

# Communion

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[0:00] With the Exodus, it's one reason I didn't turn into chapter 12, which is where the blood is painted over the doorposts and the angel of death passed over. I assume some of the instructions that wasn't recorded in chapter 12, but like a footnote to chapter 12, the things that Moses was saying at that time.

But just to refresh our minds, chapter 11 tells us of the final plague. The firstborn of Egypt will die unless you let my people go, and Pharaoh refused.

And that strikes me that's the final warning to Pharaoh. Cross God at your peril in that sense, and he failed to heed the warning.

And as we think of the New Testament, our communion, and we think of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the grace of God that brought me into the kingdom of God.

There was that time when we heard the gospel, and that in a sense to us, when we turn to Christ, we recognize it as that's our final warning. Turn to me or you die.

[1:15] And it should encourage us in our work as a church, in the work of outreach, in the work of living a life that honors Christ in that sense.

And then chapter 12 gives us the detailed instructions, as I've said, for the Passover. And God said, when I see the blood, I will pass over you.

And as we were singing, it's Christ covering for us, isn't it? The blood of Christ, the righteousness of Christ that we remember in these symbols, that the body broken for us, the blood shed for us, as a grace shown to us by the Holy Spirit that enabled us to say yes to God, whereas previously we would rebel against him and ignore his final warning to us.

And we also find these instructions that this is a day to commemorate as we do. Jesus said to his disciples, you know, this do until I come, until I drink anew with you in the kingdom.

And so we meet, I don't know how many times I've sat through a communion service as a child in the breaking of bread in the Bethany and here at the mission in over, I don't know, whatever it is, 60 odd years.

[2:41] But it's a reminder and we're looking forward and yet we're not sort of saying, well, he hasn't come. You know, God is not slow in keeping his promise, as Peter tells us. And so we see these instructions that this is a day to commemorate for your generations to come as a lasting ordinance.

And in a sense, of course, it was until the Lord's death and he forecast, he foretold the destruction of the temple.

When Jesus cried, it is finished. The curtain was torn from top to bottom. The way into the Holy of Holies that previously needed blood of the animals was made open.

And so in a sense, the Old Testament into the new, we have this, the Lord saying to us, in the bread and the wine, do this in remembrance of me until I come.

And for the Old Testament pattern, it comes up to Christ. And then in chapter 12, verse 31, Pharaoh finally says, up, leave my people.

[4:03] This is after the slaughter of the firstborn, you and the Israelites, and go. And the Egyptians are plundered and the Israelites set off on their journey, their long journey, 40-year journey, because of their sin to the promised land.

And verse 42 of chapter 12, because the Lord has kept vigil that night to bring them out of Egypt. On this night, all the Israelites are to keep vigil, to honour the Lord for the generations to come.

And so again, we have this ongoing remembrance. Remember, remember. And that's a theme right through the Old Testament, isn't it? Through the wilderness. And Moses often told them, remember, remember.

Remember. And then in verse 43, Moses receives the regulations and restrictions. We find that no outsider is to participate in this Passover unless circumcised.

So in the Old Testament, it's, yeah, I just find that fascinating. Because here in Paul's writing, which we'll look at a little later when we come to actually celebrate the communion, there is that instruction, isn't there?

[5:24] Beware when you take the communion. That there is no sin within you. It is only for believers. It's this feast of remembrance in our communion.

And the pattern in the Passover is similar. That there is that no outsider unless they are circumcised. That physical representation of belonging to God's people.

And yet under Jesus, it's the circumcision of the heart that is the important. And we're children of Abraham, not by ethnicity, but children of Abraham by faith.

And then chapter 13 contains this law of the firstborn in verses 1 to 16. And then in verse 17 onwards, there is the route that they took that God sent them on.

And if you look, I looked at the map in the back of my Bible and there's this massive detour they took when they could have just gone along the coast road, as it were, and up through the Philistine country and into the promised land.

[6:29] Which, I'd say, wouldn't have taken a bit more than five minutes. But looking at the map, you know, it is that sort of difference. It's quite incredible. And yet God was careful because he knew that they were shepherds.

They were slaves, brickmakers, and so on. Not soldiers, although they went out as an army. But they had no experience of war. And so God sent them on that long way around.

But anyway, we're looking into chapter 13. We find the consecration of the firstborn. Consecrate to me every firstborn male. The firstborn were in a special position.

