

A meal to remember

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[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we thank you that all scripture is breathed out by you.

! That all of it is useful for equipping us for every good work.! May you, by your Holy Spirit, this morning, help us not to harden our hearts to your voice, but that by your Spirit you might grow us more and more into the image of your Son, in whose name we pray. Amen.

So when Joe asked me to come preach at Bon Accord, he said, will you please continue in the series we're doing in Exodus? I thought this is going to be great. There's lots of exciting stories. They might ask to preach about a baby going down the Nile, maybe a bush that's burning but not being burnt up, maybe about God's name being revealed to people, ten amazing plagues that show God's power.

God's people being saved from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery. And then Joe sent me the passage and its rules and regulations about feasts that we no longer keep.

[1 : 10] Maybe as we read the passage this morning, you thought, do we really need to know about this? Doesn't this just seem a bit kind of antiquated, a bit foreign, a bit different to the real world today?

Do we really need to know how people from thousands of years ago ate this meal that we no longer eat? Is it really relevant? Well, I hope and pray as we dive into these verses, actually we'll see that all scripture is breathed out by God.

And I hope and pray that we'll see even these rules and regulations teach us something hugely significant about who God is. What he has done for us in the past, and also what he will continue to do for us in the future.

And so as we turn to focus on the text, we're going to see two points this morning. Firstly, we're going to look at the bit from chapter 12, and we're going to see about who these rites and rituals were for.

And then we're going to turn to chapter 13 and see what they were for. So let's turn to those first ones in chapter 12. Who is the Passover and all the rites around it?

[2 : 25] But who is it for? And we'll see in these verses that Passover was an exclusive meal, yet wonderfully it was open to all.

Now, since we've gone up in Aberdeen, I've heard that Bonacord had a wedding this weekend. Actually, I think a wedding is a good illustration of what I mean by exclusive yet open.

For if you are invited to someone's wedding day, well, by the time you get to the day itself, it's quite an exclusive gathering, isn't it? If you want to sit down and enjoy the meal, well, you had to have received a save the date.

You have to know which day the wedding is going to be on. And then you would have got an invitation in the post sometime later, and well, hopefully you've responded. You've sent your RSVP off, and you've said, do you want the chicken or the fish for your main course?

If you haven't been told the date, if you haven't told them what you're going to have for your meal, well, if you arrive on the day, there'll be nowhere for you to sit.

[3 : 30] It's exclusive. It's invitation only. But the thing is, as much as a wedding can be quite an exclusive affair on the day, I actually think for many couples, well, it feels quite open.

I hope that the happy couple at any given wedding invite lots of their close family, their close friends, the people that mean lots to them. I'm sure all of us know, if you've ever organized a wedding or been to one, well, there's lots of people the happy couple have to invite who maybe they wouldn't otherwise have at their close due.

Those kind of family friends that your parents really are keen to keep up a relationship with, but you haven't really seen in 15 years. That third cousin twice removed, who you've never met until maybe

a funeral in another 10 years' time.

It's an exclusive event. You have to have been invited. Actually, I think a wedding, in many ways, it's quite an open event. It's broad. There's a huge number of different people who come.

That's a little bit like what Passover was like. If you were here last week, I imagine you were in earlier bits in chapter 12, actually you'd have seen that Passover, the date of it, has already been set.

[4 : 47] God's told them when they're to celebrate it. And he's already told them what's on the menu. It's roast lamb each and every year. That has been decided. But as we dive in from verse 43, we see again who this Passover meal is for.

Who's allowed at the table? Let's read again from verse 43. And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, This is the statute of the Passover.

No foreigner shall eat of it. But every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it.

As we read these verses, we see actually Passover on one hand, like the wedding, it's quite exclusive. We read, don't we, No foreigner shall eat of it.

Now maybe today in 21st century Scotland, that doesn't sound very nice, does it? Why wouldn't God let foreigners eat with the nation of Israel?

