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# Banquet in the Wilderness: The Passover

## Exodus 12

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**Introduction** Over the next few weeks we are going to be spending some time contemplating the subject of food. Those who know me, know I love to eat. In fact, those who don't know me, know I love to eat. Few things dispense more pleasure in life than eating a bowl of vanilla ice cream at 10 o'clock at night during CSI Miami. We are not going to be tackling America's obesity problem. And while it would be very, very interesting, we are not going to exhaust what the Bible has to say about food in this study. Yet, what we will study ultimately will summarize what the Bible says about food and that summary may have something to say about our idolatrous propensity to not control food intake, especially at 10 o'clock at night.

Over the next few weeks on Sunday evenings we are going to be taking a look at what the scriptures tell us about the Lord's Table. We celebrate the Lord's Table 4 or 5 times a year here at the Chapel. Yet, how many of us have stopped to think about \*why\* we celebrate the Lord's Table the way we do, or even more fundamental, \*why\* we celebrate the Lord's Table at all. Maybe we observe the table because we're obeying Christ and Christ said we should do it. And maybe we observe the table because we're supposed to remember Christ's death. Is that all there is to the Lord's Table?

So, tonight we are going to look at the Passover; next week, the Last Supper; then, the Lord's Table; and finally, the marriage supper of the Lamb.

In my experience, I've come to believe that the Lord's Table is one of the most neglected practices in Christ's church today. There are various reasons for this, not the least of which I think has been an over-reaction to false teaching surrounding what Catholics call The Mass. The heresy of the Mass is certainly to be avoided. That false doctrine was at the heart of the Reformation, even though the reformers themselves couldn't agree over what the biblical alternative to the Mass was supposed to be. We will talk more about this in a couple of weeks when we consider the New Testament teaching on the table. But I think we must affirm that the Table, as it is understood by the New Testament, is one of the most important things we do as an assembled body of believers.

I know there is a school of thought out there that we shouldn't give the punch line away ahead of time in a thematic study like this, but I do think it would be best for us to peek ahead at where we are going with the Lord's Table. If we had to summarize what the scriptures say not only about food, but about the Lord's Table, it would not be found in those familiar texts we typically recite around the Lord's Table. Turn to John chapter 6. This isn't our main passage tonight. Nor will it be our main passage any other night in this series. But I think it is best to keep this passage in the backdrop of everything we say over the next few weeks. John 6 is the familiar story of the feeding of the five thousand. You'll recall that Christ's fed the five thousand and then the next day, the crowd who had been fed the day before comes looking for Jesus. Beginning with verse 25, this is what the word of God proclaims to us:

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, “Rabbi, when did you come here?” <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal.” <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, “What must we do, to be doing the works of God?” <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, “This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent.” <sup>30</sup> So they said to him, “Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?” <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’” <sup>32</sup> Jesus then said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.” <sup>34</sup> They said to him, “Sir, give us this bread always.” <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

We begin our study of the Lord’s table with where we will end because in considering what the Bible has to say about food and meals we must remember that this is the landing point. Ever since the garden, food has been a consistent ingredient in both man’s salvation and damnation. Food is both symbolic and symptomatic of sustenance and satisfaction, a sustenance and satisfaction that can only be found in Jesus Christ. Man cannot live by bread alone because Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life. Just as this crowd failed to really understand the significance of the miracle of loaves and fishes, if we do not see this throughout our study of the Lord’s Table we will miss the significance of it.

## Israel’s greatest moment

Turn in your Bibles to Exodus chapter 12. This is our text for the remainder of this evening.

The children played in hushed tones that night. Usually at this time of day, the excitement of supper time spilled over into boisterous and barefoot play in their simple Egyptian dwelling. But tonight was starkly different. There was no laughing. No horseplay. No loud talking. They played in their travel clothes. Momma and papa said very little. They were tense. Momma cried softly as she prepared the roasted meal over the fire. A sense of sadness hung over the home; only a couple of hours ago, lammie the family pet had lost its life. Papa already had explained why lammie was to be the family meal that night. And though it was for the best, the sense of loss only added to the anxious and nervous anticipation of what was about to change their lives forever.

