

What is the Lord's Supper?

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[0 : 00] This month, so maybe some people have had some of this already this month. When would you eat one of these? You can shout out! At a wedding.

What about these? Minced pies. When would you eat minced pies? Christmas. Absolutely. Absolutely. We've warmed you up.

What about, and I've got a visual aid here for us, some bread, and then it's not quite wine, but something red.

When would you eat bread and wine? You would eat them at church, definitely. Why would you eat them at church, Isaac?

Communion. Yes. Bread and wine. Really very ordinary foods, but a bit like the others. They help us to celebrate something.

[1 : 21] And remind us of something. But we're going to get to them in a moment. But before we get to the bread and wine and communion, we're going to look at a little bit, just for a few minutes, the Passover that Roger's helped us to read this morning from the book of Exodus.

Because I think to understand the Lord's Supper, we need to firstly understand the Passover, actually. The reason, just to explain why we're looking at the Lord's Supper today, is church members are sort of discussing how we currently take the Lord's Supper, when we do it, and whether to change the way we do it.

So this week and next week we'll be looking at it. So we've read from the book of Exodus, Exodus, which is a book where we find God's people, the Israelites, they're in slavery in Egypt.

And so they cry out to the Lord for help. And God was good to them, so good to them, he gave them a man called Moses, who was raised up to lead God's people out of slavery in Egypt.

And the person who ruled Egypt, who kept the Israelites as slaves, he was called Pharaoh, a bit like a king or president.

[2 : 48] Pharaoh ruled over the land of Egypt, and he wanted the Israelites there. They were good servants to have. He didn't want to let them go.

And so God sent some plagues. There were ten of them. We'll go through them quickly. First one was water turned into blood.

The second one, I can hardly read that writing. I'm going to use my notes. Frogs, a plague of frogs, plague of lice, plague of flies, plague of livestock pestilence.

The cows died. Boils, hail. Locusts, plague of darkness. And then the final plague, which is talked about particularly in chapter 11 and chapter 12.

The death of the firstborn. Exodus 11, 5 to 6 says this. Every firstborn son in Egypt will die.

[3 : 59] From the firstborn son of Pharaoh who sits on the throne to the firstborn son of the female slave who is at her hand mill. And all the firstborn of the cattle as well.

There will be loud wailing throughout Egypt, worse than there ever has been or ever will be again. God was sending this plague. There was another warning to Pharaoh.

I am God. I am greater and more mighty than you are. Let my people go. But because Pharaoh wouldn't, these plagues came. And this plague is not a nice one.

But for God's people, Israelites, they were told to get an animal. Have a look there in verse 4.

Can anybody spot what animal that is? Isaac? A lamb. A lamb. Yeah, absolutely. If any, is it verse 4? Verse 3 even. Tell the whole community of Israel that on the 10th day of this month, each man is to take a lamb for his family.

[5 : 07] One for each household. Take a lamb. And they're to keep that lamb for a few days. And then, they're to sacrifice it to the Lord.

And verse 7 tells us what they are to do with some of the blood of the lamb. Have a look there. Verse 7. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they eat the lambs.

So this is what happens. And I can re-enact it for you this morning. They're to take some of the blood. They're to paint it on the doorposts. Thankfully, this is a bit of card.

I'm not painting on our doors this morning, although I was slightly tempted. But that would cause a lot of trouble. Trouble that I'd probably have to clear up. So here we go. We've painted some blood on the doorposts.

There we go. That's what they were to do. That's going to be interesting. Paint the blood.

[6 : 14] And what's the blood there for? Have a look at verse 13. I'm going to read it. 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.

So what's God... Let's see if we're awake. What is God going to do when he sees the blood on the doorposts? Any younger ones in particular want to answer? Bethany.

Go on. Yeah. Pass through it. Or Passover. Pass over their houses. Because an animal has died. A lamb has died in the place of someone else. And so, this is called the Passover. And this is a day that the Israelites are told to keep celebrating.

[7 : 23] Verse 17. Have a look. Celebrate the festival of unleavened bread because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt.

And actually, I think I was going to read verse 14 rather than verse 17. Let's read that as well. This is a day you are to commemorate for generations to come. You shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord.

A lasting ordinance. This is a meal. The Passover is a meal, a festival. To celebrate the past.

Can we do that this morning? Trying to keep us awake because it's a hot day. That's pointing back.

That's what they're to do. When they're celebrating the Passover, they're to look back to the past.

To remember what God has done. Just like maybe on your birthday, you might be remembering all the many years that God has given you.

[8 : 23] And you'll do that by throwing a party or having a nice meal or having a birthday cake and celebrate. Celebrate all the life God has given you. Remember the past.

