

Wayne T. Galloway
www.fortloganchurchofchrist.com

7 Following the Messiah Episode 8 (14:20-26:07) The Last Week: The Passover Meal

Opening:

1. You have viewed the video “Following the Messiah Episode 8” at www.appianmedia.org and have worked through the study guide Lesson Seven available by request at wtg2@hughes.net.
2. In this lesson we will study about the Passover. We will first look at the historical record of the beginning of the Passover described in Ex. 12, then we will consider the last Passover observance in the life of Jesus, especially as it is recorded in Lk. 22.
3. If you have not given consideration to the last section of the video, please do so. It involves a re-creation of a first century Passover celebration and describes in some detail the symbolism of the meal.

Into the Text:

1. Reading of Ex. 12:21-28.
2. The Passover began while the children of Israel were still in Egyptian slavery. It began with the last of the ten plagues on the Egyptians. The death angel would pass through Egypt and in every household the first-born would die. However, God provided for the Israelites to be passed over. They were to offer a lamb from the sheep or from the goats and sprinkle the blood of the lamb on the lintel and the door posts of their house. The death angel would see the blood and pass over the house.

The Passover marked the beginning of the Jewish year. Their calendar was reset by this first Passover. It was to be a perpetual ordinance from that time forward. It was to be a time of teaching, a reminder for all generations of how the Lord passed over the houses of Israel while He smote the Egyptians.

It is easy for us to get focused on the details of how the feast was observed, noting the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, the blood on the door posts, the date on the calendar, and how the lamb was to be prepared and eaten, etc. But let’s not miss the point. The Egyptians met the consequence of their sin—death! And even then God did not destroy all of them, only the first-born. As terrible as this was they did not get what they deserved for they all deserved to die.

The fact of the matter is all the Israelites deserved death too. As dramatic as the death of the first-born was we must remember that God was gracious in sparing anyone. He allowed death to break in in a limited way so that people could experience the reality of the consequence of sin. The lamb was a substitutionary sacrifice, a reminder of God’s graciousness to the Israelites.

In Ex. 13 describes how God said, "Sanctify to Me every firstborn, the first offspring of every womb among the sons of Israel, both of man and beast" (2). Read Ex. 13:3-16. The firstborn belonged to the Lord. It was a reminder of the debt of sin. It was a reminder of the powerful hand of the Lord that had delivered them from slavery.

It would be good for us to note that Pharaoh's stubbornness and hardened heart resulted in death in every Egyptian household. Israel's humble submission led to their being passed over by the death angel. But there were appropriate ethical and moral obligations following their deliverance. Not only were they to keep the Passover, but they were to give the firstborn to the Lord, every firstborn son they were to redeem. These actions served as a "sign on your hand and as phylacteries on your forehead" (13:16). The Passover was to be kept in plain sight and near to one's thoughts so as to be unavoidably remembered.

It was a powerful experience. It was a personal experience. Every family was affected, and every year they were reminded not only of their escape from Egypt, but of their escape from death! Very serious indeed!!

3. It is against this historical backdrop and 1500 years of practice among the Israelites that Jesus and His disciples observe the Passover during the final week of Jesus' life. Read Lk. 22:1-2, 7-23. Cf. Matt. 26:17-30; Mk. 14:1-2, 12-26.

Much could be said about the symbolism of the Passover as it relates to Jesus. But the accounts are less than explicit about the symbolism. While it is easy to draw a connection between Jesus as the Lamb of God and the lamb sacrificed at the Passover the accounts only document what happened. Nothing is stated about the symbolism of the meal. No explanation is contained in the accounts.

Luke indicates that Jesus commissioned Peter and John to go and prepare the Passover. It was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the day when the lamb was to be sacrificed. They were to enter the city and meet a man carrying a pitcher of water and follow him into the house that he would enter. They were to say to the owner of the house, "The Teacher says to you, 'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" They found everything just as Jesus had said, and so they prepared the Passover.

During the meal Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood." He has taken the Passover meal and created a new memorial with new significance. This was to be done in remembrance of Him (Matt. 26:28).

Of course, gathering on the first day of the week to remember Jesus and His sacrificial death for us became a powerful part of Christianity from this time forward (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34; 1 Cor. 10:16-17). It memorializes the self-

sacrificial service of the Lamb of God who came to give His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28).

For this reason the events that are transpiring in the background of this final Passover are incredible. First, Judas has made a bargain with the chief priests and scribes to betray Him to them (Lk. 22:2-6). Second, during the feast, there arose a dispute among the disciples as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest (Lk. 22:24ff). It is in this context that John 13:1ff records that Jesus got up from the supper, and laid aside His garments and taking a towel, He girded Himself, and began to wash the disciples' feet. It was a symbolic gesture of the cleansing that He was providing for them through His self-sacrifice. The emotional dynamics in this upper room scene are incredible. There is the betrayer among them, the others arguing over who is the greatest among them, by contrast Jesus is washing their feet and instituting this memorial feast to commemorate His self-sacrifice to take away sins! Just incredible!! Had I been there would I have grasped the significance of the awesomeness of the moment or would I have missed it entirely??

4. This was the culmination of 1500 years of the Passover celebration. But before that Abraham had offered Isaac on Mt. Moriah, here in Jerusalem, the place of the Temple (Gen. 22:1-10). It was at this place that the Lord provided a lamb for Abraham (Gen. 22:14). The whole sacrificial system of the O.T. would reach its climax in a few days with Jesus offering Himself as the perfect once-for-all sacrifice for sins (Heb. 10:1, 10, 12). Deliverance was being provided by a gracious God once again. Just like from Egypt. Do we really get it? Do we really understand? When we assemble on the first day of the week to proclaim His death in the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine do we comprehend what we are participating in and the real meaning of what it means to be forgiven, delivered from sin, delivered from death, by the blood of the Lamb? Humbling!!

Application:

1. Imagine yourself participating in a Passover celebration. What do you think would be most interesting? Most meaningful? How would you be changed?
2. After celebrating the Feast of the Passover for so long do you think it became "old hat" to the Israelites? Do you think it was boring, bothersome and a matter of inconvenience for those who celebrated it year after year?
3. How much does observing the Lord's Supper mean to you? Is it something that you "must do," or something you "**must** do"? Explain! In the recent situation with Covid-19 someone asked, "How can we partake of the Lord's Supper?" I tried to explain and identify how it could be done. My words seemed to fall on deaf ears, until I said, "Love will find a way." When you really want to celebrate the Lord love will find a way. When one is just eating unleavened bread and drinking fruit of the vine it is easy to be neglectful when it is inconvenient. Love motivates us to do some pretty incredible things.

4. What does Jesus' humility do for you? Confront your arguments about being the greatest? Does it make you a servant? Soften your heart? Make you appreciative? Make you believe in Him?