

Exodus 12:1-14
Second Baptist Lincoln, NE
Sept. 5, 2009
Pastor Steve Wisthoff

Remembering (Slide 1)

- ¹ The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt,
- ² "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.
- ³ Tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household.
- ⁴ If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat.
- ⁵ The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats.
- ⁶ Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.
- ⁷ Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs.
- ⁸ That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast.
- ⁹ Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire--head, legs and inner parts.
- ¹⁰ Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it.
- ¹¹ This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the LORD's Passover.
- ¹² "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD.
- ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.
- ¹⁴ "This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD--a lasting ordinance.

Let me try a brief quiz with you. I will give the date and you give the holiday. **July 4, Dec. 25, November 11, Dec. 7, June 6, Sept 11.** These are all days of remembrance that we are made aware of each year when those dates arrive.

How about this one: A celebration of remembrance that begins on the full moon after the vernal equinox. **PASSOVER.** It was that celebration of remembrance that Jesus and his disciples made preparation for and then practiced in the upper room just before his arrest and crucifixion.

This morning as we come to the table, I believe it is important that we understand communion or the Lord's Supper for what it really is. It is the fulfillment and culmination of centuries of the Jewish celebration of Passover. The words that Jesus spoke that night in the upper room were strange words to the disciples, but promising and fulfilling words to us. Passover was instituted by YAHWEH (God) as a way for the Israelite people to remember the goodness and mercy of the LORD. For 400 years, they had been enslaved in Egypt doing hard, backbreaking work under the Egyptian Pharaoh. God raised up Moses to become their emancipator and leader. After numerous divinely inspired warnings by Moses to Pharaoh and a series of plagues designed to cause Pharaoh to cave to Moses' request, God finally leveled the worst and most devastating plague – the death of the firstborn of all the Egyptians.

This plague finally seemed to break the back of Pharaoh and his grip on the Israelite people. God had shown the people ten plagues or ten miracles – and he wanted them to be able to recall this miraculous rescue. There would be times in the future when they would need to recall the goodness of God. They would need to remember the power of God when they were overrun by the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks and the Romans. Also, they would need to remember the Lord in later times when they experienced prejudice and persecution under European laws of Stalin and Hitler. The Passover became their pivotal point, their point of reference when they KNEW that God had rescued and provided for them.

So God established this date of remembrance as a way for the people to find their way back to the very source of their existence as a people. They were formed as a PEOPLE during a period of slavery, but they were established as a NATION when God released them from their bondage and sent them on a journey toward the Promised Land.

Each year as Jewish families would gather in remembrance for the Seder meal, the children might ask about the meaning of the meal. Look at verse 26: ²⁶ **And when your children ask you, 'What does this ceremony mean to you?'**
²⁷ **then tell them, 'It is the Passover sacrifice to the LORD, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.'**"

Even today when families gather at the Seder table, the children ask four questions: (1.) "Why is it that on all other nights during the year we eat either bread or matzoh, but on this night we eat only matzah?" (2.) "Why is it that on all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs, but on this night we eat only bitter herbs?" (3.) "Why is it that on all other nights we do not dip our herbs even once, but on this night we dip them twice?" and (4.) "Why is it that on all other nights we eat either sitting or reclining, but on this night we eat in a reclining position?"

Each of these questions asked by one of the children at the Seder table is the result of these verses in Exodus 12 saying that the children will always wonder about the meaning of that night. It is the responsibility of the adults to share their knowledge and pass it from generation to generation.

The TABLE.

So Jesus and his disciples came together not to celebrate the Lord's Supper. They didn't have communion in mind. The term "Last Supper" was a later identification given to the meal Jesus had with his disciples. Jesus simply did as all good Jewish men did, he celebrated the Seder. His family happened to be those who he selected as his disciples. And on that night, one of them would betray him and another would later deny he even knew Jesus. But as Jesus waded into the heavy symbolism of the Seder and the Passover theme of God releasing the Israelite people, Jesus inserted fulfilling words to his disciples. "This is MY body broken for you...This is the CUP of the new covenant, my blood that was shed for the remission of sin." We hear him say, "As often as you do this, you do it in remembrance of ME."

Imagine what the disciples might have thought. Do you think it was beginning to make some sense to them? His DEATH that he spoke of earlier. They certainly understood the necessity of an unblemished lamb. In the hours and days ahead, they would understand fully that JESUS, their master, teacher and Lord was that unblemished lamb that came so that the whole world would experience the passing over of the angel of death and sin that had corrupted the world.

This table is rich with meaning. We gather here each month so that we can see a picture and a reminder of the greatest sacrifice known to humankind.

The result of Christ's death is that we have been set free. Let's celebrate that freedom today. You do not have to be a member of this church to receive the Lord's supper because this is not a BAPTIST table, it is the Lord's table. You just have to know what this represents and that Jesus has taken away your sin. If you have not received Christ as your savior, then I doubt this table really means very much. There is nothing magical about the Lord's table. Receiving the elements do not take away your sin, but it reminds us of the one who CAN take away our sin. While it is not magical, there is certainly something mystical and powerful. It serves as the most significant reminder of God's love for his people.