

## INTRODUCTION

I spent the last week in Hong Kong with Dale Pond and Greg Smith at a very strategic international church conference. I was able to be one of the speakers and introduce the Healthy Church training. I was the small print on the program because the keynote speakers were Ravi Zacharias and Os Guinness. It was a great conference because I got to be fed by these spiritual giants.

At our final luncheon the keynote speaker was a British billionaire businessman, Sir Robert Edmiston. He just happens to have a heart for Jesus and for global evangelism. God gave him a vision to touch a billion people with the gospel message. He has pledged \$100 million dollars to a project called Yes He Is. And the evangelism tool that this ministry is using is in your hand or in your pocket or purse. It's your smartphone, tablet, or computer. You can download the app YesHEis, or go to [yesheis.com](http://yesheis.com). The app allows you to share a variety of very well done brief videos that touch people at many points in their lives. You can share these videos over social media with your friends who need Jesus. So download the app or visit the website. When someone accesses a video it uses their device's GPS to connect them to a local church. How cool is that?

Just so you can remember, I want you to respond out loud to several statements I'm going to make. Remember, when I point at you, the response is easy. All you say is "Yes He is!" Are you ready? Jesus is God's Son! Yes He is. Jesus is the Savior of the world! Yes He is! Jesus is Lord! Yes He is! Jesus is the only hope for this world! Yes He is! So let's download it and share it!

In the 14<sup>th</sup> Chapter of Mark, we come to the night before the cross. Jesus gathers with His Disciples for a night of firsts and lasts. You might say it is last official Passover meal, and at the same time it was the first Lord's Supper meal. Here we are two thousand years later. We are part of millions of Christians who still connect with the Lord through the bread and the cup.

Mark 14:12-25. "On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, 'Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?' So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, 'Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there.'

The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, 'I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.' They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, 'Surely not I?' 'It is one of the Twelve,' he replied, 'one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.'

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take it; this is my body.' Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. 'This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,' he said to them. 'I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God.' When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."

Before we share the Lord's Supper together, I want to use the Jewish Passover meal to communicate the powerful symbolism in this memorial meal. Christians are no longer required to observe the Passover meal, but understanding it will give you a deeper understanding about the death and resurrection of Jesus. Understanding Passover will enhance your appreciation of the Lord's Supper. There are three ways the Passover meal teaches us the significance of the Lord's Supper.

## **1. PASSOVER REQUIRED SPECIFIC PREPARATION**

The disciples asked Jesus about what they should do to make preparations for the Passover. This involved more than just finding a room. It had to be a house and room that was kosher or clean. Jesus didn't have a home. He was a wandering rabbi. He said, "Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head." (Matthew 8:20) Jesus gave up the comfort of an earthly home so that we might be able to enjoy a heavenly home.

God had given the Jewish people specific instructions about how to prepare for the Passover meal. The weeklong feast was called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Passover was a 24-hour feast as part of the week. In Exodus He said, "For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread." (Exodus 12:19-20 NKJV)

So, to prepare for the observance of Passover, the Jewish people had to spend the week getting rid of all their leaven, or yeast, in their house. We'll see in a moment that leaven is a symbol of sin. Even today, observant or religious Jews still follow these instructions. To prepare for Passover they go through a frenzy of house cleaning to get rid of all the food products that contain leaven or yeast. They meticulously scrub down the kitchen making sure to get into the cracks in the counters to remove any trace of leaven. Because Passover is always in the spring, did you know that is the origin of what we call "spring cleaning?" I'm not joking; you can Google it sometime.

Of course, God said to "get rid of it." But many Jews today have figured out a way to get around throwing away so many food products. My son-in-law, Jason, has a twin brother, Robert, who lives in Fort Worth. His neighbor is a Jewish rabbi named Andrew and they are good friends. A few years ago Rabbi Andrew asked Robert if they could store their food products with leaven in Robert's garage refrigerator during the week of Unleavened Bread. Robert said, "Sure." But Robert didn't realize how much food Andrew was talking about. So every year, they clean out all the food with yeast, and fill up Robert's refrigerator with it. They even bring any bottle of condiments or jar that has been opened because the contents might have been exposed to yeast.

