

Week 1: The First Pascha and Passover (Exodus 12)

R⁴: Read, Reflect, Review, Resolve.

1. **Read** Exodus 12—13:6.
2. **Reflect** on the ideas, context, concepts, and stipulations presented in this passage and in your conversations.
3. **Review** the handout provided, including the discussion questions offered. Take your conversations in whatever direction you like. Have fun with them.
4. **Resolve** the major issues and tensions that arose in your discussions (whether in the biblical text, in your reflection, or in your review of the handout). Remember to focus on how each topic refers back to the Lord's Supper.

Passover (Exodus 12)

- Immediate context is Israel's bondage in Egypt for the past 400 years. The Passover is Israel's release from slavery.
- After reading Exodus 12:1-14, please answer the following:
 - Why is an unblemished animal required for sacrifice?
 - The way of cooking (roasting instead of boiling, and no yeast) is different from the normal way of cooking—why?
 - Why is blood to be smeared on the doorways?

Snapshot of Passover

Passages – Exodus 12; Leviticus 13:3-8

Adjoining Feast – Unleavened Bread

Time – Jewish month of Nisan or Abib, our March or April

Length – 1 day (for Passover); 7 days (for Unleavened Bread)

Procedure – Slaughter and eat blameless goat or lamb in haste

Agricultural Significance – Beginning of wheat harvest

Theological Significance – Israel's freedom from Egypt

Missionary Journeys of the Disciples

- Do the instructions Jesus gives to his disciples in Mark 6:8-11 indicate a new Passover experience?

Here are the similarities: (1) taking a staff, (2) no bread, (3) no money in belts, (4) wearing sandals, and (5) having a single tunic.

Last Supper

Question: Is it more meaningful to have Jesus crucified when the Passover Lamb is slain, or for Jesus to have the Last Supper during the Passover meal?

- In each of the Synoptic Gospel accounts (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) of the Last Supper, there is no mention of a lamb anywhere. Is there any significance to this? If so, what is it?
- In a related way, notice that it was during the eating of bread (not the lamb) when Jesus made references to his body. Why not do this when eating the lamb?

“It is significant that Jesus uses bread, not the paschal lamb, to initiate the commemoration. Because of [Jesus's] death, the killing of a lamb will no longer be necessary” (*Matthew* in the NIV Application Commentary [page 836]).

- The Synoptics, especially Matthew, seem to set Jesus up as a new Moses: he issues instructions about Passover and then mediates a new covenant where his own blood will be spilt, just as in Exodus. What does this mean?
- The Gospel of John has no Passover meal (which is supposed to occur on Nisan 15) and instead has Jesus killed the day before Passover (which is Nisan 14), at the exact time the Passover

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lamb was being slaughtered. Why do you think John put the death of Jesus during the time of the killing of the lambs?

- “The next day [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him and declared, ‘Here is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world’” (1:29).
- “Then they took Jesus from Caiaphas to Pilate’s headquarters. It was early in the morning. They themselves did not enter the headquarters, so as to avoid ritual defilement and not be able to eat the Passover” (18:28).
- “Since it was the day of Preparation, the Jews did not want the bodies left on the cross during the Sabbath” (19:31).
- Of the four traditional cups of wine drunk at the Passover Seder, which one of them was the most likely time Jesus would say, “This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28)?
 - i. Cup of sanctification
 - ii. Cup of deliverance
 - iii. Cup of redemption
 - iv. Cup of restoration

“And [Jesus] did the same with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is poured out for you’ (Luke 22:20).

Lord’s Supper Passages

Given the historical context of Passover, what is the meaning of the following verses?

- Jesus’s words, referring to the wine at Passover, “this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matt 26:28); in relation to Exodus 24:1-8, especially the last verse.

- “Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Clean out the old yeast so that you may be a new batch, as you really are unleavened. For our Passover lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor 5:6-7).
- “You were redeemed...with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect or blemish” (1 Pet 1:18-19).
- What do you think of N. T. Wright’s comments about Jesus’s Last Supper?

“It was, first and foremost, a Passover meal. Luke has told us all along that Jesus was going to Jerusalem to ‘accomplish his Exodus’ (9.31). He has come to do for Israel and the whole world what God did through Moses and Aaron in the first Exodus. When the powers of evil that were enslaving God’s people were at their worst, God acted to judge Egypt and save Israel. And the sign and means of both judgment and rescue was the Passover: the angel of death struck down the firstborn of all Egypt, but spared Israel as the firstborn of God, ‘passing over’ their houses because of the blood of the lamb on the doorposts (Exodus 12). Now the judgment that had hung over Israel and Jerusalem, the judgment Jesus had spoken so often, was to be meted out; and Jesus would deliver his people *by taking its force upon himself*. His own death would enable his people to escape” (*Luke for Everyone* [page 262]).

Questions

1. How have you best connected Exodus 12 with the Lord’s Supper? Did Jesus think the Lord’s Supper was a Passover meal?
2. Was there a lamb present at the Lord’s Supper? Or does the fact that a lamb is nowhere mentioned in the Gospels indicate that Jesus was the lamb about to be eaten?
3. What additional thoughts do you have from these passages?