[5 : 57] Why would he make them stay outside? And this isn't just hypothetical. If you flip back to Exodus 12, verse 38, it describes the people who fled Egypt as a mixed multitude.

It wasn't just Israelites who fled from Egypt, it was people of other nations who trusted in God, not in Pharaoh. And yet a few verses later, we're being told that no foreigner can enjoy the meal that remembers God's salvation for his people.

Maybe if you're visiting church for the first time, maybe you think, well, doesn't this just make God seem a bit xenophobic? Why would we want to listen to a God like this? He just seems out of touch. This can't stand, surely. Well, to help us see what's really going on here, I don't think we're coming to a God who is xenophobic. One author puts it very memorably for us when he says, the exclusion is not a matter of race, but it's a matter of grace.

The question isn't, where are you from? Which nation were you born into? The real question is, do you belong to God's people? And to help us see that's the case, let's clock that this meal isn't just really exclusive, but it's actually very broad.

[7 : 27] It's open. From verse 48, we read, if a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised.

Then he may come near and keep it. He shall be as a native of the land, but no uncircumcised person shall eat of it.

There shall be one law for the native and one for the stranger who sojourns among you. See, while on the one hand we're told, no foreigner may eat of it, but actually here we see how a stranger, someone from outside the land of Egypt, Israel, can be welcomed in.

If they were to sojourn with you and to keep the Passover, well, they can do it if they commit to join God's people. Now, I have a pale imitation of what that feels like.

As I mentioned earlier, I'm not from Scotland. I was born down in England. And so when I moved up to Scotland, some of the Scots tried to convince me of these kind of lies they tell to English people. So luckily, I wasn't gullible enough to believe that Haggis roamed the Cairngorms.

[8 : 44] And I also wasn't gullible enough to know that Loch Nessie doesn't actually exist. The Loch Ness monster isn't really there. I'm sorry if I've spoiled either of those good stories for you.

But the thing is, from being outside of Scotland, you still feel a little bit different. So I thought, what's the best way to show I'm going to commit? Well, Sarah's got an Ulster Scott surname, and I went to the kilt shop, and I got myself a kilt.

So now I can rock up to any Cayley, any Burns Knight, and look like a proper tukta, and not the wee Sassanak I am. Now, why am I telling you about my kilt?

Well, it's a really small example of what the people who were outside Israel did to show their commitment to become part of God's people.

Verse 48, we're told that all the males of the house had to get circumcised. You can eat of the Passover, but you have to buy in to what it means to be part of God's people.

[9 : 48] Now, what does it mean that they got circumcised? What are they saying by that? Well, circumcision was a gift from God as a kind of way of marking out God's people from the world

around them, to set them wholly apart from the other nations.

And so to become circumcised, to join God's people, was to say, yes, I am going to show my allegiance to God. I'm going to become part of His people, His covenant people.

And the circumcision was a sign and seal of all the promises that came with being part of God's people, that He would be our God and we would be His people.

And so what had become circumcised was to demonstrate you were joining into God's people. And so we read here, actually, that it doesn't matter where people had come from, but if they agreed to follow God's law, if they agreed to join in with God's people, if their males got circumcised, then you can sit down and eat.

There is a place setting for you in the Passover. And these people weren't second-class citizens, were they? Verse 49. There shall be one law for the native and one for the stranger who sojourns among you.

[11:10] They were to be fully embraced into God's people. Not held at arm's length, not denied justice, the same law, and not denied the right to sit and eat the Passover with God's people.

In other words, there's no ethnic barrier to being in God's people, but there is a covenantal barrier to being in God's people.

And wonderfully, we see that in the world around us today, don't we? The church is not made up of one ethnicity, one race, one people. But we see the church is global, it's universal.

It's made up of people from all the nations of the world. Every tribe, every tongue, Jesus came to save each and every people, so that people from, no matter what language we speak, no matter what nation we grow up in, we can join God's people.

