



Adult Sunday School Lesson Summary for July 12, 2009
Released on Wednesday, July 8, 2009

“Remembering and Celebrating”

Lesson Text: Deuteronomy 16:1-8

Background Scripture: Deuteronomy 16:1-8

Devotional Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

Deuteronomy 16:1–8

1 Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.

2 Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there.

3 Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.

4 And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there any thing of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning.

5 Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee:

6 But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.

7 And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents.

8 Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work therein.

LESSON AIMS:

Facts: to study the meaning of the Passover, or the Feast of Unleavened Bread, celebrated by the Jews.

Principle: to see how the Jewish Passover served as a foretype of Christian communion.

Application: to realize that Israel's flight from Egyptian bondage foreshadowed New Testament teaching regarding believers' salvation from the bondage of sin.

INTRODUCTION:

The mission of God in the last of the ten plagues imposed on Egypt was to slay the firstborn son in each house. In order to avoid the death of their own firstborn, Israelite families had to kill a sacrificial lamb and sprinkle its blood on the doorframe of each home. Thus it was that God passed over these homes and spared Israel's sons.

This divine act of mercy was to be commemorated ever afterward in Jewish life by an annual observance. It was the first religious festival to be instituted in the history of the Jews, and it was the first one on the Jewish calendar to be held each year.

The modern Jewish Passover observance is an elaborate ceremony that has been developed over the centuries. It involves the children in the telling of the story of Israel's exodus from Egypt. All leaven is "looked for" and put in the trash. The meal is blessed, and the first of four cups of wine ("the cup of sanctification") is served.

Greens are dipped in salt water and eaten. Three unleavened loaves of bread are presented—the middle one broken, with a larger piece hidden for the children to find later for a treat. The second cup of wine is blessed and consumed, then comes the recounting of the story of the exodus from a certain booklet.

LESSON BACKGROUND:

Time: about 1406 B.C.

Place: Plains of Moab, probably at Shittim

As today's lesson opens, the 40 years of wilderness wandering were over, and the Israelites were ready to enter the promised land. But first, Moses (age 120) had many important reminders to offer. One of those reminders involved the issue of the Passover celebration.

The historical basis of the Passover celebration is the last plague on Pharaoh and the land of Egypt (Exodus 11). The original Passover feast, however, is described in Exodus 12. The Feast of Unleavened Bread occurred right alongside the Passover (Exodus 13:3–10; 23:15; Leviticus 23:4–8; Numbers 28:16–25; Mark 14:1). Our lesson text for today is a general overview of these two feasts.

REMEMBERING GOD'S DELIVERANCE (Deuteronomy 16:1-2)

1. What was the significance of Passover? What does it commemorate?

Passover was one of three major religious festivals required of all men. While some of the celebrations initiated in Hebrew history might be considered optional, the three listed in Deuteronomy 16, Passover (vs. 1–8), Pentecost (vs. 9–12), and Tabernacles (vs. 13–15) were mandated by God Himself. Moses said, "Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the Lord thy God in the place which he shall choose" (v. 16).

The last thing God commanded Israel to do before they left Egypt was to celebrate the Passover (Exod. 12). This first observance occurred while the final plague was being visited upon the land of Egypt.

Each family was to kill a lamb and smear its blood on the doorposts of their homes. Then they were to eat a hasty meal of roasted lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs as they awaited the command to leave Egypt. God said, "For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt... And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you" (Exod. 12:12–13).

It must have been a memorable experience for the generation that ate the first Passover. Future generations were commanded to reenact the event annually. "And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever" (Exod. 12:14). Passover is still one of the most popular holidays Jews celebrate.

2. In what month was Passover celebrated? What is another name of this month? (Deuteronomy 16:1)

Abib, which means "ears of grain," is the old Hebrew name from an agricultural calendar. Much later, the name of this particular *month* will be changed to *Nisan* due to the influence of the Babylonian calendar (see Esther 3:7; Nehemiah 2:1).

This month is designated as Israel's first month of the religious year (Exodus 12:2); eventually it becomes the seventh month of Israel's civil year. It equates to late March and

early April. The *Passover* observance is to begin on the evening of the fourteenth day of this month, as established by God (Exodus 12:6, 18).

3. What kind of meat was eaten in the Passover meal? (v. 2)

This verse takes for granted all the details of Exodus 12:3–11 concerning the *passover sacrifice*. Each family is to select a lamb (the Hebrew refers to either a young sheep or goat) on the tenth day of the first month. Guests are to be invited in order that the lamb may be eaten completely.

The instructions are clear. The lamb must be a year old, without defect; it is to be slaughtered at twilight on the fourteenth of Nisan (Abib). The blood is to be smeared on the lintel and doorposts. The meat is to be roasted over a fire, not boiled. It is to be eaten along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. No meat is to remain; leftovers are to be burned before dawn. The people are to eat hastily. Their sandals are to be on their feet, clothing tucked into belts, and staffs in their hand. Thus, everyone has the appearance of being ready to leave at a moment's notice.