This night is Israel’s greatest moment in 430 years. Indeed, those who numbered themselves among the descendents of Jacob stood on the precipice of history that night. Israel is poised for “The Great Departure”. Indeed what happened to this family and thousands like them that night ranks as one of the all-time momentous nights in human history. Before the night was over, millions of what came to be known as the children of Israel would take flight from everything they had ever known, including their oppression and misery as slaves to the greatest nation on earth. Before this night is out, the earth would be home to a brand new nation, instantaneously and miraculously birthed by a single event, an event beyond the

control of the new nation, no less. It is an event that not only births a new nation, but is so significant even the calendar will never be the same. There are so many compelling story lines and so much high drama in the twists and turns of the unfolding of this night, is it any wonder that this story, this tale, is embedded in the myth and legend of human sociology? The Great Departure is a story that transcends both history and people groups. Cecil B. DeMille couldn't have asked for a better plot line.

Yet, this is no tale. This is no myth. This is no legend. This is God acting and speaking in real time and real space. This is high drama because we have a God who is a God of the dramatic even as he redeems for himself a people. Already, God, in dramatic fashion, has showered Egypt with plagues aimed at embarrassing and invalidating its gods. God has orchestrated the public spectacles as he sets in motion his sovereign plan to deliver his people from Egypt. Moses and his brother Aaron have emerged as God's authoritative spokesmen against an obstinate Pharaoh who is bent on preserving the cheap slave labor fueling Egypt's economic engine even as he is at the same time systemically eradicating an entire people group through ethnic cleansing. Yet, the plagues had failed to change the genocidal Pharaoh's mind.

## God's great final act

God has one great final act that He himself will perform without the aid of Moses and Aaron. God's patience with Pharaoh and the Egyptians is at its end. God is going to act on Israel's behalf. He himself will change the will of Pharaoh; after all, it had been God who had hardened Pharaoh's will against His chosen people. At the beginning of this monumental epoch, Pharaoh claimed to have never heard of God. When this is done, God says in Exodus 14, Pharaoh will know that I AM is the One True God. Pharaoh had promised that he would not allow Israel to go. Before the night is over, he will be begging for Israel to go. God will deal a final, swift, devastating blow to the proud Egyptians and their gods, those false gods that were perversions of the One True God. Judgment will be executed and God's people will be liberated. Israel's beginning is Egypt's finality.

## A new event (Exodus 12:1-13)

And that is where we find ourselves this evening in Exodus 12. This is what God's Word proclaims to us:

<sup>1</sup> The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, <sup>2</sup> "This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> 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. <sup>5</sup> Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> "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. <sup>8</sup> They shall eat

the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it.<sup>9</sup> Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts.<sup>10</sup> And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn.<sup>11</sup> **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.<sup>12</sup> 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.**<sup>13</sup> 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.

God's final act in freeing his people from Egypt is accompanied by a new event that God institutes before the event actually takes place. The first thing we see is that Israel's rescue from Egypt anticipated in the Passover involves a new birth. Verse 2: this month will be the beginning of months. Israel's calendar will never be the same. What Israel will come to know as the night of Passover and the Exodus marks a new time frame. It is as if time had no history prior to this night. This is the first day of Israel's life.

We also see in the Passover a new sacrifice. There cannot be a new birth without a sacrifice. The sacrifice of the lamb is set over against the backdrop of the death of the firstborn of Egypt. An exchange must take place. In this instance, it's the life of a lamb without blemish in exchange for the life of the firstborn son (and we should hear echoes of a ram caught in a thicket while the firstborn son lays on the altar). In order for Israel's firstborn sons to live and accompany them out of Egypt, the lamb must die. God is going to deliver his people through the death of a lamb and the death of the firstborns.

