

# A Feast for the Ages

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[ 0 : 00 ] Father, we pray that you would speak to us now, each and every one of us here, through your word, by your Spirit, that you may reveal Christ in all his glory to us, that we might have our hearts softened and our ears opened to the wonderful truths of your gospel.

May we grow in our faith and our love for you through it. And may you make us evermore into the likeness of your Son, that we might live to your praise.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. As I mentioned just at the beginning of the service, we are going to be sharing the Lord's Supper together in a little while.

And as we look forward to doing that, we're going to just take this opportunity, as we are kind of in between series, to think a little more in depth about what is going on here.

What is it that we do when we share the bread and wine with one another? Why do we do it?

Because it isn't, is it, at face value, the most intuitive thing, is it?

[ 1 : 22 ] Maybe you've grown up in church and so you're quite used to the sight of it. If not, it probably seems quite strange.

A little bit of bread, a little bit of wine, handed out among all the members of the church. Why bother? What's the point?

What good does it do? Well, I hope this evening, as we just kind of skim the surface, really, that we'll see the depth and richness that there is to the Lord's Supper.

So although these might seem like two very simple elements before us, and they are two very simple elements. This is just normal bread and normal wine. But within both of these things is packed so much glorious biblical imagery and biblical truth.

And through these elements, the Holy Spirit affects real change amongst God's people. So we're going to do that primarily by just focusing on that passage we've just read in Luke chapter 22.

[ 2 : 38 ] We're going to draw on a variety of other passages as we go through. But as we look at this passage, we will see that there are two kind of primary things that the Lord's Supper kind of builds around, that everything else is centered on.

Paul summarizes those kind of two key pillars when he says in 1 Corinthians 11, we, what are we doing here? We proclaim his death until he comes.

We proclaim his death until he comes. First of all, we see we proclaim his death in sharing the Lord's Supper.

We remember the lamb who was slain. In sharing the Lord's Supper, we remember the lamb who was slain. Where's the lamb coming from, you might ask?

Well, in the early verses of Luke 22, there is one thing that Luke wants to make absolutely certain of that his readers are not missing.

[ 3 : 45 ] Just look through those verses with me, starting in verse 1. We didn't read this earlier, but we see there that the festival of unleavened bread, the Passover was approaching.

Just down to verse 7. Then came the day of unleavened bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Verse 8, go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.

Verse 11, Jesus sends the disciples into Jerusalem to say, the teacher asks, where's the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? Verse 15, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover.

Passover, Passover, Passover, Passover, Passover. There's only one other time, right outside of these references, in the whole Gospel of Luke, that he mentions Passover.

And that is right back at the beginning, in chapter 2. He wants to make unmistakably clear here, doesn't he? That what Jesus is about to say and do is happening at the time of Passover.

[ 4 : 55 ] What on earth is Passover, you might ask? Well, it's what Diane read for us earlier in the service, in Exodus chapter 12. This was more than a thousand years before Jesus' time.

It's a big historical gap, isn't it? We can think the Bible sort of all happens quite close together. It was a thousand years between the festival Jesus is celebrating here and what they were remembering.

And what they were remembering at the time of Exodus 12 was the people of Israel being freed from Egypt. The people had been in Egypt for 400 years, and for the last number of those years, we don't know exactly how many, but a few decades at least, for the last number of those years, the people of Israel had been treated brutally by the Egyptians.

They had been enslaved and forced to produce far more work than they were physically capable of. And so the people cried out to God for help.

They cried out to God for help, and God heard those cries. Our God is a God who hears pleas for help. And he went and saved his people so that they could be with him and that they could serve him instead of the Egyptians.

[ 6 : 20 ] And God brought his people from Egypt through what we know as the ten plagues. You might be familiar with them. But the tenth and final of those plagues was the killing, the death, of the firstborn son in every household in the land of Egypt.

The death of the firstborn son of every family in the land of Egypt.

It is a somber and terrifying fate that awaits everyone in the nation. But God provides a means for the people of Israel, God's people, to be spared the punishment that has been inflicted upon the whole land.

And what that means is, by which they would be spared, this links very closely to what we were looking at this morning, doesn't it? The means by which they were saved was a sacrifice.

The blood of a lamb, as we read earlier, is shed and painted on the doorposts. Their blood is saved by the blood of another being shed on their behalf.

[ 7 : 55 ] And all those who put their trust in God's words and so put their trust in the blood of the lamb, they are all protected, aren't they?

But I wonder if you noticed what they are protected from. What does Passover celebrate Israel's deliverance from?

This is really important for understanding the Lord's Supper from Sunday Exodus. Who were God's people saved from through the blood of the lamb? I wonder if you picked it up as we read through Exodus 12 earlier.