The Gospels present Jesus' death as coinciding with the Feast of Passover (Luke 22:13–15; John 13:1; etc.). The fact that John 19:36 refers to Psalm 34:20 ("He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken") indicates that Jesus becomes the world's Passover Lamb when we compare Exodus 12:46 and Numbers 9:12. See also 1 Corinthians 5:7.

Since Deuteronomy anticipated a time when Israel would be in their own land, Passover was to be celebrated in the place God would later specify. In time, this would be Jerusalem, where the temple was erected. However, some scholars believe that prior to the construction of the temple, the Passover was celebrated wherever the tabernacle was located. Since it was originally celebrated with family or neighbors (Exod. 12:3-4), others think that Passover continued to be a family feast until a central sanctuary was constructed in Israel.

4. Should Christians hold Passover celebrations or participate in modern Jewish celebrations of Passover? Why, or why not?

Some Christians avoid Passover celebrations entirely, believing that such observances detract from the finality of the Lord's Supper. The lesson writer participated in a Passover observance for the purpose of witnessing for Christ, who is the ultimate Passover lamb. Such witnessing should be the goal of Christians who decide to participate, although harm can be done if those hosting the observance end up feeling "ambushed" by a Christian witness that was not expected.

Some Jewish-Christian groups offer opportunities for churches to experience a narrated Passover celebration. These can help Christians better understand the Last Supper and the symbolism involved. Passover reenactments may help us better appreciate the Jewishness of Jesus and His disciples.

REFLECTING ON ISRAEL'S DIFFICULTIES (Deuteronomy 16:3-4)

5. What kind of bread was to be used in the Passover? What does this tell us about the Last Supper? (v. 3)

The *seven days* at issue here occur between the fourteenth and twenty-first days of the month (Exodus 12:18). The only kind of bread that may be eaten for that week is bread made without leaven (yeast). This kind of bread serves to remind the people of their haste to leave Egypt (Exodus 12:11) as well as their slavery in Egypt; thus it is *bread of affliction* (see Exodus 3:7, 17; 4:31).

Just as the Passover was to help Israel remember the day God delivered them out of slavery in Egypt, so the Lord's Supper is a memorial of our deliverance from sin through Christ's death: "For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. 5:7). The Feast of Unleavened Bread also relates spiritually to the Christian experience: "Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (vs. 6-8). The elements of the Lord's Table are thus continual

reminders: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (11:26).

6. What were the circumstances surrounding your personal day of salvation, your deliverance from the bondage of sin? How does remembering those circumstances strengthen your faith?

Many believers are able to mark a specific day, event, or set of circumstances that brought them to faith. For some, this may involve a sequence of events over a period of time. We especially remember the people who played an important role in our decision for Christ. Remembering this milestone of our spiritual journey is important for both ourselves and our witness to others.

7. What special instructions were given concerning any leftover meat? (v. 4)

No meat was to remain. Leftovers were to be burned before dawn. The Israelites were not to allow any of the meat of the Passover lamb to be kept until the next day. Any that was not eaten was to be burned (Exod. 12:10).

To honor this instruction requires a certain strength of faith. It's a human tendency to try to preserve unused food "just in case." We may compare the Israelites' disobedience in trying to save manna in Exodus 16:20.

RESPONDING TO DIVINE DIRECTIONS (Deuteronomy 16:5-8)

8. Where was the sacrifice of the Passover to take place and at what time of day? (vs. 5-6)

Refer back to verse 2, where it is mentioned that the Passover sacrifice was to be offered only in the place where God chose to have His name honored. We come back to the same thought in this passage. Remember that Deuteronomy is a covenant renewal treaty given by Moses to the people just before they enter the promised land.

Once Israel entered Canaan, it was only in the presence of God that the Passover lamb could be sacrificed, not just in any location (gates) of the Israelites.

A specific time of day was given for the sacrifice to occur. It was to be done in the evening, at sunset – the same time that the Israelites came forth out of Egypt.

While the newly formed nation of Israel anticipated a homeland and a central place of worship, the situation in the New Testament is quite different. Instead of one nation being God's people, Christ commanded that God's mercy and grace be preached to all nations (Mark 16:15). While Jews were the first to hear the gospel (Acts 2), Gentiles would respond in large numbers (13:46-49; 28:28). Likewise, the place of worship would no longer be significant (John 4:19-24), as God wants us to "worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (vs. 23). Old Testament people, events, and institutions furnish us with important background information, but they also serve as types of realities in the new covenant. The law is but a shadow of what we have in Jesus (Col. 2:16-17; Heb. 10:1).

9. What aspects of your own "spiritual Egypt" hinder your full enjoyment of the promised land of Christ? How will you correct this situation?

Many adults are overly satisfied with their current situation and thus resistant to change; that resistance ends up being a "spiritual Egypt." The busyness of life can crowd out our relationship with God, leaving us unable to hear His call. Unresolved sin issues make us unprepared to undertake new ventures that God might offer to us.

10. How was the Passover lamb to be prepared? (v. 7)

In accord with what was stipulated in Exodus 12, the Passover lamb was to be roasted. It was not to be cooked any other way.