And so if you're visiting church again this morning, it's wonderful to say you're extremely welcome. You are not barred. You're not excluded. It's great to have you with us.

[12:26] But there will be aspects about church which will maybe feel exclusive, and there are aspects about church that continue to be exclusive. So when we enjoy the Lord's Supper as a church, actually there is no ethnic barrier.

You don't have to be an Israelite in this church congregation to enjoy the Lord's Supper together. But you do have to be part of God's people. You have to have been baptized, you have to have professed your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

And when we do that, we can all share in that exclusive meal together. No ethnic barrier, but a covenantal barrier.

So let me encourage you, if you are here and you wouldn't call yourself a Christian, you never put your hope in the Lord Jesus, let me encourage you next time you see the Lord's table, the Lord's Supper being enjoyed at this church family, to think seriously, is this something I want to be a part of?

Is trusting in Jesus worth it? And what if we carry on looking in chapter 13, there are more blessings than just getting to sit down and eat one meal.

[13:41] There are lots of blessings in that meal, I promise you, we don't have time to look at them all now, but actually there's even more blessing in it. And we see that as we look at chapter 13, verses 1 to 16, and we see this was a festival for remembrance, yet it was also to teach future generations.

For my hope and prayer as we dive into these verses, is that we'll all see why joining God's people is so worth it. Not because Passover pointed us to God's salvation, we did a scene last week, he saved the people from the land of Egypt from slavery.

Actually, there's far greater salvation being offered. Not just for one night thousands of years ago, but actually there is a salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ that will last forever.

And these rites and rituals remind us of what he has done for us. And so in these verses, our attention is turned to the kind of side rituals to Passover.

Passover, we've got this thing called the Feast of Unleavened Bread and the consecration of the firstborn. Now don't worry if you've not come across them before, we're not going to do a kind of big summary, a deep dive into them.

[14:57] But if we scan through these verses, maybe you notice there are two main kind of purposes for them. We'll see these two purposes now.

Firstly, they were to help Israel to look backwards backwards to what's come in the past and to remember what God has done. But they were also to help Israel to look forwards, not just to think

God was great back then, but to teach future generations as we've just sung, people who weren't yet born when those events happened, about what that God is like.

I think we see that sort of idea in lots of dates, even the ones maybe we're more familiar with celebrating. Maybe when we think about our calendar, Remembrance Days come to mind.

Now what's the first one that probably pops into your head? Well it's probably the 11th of November, isn't it? Remembrance Day itself. And what do we do on Remembrance Day?

Well we take two minutes in silence to think back to those people who laid down their lives in war. We remember them. Or another date that maybe came to your mind was the 5th of November.

[16:12] Maybe you've heard the poem, Remember, Remember, the 5th of November, Gunpowder, Treason and Plot. The 5th of November, Guy Fawkes Night. Well what do we do? We remember what happened on that very first 5th of November when Guy Fawkes tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament.

These two dates they're to get us to think back to what's happened. But that's not the only reason we celebrate them in our culture, is it? We don't just think back but they also teach us something about today.

For example, Guy Fawkes Night. The government at the time really encouraged people to celebrate Guy Fawkes Night. Not just to remember the success of foiling the plot, it was to teach every successive generation if you try and blow us up, this is what will happen to you.

Don't do it. It's not worth it. You don't want to be like the guy on the pyre. It was to teach future generations. Or Remembrance Day. We don't just think back to the people who died in First World War and the Second World War.

We also think it's to teach us something about the gravity and seriousness of war even today. The wars we see raging around us. Event Days to remember but Days also to teach for the future.

[17:34] And we see both of those in Exodus 13. Verse 3 says, Then Moses said to the people, Remember this day in which you came out from Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

For by a strong hand the Lord brought you out from this place. When they sat down for the Feast of Unleavened Bread, well, they were to remember what happened the first time they ate that Unleavened Bread.

It was an act of remembrance. And what was it reminding them of? Well, chapter 12 verse 39 tells us, They ate baked Unleavened Bread of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt for it was not leavened because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.