Maybe someone even gets out photos of when you were a baby or younger to embarrass you when that happens. That's what the Israelites are to do when they're having the Passover.

They're to remember the past. Remember what God has done for them. Do you ever ask questions? No? No one asks questions?

It's good to ask questions. And perhaps, perhaps children, you often ask your parents questions.

Maybe they sometimes don't know the answer to your questions.

Well, the Lord is very kind to parents in this chapter. Look at verse 26. When your children ask you, what does this ceremony mean to you?

[9 : 27] Why are you sacrificing a lamb? What are we doing? Why are we celebrating this? Well, the Lord gives answers to the parents. 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.

That's what they're remembering. Remembering the past. Looking back to remember how God has spared the people, the firstborn in each home.

So what we do, what the Jewish people do when they celebrate the Passover is remember the past. Celebrate what he's done to not forget his amazing deeds for them.

And every year, even now, Jewish people will do that. But I also think this meal, it helps to point them towards the future as well.

Can we point in front of us? It helps us to remember, look even to the future. Who remembers what animal is sacrificed?

[10 : 48] Lamb. Well done, Isaac. It's a lamb. And I think this meal helps them to get ready for Jesus.

See, in John chapter 1, verse 29, John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, the Messiah, the one who has come for his people to be the final lamb sacrificed in the place of his people.

Dying for their sins so that God will pass over them in judgment and instead give them life. the Passover helps us to look back but also helps his people to look forward to Jesus, the Lamb of God. And we're going to read about Jesus at the time of Passover in a moment. We're going to see the bread and wine but firstly, we're going to sing another song. For a moment, you're organizing your birthday party.

[12:04] Who do you want to be there? Maybe you immediately have thought of some special friends of yours that you want to be there. Maybe brothers and sisters, cousins, parents, grandparents.

So you'll get the invitation and you'll write on there their name and what day you want them to come and where you want them to be to celebrate the day you were born.

Well, Jesus, in this passage, he's not celebrating his birthday but he's celebrating the Passover, sort of having a Passover party if I can put it like that.

Verse 15, he said to them, I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. Jesus knew exactly who he wanted to be there to celebrate the Passover with him.

he wanted his friends, his disciples to be there. He's eagerly desired to do it to celebrate it with them. And so he organized this meal.

[13:19] We still the preparations as we began our reading. There in verse 7, it's the, on the day of unleavened bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed, Jesus sent Peter and John saying, go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.

So Peter and John, they're tasked with organizing the Passover. And so apparently Peter and John, they may well have gone to the temple, taken a lamb along with them without blemish, joined one of three queues to have the lamb killed and had made ready for the Passover meal.

They also had to frantically organize the place, but actually in many ways it wasn't frantically because Jesus was incredibly organized.

I was enjoying reading this, maybe a bit too much, about how much Jesus was organized in this passage. So have a look there. Verse 10, Jesus said to Peter and John, as you enter the city, there will be a man carrying a jar of water and he will meet you.

Apparently that was a job for women to do, so Peter and John would be able to easily spot a man carrying a jar of water, wonderfully organized by Jesus.

[14:50] And follow him to the house that he enters and say to the owner of the house, the teacher asks, where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

And he will show you a large room upstairs all furnished, make preparations there. Jesus was very organized. Either he had had the right conversations with the right people and so marvelously planned this, or just Jesus being God, he knew exactly how this would be worked out.

Either way, wonderful organization, making Peter and John's job in organizing this Passover party. Very easy. And so there they are, verse 14, they're celebrating together.

Celebrating the past. Point back. That's what the Passover was to do. To remind them of the past. Remind them of what Jesus has done in rescuing his people from Egypt, in providing the lamb who died in the place of the firstborn.

they celebrated that God brought them out of Egypt and established them as his people. But nowhere beyond verse 7 do we see mention of a lamb at this meal.

[16:14] For I think Jesus and the scriptures are showing us in this time of Passover when lambs would be slaughtered and God was showing his people and God was showing the world that actually there's no more need for a lamb for Jesus is that lamb.

And Jesus I think makes this very very clear in this meal together with his people. So he takes the bread and apparently some things which might have been said as the bread was taken.

This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate when they came out of Egypt. But now Jesus takes the bread and look at what he says there in verse 19 as he breaks it.

He says this is my body. Do this in remembrance of me. This is my body given for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. Jesus is saying to his disciples this meal is now about me.

[17:34] I'm sure that Jesus when his disciples were taking that bread and eating it they weren't thinking this is actually his body. He was there in body in person.

rather hopefully they were thinking this bread it points us to Jesus and his body. It would make more sense to them once he died.

but that's what it is a sign that Jesus was going to suffer and die in our place. The rescue of God for his people is found in Jesus the lamb without blemish without sin.