Let me just read a few verses for you. Verse 12 of Exodus 12. We read, And on that same night, I, this is God speaking, I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn of both people and animals.

And I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are.

[ 9 : 04 ] And when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike.

See it again later on in verse 27. Who are they to remember being delivered from? They are to remember being spared the Lord's judgment.

Who does God provide the means for Israel to be saved from? Yes, they will be delivered from Egypt, and that is a wonderful thing. But they do celebrate as part of the Passover, but that is not what they remembered then.

The Passover is God's people remembering when God delivered them through the blood of a lamb from God's wrath.

That is the message of Passover. That is what the people were to gather and celebrate.

[ 10 : 10 ] And so every year, every single year, all of Israel, all the people of Israel would come together to Jerusalem. It was a pilgrim feast. Thousands, tens of thousands, maybe even hundreds of thousands of people would all come together to Jerusalem.

That is the context that Luke is desperate for us to know as we come into chapter 22. What we find out very quickly as we go through this Passover feast is that this is a Passover like none before it.

Jesus says in verse 15, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover. with you before I suffer.

What is this Passover? There's no mention of any lamb, and where is there? It's not to say it wasn't present, but it's definitely not the focus in this Passover meal.

Nor is remembering the deliverance God provided in Egypt at the time of the Exodus. Jesus says in verse 19 what this Passover is all about.

[11:38] He took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them saying, this is my body given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Do this in remembrance of me. Do this in remembrance of me. That is an astonishing thing for Jesus to say in the context that he is speaking in. But he says it, and he can say it, because what he is about to do is what the original Passover was pointing to all along.

His blood is a new covenant, building on top of the foundations that have been laid for centuries and millennia before. Again, Joe mentioned it this morning, what we read just a couple of chapters later in the Gospel of Luke when Jesus is on the road to Emmaus with the two disciples.

He opens up the Scriptures and shows them how everything, everything in the Old Testament is pointing to him. And so in him, the Passover finds its fulfillment.

[13:00] It is now complete. It is finished. Because in Jesus breaking his body and shedding his blood, the Lamb of God has shed his blood once and for all to save forever those who hear God's word and put their trust in the blood of his Lamb.

And they are all saved eternally, right? It is done. It is finished. The looming threat throughout the Old Testament was always that Israel might return to Egypt.

No more. There is no more threat of going back to the land we were saved from. And so we no longer remember God passing over the houses of Egypt because of the blood of Allah.

Because we now have something so much greater to remember instead. because the just wrath of God that we deserve has and forever will pass over us who ourselves are covered by the blood of the Lamb.

they kept on sacrificing lambs every Passover, didn't they? Because they were waiting for the sacrifice that needed to cover them completely.

[14:45] But the blood of that Lamb has been shed. So we do not need to shed it again. but rather Jesus gives us a meal to remember His sacrifice.

Because we now can come to a table with God already cleansed by Him instead of for all the Old Testament saints who had to come to an altar in order to cleanse themselves.

We come to a table not an altar because we have been forever cleansed by the one time breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of His blood. And so the Passover is finished.

It is done. We do not need to observe it anymore because something so much greater has come and it is this. That doesn't mean there isn't much we can still learn from the Passover and from all that we see in the Old Testament.

I think we can still learn what the Lord's Supper means just in light of what we read about the Passover. Here's just one example of what we see in Exodus 12. God gives the people instructions saying in verse 24 Obey these instructions as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.

[16:28] When you enter the land the Lord will give you as He promised. Observe this ceremony the Passover. And He says and then when your children ask what does this ceremony mean?

Then tell them. Tell them what it means. What are you to tell them? It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord. The Lord who passed over the houses of Israel of the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when He struck down the Egyptians.

What does this ceremony mean? That is the question of the Passover that God expected people to be asking. Specifically the children of God's people to be asking.

I said at the beginning that this might all seem a bit strange to people who are unfamiliar with it. And so it should. Right?

Part of the purpose was to facilitate conversation about God's salvation for people to look at what's going on and ask. What does that mean?

[17:42] Why do you do it? Great question. Let me tell you the gospel. How God provided His Son to be slain in order that His righteous wrath might pass over us.

So it is that we remember what Jesus has done for us. maybe it's actually worth just very quickly saying before we move on to our next point.

Remember is something quite different in the biblical context to what we probably normally assume it means. I think what we think remember don't we is a kind of western I think Greek originally concept of just recollecting something that happened in the past that is sort of no longer active in

the present.

If that was the extent of remembering that Jesus is calling us to then all this would be wouldn't it would be a mental exercise of saying oh yeah Jesus did die for me didn't he and then move on. But remembering in the Bible is so much more than that. Remembering is a participating here and now in the certain defining events of both the past and also in the future.

