

The Lord's Supper:
From Passover to Marriage Supper of the Lamb
 Exodus 12:1-13; Luke 22:7-23; Revelation 19:6-9
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The last two Sundays we've looked at the ordinance of baptism, and this morning and next week I'm going to preach on the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. These are precious gifts which Christ has given to us, and it's my desire that we come into a fuller and deeper understanding of them. It's my hope, personally, to grow in my appreciation of baptism and the Lord's Supper and to better understand the rich meaning that is portrayed when we practice them. And I hope and pray that as a body we will do the same, so that when we come together to baptize an individual and when we come together to eat and drink of the Lord's table we will be edified and unified and reminded of the astonishing truths of the Gospel.

What I want to do this morning is look at the significance of the Lord's Supper, beginning with the Passover in the Old Testament and then the institution of the Lord's Supper in Luke 22 (also recorded in Matthew and Mark and 1 Corinthians 11) and concluding with the Marriage Supper of the Lamb which is spoken of in Revelation 19. This will give us the big picture of what this meal means, and I'll make three points about the significance of it. Then next week we'll turn to 1 Corinthians 11 where there are some specific instructions and warnings about how to eat and drink in a worthy manner.

Let's begin, then, in Exodus 12:1-13 where we read of the Passover. The Israelites were slaves in Egypt, and the Lord was about to deliver them. He had already inflicted Egypt with nine plagues, and He was preparing for the tenth and final plague.

- 1 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt,
- 2 "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you.
- 3 Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household.
- 4 And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb.
- 5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats,
- 6 and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when

the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

7 “Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

8 They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.

9 Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts.

10 And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn.

11 In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord’s Passover.

12 For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the Lord.

13 The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

What an amazing event this was! God was about to demonstrate His sovereign power over Egypt by striking down all the firstborn in the land. God’s claim on the firstborn signifies His claim on the whole people. Everything and everyone belongs to the Lord, and He will do as He pleases. And in this situation He chose to severely punish the people of Egypt for their wickedness. What we also see here, though, is that the Egyptians were not the only ones who deserved punishment. The Israelites deserved punishment, too. They were sinners. They had wicked hearts. And they deserved to have their firstborn killed as well. This is an important point for all of us to realize, that we all deserve God’s wrath because of our sin. You may read this account and question what the Egyptians did to deserve God’s wrath. And the answer is: that’s exactly what each and every one of us deserves from God. We deserve to die and to be separated from God’s presence for ever and ever because we have rebelled against Him and dishonored His Holy Name.

But look at the provision the Lord made for His chosen people. He appointed a substitute, and the substitute was a lamb without blemish (verse 5). The lamb was killed, and its blood was put on the doorposts and lintel of the house so that when the Lord saw the blood He would divert His wrath. The lamb died in the place of the people. In the Passover God demonstrated His *justice* by showing His people that sin deserves death. And He also demonstrated His *grace* by providing for them a substitute.

Israel was to continue to celebrate the Passover meal each year as a memorial of their deliverance from Egypt. Each year they would be reminded of God's power to save—God's power that delivered them from slavery. And as they killed the lamb they would experience in a very graphic way the seriousness of sin, and they would also be pointed to the coming Messiah who would be the ultimate and final Passover Lamb.

When we come to the New Testament we hear John the Baptist say of Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). And Paul writes in 1 Cor 5:7 that "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." This is all part of the rich background that reveals the significance of the Lord's Supper. For it's no coincidence that Jesus instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper when He was eating the Passover meal with His disciples. This brings us to Luke 22:7-23.

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.

8 So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it."

9 They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?"

10 He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters

11 and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'

12 And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there."

13 And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

14 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him.

