

# Christ Our Passover

## Exodus 12, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

**Series:** Easter Series 2021

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**Worship:** Sacrificed For Us

**Key Sentence:** Christ our Passover was sacrificed to rescue and purify us

Outline:

I. The Exodus

II. The Bread and the Cup (1 Corinthians 5:6,8)

III. The Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7)

**1 Corinthians 5:6–8** Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? <sup>7</sup>Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

## Christ Our Passover Exodus 12, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

Opening Worship: “And Can It Be?”

### **Christ Our Passover: The Exodus**

Thursday of Holy Week, which we call Maundy Thursday, was the day that Jesus met with his disciples in an upper room in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Less than 24 hours later his body was lying in a cold stone tomb. Tonight we want to participate in that Passover and anticipate that suffering. We will look at some of the details of Passover found in Exodus 12, and we'll see, from 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:6-8 what it means that Christ, our Passover lamb was sacrificed for us. He was sacrificed to deliver us from slavery and to purify us.

Let's begin by reading 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:6-8. Hear the word of the Lord: *Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? <sup>7</sup>Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

This passage comes as an illustration in the middle of a discussion of immorality in the church. It's a powerful illustration which has significance beyond the immediate context. Paul is writing to a mixed group of Jewish and Gentile believers in Corinth, and he assumed they would understand the background references in this passage. That background is the deliverance of God's people from slavery in Egypt, and tonight I'd like to look at some of the details of that story and the Passover meal that remembered it.

We'll draw most of these details from Exodus, chapter 12. First we'll look at the events themselves, God's great deliverance of his people from Egypt which culminated in the Passover, the tenth plague, the exodus of the Hebrew slaves to the shores of the Red Sea and it's parting to grant them final escape. We'll pause and the drama class will walk us through parts of that story, and we'll sing a few songs focused on the Passover. Second, we'll look at the meal itself, using Exodus 12 for the details and 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5 for the application. Then we'll share communion. Finally, after communion we'll look more closely at the meaning of Christ's sacrifice and we'll close by entering in to the Good Friday reality of that sacrifice. First, God delivers from slavery.

In Genesis, after the fall of Adam and Eve and the judgment of the flood, the world had been populated by a multitude of fallen, sinful people who despised God and created their own gods, pursuing personal hatreds, slavery, murder and oppression. In response, in Genesis 12 God choose one particular man, Abraham, and the race that would come from him to show that the one true God was still working rescue and righteousness. But this family, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his sons were of little account until God took Jacob's son Joseph to the great nation of Egypt to save this chosen family from famine.

God's people stayed in Egypt for centuries. As Exodus begins they have multiplied greatly, but have been made slaves of the Egyptians. "Then the LORD said," Exodus 3:7 "I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, <sup>8</sup>and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey." The key word is "deliver." God had chosen this people, but now, as slaves, they needed to be delivered, or rescued. God tells them that he is in this to be a deliverer, to rescue from slavery and oppression.

And that, of course, is what he does. Exodus 5:1 "Moses and Aaron went and said to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, "Let my people go."'" Pharaoh refuses and continues to refuse as nine plagues ravage the land of Egypt. Then comes the tenth plague. "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, <sup>5</sup>and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill.'" But God is going to save his people from this judgment. They are to sacrifice a lamb and "take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it." Then "I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast." But "the blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you." That's what happened, so that Pharaoh finally said "go, get outta here."

Moses then led God's people, hundreds of thousands of freed slaves, to the shores of the Red Sea. When Pharaoh changed his mind and sent out his army, they were trapped by the sea. But God miraculously parted the waters. His people came through on dry land. The army of Pharaoh followed and were destroyed by the returning waters. So God's people were set free, rescued from the yoke, and torment of slavery. God's sovereignty, power and glory were revealed. God even says to Pharaoh "But for this purpose I have raised you up, to show you my power, so that my name may be proclaimed in all the earth."

There are two things you can take hold of here, especially as you watch the drama we're about to see. First, the slavery of Egypt becomes a model of slavery to sin. This is seen in the Old Testament when God often has to remind his sinful people that he redeemed or delivered them from "the house of slavery." In the New Testament it is explicit. Jesus says "everyone who sins is a slave to sin." Paul says "For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. <sup>21</sup>But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. <sup>22</sup>But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life." Just as they needed rescue from Pharaoh, so we needed rescue from bondage to sin.

