

Christ of the Passover

INTRO: Good morning! Welcome to our celebration of our Savior's resurrection! That is what Easter is - a celebration because Jesus did what no one in history ever did - He conquered death. Not only did He do it for Himself, but He broke the power of sin, death and hell for mankind as well - something we could have never done on our own.

TRAN: This morning we are going to do things a little bit differently. Often times we talk from passages about the Last Supper and move toward the cross and the resurrection. Or we will take passages about the resurrection and look back to Jesus death on the cross.

Today I want to start with the Last Supper, and work our way backward. Back from the upper room to the roots of the passover. Back from the NT to the OT. For most Easter sermons this is a little less than conventional, but I think it will prove beneficial for all of us to see how great our God is in weaving together throughout time THE story for the the ages.

So turn in your Bibles to Luke 22:14-23. If you do not have a Bible of your own I encourage you to follow along in the black Bible that will be in the pew in front of you. Also, if you don't have your own Bible, feel free to take that Bible home as a gift from us. We want everyone to have a readable copy of God's Word.

Luke 22:14-23

I. The Last Supper

- A. If you have spent much time around church, you know the Lord's Supper, or the Last Supper - we have a copy of Davinci's painting downstairs
- B. And for most Christians today, we know that this is the place where Jesus instituted communion
 1. Depending on your background you might call it communion, the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist
 2. You might celebrate it weekly at your church, monthly or some churches celebrate it annually
- C. The sad part is that most of us do not know the rich background that all of this is pointing back at, which makes what is to come so lavish and extraordinary that it is hard to take it all in
- D. So let's begin with the basics
 1. The Last Supper was a celebration of Passover
 - a) The Passover was celebrated annually for the Jews hand in hand with the Feast of Unleavened Bread

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2. The elements of the Passover celebration and the ceremony itself lend so much to the richness of what communion means - so this is our next step stepping backwards - looking at the Passover celebration

II. Passover

- A. Passover began in the OT as a means of remembrance of what God did for Israel to get them out of Egypt
 1. As I walk through the Passover celebration, I will take the time to point you forward again to what these things symbolize for Christians
 2. Not everything in the Passover has the same level of meaning, and some do not have direct correspondence to the Christian life
 - a) So I will only point out some of the major symbols along the way
 - b) And I will NOT try to make something fit that does not fit
- B. The feast itself marks a new year for the Israelites and a new beginning
 1. Exodus 12:1-2 “The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, “This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year.”
 2. Now, because of what Passover celebrates, the passing over of the judgment of death when the angel saw the blood covering the doorposts of the family’s home
 - a) The correspondence for us can be found in 2 Corinthians 5:17 “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”
 - b) Passover was a reminder every year of the newness of life - of the fact that they were covered by the blood of the lamb just as we are covered by Christ’s blood, and there is new life in Christ
- C. In that first month of the year, on the tenth day they were to take a year old male lamb into their home and inspect it carefully to make sure there was no blemishes or defects
 1. Part of the reason for this was so that they would come to care for the lamb - that there would be a sense of sacrifice and sorrow for what is being given up
 2. Part of the reason points forward to Christ - our Passover Lamb, as Paul calls Him
 - a) Think about it, Jesus was inspected for hours after His arrest by Pilate, Herod, Annas, and Caiaphas
 - b) All of them looking for an excuse to execute Him - some flaw, some blemish which would determine guilt
 - c) They all failed to find one thing wrong with Him
 3. And think of this, each one of us, in our own ways, have inspected Jesus Christ

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- a) Some of us took long looks trying to find fault, looking for a reason not to believe
 - b) Some of us want to find something wrong so we can discount this religion thing and not feel guilty
 - c) Some of us took one look at Jesus and dove right into His arms
 - d) But all of us inspected Jesus in some way, or perhaps are inspecting Jesus even now
- D. Exodus 12:6 “Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the members of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.”
- 1. All of the members of God’s people, Israel were to participate
 - 2. The fact is, that all people that want to be a part of God’s people on this side of the cross have to come to God through Jesus Christ
 - a) John 14:6 “I am THE way, THE truth, and THE Life. NO ONE comes to the Father except through Me.”
 - b) That’s Jesus words to us - if we want to be a part of the community of faith, we come through Him
- E. Exodus 12:7 “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.”
- 1. John the Baptist put it best when he announced “Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.”
 - a) He could have called Jesus by any of His titles - Behold the Messiah, The King of kings, the Lord of Lords etc.
 - b) But He announced Jesus as the Lamb of God
 - 2. Romans 5:9 “Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him”
 - a) Justified is a fancy term used in church, stolen from the courtroom that means “declared not guilty”
 - b) We were declared not guilty because of His blood
 - 3. When we trust in what Jesus did for us to remove our sins, we are in a real sense covered by His blood (a shield)
 - a) When God the Father looks at us He sees the blood of Christ, or Christ’s righteousness on us
 - b) God’s wrath will never again come for us because Jesus absorbed God’s wrath for our sin on the cross
- F. Exodus 12:14 “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.”
- 1. Passover was a remembrance of what God was about to do for His people to save them

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2. Luke 22:19 “And he took 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.”
3. How Jesus changed the Passover celebration at the Last Supper was to remain as a remembrance for His people of what He was about to do to save them
4. Which brings me to our next item to cover here - how was this Passover celebration with the disciples different from any normal celebration - what changes did Jesus make?