And we see that the Passover involves a new meal. This sacrifice is going to give them sustenance for their great departure. The meal itself interprets the events of the night. The meal symbolizes, in the lamb meat and unleavened bread, Israel's salvation and Egypt's judgment. The exchange of a life for a life, in the lamb for the firstborn, provides Israel with sustenance for the departure and satisfaction in God as provider and protector of His people.

While Israel's participates in this new sacrifice and new meal, the entire Passover event is the great I AM's salvation of his people. Twice, Moses stops the narrative here with emphatic statements: It is the LORD's Passover. I AM the LORD. For Moses and the people he leads, there is no mistaking that this event will be vindication of God's promise at the burning bush: "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings,<sup>8</sup> and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians." This one who vindicates his people is none other than the great I AM of the burning bush. It is the I AM who acts on behalf of his people.

**The Passover is God's judgment of Egypt and its gods.** What is Israel's salvation is also Egypt's judgment. In the Passover, we see the parallel acts of love and justice in one event. The Passover is both a rescue and a reprobation. This action of God against Egypt isn't mere vengeance. God singles out the gods of Egypt even as he strikes down the firstborn. His aim isn't just the people, but their belief system. He will not only crush Pharaoh, but the

philosophy of the serpent acting out behind Pharaoh. Even as Israel eats and posts the blood on the doorposts, strongholds are being destroyed.

**The Passover sacrifice is God's protection of his people from judgment.** Notice the "I will's" in these verses. "I will pass through". "I will strike". "I will execute". The very I AM that appeared to Moses in a burning bush that was not consumed will himself consume the Egyptians. He will pass through the land. In chapter 12 he says he will go "in the midst of Egypt". This I AM, who the Egyptians thought was just another distant god, is going to descend from heaven and will himself walk up and down the streets of Egypt as a death angel. If ever there was a biblical precedent for the popular notion of a grim reaper, it belongs to this night.

**The Passover is a preparation for departure.** This is noted in the unleavened bread, which not only symbolizes purity in keeping with the lamb without blemish, but also can be baked and eaten in a hurry. Notice the language of verse 11: "you shall eat with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet". Do we not hear a faint whisper of Paul here? This new nation will soon be homeless. Even as they anticipate their redemption, they are pilgrims. This meal is pointing them forward to the desert and beyond. They eat as if they have already begun their journey. They are to set aside those weights that are so easily be-setting. Unlike Lot who tarried even as he was rescued in the midst of judgment, Israel will not tarry when God strikes Egypt. Their sights are not to be on their current surrounding because those surroundings are fading away under God's judgment. Their belts are fastened and their feet are shod with sandals because they have their eyes on the land flowing with milk and honey.

## A new festival (Exodus 12:14-20)

Not only does God prescribe the original Passover, but also a festival in conjunction with subsequent Passovers. This entire section points forward to another day, and the presumption here as Moses delivers it to the people, is that there will be another day. This section is remarkable in that judgment and salvation have not yet occurred. Verse 14 of chapter 12:

<sup>14</sup> "**This day** shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as **a feast** to the LORD; throughout your generations, **as a statute forever**, you shall keep it as a feast.

<sup>15</sup> Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall **remove leaven out of your houses**, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. <sup>16</sup> On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day **a holy assembly**. **No work** shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. <sup>17</sup> And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, **as a statute forever**. <sup>18</sup> In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. <sup>19</sup> For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, **whether he is a sojourner** or a native of the land. <sup>20</sup> You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread."

We are not going to spend a lot of time parking on this section. But notice a couple of things about this part of the passover.

**The Passover is a memorial.** Even though the original Passover anticipated and precipitated the rescue from Egypt, subsequent Passovers were to be re-enactments of the original. The atonement sacrifice of a lamb without blemish would be made. The unleavened bread would be eaten.

**The Passover is for future generations.** Future Passovers were considered participation in the past event. More on that aspect is to follow from Moses.