In both religion, and that's still the case even today. Particularly in Middle Eastern countries.

Amongst Arabs and Israel.

The firstborn are in a very special position. It is indeed in our inheritance situation, isn't it? Very often it's the firstborn. And the death of the firstborn in Egypt is the last plague.

[7:31] The final enemy, as it were. That we read of in the Jesus conquering. Death is that last enemy.

And the last plague hit the firstborn. But it's the blood of the Passover lamb that secured the lives of the firstborn of Israel.

Not just the people, but also in their animals. And the nation was regarded as the firstborn son of Yahweh. We read that in Exodus chapter 4, verse 22.

And then there's the celebration of the Passover. The instructions were to be carried forward. How to keep the ordinance.

A continual reminder of the need for obedience. And an assurance that they would enter the land. And part of the Passover was the unleavened bread, which we represent in the communion as the bread.

[8:36] And the wine representing the blood, shall I say. And the other unleavened bread spoke of the urgent need to depart.

The haste to depart. They couldn't wait for the bread to rise and cook it. And if they were on a journey. I don't know if ever you bake bread with yeast. Of course, if you leave it too long in the proving, it overflows the bowl and makes a right mess.

But unleavened bread, you can just take it and bake it when you're able to do so. And it may also speak of the abundance to which they were going.

The haste to depart. And the minimal amount they took with them in terms of food. And yet they're going to a land of promise. Full of a land of milk and honey.

And this is what our communion reminds us of. What did Jesus say? You know, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew with you in the kingdom.

[9:45] So we look forward to that time where there's a land, in a sense, to heaven where there is no sin. We leave that behind. And there is blessing.

And we're with the Lord all the time. And note also verses 11 to 13. Men and animals were to be consecrated.

And in particular, we find reference to an unclean animal. The mention of the ass, the donkey, as a representative of the unclean animals, redeemed by the blood of a lamb.

Redeem with a lamb every firstborn donkey. But if you do not redeem it, break its neck. Redeem every firstborn among your sons. And so we come together to remember and to celebrate the lamb who takes away our sin.

Jesus, who suffered and died. Our saviour. You should call him Jesus for he should save his people from their sins.

[10:58] That we might be forgiven. That we might be saved from hell and death. And brought into freedom and a new life in Jesus Christ.

And yet we are slaves to Christ, as Paul reminds us. But we have a good master, a kindly master. Not a harsh taskmaster. And it's a lasting audience.

A lasting ordinance, as I've already said. And it's a do this in remembrance of me until he comes. And we drink together.

We're thinking of the church being together this morning. The people of God working together. You know, we're not all the same. We're not all eyes. We're not all mouth or something. And so on. We work together. There are different abilities within the church under Jesus Christ. And we do this as we come together. And we look forward to that time when we shall be in the glory.

[12:05] That great wedding feast of the lamb. They look back at slavery and forward to the promised land. And that's the position we're in, isn't it, in a sense. You know, we're in this world of sin that Satan keeps attacking us.

And for most of us, we fall by the wayside in so many ways. And yet the grace of God is sufficient for us. And helps us day by day by his Holy Spirit.

We look forward to that promised land. We being dead in our sins. But being given eternal life in Christ. Our belonging not by circumcision of the flesh.

But by the circumcision of the heart. And inward faith. The writing of God's law on our hearts. Christ is described as the firstborn among the dead.

As he rose from the grave. And by his work in us. We are sons of God. And as Paul writes, we're joint heirs with Christ.

[13:09] Christ. If you, you know, the firstborn is the heir. Jesus is the firstborn in that sense. But we're called joint heirs with him. It makes us the firstborn in that sense as well.

With Christ. Not saying we're equal with Jesus Christ. But that's our position in God's sight. He looks upon us. He doesn't see us. He sees the covering that we have.

The robe. The righteousness of Christ. The blood of Christ. That takes away our sin. As Paul reminds us.

It's only true believers that participate in the Lord's Supper. And we saw, too, that any aliens and foreigners within the family, within the nation, would need to be circumcised to identify with the people of God.

And would need to be covered by the blood on the doorpost of the family. And the unclean ass.

[14:14] That's a reminder to us. We've been thinking in recent weeks in our sermons in mornings and other times of it's Jew and Gentile. We have been brought in.

We're aliens to God in one sense in the Old Testament. But now we're brought in. And the ass, in a sense, is that sort of link for us, if you like. I'm not saying we're all asses or donkeys.