The lamb in the Passover that died in the place of someone. And now Jesus the lamb of God is going to die in our place on the cross.

It should be us there really. But Jesus went there for us. And notice what Jesus does with the bread. He took bread, he gave thanks and he broke it.

[18 : 47] Not because Jesus would be broken physically on the cross. None of his bones were broken just like a Passover lamb. None of their bones were broken.

But the bread was broken in order to be given out to his people. This is my body and it's given for you. I am dying for you.

Now we read of two cups in this little story. Apparently I was reading this week in the Passover meal there would be four cups but we just read about two cups in this meal.

We'll get to the first one in a moment but the second one is most important. Likely to be the cup of blessing in the Passover meal that Jesus took.

Verse 20 in the same way after supper he took the cup saying this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you.

[19 : 50] Jesus takes that cup which is a blessing for his people as he says something new can be found in this.

New things are exciting. Yesterday I got to go to a new Haribo shop in Portsmouth that was exciting new things are exciting and Jesus in this meal gets this cup and says something new is happening.

To understand this I think we need to read some words from the Old Testament from the book of Jeremiah. Here are the words they're on the screen. The days are coming declares the Lord when I will make a new covenant new it's exciting with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah it will not be like the old one the old covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt because they broke my covenant though I was a husband to them declares the Lord this is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time declares the Lord I will put my law in their minds and I will write it on their hearts I will be their God and they will be my people no longer will they teach their neighbor or say to one another know the Lord because they will all know me from the least to the greatest declares the Lord for I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more there was nothing particularly wrong with the old covenant

God had rescued his people and they couldn't rescue themselves God had given spoken to his people his word given them his law but the problem was the people and their hearts they couldn't obey the law they kept forgetting God and they kept turning away from him but God will not give up on his people and so he's saying I'm doing something new new is exciting and the key to this is those last couple of sentences for I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more and so we can look at the cup at communion Jesus says and see there's something new the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you in my blood is the forgiveness of sins Jesus has shed his blood like the blood of the lamb in our place so that

God's judgment passes over us we don't have to face it if we're trusting in Jesus and as for the laws that we can't obey he's going to write them on our hearts he's going to change our hearts so the Lord's Supper is like the Passover because it's a meal and you can do it if you want to remember the past for as we take the bread and as we take the wine or the grape juice as we do here we see that it shows us the blood which Jesus shed for me shed for the forgiveness of my sins we see in the bread Jesus' body which was given for me hopefully we're getting this but just to help us a bit more here is a biscuit I love eating biscuits and if

[23 : 38] I eat this biscuit myself it's just a biscuit really but if I was to give this biscuit to Jerome it's a biscuit but it's also more than a biscuit it's a gift to Jerome it's a sign of our friendship and I think when we look at the bread and the wine and as we hear Jesus say this is my body given for you this cup is a new covenant in my blood poured out for you it's more than just bread and wine it is just bread and wine but it's more it's a sign of God's love for us it's a sign of his mercy and grace in dying in our place so we don't have to eat and as we take it yes we are just eating bread and yes we are just drinking grape juice but we're doing so much more we see them as signs as visible reminders of

Jesus and it's like we're feeding on him and drinking on him by faith in our hearts so in the Lord's Supper we look back we look back to the cross we look back to Jesus giving his life for us but one more very brief thing it's also a meal where we look to the future point forwards last time last opportunity it's a meal where we look to the future last year Becky and I as many of you know we got married and so we sent out various invitations to people to join us on our wedding day and it was so great that many of you could do that and as part of the wedding celebration you have a meal together and we couldn't invite everybody and not everybody who we invited could make it to the meal and we were happy to celebrate it with loads of people but there were some people we missed being there and we could have said let's cancel it and wait till everybody could be there but as you probably know that would be tricky

Jesus was eagerly awaiting to celebrate this meal this past liver meal with his disciples but he also points us to the future have a look verse 16!

Jesus isn't going to take the bread and the wine again until everybody is together until all his people are finally together at a future wonderful party a feast with Jesus and so until then there is a place at that future feast where Jesus will drink the wine again with his people and that invitation is even for you this morning we see that in the bread and the wine Jesus has died in our place so we can be forgiven we need to do is accept that invitation if you want to know more about that please do ask me later and when so when the Lord's Supper is taken here in this place we look back we see these wonderful visible signs of what

Jesus has done for us but we also look forward look forward to the forever party where we'll be feasting with Jesus and where we'll be saying worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and might and wealth and wisdom and honour and glory and blessing what a wonderful meal this is let's pray