**The Passover is a feast.** Here we begin to see the commemorative aspects of the Passover. As Israel journeys toward the land flowing with milk and honey, the nation will anticipate the blessings and benefits of that land in the Passover feast. Unlike the original Passover in which there is anxiety and tense anticipation of what is about to happen, subsequent Passovers will be filled with joyful sounds, music, dancing, and the laughter of children. There will be abundant food to go along with the unleavened bread. The Passover will be a banquet in the wilderness, a memorial of God's faithfulness in acting on behalf of his people in the sacrifice and rescue, a reminder that their sustenance and satisfaction is the Great I AM who provided their salvation, and a longing for the new garden of God on the other side of the Jordan.

**The Passover is a purification.** Both the unleavened bread and the lamb without blemish are a perpetual reminder to Israel that God's standard for right relationship is perfection and purity. The hyssop used to smear the blood on the doorposts also represents cleansing. This is a reminder that God is a holy God and there is a perfect standard of righteousness even the Israelites were to acknowledge.

**The Passover is covenantal.** The language used here in denoting the penalty if this part of God's command is not followed correctly is the same language used in circumcision. This is covenantal language. To be "cut off" is to be cut off from all of God's covenant promises and blessings. To be "cut off" is to suffer the same judgment that was inflicted on the firstborn of Egypt who were cut off on the original Passover night.

**The Passover is corporate.** Notice the word "assembly". Not only is the Passover a family matter, it is an event that cannot be disconnected from the covenant community. No Israelite was an island. When God viewed Israel's participation in the passover, he viewed them as an entire nation, an assembled and called out group. Israel is God's corporate son called out from Egypt. God's salvation of his people was complete and total, with no one left behind. The Passover embeds and encodes the very origins of God's people in their collective commemoration and festival.

**The Passover is rest.** No work was to be done during the entire seven day event begun by the Passover. This was an extended Sabbath pointing to the eventual rest in the land flowing with milk and honey. Rest reinforces the idea with Israel that God is to be their satisfaction and sustenance.

**The Passover is eternal.** Subsequent Passovers were never to end. They were to be perpetual. The Passover was for forever. This places the Passover squarely within the promises made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that he would make of them a people forever.

The Passover, as it is perpetual, points to those things that lie outside of time and space. The Passover is evidence of things not seen. The perpetual Passover presumes that there forever will be a people to celebrate it.

**The Passover is for all people groups.** What an interesting phrase thrown into the middle of these instructions. “Whether he is a sojourner” presumes that there will be sojourners in God’s midst. And indeed, there is an anticipation that there will be foreigners who partake in the Passover because there are instructions on how to include foreigners in the Passover at the end of this chapter. This accommodation for sojourners or foreigners serves a couple of functions. First of all, it serves notice to Israel that others are welcome at the banquet. Israel is to keep its pride in check by taking notice of those outside of the ethnic circle who have embraced the One True God and have placed themselves under the terms of the covenant. And Secondly, this phrase reminds Israel that the conditions and terms of this atoning sacrifice extend beyond the ethnic boundaries of the newly formed nation and the Jewish people group. All men are in need of the sacrifice, or else they die, just like the Egyptian firstborns.

## A new statute (Exodus 12:21-28)

So, Moses and Aaron, those prophetic messengers of God who had been driven out of Pharaoh’s presence take God’s directives to the people. Verse 21:

<sup>21</sup> Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, “Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. <sup>22</sup> Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. <sup>23</sup> For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow **the destroyer** to enter your houses to strike you. <sup>24</sup> You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. <sup>25</sup> And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. <sup>26</sup> **And when your children say to you,** ‘What do you mean by this service?’ <sup>27</sup> you shall say, ‘**It is the sacrifice of the LORD’s Passover**, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.’” And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. <sup>28</sup> Then **the people of Israel went and did so**; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

**The Passover is an “ark” of protection.** No one was allowed to leave the house and only those who were in the house would be protected. The house was their “ark” of protection. God himself would protect his people even as God’s poured out his fury on the Egyptians. This new people that will be birthed this night is a people on whom God’s favor rests.