They ate Unleavened kind of flat bread because it reminded them of the panicked frenzy they were in when they'd had to flee Egypt. See, they were such in a rush they didn't have time to get all their food together.

They hadn't prepped sandwich boxes and a nice little kind of takeout when they got to the wilderness. No, they grabbed what they could and the bread they had hadn't risen yet. So they took it flat and they ate it like that.

[19:00] And so every year for seven days they would eat this unleavened bread again. Why? To remember what happened on that first Passover. To remember how God had saved them not themselves how God had rescued them from the house of slavery out of Egypt.

But they didn't just remember for nostalgia's sake. It wasn't just to puff themselves up being like we used to be slaves and look where we are now. Isn't it amazing?

Think about our poor ancestors who had to go through that. Maybe for one week a year we'll kind of pretend we're still with them in that hardship and kind of it'll be a nice time. It wasn't just about nostalgia.

It wasn't about rose tinted goggles about the past but it was important they didn't forget these events because they had to teach them to the next generation.

They had to teach those people who never saw slavery who never saw Egypt who never saw how horrible Pharaoh had been to them who never saw how God had rescued them just what God is like just what happened.

[20:10] And we see that don't we in verse 8. You shall tell your son on that day. It is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.

The children would have been watching their parents preparing all the food for the feast. And while the children weren't just meant to watch and be bystanders, but the parents were meant to say this

is why we do it like this way.

This is the significance of all this means. And they were to teach them that God's strong hand had saved them from the land of Egypt.

They didn't have time to the bread to rise because God saved us from a miraculous way. And so that even people who didn't see the Passover would know what the God who had done it is like. And we see a similar pattern in verses 11 and 16. It's this time it's about the consecration of the firstborn where the firstborn was set aside made holy for God.

[21 : 12] Why did they do this? Well to remember what happened on that first Passover. When the firstborns of Egypt were saved by the Passover land and the ones who were not were killed in judgment.

They consecrated the firstborn to remember the gravity of what had happened. But it wasn't again just about remembrance. Verse 14. And when in time to come your son asks you, what does this mean?

You shall say to him, by a strong hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of slavery, for when Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let us go, the Lord killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man and the firstborn of animals.

Therefore I sacrifice to the Lord all the males that first opened the womb, but all the firstborn of my sons I redeem. You can imagine the scene again.

This time the kids aren't watching their parents make the unleavened bread, they're watching them kind of consecrate the firstborn lamb or goat that is born on the family farm. Mom and dad, why are you doing that?

[22 : 26] Doesn't that seem a bit relevant? And why don't you do it for the subsequent calves, the subsequent kids, the subsequent lambs? Why are you so obsessed with the firstborn? And well the parents, they weren't just meant to laugh and ignore their child's request, but what were they to do?

To teach them, to tell them what God had done on that first Passover, to remind them of the gravity of sin, that it does come with judgment, but also to remind them that we have a gracious Savior who provided a means of escape from that judgment.

And so just as a quick aside, I hope this passage reminds us what a joy it is to have a church family of every age and stage. older brothers and sisters who can tell us of what God has done for us in their lives, teaching the younger generations what God is like.

When kids ask us great questions, well it's a good opportunity to teach them what our God and Savior is like. To teach them that God is a God who judges sin, but loves to save his people.

And that is a great thing to teach even today. For whilst maybe we don't necessarily celebrate the Passover anymore, we don't kind of have that same meal, we don't consecrate our firstborn kids in the same way that Israel did all the way back then, that doesn't mean we've forgotten what God is like.

[23 : 51] That doesn't mean it's irrelevant for us, but actually there is still something God is wanting to teach us and show us. And help us see that as we sung in Psalm 78, written hundreds of years later, that God's people still for thousands of years kept the Passover, even if you go to synagogues today, they still keep the Passover to teach the generations what happened.