The second thing to notice is deliverance. The deliverance from Egypt reveals the truth that God is a deliverer. This word, *natzal*, is used only a few times in Genesis, but 14 times in Exodus, always of God's rescue, and then nearly two hundred more times in the Old Testament. Before the Exodus God hadn't revealed this key truth of his character. After the Exodus God's people know. The Psalmists are particularly in love with this word. Psalm 34 "When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. <sup>18</sup>The LORD is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. <sup>19</sup>Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the LORD delivers him out of them all." The New Testament uses it too. Paul says "he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, <sup>14</sup>in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." So this evening starts with two words from the Exodus. Slavery and deliverance.

Prince of Egypt

Worship: *The Passover Song, Lamb of God*

## Christ Our Passover: The Meal

Passover was not only an event in Israel's past but was, always, an event on Israel's calendar. God made that clear from the beginning, in Exodus 12. God gave instructions for the killing of the lambs, and the painting of the blood on the doorway. He told them to stay in their houses as the destroyer passed through, who would not be allowed to enter the houses with the blood on them. Then he says, Exodus 12:24, "You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. <sup>25</sup>And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. <sup>26</sup>And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' <sup>27</sup>you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.' "

In Jesus' day they still did this. They gathered pure and spotless lambs to the temple. The priests and Levites sacrificed them. The people took their portion and roasted it and ate. I'm not sure if they actually painted the blood on the doors in Jesus' day. I couldn't find a clear answer. But, a major part of the Passover ritual, in Jesus' day, and in ours, concerned the four cups of wine that were taken at the meal. They were the The Cup of Sanctification, The Cup of Deliverance, The Cup of Redemption, and the Cup of Praise. These cups are associated with blood. The second cup is also called the cup of plagues or judgment, and it is from this cup that we dip the ten drops of "blood" for the ten plagues. The third cup is the cup of redemption, and this is the one Jesus took up during his celebration of the Passover that night. He specifically says that this cup, "that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." It is the blood "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."

So blood is no longer painted on the door for Passover, and in fact lambs are no longer slain for Passover, but only represented on the plate by a lamb bone. But the blood is still central as seen in the four cups, and Jesus makes it central to the new remembrance he gives the disciples. When Paul says "for Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us," he's referring to the blood of the lamb that was poured out to protect the Jews from the tenth plague, and to the blood of Jesus that was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The other central element of the Passover celebration was unleavened bread. Exodus 12:14 "This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations. . . . <sup>15</sup>Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel . . . .

<sup>17</sup>And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt.” Why is God talking about unleavened bread in the middle of this rescue by blood? What does leaven have to do with this? It’s a symbol. First, of haste Exodus 12:39 “And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves.” There was no time to let the bread rise, they had to get out fast once the plague of the firstborn struck. Moses explains in Deuteronomy “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, the bread of affliction—for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste.”

But the leaven was more than a symbol of haste. It became a symbol of sin. In the law of Moses no leaven was allowed on the altar. It was always unleavened bread that was offered to God. And though no explanation of this is given in the Old Testament, the rabbis taught that what prevents men from performing God’s will is “the yeast in the dough, . . . the evil impulse, which causes a ferment in the heart.” The connection of yeast and sin became part of the Passover tradition. Jewish people prepare for Passover by searching the home for leaven and burning it. The rabbis say “leaven symbolizes the evil urge, which we must search out in the recesses of our mind, and of which even a tiny bit may become disastrous.” In many Passover rituals, following the search for leaven the prayer is “Just as we remove leaven from our homes . . . so we pray that we should be able to remove evil inclinations from within us.”

This is the connection Paul makes in our text. Read it again “Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? <sup>7</sup>Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Leaven is a symbol of malice and evil. When the Corinthian Christians are boasting about the immorality they have allowed to continue among them, that’s evil leaven. And it spreads.

Don’t forget that leaven is yeast. It’s the living organism that feeds on the bread flour to make it rise, to make it grow. My wife has baked bread longer than I’ve known her. I’ve seen how remarkable the growth of yeast is, how it blows up the loaf. Sin is like that. It grows and expands. A little sin can spoil a whole life, or a whole church. But, Paul says, Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed for us. This points back to the blood. Just as the lambs were slain and blood painted on the door so the destroyer would pass over, and just as the blood of their sin offerings was said to cleanse from sin and impurity, so Christ by his sacrifice cleanses us from the sin that permeates our lives.

One of the applications of this that Paul draws out in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians is simply that we need to confess our sins, and especially as we prepare our hearts to take communion. Paul says “Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” Or as he says in tonight’s text: “Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened.” Be what you really are. Most of us have already placed faith in Christ. We have already been cleansed of sin. We are already then, unleavened bread.