**The Passover is Israel’s birthright.** This feast and the event it commemorates is for all posterity. Israel was to observe this as a rite, or ritual, that was to be passed on to generation after generation after generation forever. The covenantal language here parallels that of a birthright. That future “sons” will be commemorating the Passover is testament to God’s faithfulness to his covenant promises that Abraham’s seed will be as numerous as the stars.

**The Passover is an exchange of slavery for voluntary service.** Moses' use of the word service in verses 25 and 26 is intentional. The Passover is Israel's liberation from slavery. Yet, in future generations, the Passover sacrifice and festival is a service rendered to the Lord. One form of bondage is replaced by volunteer service.

**The Passover is participation in a past event.** The future Passovers would forever be tied to the original Passover. And it goes beyond mere theme or memorial. Fathers are given responsibility to pass the story along to their sons so that what God does on Israel's behalf is never forgotten. And passing along the story takes on some very specific language. Look at the language used here: It says that the significance of the Passover is that God spared **\*our\*** houses. God goes into further detail about this with Moses in chapter 13. The fact that God says it twice speaks to the significance of this aspect of the Passover. Listen to what he says in chapter 13, not only in relation to the Passover, but the related consecration of firstborns:

<sup>8</sup> You shall tell your son on that day, 'It is because of what the LORD did for **me** when I came out of Egypt.'...<sup>14</sup> 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.'<sup>15</sup> 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... (verse 16) for by a strong hand the LORD brought **us** out of Egypt."

This language strikes us westerners as kind of odd. We do not think of history this way. In fact, we do all we can, as post-moderns, to remove ourselves from history by creating our own history as we go. Our history is self-made and because it is so, there is no need to find ourselves somewhere in the past. This is not the way God wanted Israel to think of their history. Israel's posterity was united in word and deed to its forerunners. In the Passover, Israel participated in the original Passover event. The fathers were to say to their sons, "As I partake in the Passover, I partake with those who ate in hushed voices with belts around their waists and their feet shod with sandals. When Israel was delivered, we were delivered. When God and his destroyer angel spared Israel judgment, they spared us judgment. The blood on the doorpost that appeased God's wrath for Israel is the blood that appeased God's wrath for us. Whatever happened to them, happened to us. When they left Egypt, we left Egypt. The parents exodus is the children's exodus. Israel's salvation is our salvation." There is a corporate solidarity in the Passover's redemptive history that transcends generations.

The banquet in the wilderness is to continue even after they are in the Promised Land. Generation after generation until forever are to actualize and participate in the great event in which God kept his promise to Jacob that he would bring a nation out of Egypt and back to the land. Those who are in the land will come to know the Exodus by experiencing the exodus through the slaughter of the lamb and the meal with unleavened bread. The Passover is their heritage. The Passover is their destiny.



## An Act of God (Exodus 12:29-51)

Having spelled out for Israel what they were to do, and Israel having responded in obedience and worship, the event occurs:

<sup>29</sup> At midnight the LORD struck down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sat on his throne to the firstborn of the captive who was in the dungeon, and all the firstborn of the livestock. <sup>30</sup> And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the Egyptians. And **there was a great cry in Egypt**, for there was not a house where someone was not dead. <sup>31</sup> Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, “Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as you have said. <sup>32</sup> Take your flocks and your herds, as you have said, and be gone, and bless me also!” <sup>33</sup> The Egyptians were urgent with the people to send them out of the land in haste. For they said, “We shall all be dead.” <sup>34</sup> So the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading bowls being bound up in their cloaks on their shoulders. <sup>35</sup> **The people of Israel had also done as Moses told them**, for they had asked the Egyptians for silver and gold jewelry and for clothing. <sup>36</sup> And the LORD had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have what they asked. Thus **they plundered the Egyptians**. <sup>37</sup> And **the people of Israel journeyed** from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides women and children. <sup>38</sup> A **mixed multitude** also went up with them, and very much livestock, both flocks and herds. <sup>39</sup> And they baked unleavened cakes 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. <sup>40</sup> The time that the people of Israel lived in Egypt was 430 years. <sup>41</sup> At the end of 430 years, **on that very day, all the hosts of the LORD** went out from the land of Egypt. <sup>42</sup> It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; **so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations...** (verse 50) <sup>50</sup> **All the people of Israel did just as the LORD commanded** Moses and Aaron. <sup>51</sup> And **on that very day** the LORD brought the people of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their hosts.