[ 19 : 10 ] So for those enjoying the Passover together they would together with their forefathers invoke the name of God to their rescue as they shared the Passover meal.

I was just saying God rescue us as you rescued them. So when we remember Jesus' death and resurrection we're not just recalling historical facts.

We are participating in the present by sharing the bread that is his body and the wine that signifies his blood. By sharing those elements we participate here and now in the historical death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ as we are united to him by faith calling on him to forever be our deliverer.

That is what it means to be remembering in covenant context. It's what God does when he says I will remember you with the rainbow he gives to Noah.

He's not saying I might have forgotten something in the past but he says so long as I see this sign so long as I see this sign and seal I will be faithful to the covenant I have established with my people.

[ 20 : 30 ] So long as we partake of this meal God will be faithful to the covenant he has made with his people. So we remember the lamb who was slain but we also don't we look forward to the lamb who will reign.

This meal is not only one that brings us back into what happens in the past but it points us forward to something better yet to come.

Just look down there at what Jesus says in verse 15 and 16 of Luke 22. Jesus said to them as disciples I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer for I tell you I will not eat of it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.

Again down in verse 18 I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. the Lord's supper is the fulfillment of the Passover but you see there in verse 16 the Lord's supper itself is awaiting a fulfillment of its own because this is a meal not a sacrifice and so while we remember the sacrifice that was made through the elements of the meal given to us the meal itself points us to something better yet to come.

We proclaim the Lord's death until he comes and when he comes we will feast with him.

[ 22 : 33 ] Jesus did not just give us this meal and he is not only ever going to be present with us by his spirit in us but there is a day coming when he will sit with us and enjoy a wedding feast with his church.

It is a foretaste of something greater still to come. Let me read it from Revelation 19. These are wonderful words. Revelation 19 from verse 6 Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder shouting Hallelujah for our Lord God almighty reigns let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory for the wedding of the Lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready fine linen bright and clean was given her to wear fine linen stands for the righteous acts of God's holy people Then the angel said to me write this blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb and he added these are the true words of God God and so we come to this table joyfully looking forward to what awaits us because the Lamb whose death we remember did not stay dead but is now seated at the right hand of the Father in glory and honour waiting eagerly for the day when he will again eat of this Passover with us with all of his disciples and so it is that as we come to it now we rejoice don't we that as surely as we eat the bread so surely will we eat of it in all its glory when Christ comes again for those of us who are in Christ as surely as the bread touches your lips so surely has Christ given his body for you and so surely will you eat with him in his new creation as certainly as you taste the wine so has Christ spilled his blood for you and so surely will he drink once more of the vine in his kingdom with you when it comes because Christ is coming again Christ is coming again and we know and experience the glorious hope that brings when we share a foretaste of what is to come a meal shared by all God's saints looking forward to living with the lamb who was slain and will reign forever and ever there is there is so much biblical imagery I said earlier packed into these two elements and we'd be here forever if I tried to go through them all but just one that particularly struck me this last week as

I was thinking on this last point was that the bread and the wine were the very two things that were withheld from the Israelites during their wilderness wanderings for 40 years they roamed the wilderness and God says specifically in Deuteronomy 29 during those years I gave you no bread and I gave you no wine because they were the produce of the promised lands that they had not yet entered we live don't we in the now but not yet of Christ's kingdom but it is a beautiful picture is it not that Christ God through his son gives us now bread and wine even though we might feel we are in the midst of wilderness wanderings waiting desperately for entry into the promised land [ 27 : 09 ] God is so sure that day is coming and he knows that we who are in Christ will be there on that day that he gives us a taste of it here and now this is the produce of the promised land is a beautiful thing and it is a sure sign and seal of God's covenant of grace sealed with the blood of Christ that we have been brought into through no good of our own but only out of Christ's love for us and so it is right and fitting isn't it that we respond as the ancient Israelites did at the end of our reading in Exodus 12 by worshipping God for his gracious deliverance by praising him for this meal that we celebrate for this is a meal that he has provided by his own body and blood in order that we his church might be built up through his spirits growing us in our faith drawing us ever nearer to him as we remember his sacrifice and look forward to his eternal kingdom before we come and share these elements together let us pray once more father we thank you and praise you that you have saved us from your just wrath by the bloods of your own son by the broken body of the lamb of gods who willingly gave himself that we might be saved father we praise you for your mercy and your grace we confess that we are utterly undeserving of your goodness and your blessings and so it is that we humbly rejoice and give great thanks that we come now to share in this covenant meal looking forward to an eternity where we will share with

Christ himself forever and ever in his person but until that day sustain us now with this by your spirit draw us ever closer to Christ that we might live eagerly for him in his name we pray amen