to consider themselves "passed over" by the Lord.

Reuniting the Community

Second, the people of God are drawn together in community by the Passover meal. Originally, the Passover meal was designed to be eaten in the individual homes of the people. The meat was not allowed to be taken outside the home (Exod. 12:46). This kept families tethered to their respective fathers' houses, emphasizing a communal remembrance of God's salvation. Slaves and immigrants were also to participate, if they had been initiated into the people of God by circumcision (Exod. 12:44, 47).

In Deuteronomy 16:5-6, over 40 years later, Israel is given a slightly new direction: They are instructed to eat Passover at Jerusalem, rather than in their separate towns. Again, this worked to eliminate the segregation of the people of Israel into their clans and families across the land of Israel. Not only did the Hebrew men come, but Moses instructed them further in Deuteronomy 16:11,

"And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there."

Every year, the nation reunited around their common identity as the "passed-over ones." They were those whom the Lord spared from death and judgment, and this joint identity bound them together.

Redirecting Their Lives

Third, the people of God are redirected by Passover to live rightly. When he instructs Israel on the Feast of Passover and of Unleavened Bread, Moses tells the Israelites the feast will be like “a mark on your hand or frontlets between your eyes,” and it will remind them that the Lord brought them out of Egypt (Exod. 16:1). Again, before entering the Promised Land, Moses tells Israel it will also be like writing on the doorposts of their houses and on the gates of the city (Deut. 6:9). Every time they looked at their hand or their neighbor’s face, they would remember. Every time they left or entered their house, or they left or entered the town, they (and visitors) would remember. But, why does Israel need to be reminded so often of being passed over?

Here in the Old Testament, “remembering” means much more than mere knowledge. This is a type of remembering that implies action. It implies attentiveness to the promises and events of the past so that action is taken which is defined by the thing remembered—remembering *forward*, recalling the past for the sake of propelling yourself into the future. This is why it is such great news when God remembers His people (Exod. 2:23-25). He never “forgot” them or the promises to Abraham but is decisively acting on His promises for the sake of His people. In a similar way, Israel is to remember God’s salvation *so that they will be who they are*. They are to remember His commandments *so that they will do them* and walk in faithfulness to the covenant.

The Lord’s Supper and Remembering Christ

Read Mark 14:22–25

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, He took the bread, He took the cup, and He instituted the commemorative meal for the New Covenant people

of God. As the Church, we receive the Lord's Supper to commemorate and proclaim the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Just like the Israelites whom the Lord "passed over," we remember God's saving act in the commemorative meal for the purpose of,

1. Reliving the event
2. Reuniting the community
3. Redirecting our lives

First, we take the Lord's Supper to relive the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ. For the Israelites, the escape from death was illustrated every year. The Passover was the ritual re-enactment of being passed over by God and spared from His judgment. As God's people partaking in the commemorative meal, we do not passively relive the event, we bring the event into the present. It is as if we are there at the foot of the cross as the body is broken and the blood is spilt. What's more, we consider ourselves crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). Because of our union with Christ by the indwelling Spirit we can relive the crucifixion as those who have been united with Christ in His death (Rom. 6:2-4).

Second, just as Passover brought together the Israelites as the "passed-over ones," so the Lord's Supper now brings together the people of God in the same way. When the Israelites put the blood on their doorposts, they were seen by God as "in the right." When we believed in Jesus as Savior, we were made righteous by His blood. And being counted righteous by His blood, we are saved from the wrath of God (Rom. 5:9). When we receive the Lord's Supper, we do not receive it alone; we come together and proclaim our common identity in Christ—as the "passed-over ones," who have been crucified with Christ and who await the consummation of our redemption. When we come to eat this meal together, if we do so in disunity or discord, we violate the very heart of communion (1 Cor. 11:17-34).

*Third, when we eat the Lord's Supper, we remember forward, recommitting ourselves to the "obedience of faith" (Rom. 1:4). The Ten Commandments begin with a declaration: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery" (Exod. 20:2). The good news of God's delivery of his people from bondage always precedes the mandate for obedience to the covenant. In our case, we celebrate that He is the Lord our God, who rescued us from death and darkness, out of slavery to sin. We look *forward*, walking in obedience to His commands, having been liberated from slavery to unrighteousness so that we would be free to pursue righteousness even in our mortal bodies. At the Lord's Supper, we meditate on the mercy given for our sin, and we renew our focus and commitment to follow after Jesus, who is not only our Savior, but our example.*

1. **What is an example of a *specific* way in your day to day life that remembering the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus can change your heart, mind, and actions?**
2. **Do you struggle to find your ultimate identity in Christ as one who has been "passed-over?" If so, what is a specific area you can work to let the truth of your ultimate identity in Christ shape you?**
3. **We all have areas that we struggle to walk in holiness. For some, these areas can seem trivial, for others they are sources of guilt and fear. In light of God's delivery of *you* from bondage to sin, where ever you land on that spectrum, use this time as an opportunity to confess areas in which you struggle to grow and ask for prayer.**

Take this time to take turns praying together. Use this opportunity to pray for anything that has come up during discussion or anything else that you feel lead to. Emphasize thanksgiving for the work of Christ to seek out and to save his church from the bondage of sin and condemnation. Pray for focus,

not only as a church body, but as individuals to strive toward holiness in the hope of the restoration of all things.

The Final Remembrance

Israel observed Passover every year as a way to root themselves in their identity as the “passed-over ones.” They were those whom God rescued out of Egypt and so were the people who inherited God’s promises to Abraham. They constantly looked forward to the day when they would fill the land and be a kingdom of priests to all the nations of the world. In that day “the earth would be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea” (Hab. 2:14). This final remembrance is the hope which drove the Israelites forward.

In the Lord’s Supper, we remember the death and resurrection of Christ, who is the firstborn from the dead. He is the one who will fulfill all God’s promises to Abraham. Through Him, **all** the nations of the earth will be blessed. We remember forward to that day when **all** creation is liberated from its bondage to decay and the glory of God is fully revealed. We are those who will finally be made like Jesus Christ in His resurrection, and we will eat a new commemorative meal with Him again in the kingdom of God (Mark 14:25). This is our hope, and it is an anchor for our souls. This is the hope for which we strive and the final hope toward which we remember *forward*.

Take communion together and, to yourself, meditate on the implications of Jesus body and blood broken and spilled for your sake, confess any sins in your life to Him, and seek to praise Him for specific examples of blessing in your life and the lives of those around you.