

The True Passover

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[0 : 00] Hi there, I'm just reading from Matthew chapter 26 verses 1 to 30. When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.

Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in a palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. But they said, Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people. Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to him with an alabaster flask of a very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table.

And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, Why this waste? For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor. But Jesus, aware of this, said to him, Why do you trouble this woman?

For she has done a beautiful thing to me. For you always will have the poor with you, but you will not always have me. In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial.

[1 : 22] Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her. Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?

And they paid him thirty pieces of silver. And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him. Now on the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus, saying, Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?

He said, Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, The teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.

And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover. When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. And as they were eating, he said, Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.

And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him, one after another, Is it I, Lord? He answered, He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me.

[2 : 39] The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, But woe to the man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.

Judas, who would betray him, answered, Is it I, Rabbi? He said to him, You have said so. Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, And after blessing it, broke it and gave it to the disciples, And said, Take, eat, this is my body.

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, Drink of it, all of you, For this is my blood of the covenant, Which is poured out for many, For the forgiveness of sins.

I tell you, I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine, Until that day, when I drink it new, With you in my Father's kingdom. And then they had sung a hymn, They, sorry, and when they had sung a hymn, They went out to the Mount of Olives.

Well, good morning, everyone. Will you pray with me as we come to God's word? Lord, so many people have interpretations of your death, But you here in your word tell us what your death is really all about.

[4 : 03] And so I pray that your spirit would give us minds that understand you, So that we might, We might know salvation ourselves, And know how to teach it to others.

And I pray, Lord, that through your word, You would go through our minds and grip our hearts. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, imagine you're walking into your HSC exam, And a few of you here in this room don't have to imagine too hard for that.

But you're nervous, but prepared. Your schooling has been preparing for this moment. You feel, whether it's true or not, You feel like your future is on the line.

The supervisor announces, You can start. You turn the page over. And the ancient history question Isn't what you studied for, Or what the teachers even taught you.

It's on Julius Caesar, When you're expecting Augustus Caesar, You've got the wrong king. How on earth did that happen this week?

[5 : 15] You probably heard of the nine schools that taught the wrong Caesar. There's no time to go back and do it again. That panic.

That must have been traumatic. Doesn't your heart just go out for those students? It's just, that's traumatic. That's nothing compared to the final examination we've been hearing about for four weeks.

All of us will appear before the judgment seat. When, 25-31, When the Son of Man comes in his glory, And all the angels with him, Then he will sit on his glorious throne.

Before him will be gathered all the nations. There's only two outcomes we've been hearing for four weeks. Come, You who are blessed by my Father, Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.

Depart from me, You cursed, Into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. We've all got to face that face.

[6 : 37] As C.S. Lewis puts it, I've already said this two weeks ago, In the end, That face, Which is the delight or the terror of the universe, Must be turned upon each of us.

Either with one expression or with the other. Either conferring glory, Inexpressible when he welcomes you, Or inflicting shame that can never be cured.

We've heard so many parables about being ready for that final day. We heard about being spiritually alert, Knowing that he could come like a thief in the night.

We are to be faithful with authority and responsibility, Knowing we've got to give an account to our master. We've got to take steps to endure for the long term, Like the women who bring oil in their lamps.

They're ready to endure for the long term. We looked at the servants who are busy advancing their master's assets. They want to advance the kingdom, Looking for his pleasure in the end.

[7 : 46] And we see sheep who identify with other brothers and sisters, Almost unselfconsciously, In their need, We just want to meet our brothers and sisters in their need.

We've heard all this, But who of us can survive that great examination? Who of us can enter that day, Before such pure glory of the Son of Man, And be confident.

Have I really done enough to live up to these things? Matthew's Gospel quickly moves from that great final day, To chapter 26, Verses 1 and 2, Another day.

When Jesus had finished all these sayings, He said to his disciples, You know that after two days, The Passover is coming. And the Son of Man, The Son of Man, Will be delivered up to be crucified. The judge will be judged and crucified at Passover. We better understand Passover.

[9 : 08] That great final day depends on this Passover day, 2,000 years ago. So, I just want to take us through this passage.