And when Passover has passed over, they reclaim all their food. Pretty smart, huh? This year the Jewish Passover begins on Friday Night, April 22 at sunset. It lasts for 24 hours until sunset on Saturday. So, Robert's refrigerator is already full for his neighbor's Passover.

So what is the application of this preparation for us? Simply this: I must make spiritual preparation to receive the Lord's Supper. God was telling His people, "I want your houses to be free of any trace of leaven because leaven represents evil and sin." As followers of Christ, we don't have to get rid of the leaven in our kitchens, but we should constantly be concerned about sin and evil in our lives.

In the New Testament Paul connects the dots for us. He writes, "Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are." (1 Corinthians 5:6-7)

He says that a Christian with sin in his or her life is a contradiction. Jesus has made us clean, an unleavened batch. That's who we really are. But we all know that when we give in to temptation, sin slips back into our lives. Paul commands the same thing God did in Exodus 12. He says, "Get rid of it!"

Leaven, or yeast, is a symbol of sin in the Bible. A tiny bit of yeast has a profound impact on a lump of dough. Our English word "yeast" comes from an old English word that means to "foam or bubble." When you add it to water and flour, yeast creates a chemical reaction that causes the dough to expand and rise. It actually sours it, which is where we get the term sour dough bread. I've read that tiny yeast spores are present almost everywhere and the same yeast that makes bread rise makes fruit rot.

That's a picture of sin. Just a little bit of sin in your life can ruin you. It will cause your soul to rot. Unconfessed sin spoils you and changes you like nothing else. So before we partake of the Lord's Supper this morning, would you do a little spring cleaning? Would you pause right now and say, "Lord is there any unconfessed sin in my life right now?" That's a prayer God will answer if you listen to His voice. If God points out some lingering leaven in your attitude or in your actions will you confess it and claim His cleansing? The Bible says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:8-9 NKJV) So will you make preparations for this Lord's Supper?

## **2. PASSOVER REMEMBERED A MIRACULOUS DELIVERANCE**

At every Passover meal the story is retold. Thousands of years ago, God's people were in bondage in Egypt as slaves to Pharaoh. God sent Moses to say, "Let my people go." Pharaoh refused. So God instructed the Israelites to take a lamb without spot of blemish, a lamb in the prime of life. The lamb was to be killed outside the house. Then they would take a hyssop branch and smear the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintel of the front door. Then they were to walk into the house, roast and eat the Lamb. That night God sent His destroying angel throughout Egypt. In every home where he saw the blood, the people were safe and death passed

over them. But in the houses that had not followed God's directions, there was judgment and death.

That's a great Passover story, but our application is even better: The Lord's Supper reminds us of the Lamb who died for us. Jesus is the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world. He fulfilled the requirements for the Passover lamb. I'm not just taking a leap of imagination to make this comparison. Consider the words of scripture: "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." (1 Corinthians 5:7) And Peter wrote: "For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." (1 Peter 1:18-19)

Today we are celebrating the fact that once we were in bondage to the slavery of sin. We were people without a country. When the Lamb of God laid down His life on the cross, He delivered us from the slavery of sin. And He made us part of the Family of God.

### **3. PASSOVER UTILIZED POWERFUL SYMBOLS**

Several times we have celebrated a Seder meal here at Green Acres and Dr. Tom McCall has led us through a great study of "Christ in the Passover." This is called the Seder meal, because the Hebrew word means, "Order." There is a certain order that is followed in every Passover meal. Each meal has items on the plate that are symbolic.

And all of the symbols are memory tools to help the family retell the story of God's deliverance. Jesus and His disciples had lamb chops, but today, since the Temple isn't in existence, the Jews don't sacrifice a lamb. But on the Seder plate there is a roasted lamb shank bone as a reminder of the Passover lamb.

They eat Matza, or unleavened bread. It is a reminder that when the Jews left Egypt for the Exodus, they left so quickly; the bread didn't have a chance to rise. There is usually parsley or another vegetable dipped in salt water and eaten. This pictures the hyssop branch that was dipped in the blood of the lamb and applied to the doorposts of the houses in Egypt. There are bitter herbs, which is usually horseradish. It reminds the Jews of the bitter existence as slaves in Egypt. Then there is a fruit and nuts paste called Charoseth. It reminds them of the mortar their forefathers used to construct the buildings in Egypt. There were boiled eggs which represent mourning—and probably the origin of our Easter eggs.