You can read in Luke chapter 2 that Jesus himself was taken each and every year by his parents to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.

That's what our Lord and Savior did every year. Mary and Joseph obediently listened to the Lord's command, just as they had been taught by their parents or they passed it on to their kids to teach them what the Lord is like.

And so maybe we're thinking, well if it's good enough for Jesus, if he did it, he needed to be told by his parents and his brothers needed to hear it too, well why aren't we still doing it today?

Well because the exodus and the feasts that commemorate it, they were extremely important, don't hear me wrong, but they were never meant to be the ultimate fulfillment, but they were to preempt, to point to the even greater Passover to come.

[25 : 16] For Jesus didn't just celebrate the Passover, but he also came to fulfill the Passover. Passover. Luke chapter 22 verse 7 reads, Then came the day of unleavened bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be killed.

And where was Jesus on that day? Well celebrating it with his disciples in Jerusalem. And later on in Luke chapter 22 we read, Jesus say, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you

before I suffer.

And he took the bread which he had given thanks, he broke it and said to them, This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

And likewise the cup, after they had eaten, saying, This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. two thousand years ago, on the feast of unleavened bread, on the night the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed, Jesus didn't just teach his disciples what Passover was about, but he teaches them what Passover was always pointing to.

That he had come to suffer and to die, and to save his people from their sins. For that night that they celebrated the Passover was also the same night that Jesus was betrayed, and he was taken to be crucified on the cross.

[26 : 53] And the apostle Paul writes, For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. His blood was shed on the cross.

not put on the door until, but put on the cross. As a new covenant. So we might enjoy a new relationship with God, and once again, he might be our God and we, his people.

For the spotless, blameless, perfect lamb has died on the tree to save people from our sins. And as the first Passover was, well this is extremely open.

No matter what nation we were born in, no matter what our mother tongue might be, no matter where we have come from, all of us can enjoy that blessing. But is it exclusive?

Jesus says that he is the way, the truth, and the life that no one comes to the Father except through him. If we want to be part of God's people, then we must put our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, knowing that there is no other name under heaven by which men and women must be saved.

[28 : 03] And we can enjoy all those blessings if only we repent of our sins and believe in the gospel and know that Jesus Christ is our Passover lamb, one whose blood was shed to save us.

And wonderfully, on that last Passover he celebrated, he gave us a new meal, one that we do in remembrance of him, the Lord's Supper. We remember that this was the body and blood that he shed for us, take and eat and drink.

Do this in remembrance of me. It's good to remember back to what Jesus did for us, his sacrifice to save us from our sins. But actually, that's not the only thing the Lord's Supper is for. It's also there to teach us, to grow us in our faith, to help us to enjoy by the God's Spirit Jesus' presence with us and to teach us what it all means.

Again, the Apostle Paul said that every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Every time people see us eating the Lord's Supper, will we proclaim what the Lord Jesus has done for us?

They look on and they think, why are these people eating? Not just to remember back to St. John 2,000 years ago, which we do, it's really important, but also to teach us something about what we are like, that we are a sinner in need of salvation, that we have a Savior who died for us, who died even though we didn't deserve it, that we deserve judgment just like anyone else, that we are sinful and in need of a Savior, but also to teach us that Jesus Christ is the perfect solution to that problem.

[29 : 48] So that, like they did at the Exodus, what we might be able to say, by a strong hand, the Lord has brought us out of sin to save us, that we might be with our God forevermore in that new and perfect land that he is still to bring us.

Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we thank you that the Lord Jesus is our Passover lamb, the one who has been sacrificed.

We thank you that sacrifice was once for all to save us from our sins. We pray you'd help us as we come to church, as we live for you, to remember all that he did for us, but also to seek to teach it to others so that each and every one of us might enjoy the blessing of knowing you as our God and Father.

help us as we continue to walk before you call us home, walk in faith, help us to grow in our love of you and help us to grow in our desire to teach those around us the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in whose name we pray.

Amen. Thank you.