I think we're going to see two main things. One is, He chose to die at Passover. He chose it, Willingly. And then we'll spend time looking at the meaning of his death, In the light of Passover. So, verses 1 to 25 of chapter 26. If I give you just a bit of insight into our fortnightly elders meetings, Adam sets the agenda.

We don't vote. We aim for unanimous decisions. And we record action items.

Profound stuff, I know. The divinely appointed elders, chief priests and high priests, representing the covenant people of God, had one agenda item, one action item, and they're unanimous.

[10 : 18] They plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him, just not at Passover.

They tried to publicly discredit him in chapter 22, asking their toughest questions, you remember. But then, he publicly discredits them as hypocrites. They try to arrest him. They fail. We are at Passover.

Masses of crowds are coming, and there was a Jewish expectation that the Messiah would reveal himself at Passover. Messiah hopes it is at fever pitch.

They are right to be afraid of a riot, because Jesus has ridden in on a donkey. So let's do it after Passover. But the Son of Man overrules them.

[11:18] No, I will die at Passover. And then the spark that ignited and hurried the leaders' plans seems to be this meal.

This meal around the dinner table from verse 6. They're at a meal in Bethany. It's just outside of Jerusalem. And mid-meal, a woman who, John's Gospel tells us, is Mary, the mother of, the mother, the brother of Lazarus.

She honours Jesus in front of them all. She takes this expensive ointment, probably nard from India, and pours it on his head. Now, the emphasis in all the Gospels is the cost.

A year's wages. What would you spend a year's wages on? I've got my own things, I'm not going to tell you. What would you spend a year's wages on?

She just pours it on his head. For this momentary, filling the room with fragrance. We all know the feeling.

[12:31] You've had the feeling. We've all had the feeling. When someone spends money on something, you're just like, that is not valuable. I think of the thousands and thousands of dollars spent on flowers at weddings that I heard someone spent on.

Sorry, Alyssa, I know you've got a flower business. I love flowers, but this was just next level. I just put it on a house deposit. What do you... Now, maybe I don't value flowers enough.

All for flowers. This was like tens of thousands of dollars. We've all had that feeling. Now, my mind goes to material things, like house deposit.

They've got more righteous indignation here. The poor. Imagine the suffering around Jerusalem. The homeless. The hungry. The sick. For what?

Honor him some other way. Judas was probably the spokesperson, if we're merging accounts with John's gospel. But he's representing all of them.

[13:42] What a waste. They're having a go at her, that she did the wrong thing, and Jesus steps in and rebukes them. She's done a beautiful thing to me.

They fail to see the unique person and the unique moment that's happening here. He's implying a very high claim.

I am worthy of this wasteful, lavish expense and love. I'm worthy of it. And the moment, this moment in history is unique.

Whether Mary knew it or not, maybe she did. Maybe she actually was listening to Jesus. And the Spirit gave her insight. She has done it to prepare me for burial.

He knows he's going to die at Passover. And this is what provokes Judas. Judas, this moment, provokes Judas to betray him.

[14:53] And I just pause to just reflect on the terrible power of the love of money. He was with the Son of God for three years, seeing his miracles, hearing his teaching wash over him.

day in and day out. And the love of money blinded him to see truth and beauty and value.

He goes to the chief priests to trade him in for 30 pieces of silver, which is just, it's not even a good price. It's the price for Exodus, I think it's chapter 21, it's the price for a slave that's being killed accidentally.

They don't even agree on a high price. And Judas goes, I'm benefiting from this. That's the power of the love of money.

Isn't that scary? Isn't that scary? I know traces of it in my own heart. This opportunity Judas brings to the chief priests seems to be too good to be passed up.

[16:11] They were going to do it after Passover, but this is a great opportunity. And then Jesus doesn't wait for Judas to act. He forces his hand.

You're going to betray me tonight. He doesn't just wait for Judas to act. They're sitting down for the Passover meal and he drops the bombshell.

Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me. Now they probably all shared the bowl, dipped their hand into the bowl. They probably all shared it and so they didn't know who he was talking about.