**The Passover is Israel’s exodus.** This section of chapter 12 that tells us what actually occurred that night is bookended before and after by the divine regulations concerning the Passover. Just as we see Judah at the head of the train leading his father Israel and their families down to Egypt to buy grain, now God leads his people out of Egypt toward home. In the event, God gives Israel a sacrifice and a meal. Israel cannot make the mistake of believing that the Passover was a mere addendum to the Exodus. The Passover is forever inseparable from God’s great act of delivering his people from enslaving Egypt. While it is the spectacular division of the Red Sea that has grabbed most of the headlines in the Exodus, it is the Passover sacrifice and meal that is embedded in the event for perpetual remembrance. Israel is to never forget where they were: Egypt. They are to never forget who they were: a house of slavery (13:14). They are never to forget Who delivered them from Egypt: The great I AM of the burning bush.

**The Passover is characterized by Israel’s obedient response.** Earlier we found that they bowed their heads and worshipped. Here for the second and third times in this passage we

are told that “the people of Israel did just as the Lord commanded Moses and Aaron”. God’s divine action in single handedly delivering them from their oppressors, all two and a half million of them, was not without any action on their part. Israel responds to God’s gracious provision with heads that are prostrate, hearts that are Godward, hands that are obedient to the task, and feet that are swift to move when God acts. Israel participates in the Passover even as it is God who is doing the actual saving.

**The Passover is the day of the Lord.** What had earlier been described as “this day”, is now being described as “that day”. Even as history is given a new calendar as a nation is born, the birth is couched in what is called Apocalyptic language. Later writers of the Bible will come to speak of “the day of the Lord”. “The day of the Lord” is a terrible day in which God executes judgment on his enemies and saves his people. Here in the Passover and exodus, there is a hint of that day as Israel is saved and Egypt is damned. What horrific language this is: “there was a great cry in Egypt”. God executes his judgment against Egypt and its gods, leaving in his terrible wake the weeping and gnashing of teeth in every Egyptian home. As Israel makes its grand departure to a land flowing with milk and honey, it is leaving hell on earth. In the Passover, Israel isn’t being saved merely from her slavery. In the Passover, Israel is being saved from God’s wrath. It is the death of the lamb and the proclamation of its blood that mediates God’s judgment and breathes life into Israel, sparing them from damnation and giving rise to their obedience and worship.

## Conclusion

How do we summarize the Passover from this passage?

**Redemptive history is precipitated by the Passover.** The first Passover was the only Passover of its kind. Subsequent Passovers were celebrations and commemoration. The original Passover protected Israel and judged Egypt. Israel was delivered. Egypt’s firstborn were destroyed.

**The Passover is God’s judgment of Egypt.** God exacts punishment on a rebellious Pharaoh, an oppressive people, and their false gods, while Israel partakes of the Passover meal. Their table is spread in the presence of their enemies.

**The Passover is God’s salvation of his people.** God single-handedly acts on behalf of his people. God changes the will of the obstinate Pharaoh who begs Israel to leave. The Egyptian people lavish their belongings on their slaves as they drive them out of the land.

**The Passover is the beginning of Israel as a people.** Israel’s redemption is its creation as a nation. History has a new calendar. Human history will forever be Israel centric. Secular history ultimately will concede itself to Israel’s history.

**The Passover is an atonement sacrifice.** A life is exchange for a life. The death of the lamb gives life to the firstborn son. The blood on the doorposts spares the inhabitants inside the house from God’s wrath.

**The Passover is both commemoration and celebration as a feast.** While the original Passover anticipates what God is about to do, subsequent Passover meals celebrate what God has done. The Passover is a banquet in which Israel acknowledges its dependence on God for salvation, satisfaction and sustenance.