15 And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

16 For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves.

18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

21 But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.

22 For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”

23 And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

I. The Lord’s Supper is a Memorial of Christ’s Death for Us

As the Israelites observed the Passover each year as a memorial of God’s saving power, so we celebrate the Lord’s Supper as a memorial of the salvation we have in Christ. And as the Passover meal was a vivid reminder that the lamb died in the place of the people, so the Lord’s Supper proclaims the glorious truth that Christ died for us. Notice what Jesus said about the bread and the cup, which represent His body and blood. In verse 19, “This is my body, *which is given for you.*” And in verse 20, “This cup *that is poured out for you* is the new covenant in my blood.” What Jesus is describing here is at the very heart of the Gospel. It’s the Good News that He died in our place. This is what the Passover foreshadowed, and it is what Jesus fulfilled in His death on the cross.

Therefore, when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, one of things we’re doing is proclaiming this Gospel message that Jesus died in our place. In 1 Corinthians 11, the passage we’ll study next week, it says “as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” So when we take the piece of bread and the cup of juice, we are proclaiming the Gospel, to ourselves and to any unbelievers who may be among us. We are proclaiming in a tangible way the fact that Jesus offered Himself as the Passover Lamb to be slain on behalf of the people. He was killed, and His blood covers us, so that when God sees the blood His wrath is turned away.

Many people want to avoid this talk of blood and wrath, but it is at the very core of the Christian faith. It’s at the very core of what the Bible teaches about God’s plan of redemption. If we’re going to understand the Good News, we first have to acknowledge the terrible news that we are wretched sinners. And we have to understand that God hates sin. And He *must* hate sin, otherwise He would not be holy or just. So if you’re here this morning and you’re wondering why God would ever be angry with you, you need to spend some time considering who God is. And you also need to spend some time considering the nature of your own heart. None of us are good people. We might try to cover up our depravity in various ways, but deep down in our hearts we all have wicked thoughts and attitudes. For these many sins we deserve God’s wrath. And if you are not in Christ, you will experience that

wrath for eternity in hell. But for those who trust in Christ, for those who cherish what the Passover pointed to and what the Lord's Supper symbolizes, for those who admit their sin and their need for a Savior, they are covered by the blood of Jesus and declared righteous in God's sight.

This is the Gospel, brothers and sisters. We proclaim it to the unbelieving world around us, and we proclaim it to ourselves as well because the Gospel is not just for unbelievers, but for believers. We need to meditate on these truths. We need to sing of these truths. We need to experience these truths in the ordinances, so that we will always remember that Jesus died for us. When you're discouraged and depressed because of your own sin, remember that Jesus' blood covers those sins. When you're overwhelmed by the trials and demands of life, remember that Jesus' death has purchased for you eternal life. We just sang "The Solid Rock," which is a great way to preach these things to our own souls when we are tempted to despair. "My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus' *blood* and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus' name. His oath, His covenant, His *blood*, support me in the whelming flood. When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay. When He shall come with trumpet sound, O may I then in Him be found. Dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne." Let us never ignore the precious blood of Jesus. His blood is our life. The only reason we are not destroyed is because His blood covers us. So when we eat and drink of the Lord's Supper we remember that Christ died in our place.

II. The Lord's Supper is a sign of the New Covenant

Jesus says in verse 20, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." Last week I read the new covenant passage in Jeremiah 31 to make the point that in the new covenant people of God all will know God. The new covenant community is not a group of believers and their unbelieving children, but a community made up entirely of believers. And that's why we don't baptize infants. We baptize individuals, not when they're born physically, but when they're born spiritually—when they're born again. Jesus' statement here in Luke 22 shows us that it is His blood that ushers in the new covenant. Let me read that passage from Jeremiah 31 again for us.

31 "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,

32 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of

Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord.