He's forcing Judas' hand to act then and there. He's choosing to die at Passover. Passover.

Passover. We're confronted here, I think, with how it can be God's plan and Judas' plan and the elders' leader's plan at the same time.

[17:23] I'm not going to solve how sovereignty and human free will merge together here in a few seconds, but I found Proverbs 16.9 a helpful way to think about it.

In a man's heart, in a person's heart, he plans his course, but the Lord determines his every step. Judas' thoughts and desires and will are his.

He's responsible. The leaders who want to kill him, their thoughts and desires and will are theirs. They're responsible. But Jesus is in charge here.

The Lord determines our every step. Scripture affirms both. Son of man will go as it is written of him.

Jesus is choosing how he dies while at the same time fully responsible. Judas wants a handful of cash. The Lord is using that to redeem his people.

[18:42] Now, I'm not claiming to solve the mystery of that, but there is so much comfort in that. One of the most despicable acts in history, maybe the worst, I don't know, a close friend kissing, kissing the son of man, knowing it's leading to his murder.

One of the most evil acts in history, God is using for the greatest salvation of his people. There's so much comfort in this.

He's no helpless victim. I think all these passages are just, I think the main thing we should be seeing here, he's no helpless victim.

He's choosing the Passover to die. Verse 17, the disciples were asked, where should we prepare the Passover?

Verse 18, Jesus says, here's where you prepare the Passover. Verse 19, the disciples prepared the Passover. Do you get the picture? Passover. We've got to be thinking Passover.

[19:49] Matthew, Mark and Luke all put the Lord's Supper with the Passover. John's Gospel places his death at the time that the lambs for Passover were being slaughtered.

And he sees relevance in the fact that not one of his bones are broken like an unblemished lamb. We've got to see his death in light of Passover. And he's voluntarily choosing to die then.

So let's turn to that. Verses 26 to 29, what is the meaning of his death in light of Passover?

Passover means three main things.

Substitution, set free from a powerful enemy, covenant fellowship. Let's look at these three things. Passover was at the heart of Jewish identity. They changed the whole calendar year to start the year at Passover. This is the beating heart of Judaism.

[21:03] So we're probably about mid-afternoon on Thursday when lambs were taken to the temple court and the priests would sacrifice the lambs.

Just picture how much blood is happening on this day. I know the kids' talk was intense, but this is intense. This is a blood-filled day.

Brought to the altar. And the blood is poured in the altar for the forgiveness of sins and fat burned as an offering. Then at sunset, they meet in households and the head of the household would preside over the meal and a boy usually would ask the question, what does all this mean?

And the head of the household would explain what it means as they're singing psalms together throughout this. There's three basic elements. The unleavened bread, they had four cups of wine. Now, it's not a slosh. They watered it down with water. So four cups of wine symbolizing four promises in Exodus. And then, of course, there's the lamb, the roasted lamb.

[22:19] In this meal, each of these elements are symbolic. That's how the meal operated. It was symbolic. Remembering that great day back in Egypt.

So taking the unleavened bread, they expected Jesus to say, this is the bread... I'll try that again. This is the bread of our affliction, which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt.

But he doesn't. He turns it about himself. This is my body. Now, his body was holding this bread. Passover was symbolic. The Lord's Supper is symbolic, but there's great power in the symbol. Now, you probably know the story well.

They were under a powerful enemy. Life was bitter. Bondage. Darkness. Death.

[23:28] Nine plagues. This enemy will not let them go. He has no intention of letting them go. Nine plagues don't do it.

It's this tenth plague that does it. Their salvation wasn't automatic. They had to take that lamb and paint that doorpost and take shelter under that blood.

God made a promise when he would come through Egypt to strike down the firstborn.

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.

In every household there is death, either the son or in every Hebrew household the lamb.

[24:34] Substitution. In the face of God's judgment, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. That boy in every household could look at that lamb as they are eating it together.

You died instead of me. The bread and the juice that we're going to share in the Lord's Supper today is violent.

It is violent symbols. The bread broken is body broken so that you are made whole. It should be your body broken.