Sometimes we are, perhaps, when we go astray. But there it is. Yeah. There's a recognition of this, how the grace of God that we see as we gather around the table.

I don't think I've got any more to say other than that. I hope it's been helpful. But I think that's before we turn to the Lord's Supper. And perhaps there'll be a few minutes of prayer as we just consider what God has done for us.

And shows to us, both through the description of the Passover. And how he dealt with the people of God in the Old Testament. And how that carries through, in a sense, of how Jesus is the perfect sacrifice.

[15:32] Not the lamb that needed to be slain at Passover. And then on the Day of Atonement. And in all sorts of other times through the year.

But that Christ is our once and for all sacrifice. He is, as Hebrews speaks, of the better sacrifice that our Lord made for us. And which we're here tonight to remember.

If you, perhaps one or two, two or three, would like to pray. If you please try and pray out loud. I haven't got the microphone to pass around, but just as you're led. So let's just turn to prayer.

Father, we do thank you, Lord, for this theme that runs right through Scripture, Lord. Of looking forward to the Messiah. Looking forward to the true King. Looking forward to the King who would give his life for his people.

And Father, we pray that you would help us now as we just contemplate these things. In prayer to you, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. And verses 16 and 17.

[16:45] Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ?

And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we who are many, are one body. For we all partake of the one loaf.

And then a reminder too that this is a welcome around the Lord's table to all true believers to join in communion, the one with the other.

And in 1 Corinthians 11, verses 23 to 29, Paul writes, For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you.

The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, This is my body which is for you.

[17:48] Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after supper, he took the cup, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood.

Do this whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me. For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

A reminder that this is not just a free-for-all feast, as it were. A reminder that this is a solemn remembrance of our Lord. Remember that he died, he suffered and bled, and was tortured and was beaten and was mocked on behalf of us.

[19:01] In my place condemned he stood. And it's a proclamation, or the authorised version, I think, has a show, a demonstration of the Lord's death until he come.

I read just a few months ago, I think, a reference to communion as being a reminder to Satan that he is defeated, that God has a people for himself that Satan cannot take hold of.

A reminder that we must be careful how we come. We do need to examine ourselves and meditate on the grace that is demonstrated to us by these symbols, the suffering of our Lord, the blood that was shed.

So just a moment quiet while we consider ourselves and make sure, in a sense, that we aren't coming glibly or lightly, but we come seriously, recognising that our sin should be confessed before our Lord and his blood, his grace is sufficient for us.

To read the Matthew version. And it's a reminder to me, I think, the disciples on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?

[20:41] He replied, go into the city to a certain man and tell him, the teacher says, my appointed time is near, I'm going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.

So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. And it reminds me too of the Palm Sunday, you know, go and see a certain man.

There's a foal of a donkey that's prepared. And we saw the donkey in Exodus. How marvellous scripture is, isn't it? Scripture and scripture. And how careful Jesus is to prepare things for us. And he's prepared a place for us in his kingdom. And we remember that's because of what he did for us. So the disciples did as Jesus directed them, prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve. And while they were eating, he said, I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me. They were very sad and began to say to him, one after the other, Surely not I, Lord.

[21:47] Jesus replied, The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray 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 will be better for him if he had not been born. And Judas, the one who would betray him, said, Surely not I, Rabbi. Jesus answered, Yes, it is you.

I've said before that it's very sobering, isn't it, to think. Judas, who was there for the three years of the Lord's ministry, that one of the disciples, and yet, could still betray him.

And yet, almost it seems as if he doesn't really recognize it in himself. And how like us that can be. And that's why we needed to come and just have that moment of quiet, just to consider ourselves before the Lord.

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, Take and eat. This is my body. I don't know whether Corrine wants to come and take it around yet.

[22:53] Thank you. Perhaps, yeah, follow our usual pattern, and hold the bread, and we'll eat together. Just a reminder that we receive the word of God, and the grace of God individually.

Yeah, carry on. And then we're brought into, as it were, we're together, that communion of the saints, and we will eat to remind us of the body.

We are part of the body of Christ. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[24:31] Thank you. Thank you.

So we will take the cup and we'll hold the cup and we'll drink together as a reminder of the blood of Jesus that covers our sin.

Thank you, Corinne. Maybe there will just be a few minutes time to pray together before we conclude.

Yeah, I think I do it that way. Our last hymn is Behold the Lamb who bears our sins away.