III. That special Passover celebration

- A. Again, there are some other cool symbolism in the Passover ceremony that I won't dig into here: like the very first thing that happened
 1. A woman would light the candles for the Passover meal
 2. Women did almost nothing in that culture - especially in terms of anything significant related to the ceremonies of faith - yet a woman was to light the candles. Why?
 3. Glad you asked - A completed Jew would tell you it symbolizes Mary bringing the Light of the World into the world
 - a) This is not a significant thing in what we are looking at today, but there are many little gems in the ceremony if you take the time to read and study a little
 - b) I have a few books I can recommend or lend if anyone is interested
- B. Please understand that I am not a Jewish person. I am a Gentile that has studied this topic
 1. So while I am “in the know” I will still not describe this the same way a Jewish believer or completed Jew would; or with the same passion
- C. There are four cups that are a part of the Passover Seder
 1. The cups come from Exodus 6:6-7 (turn there, p. 61)
 2. The first cup is the cup of Sanctification - “I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians...”
 - a) I am taking you out
 - b) I am setting you apart
 - c) This cup was the opening of the Seder and the sanctifying of the meal
 3. The second cup was the cup of plagues - “I will free you from being slaves...”
 - a) The freedom came through plagues that God used to loosen Pharaoh's grip on Israel
 - b) The second cup was not drunk, it was used to drip droplets of wine onto a white plate, naming all ten plagues as a reminder

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- c) The other reminder came in the visual of the red droplets on the white plate - a reminder of the blood shed to protect them
- 4. The third cup was the cup of redemption - "I will redeem" - this is the cup that gathers most of our attention - and we will come back to it
- 5. The last cup was the cup of praise - "I will take you as my own people"
 - a) It was also known as the cup of acceptance
 - b) Obvious, as God is taking them as His own people
- D. Before we go into an explanation of the third cup and where it was in the Seder ceremony I have to explain the bread of the meal as well
 - 1. The bread looked much like this - a lot like pita bread in Jesus day
 - 2. At the beginning of the meal, the head of the family (father) would take three pieces of the bread and place them into a special bag that had three separate compartments
 - a) At one point during the Seder the second piece of bread is taken out, broken in half, the smaller piece returned to the bag, the larger piece wrapped in white cloth and hidden until the end of the meal
 - (1) The kids usually made a game of finding the Afikomen, as it was called
 - 3. Allow me to explain the significance and then we will get back to that third cup
 - a) The three pieces of bread placed in the bag is taken to represent the Trinity - Father, Son and Holy Spirit
 - b) Who is the second member of the Trinity - Jesus Christ, the Son
 - c) When the second piece of bread is removed from the bag, it is broken, and the one piece wrapped in white cloth and hidden - representing: Jesus death and burial
 - d) Later in the meal that piece is brought back as a form of dessert
- E. The third cup and the Afikomen
 - 1. The Passover is famous for its four questions by the children regarding why this night is different than all other nights
 - a) All answers go back to the original Passover in Egypt
 - b) The questions and answers along with the story of the Exodus from Egypt are the beginning of the meal
 - 2. When the meal is done, the Afikomen is searched for, and when found, the father must redeem it from the child with silver
 - a) Remember that this is the second piece of bread in the bag that represents the second Person of the Trinity - Jesus Christ
 - b) This piece of bread was broken
 - 3. So now, when Jesus offers up this piece of bread at the Seder earlier in the meal to create the Afikomen, He changes the words just a bit

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- a) He says, this is my body which was broken for you
 - b) But before Jesus said that, Scripture records that Jesus blessed it
 - (1) The blessings performed at Passover Seders have not changed in millennia, according to one Jewish source I read
 - (2) So the chances are, even though the words were not recorded in the NT, Jesus probably used the traditional blessing
 - (a) In fact, support for that idea is strengthened by the fact that the primary readers of the original gospels were Jewish
 - (b) They did not need to hear the blessing unless it was different because they knew the blessing
 - (3) Sadly, most of us as Christians in the 21st century do not know the blessing that Jesus said, and yet it has a beautiful meaning
 - (4) Ready?
 - (a) “Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth.”
 - (b) THEN Jesus says “This is my body”
 - (5) Do you get it?
 - (a) “Hey disciples. God has brought forth bread from the earth for centuries. I know you are worried about what is to come, but this bread, my body, will come forth from the earth as well.”
 - (b) Jesus, at the Last Supper, just predicted His resurrection, in a veiled manner
4. Let’s move on to the cup - it is called the cup of redemption
- a) There is no mistake or coincidence that this was the cup Jesus used to institute communion
 - b) There was no coincidence that Jesus used this cup to make the statement “This is the New Covenant in my blood.”
 - c) Jesus point was very clear in using this cup, the cup of Redemption
 - (1) I will be the Redeemer
 - (2) It will be my blood that brings forgiveness of sins
 - (3) No longer do you have to look backward at the Passover and the salvation that God provided there
 - (4) No longer do you have to look forward for the Messiah to come and save
 - (5) I will save you, I will provide salvation in what is about to happen this very night (Which also gives you an interesting twist on the “Why is this night different from other nights” questions.)
 - d) I always get a kick out of people that want to play down the OT or the Jewish roots of the Christian faith
 - (1) We can’t understand these things apart from the OT