There are four cups of wines taken at different times during the meal. The first is the cup of sanctification; the second is the cup of judgment; the third is the cup of redemption. Most scholars believe this is where Jesus talked about this cup being representative of His blood. And finally there was a cup of rejoicing, which the disciples probably sipped before they sang a song and left the room.

Today the Jews conclude their meal with a symbolic dessert. But since it is dessert, I'm going to save this symbol for the end of the message. I'm saving the best for the last.

So in terms of symbolism, what's the application today? The bread and cup introduce a new and better covenant. Passover was a reminder of the covenant God made with Moses on Mt. Sinai. God gave Moses the law, and it included more than the Ten Commandments. It included hundreds of laws about celebrating Passover and the other festivals. A covenant is like a contract in which God is one of the partners. There is mutual responsibility. God said, "If you will do this (obey me) then I will do this (bless you)." But the Israelites couldn't avoid sinning; that's our nature. So God established the use of animal sacrifice. The blood of the animals would make atonement for their sins. That was the old covenant. But on the night of the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper, Jesus announced a new and better covenant and it is connected to the Lord's Supper.

Jesus said, "In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." (Luke 22:20) And Paul continued to use the Passover symbols to show that leaven represents our attitudes. He wrote, "Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with the bread of sincerity and truth." (1 Corinthians 5:8)

So what are the symbolic meanings of the bread and the cup? Our Catholic friends believe the literal presence of Christ is in the wine and the wafer. It's called transubstantiation. I'll be talking more about that in my session this afternoon on the Radical Reformers at 5:30 in the Galilee room.

We don't believe that this bread or juice literally becomes the flesh and blood of Jesus. We believe the cup and bread are powerful symbols. To us, the bread represents the body of Jesus. The cup represents the blood of Jesus. Jesus left us a powerful symbolic teaching tool to remind us of His sacrifice. Jesus wasn't trying to institute some kind of liturgical observance; He was giving us a simple memory lesson.

The bread and cup are symbols, but what they represent is very real. At the meal, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples. In the same way, Jesus' body was broken. The soldiers broke Him down through torture and abuse. To fulfill scripture, not a bone of His body was broken, but the whip shredded the flesh on His back. His brow was broken open by the crown of thorns. His hands and feet were broken open by the nails.

His precious blood was poured out that day to make atonement for our sins. Once a year the High Priest observed Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, by taking the blood of a lamb without spot or blemish. He moved aside the thick curtain that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the world. He entered the Holy of Holies and sprinkled the blood on the Mercy Seat. But when Jesus died on the cross, the curtain of the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom. It was God's way of saying, "A new way has been opened to my Presence. It is through the blood of Jesus."

## CONCLUSION

I mentioned that there's one more way to connect the Passover to Jesus. It involves the Matza, unleavened bread. At the beginning of the meal the father takes three pieces of Matza

(unleavened bread). He takes the center piece of the three pieces and breaks it in half. He wraps it in a napkin and then while the children close their eyes, he hides it—but not so it can't be found. This wrapped bread is called *afikomen*, which literally means "dessert" They save the best for last. At the end of the meal, which is usually about three hours later, the youngest child is sent to find the hidden bread in the napkin. There is great rejoicing when the child produces the hidden bread. Then they unwrap it from the napkin and give a piece of it to everyone at the dinner. It's the last thing that is eaten. It is to symbolize that they are satisfied and want nothing more to eat.

This practice goes back to many centuries before the cross and the empty tomb. But how can you miss the symbolism? To us, it says something about God and the death and resurrection of Jesus. We serve a Triune God. Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Son came and His Body was broken for us. They took Him from the cross and buried him, wrapped in a burial cloth. He was hidden for three days, but when they found He was alive, it was cause for great rejoicing. And when you receive the Bread of Life, you are satisfied; nothing else quenches your hunger besides Jesus. And had there not been a resurrection, we would never be celebrating the Lord's Supper.

As we eat this meal, I hope you realize how God used the Passover for many centuries as an object lesson. He was preparing the world for the Lamb of God who would take away the sins of the world.

## OUTLINE

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Application: I must make spiritual preparation to receive the Lord's Supper.

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Application: The Lord's Supper reminds us of the Lamb who died for us.

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For the Joy...  
Pastor David Dykes



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