It should be mine. But it's substitute for you. Blood poured out for many. It's violent.

So the first thing Passover means is he's our substitute. In the face of God's judgment, when I see the blood, I will pass over you.

[25 : 48] The second thing Passover means is we're set free from a powerful enemy. Now for the Israelites, that enemy was Pharaoh.

He had no intention of letting them go. But the Passover ransomed them, set them free. That's what triggers the exodus.

They're free. They're freedom. I think this one is hard to feel the weight of if we don't understand what we're enslaved to because we are so free in this country.

Don't we have so many freedoms? Some parts of the world, the political rule is bitter and oppressive, and I'm sure I don't have to convince you, life is full of very bitter things sometimes.

I feel like we're going through some of it as a church family. But enslaved, what are we enslaved to? even the millionaire eating ice cream on Nobby's beach with his children is enslaved, Scripture said.

[27 : 24] I think we see it in Judas. He would trade in God an eternal life for a handful of cash and call it gain.

Wow. Wow. How many people trade in Jesus for this boy or this girl who they think are going to fill their soul?

whatever ambition you and I have, whether it's sport or even our family, our career, people trade in Jesus all the time.

There's so many ideas and views of the world and things we think are critical to our life that keep drawing us away from Jesus and the love of God in Jesus.

There is a powerful enemy at work. I think we see it in the chief priests and the elders. They're confident they are good people.

[28 : 40] I find it scary the level of blindness they can have that they don't see God in the face of Jesus. There can be darkened minds in churches today, eating and drinking the Lord's Supper, perhaps simply because they've done it all their lives, or perhaps because they see in the ritual itself some sort of dose of God's blessing.

It's just going through the motions. They don't get Passover. It hasn't hit their heart. It hasn't taken over their life yet. Even Judas ate the Lord's Supper.

There is a powerful spiritual bondage. Anyone who sins is a slave of sin, Jesus says.

Satan blinds the mind so that people don't see the beauty of Christ. There is no way to free yourself from the power of Satan and sin.

There's no way. They're too strong for you and me. But Passover does. Passover sets us free. These enemies have no desire to let us go.

[30 : 10] But Passover sets us free. Now, it's not free from all sin. The freedom looks like struggling against sin.

Once we were just going along with it, we were fine with it. Now you're in the fight. Now you're struggling. That's the sign of your freedom. You're fighting. You hate it.

It's still present. The sin, but you're fighting now. That's the sign of freedom. The power of Passover and Jesus' death is that you can look at that.

Whatever sin you've committed this week and you feel so ashamed, you can look at it and you know Jesus looks at it and there's no condemnation.

condemnation. There's no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. You can know you will be finally free from it one day. You've got no power over me.

[31 : 12] God's love for me does not change. I don't belong to this sin anymore. He redeemed. I belong to him. That's the power of the cross.

We can look at the things that cause us shame and say that. Passover means substitution. It means freedom from powerful enemies of Satan and sin.

The third thing that Passover meant was it created the covenant. It led to the covenant at Sinai. It created the nation of Israel.

They're once slaves, now they're the nation. They're the covenant community. Verse 28, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

This picks up Exodus 24 verse 8 where Moses is sprinkling the people. He's read out the law, Ten Commandments and the law, the book of the covenant. He's sprinkling the people with blood.

[32 : 17] So Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with these words. And the people said, all that the Lord has spoken we will do and we will be obedient.

The contract is signed in blood. But notice here the disciples are not asked to respond to Jesus's, Jesus I'm going to die for you.

They're not asked to respond with pledges of allegiance. What we're going to see next week is they all fail that night.

they all fail. This new covenant is unilateral. It is one way. Have you made lofty promises of faithfulness to God?

I'm going to change this week. I'm going to be different. if you do this big thing for me, I'm going to change my life.

[33 : 25] Haven't we all made those sorts of lofty promises? We don't keep them. I don't know, maybe you, I'm guessing you haven't if your heart is anything like mine. This covenant is one way.

It's sworn in his blood. God. Because this covenant is based on better promise. If you dig down, what is at the basis of your relationship with God?