33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

34 And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Notice the amazing promises here, and consider them in light of the fact that it was Jesus' blood that purchased these benefits for us. The Lord says in verse 33, "I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts." This is an amazing promise, because unlike the old covenant law, which was written on tablets and scrolls, this new covenant law is written on our hearts. It's not an external duty, but it's an internal change that God brings about so that we delight to do what we ought to do. He changes our hearts, and this undeserved blessing is rooted in the blood of Jesus. There's also the great covenantal promise that God will be our God and we will be His people. This speaks of the intimacy of fellowship that we have with God, something that would never be possible apart from Christ. This is possible because of the forgiveness that is mentioned at the end of verse 34, "I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Again, all of this is purchased by the blood of Jesus, and it is signified in the cup of the Lord's Supper. "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

III. The Lord's Supper is a Pointer to our Eternal Fellowship with the Lamb

So far, we've seen the significance of the Lord's Supper in His death for us, and as a sign of the new covenant. Finally, I want to look at how the Lord's Supper also points to the future. It is a fulfillment of what the Passover pointed toward, and it signifies the inauguration of the new covenant, and it also points us to our eternal fellowship with the Lamb. We see this, first of all, in Jesus' statement in verse 16, "I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And again in verse 18, "I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." Jesus is alluding to the future consummation of the kingdom of God. This hasn't happened yet. Jesus has already ushered in the kingdom, but it is not yet here in its fullness. The old age remains. But when He comes again He will defeat all of His enemies, and He will bring His people to

glory, where there will be eternal rejoicing. This is how it is described in Revelation 19:6-9.

6 Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.

7 Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

8 it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

9 And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”

Meals are very important in the Bible. They represent fellowship. We experience this in daily lives. A family sits to eat together on a regular basis, and it is a means of bonding that family together. On Thanksgiving, which we celebrated just over a week ago, we sit down with extended family and friends, and we share a meal together. When you want to get together with a friend, or when you want to do something special with your spouse or your family, it will often involve a meal. God made us this way. Food brings us together. It brings us into fellowship with one another, and it is also used to symbolize our fellowship with God. The Passover meal is an example of this—a sacred meal to celebrate God’s power and deliverance. Later in the book of Exodus, after God gave the Israelites the Ten Commandments, “Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel . . . they beheld God, and ate and drank” (Exodus 24: 9, 11). There was a meal in the presence of God that marked the sealing of that covenant. Also in Deuteronomy 14 the people are instructed to give a tithe (ten percent) of their crops and herd and flock: “And before the Lord your God, in the place that he will choose, to make his name dwell there, you shall eat the tithe of your grain, of your wine, and of your oil, and the firstborn of your heard and flock, that you may learn to fear the Lord your God always.” Then a few verses later, “And you shall eat there before the Lord your God and rejoice, you and your household” (Deuteronomy 14:23, 26). Again, eating a meal in the presence of the Lord.

In our celebration of the Lord’s Supper we eat a meal in the presence of the Lord. We celebrate His power and deliverance. We rejoice that the blood of the Lamb has covered our sins. And we look forward to the wedding supper of the Lamb, where we will eat and drink in the presence of the Lord forever. We can

celebrate that we now have fellowship with God. We are no longer His enemies, but His friends. We have peace with God and can enter His presence. And we can look forward to that day when we will enter His presence unhindered by sin or sadness or sickness—when we will experience the full delight of fellowship with God. Brothers and sisters, this is what it's all about! This is the point of everything else. This is why forgiveness is such good news. This is why Jesus' substitutionary death for us is such a glorious reality—because it achieves for us fellowship with the Triune God. Have you ever asked yourself the question: Why am I glad that I'm forgiven? Why am I glad that Jesus died for my sin? The reason for our rejoicing is that we are now no longer enemies of God, but we have peace with Him. We have fellowship with Him. This is why forgiveness is so great, because it brings us to God.

So as you think about the Lord's Supper, and as we eat and drink of the Lord's Supper together as a congregation, let us cherish these things that the Lord's Supper represents. It is a memorial of Christ's death for us. It is a sign of the new covenant. And it is a pointer to our eternal fellowship with the Lamb. Next week we'll look at some other aspects of the Lord's Supper that we learn in 1 Corinthians 11. My hope this morning is that we will be impressed with the rich symbolism and significance of this meal. It is a meal that reminds us vividly of Jesus' broken body and shed blood, the ultimate Passover Lamb, whose blood covers our sin and turns God's wrath away from us. It is a meal that signifies the amazing blessings of the new covenant. And it is a meal that should cause us to celebrate in anticipation of the wedding supper of the Lamb.