**The Passover is both a family and corporate event.** An interesting side note to the Passover is that even the women and children are included in this covenantal meal. No one is excluded. And this event is not to be observed in isolation from the rest of the nation. While families participate, they are celebrating the meal as an assembly.

**The Passover is a death blow to false gods.** God doesn't merely verbalize his exclusivity as the One True God who created heaven and earth. God acts out his anger and his jealousy of anything that would set itself up against him and rob him of his glory.

**The Passover incorporates all people groups.** God has always had room for the sojourner and the Passover is no exception.

**The Passover anticipates rest in the Land flowing with milk and honey.** The banquet in the wilderness is the land flowing with milk and honey in miniature. In the Passover, Israel tastes of the rest and sustenance God has promised for them in the land.

**The Passover is a proclamation.** The Passover isn't merely an event. It is also word. As Israel participates in the sacrifice and meal, they are to proclaim its meaning to their children and to each other. The Passover is Israel's deliverance from slavery and from Egypt's judgment in picture form. What happened to the lamb is what happened to Egypt's first-born. To munch on the unleavened bread was to acknowledge the satisfaction and sustenance provided by God in their deliverance from Egypt.

**The Passover is participation in a past event.** Participation in the Passover is participation in the exodus. Participation in the Passover is union with the great I AM who exercised judgment on the Egyptians and provided salvation for His people. It is in the Passover that the people of Israel will be given their identity.

**The Passover is for posterity.** This was to be for every generation in Israel forever as a national birthright. The Passover sacrifice and meal was part of their identity as a people. It went to the core of \*who\* they were. Keeping Passover was their maintenance of their identity. Is it any wonder that during the zenith of Israel's identity crisis in the days of the judges keeping Israel stopped keeping the Passover? One cannot help but wonder whether Israel's failure to completely occupy the land as they had been commanded isn't tied to their failure to observe Passover as they had been commanded.

## Lessons

Hopefully, by now, it is obvious where this is headed. In fact, I hope it is so obvious that the following sermons in this series on the Lord's Table basically preach themselves. Without giving the rest of the series away, I hope we are able to see Christ, to whom the Passover pointed, all over this text. 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 says this: "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Without going into the argument Paul is making in 1 Corinthians, we at the very least, can say that Christ is our Passover Lamb. And because he is our Passover Lamb, our lives and its Table, the Lord's table, are a celebration festival. In light of 1 Corinthians 5, we can also say:

**It is no accident that Christ's death and resurrection occurred during the Passover observance.** Redemptive history was again precipitated by the Passover meal.

**Christ, the Passover lamb, provided salvation for his people and executed judgment on his enemies in his death and resurrection.**

**It is in Christ's death, a life was exchanged for a life, and in this instance the lamb is itself a firstborn Son.**

**Christ the Passover lamb has spared the lives of his people in satisfying God's wrath and keeping the death angel at bay with his blood proclaimed on the doorposts of his own body.**

**Christ's death and resurrection signify the Great Departure of His people.**

**Christ, the Passover lamb leads his people out of bondage to sin and death, headed to the New Jerusalem with their belts of truth around their waists and their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.**

**Christ, the Passover, is the firstfruits of a New Creation, a new people of God who are identified by their union with Him.**

**Christ, the living bread of the Passover, provides eternal satisfaction and sustenance to both Jew and Gentile, forever unified in the corporate and assembled family.**

- Let us therefore, like Israel, respond with lives that are prostrate, hearts that are Godward, hands that are obedient to the task, and feet that are swift to proclaim the good news wherever God's providence takes us.
- Let us rejoice in God's Great Act on our behalf in Christ Jesus who spared us from judgment and saved us for His glory.
- Through the Word proclaimed in sermon and in the Lord's Table, let us feed on Christ, our salvation, our satisfaction, and our sustenance.
- We are a pilgrim people, wandering through this desert land that is not our home. Let us look forward to the day when, in the ultimate land flowing with milk and honey, the New Jerusalem, we will see our Passover Lamb face to face.

**Response**