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(2) We are lost in our own faith when we miss out on the Jewish roots of the Christian faith

F. One last thing to look at before I tie all of this together - the original Passover

IV. The Original Passover

A. In Exodus 12, where we have been reading, the Israelites were preparing to be released from captivity

1. They had been slaves 400 years, and God said, "Enough is enough"
2. God sent ten plagues on Egypt to loosen Pharaoh's grip - but he was a very stubborn man
3. The final plague was the worst
 - a) God did not allow some of the plagues to affect His people however, this plague would
 - b) All of Israel had to trust in what God was about to do, and follow the commands that instituted Passover
 - c) The final plague was the death of the first born child - and it would affect anyone not covered by the blood of the lamb
4. Israel knew they had to cover their doorposts with the blood of the lamb to be protected and have the angel pass over their house

B. It was this event in Exodus 12 that pointed forward to God's ultimate redemption of His people from sin

1. Exodus was a temporary redemption
2. The redemption from Egypt solved Israel's problem of the moment
 - a) Yes, their problem was suffering at the hand of an oppressive task master
 - b) Their problem was being slaves and not having freedom
 - c) But these things only point to the bigger picture

V. The bigger picture

A. In the bigger picture we are slaves - slaves to sin - we are the ones being oppressed

1. The thing is many of us have lived our lives so long as slaves to sin that we don't even realize that we are hopelessly trapped
 - a) We think this is normal
 - b) And if we do get the hint that something is amiss, we do what society has championed for years - we try to marshal our resources to battle this ogre that we have identified as the problem
 - c) I'm going to let you in on a little secret
 - (1) The problem is not the ogre
 - (2) The problem is the idea that we think we can overcome the ogre without help

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- (a) That we are capable of this change and that we can defeat it
- (b) Society's philosophy at its best: I am man, hear me roar!
- 2. All of us instinctively know that something is not right in this world - our problem is we think we can fix it
- B. So here we are, slaves to sin, and God sees this and knows that we can't fix our own troubles - so God steps in like He did for Israel
 - 1. Only this time He wants to take care of the ultimate problem
 - a) He does not want to relieve the temporary problem we might face, only to have something else take its place
 - (1) He doesn't want to relieve the alcoholism, or the sex addiction, or the rage issue, or the domestic violence that we might be facing
 - (2) He wants to grab the root of it all, and kill it off for all time
 - 2. So God sends Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world
 - a) Jesus dies on that cross that we hear so often about at Easter time to pay for our sins
 - (1) You see Jesus led the life we never could - having never sinned - a perfect spotless lamb
 - (2) He gave up His life to take on our sin, and then He gives us His righteousness
 - (a) So when we put our faith in what Jesus did for us to solve our sin problem, all God the Father sees when He looks at us is the righteousness of Christ
 - (b) Never again do we face the wrath of God for our sin because Jesus absorbed God's wrath for us
 - (3) Which by the way, that is the scandal of the gospel
 - (a) Jesus takes all the punishment
 - (b) We get off "scott free"
 - (4) But for any normal person, when they understand what Jesus did, it motivates them to want to give back
 - (a) To give time and energy and life back to God who did what we could never do
 - b) Now, what I am not saying is that if you trust in Jesus all your struggles with sin will go away
 - (1) That is a lie, and anyone who tells you that is misinformed
 - (2) Your struggles may get more intense because you just put a target on your back for Satan
 - (3) What I am saying, is that when you do trust and follow Jesus, you now have been set free from having to sin

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- (a) You now have a choice to choose the righteous life God designed you for
 - (b) And I promise you will not always choose it - you will mess up, but with Jesus there is continued forgiveness from our sins
- C. All those things we talked about with the passover, and the blood
- 1. When your sins are covered by the blood of Jesus, the wrath of God passes over you
 - 2. You are promised a place in God's kingdom and we know this because God gives the Holy Spirit as a deposit on that promise
 - 3. When you say "yes" to Jesus Christ, and "yes" to following Him, you are given some amazing gifts
- D. So all that is left is an honest evaluation of where you are
- 1. Maybe you are here and you know this is for you - you need Jesus love and forgiveness
 - 2. Maybe you feel too dirty, like you can't come to Him
 - a) To which I have to ask you, do you have to get cleaned up to take a bath?
 - b) It is in coming to Jesus, and He will do the cleaning
 - 3. Maybe you don't feel like you are all that bad off, but those things about trying on your own struck a chord and you know you need to lay down your pride and come to Him
 - 4. PRAYER