Again it was emphasized that God was going to choose a place in the Promised Land as a national sanctuary. After the completion of the Passover Feast, the people were to return to

their tents (Deut. 16:7). At this point, they were all living in tents. It may be best to understand the phrase *go unto thy tents* as an idiom meaning "go home" (see 2 Samuel 20:1; 1 Kings 12:16).

11. What happened on the seventh day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread? (v. 8)

On the last day of the celebration, a solemn assembly was to be convened. Like the weekly Sabbath, it was to be a day free of common labor.

While Christians do not normally celebrate them, Jewish holidays do furnish us with important background information because they illustrate important elements of the new covenant. With regard to Christian worship, God's people should assemble with the same sense of solemnity as did the ancient Hebrews when they reflected on the redemption God had provided them. Let us both remember and celebrate the redemption we have in the Lord Jesus Christ.

12. How much time are you willing to devote to worshiping and remembering God? How do you deal with limits on your time commitment?

Ancient Israel held annual worship and remembrance celebrations that lasted for an entire week in addition to weekly Sabbath observances. Today, many Christians struggle to attend a weekly worship service for even one hour. The lure of family activities, sporting events, etc., can crowd out our commitment to God and His people. We can correct this by anticipating specific events that will build our spiritual commitment.

For example, it's not a good idea to wait until December 10 to ask, "Now what day is the church's Christmas play?" A proactive approach will ask that question on, say, November 1 in order to make definite plans both to attend and to bring a neighbor. Spending extended time with God's people helps us grow in the Lord.

PRACTICAL POINTS:

- 1.** Our celebrations have changed from those of Israel, but they have the same purpose - to honor the Lord our God (Deut. 16:1-2).
- 2.** The forms of our observances contain reminders of what God has done for us (v. 3).
- 3.** We must take stringent measures to banish the leaven of impurity from our observance of the Lord's saving work (v. 4).
- 4.** There is a proper place and time for everything we do (vs. 5-6).
- 5.** Although our religious celebrations are different from Israel's, they must be conducted in an orderly way and with reverence (vs. 7-8).

CONCLUSION:

Celebrations of the Passover (and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that go along with it) are rarely recorded in the narrative of the Old Testament. Perhaps that is because its observance is taken for granted. But the few records of the celebrations are instructive and interesting: Joshua 5:10-12 (second generation of the exodus just before the conquest of the promised land, about 1406 BC); 2 Chronicles 30 (Hezekiah's reform, about 727 BC); 2 Kings 23:21-23 as paralleled in 2 Chronicles 35:1-19 (Josiah's reform, about 622 BC); and Ezra 6:19-22 (Ezra's reform after the exile, about 515 BC).

It seems that when great reform swept over the people, they celebrated the Passover extravagantly. The Passover became the most important celebration for the Israelites, for it commemorated their origin as a people in God's great deliverance from slavery. The exodus event becomes the model for the idea of salvation throughout the Bible.

The church today should continue to remember and celebrate deliverance from the bondage of sin no less than the ancient Israelites celebrated deliverance from their bondage of the flesh. Certainly Christmas is a great time to celebrate the birth of our Lord—the Word become flesh (John 1:14). The greatest gift ever given is Jesus (John 3:16), and that is worthy to celebrate.

The church often celebrates the resurrection of Jesus in a nobler manner than His birth. Resurrection Day (Easter) recognizes the Sunday morning when death was swallowed up in victory! The resurrection is at the very heart of the Christian faith; it must not be forgotten in the collective mind of the church. Remembering the resurrection means that Christians celebrate salvation from sin.

The Day of Pentecost (the Jewish Festival of Weeks) is a time for the church to remember her birth through the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2). Yet there seems to be no consistency in remembering and celebrating this birth in the church-at-large today. More needs to be done. There is no reason why we should allow such a day to pass without even a mention.

Those three are annual observances. Much more frequent should be celebrations of the Lord's Supper. Each time we celebrate we recall Christ's victory over sin. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). If we allow it to do so, the Lord's Supper can bind us together, keeping us close to God and one another.

PRAYER:

Our Father, bind us together as we remember and celebrate the occasions of Your great salvation for us. Help us as individuals and corporately as the church to recall Your actions of mercy, justice, and love for all people. May we be wise as we pass our faith on to the next generation and the generation beyond that. In Jesus name. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER:

Remember to celebrate. Celebrate to remember.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON:

Next week's lesson is "[Commissioning for Service](#)" and focuses on the consecration of Aaron, Moses' brother, and his sons to the priesthood in Israel. Study Leviticus 8:1-36.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY:

Renee Little
Jesus Is All Ministries
www.jesuisall.com

WORKS CITED

Summary and commentary derived from Standard Lesson Commentary Copyright© 2009 by permission of Standard Publishing.

Reprinted by permission of The Incorporated Trustees of the Gospel Worker Society, Union Gospel Press, P.O. Box 6059, Cleveland, Ohio 44101. (Web site: <http://www.uniongospelpress.com/>)

The Pulpit Commentary, Spence-Jones, H. D. M. (Hrsg.), Bellingham, WA : Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The KJV Parallel Bible Commentary, by Nelson Books