Yet we continue to fall short. Our self-centeredness, our pursuit of pleasure, or antagonism toward others, or rebellion against God still has a little life, a little yeast in our soul. And we indulge this old nature from time to time. This does not make God stop loving us. If anything he wants to draw closer to us when we struggle. But it does cloud our vision, stop our ears and dull our minds so that we do not reach out to him for the forgiveness and relationship he won for us in Jesus. So right now, before we turn to communion, I want to give you a few quiet moments to look at your heart and your mind, your words and your actions, and where you have done what you know you shouldn’t, or where you have failed to do what you know you should, confess that; get the leaven of malice and evil out and come to him in sincerity and truth.

David will lead us in a song and then we’ll celebrate the bread and the cup.

Communion Worship: *Remembrance*

Invitation to Communion

Communion

## **Christ Our Passover: The Lamb**

We've seen that we were slaves to sin and God sent deliverance. We've seen that Passover was an ongoing remembrance of that rescue, and that communion is an ongoing remembrance of our rescue, in which we experience again his body broken and his blood shed. But now, before we close I want to focus a little more closely on the sacrificial lamb, and then lay in front of our hearts the path that Jesus walked after that first Lord's supper, so that we can leave, tonight, ready to meditate with joy and dread on the lamb that was slain.

Paul says in our text, 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 5:7 that "Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us." Most translations say "our Passover lamb," though the Greek only has the word Passover there, and a few translations, they do not put the word lamb in. I can understand both choices. It's good to go with only the words that are in the Greek. But the fact that Paul adds 'has been sacrificed' leans me toward adding the word lamb, because it's not the Passover celebration or the Passover feast or even the event in Exodus 12 that has been sacrificed for us, it's the lamb. Jesus is the lamb. John, chapter 1 "The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" Revelation chapter 5 "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" And 1<sup>st</sup> Peter chapter 2: "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, <sup>19</sup>but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect." That reality, of his life given to deliver us from slavery to sin and to protect us from the wrath we deserve is at the heart of communion, at the heart of holy week.

Here, on Thursday night of Holy Week, we do well to remember this sacrifice. We remember and experience it again in communion as Jesus intended. But we also experience it when we remember on Good Friday and Holy Saturday and Easter Sunday. When you walk out of here tonight you will go home. But I ask you to also go with Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane, where the great battle was fought with tears and drops of blood. "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will." The last temptation was defeated. Jesus willingly bore the cup, the wrath, and our sins.

In the dark of this night remember again the betrayal and the betrayer, the one who had walked with Jesus, been chosen by Jesus and betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Remember the friends, all his friends, who deserted him in that hour, so that he entered alone into the suffering he must bear.

Remember the disciple who followed, who sat by the fire in the courtyard, who had said “Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!” but did. Three times, with curses. Remember the leaders of Jesus’ own people who accused him, who bore false witness against him, who tore their robes because of him, who condemned him and judged the sinless lamb as one deserving of death. They spit in his face and struck him. They slapped him and mocked him.

Tomorrow morning, early, if you’re awake before it’s light, remember how they bound him and dragged him through the streets to the judgment seat of Pilate. Remember how Pilate sent him to spineless Herod who, seeing the dignity of the king, mocked him and treated him with contempt and sent him back. Remember how Pilate next offered the crowd a choice between a murderer and the Lord of Life and the crowd chose the murderer, rejecting their savior. Remember how Pilate had him whipped, the cruel 39 lashes that flay the skin and flesh from a man, exposing his spine and ribs. Remember how cowardly Pilate then asked this Jerusalem crowd what Jesus’ fate should be and those whom Jesus had wept over days before cried out “Crucify, Crucify” Remember how Pilate caved to the pressure and washed his hands of the truth. But the crowd took horrifying responsibility for this death: “His blood be on us and on our children!” Remember. You were there.

Tomorrow, before noon remember how the Roman soldiers, not content to carry out Pilate’s cruel sentence took Jesus into their barracks and stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and made him a crown of thorns and a scepter of reed so that they could mock him, spit on him and strike him. Only then did they lead him out to crucifixion. Remember how they made him carry his own cross through the streets and how in his weakened state and oppression, he fell under its weight. Remember how they dragged him up the hill and laid him out on the cross. Remember how they struck the blows that nailed his innocent flesh to the wood. Remember how all mocked him and defied him to come down, but he would not save himself so that he might save you.

Remember, tomorrow afternoon how the sky turned black as he hung there, in agony, every breath an agony. Remember how in the midst of that suffering he offered paradise to the thief and forgiveness to the ones who placed him there. Remember how he thirsted. Remember the awful moment when, under the full weight and curse of our sins, he uttered that cry of desolation “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.” Remember that for every physical torment of that Friday, the spiritual torment and weight and agony was the ten times worse, the hundred times worse, the true suffering. Finally, remember his last cry cry “it is finished.” Not a cry of despair but a cry of victory. “Father into your hands I commit my spirit.”