If you dig right down, what's at the basis? Why this? What's at the bottom? You're not going to find yourself. You're not going to find your devotion. You're not going to find your faithfulness. You won't find you at all.

You'll find his blood. God, in this promise, I will remember their sins no more. The Passover means we're in covenant fellowship with God and with one another.

We are the people of God. We're the redeemed people of God. That's what the Jews are celebrating. I suspect many of us at times, and maybe all the time, feel a bit on the outer of church sometimes.

[34 : 51] Maybe because you've been here just a short time. Maybe because you've been a Christian a short time. You feel just slightly on the outer. Maybe because you're not the majority ethnic group, Anglo-Saxon.

You might just feel slightly on the outer. Maybe because you know the feelings of guilt and shame. If anyone found out, what would they think of me here?

And you feel slightly on the outer. We compare ourselves like I'm not as useful as that person. And you feel slightly on the outer.

The Lord's Supper says we are in fellowship. We are a covenant community. There is no one on the outer. That category doesn't exist. We are in covenant fellowship with God and with one another because it's in his blood.

It's got nothing to do with us. When we eat the Lord's Supper, people call it the Lord's Table.

[36 : 04] We're meant to know we're fellowshiping with God. It's holy communion. We have communion with God as his redeemed people.

And therefore, some people call it, I know we don't, the Eucharist. Thanksgiving. Now, I don't want to call it the Eucharist for lots of baggage there, but the word itself, Thanksgiving.

Because we're the people of God, we're the redeemed people of God. Listen to an ancient Jew talking about Passover. Passover. He brought us out from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a festival day, and from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption.

So let us say before him, hallelujah. This is a joyful meal. And we're looking forward to that full expression of communion in that promise in verse 29.

I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. I think we get a glimpse of that future day, even that meal at Bethany.

[37 : 33] It's at Simon the leper's house. Now, he must have been restored. There's no way that they would be sitting around a dinner table sharing a meal with the Son of God, and he's fully made whole again.

I think that's what we're looking forward to. We're lounging around with the Son of God together, having a meal. It's a substitution set free from a powerful enemy, and we are in fellowship with the

covenant redeemed people of God.

Well, how can we survive that great day of examination when we'll face him on the last day? It's got nothing to do with us. It's that day past when the Son of Man is our Passover.

Passover. Passover. I don't know if you've heard of the Great Awakening. I'm not even going to guess a century because I got Spurgeon's century wrong, so I'm very nervous now.

The Great Awakening where there was just mass revival in America and the UK. Before that began, one night John and Charles Wesley were reading Galatians, the book of Galatians, with another man called William Holland.

[39 : 17] And they're reading Martin Luther's commentary and he had a preface to the book of Galatians and here's what Martin Luther wrote. What?

Have we then nothing to do? know nothing. Only to accept of him who of God is made unto us our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

And William Holland said, and at those words there came over me such a power that I cannot well describe. My great burden fell off in an instant.

My heart was so filled with peace and love I burst into tears. I almost thought I saw my saviour. My companions perceiving me so affected fell on their knees and prayed and then afterwards when I went into the street I could scarcely feel the ground I trot upon.

What have we nothing to do? No, nothing. One person said all you need is need.

[40 : 32] All you need is nothing. But most people don't have it. They want to bring something. You can starve in the presence of a meal.

You need to take it and eat it. But it's not the taking and eating that contributes anything. It's what it represents at Passover. It's filling your heart.

have we then nothing to do? No, nothing. Because the Son of Man died at Passover. He's our substitute.

When I see the blood I'll pass over you. We're set free from Satan and sin and we'll finally be free of their presence one day.

And we are the covenant fellowship people of God. God Jesus' death divides the world and I think we see that division in Judas and this woman and Mary.

[41 : 47] Judas, he sees nothing in it and he agrees to trade him in for a very low price. Mary, she sees the unique person and the unique event and she voluntarily joyfully pours out everything because he poured out everything for her.

That's our response, thankfulness. We can be ready for that final day simply because he died at Passover. So let's just pour out our lives and loving him in return.

And love him