

A Tale of Two Dinners: Passover

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[0 : 00] This is the second in a series of four as we look at Mark's Gospel, Chapter 14, as we prepare in these weeks leading up to Easter, as we prepare for the cross. So do turn with me to Mark, Chapter 14, and we're looking this afternoon at verses 12 to 25 in Mark, Chapter 14.

That's on page 850 in the Church Bibles there. And this is the second of two meals that we're looking at at the start of Mark. Last week we were with Simon the leper at his house for a meal, and then today we have the Passover meal.

So let's look with me, Chapter 14 and verse 12. And on the first day of unleavened bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples came to him.

Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover? And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. And wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, The teacher says, Where is my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready.

[1 : 22] There, prepare for us. And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them. And they prepared the Passover. And when it was evening, he came with the twelve.

And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.

They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, Is it I? He said to them, It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me.

For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him. But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.

And as they were eating, he took bread. And after blessing it, he broke it and gave it to them and said, Take, this is my body.

[2 : 28] And he took a cup. And when he had given thanks, he gave it to them and they all drank of it. And he said to them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.

Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Amen. Well, before we consider these words together, let us pray as we come to our Heavenly Father. Our Heavenly Father, our Creator, our Lord, as we gather together, we turn our attention towards you and we are reminded of your greatness, of your glory, and of our smallness and frailty. Help us to be concerned for the praise of your name, that you would be honored and worshipped through our lives and words. Father, you have caused all the Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning.

Help us to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them so that we might embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life which you have given to us in our Saviour, Jesus Christ.

[4 : 02] thank you that you have revealed yourself to us and help us as we consider again Jesus' death to respond in repentance and belief.

Help us, we ask this, in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Oh, I wonder if subconsciously you switched off when the word Passover crept up again and again in the passage I read a few moments ago. The Passover, that's some Old Testament thing, isn't it? Interesting, but not terribly important. What really matters now is the Lord's Supper. Communion, that's what this passage is all about. the institution of the Lord's Supper. Well, no. It's not. It's not about the institution of the Lord's Supper. There's no mention anywhere of Jesus instructing the disciples to repeat this meal as a remembrance.

We do see that elsewhere in the New Testament, but Mark doesn't mention that here. Mark is writing for a different reason, and we'll have to pay attention to the Passover meal after all.
[5 : 18] To understand the significance of Jesus' upcoming death, to understand the significance of the Lord's Supper, we need to understand the significance of the Passover meal.

That meal which remembers the great deliverance from God's judgment and from slavery in Egypt many centuries before. Now, this is the second of two meals at the start of chapter 14.

Last week, at Simon the Lepidus, we saw a woman who adored Jesus. She was willing to give up something of extraordinary value for him.

But we also saw Judas in complete contrast to that woman. He was willing to betray Jesus for selfish gain. And at the heart of that episode was the impending death of Jesus.

Jesus was right at the center of it, and it's a death that divides. And it's his death that is at the heart of this whole chapter.

[6 : 23] And today, in this second meal, in chapter 14, his death takes ever greater prominence. In particular, Mark is at pains to make it abundantly clear that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Passover meal.

The view in Mark's camera has been steadily zooming in on the Passover. At the start of chapter 14, we are two days out from the festival.

Verse 12, we find ourselves on the first day of the feast, the day when the Passover lamb is sacrificed. And you can't miss the constant references to the Passover here.

Twice in verse 12, again in verse 14, again verse 16, and then the events of 17 to 25 are the actual meal itself. Mark, and what he records here, is making one very clear point to his readers and to us. Jesus is the promised rescuer. He is the ultimate fulfillment of the Passover. Two points this afternoon in relation to Jesus and the Passover.

[7 : 32] Firstly, looking at verses 12 to 21. we see the sovereignty of Jesus in the Passover preparation. The sovereignty of Jesus. Every year, thousands of Jews would flock to Jerusalem in order to celebrate the Passover.

The population would swell from a few thousand to many tens of thousands during the feast. You can imagine the clogged up roads as people traveled from the surrounding area to come into the city, making their way to Jerusalem.

And that is where we find Jesus and his disciples at the start of verse 12. They are outside of the city and it was later that day in the evening that the Passover meal was to be eaten.

Jesus begins to make preparations for he and his disciples to eat the meal together. He dispatches two disciples ahead of the rest of the group to go into Jerusalem itself.

In what is a quite astonishing demonstration of his control over events, his sovereignty, Jesus tells them who they'll meet as they arrive into the city and what will happen.

[8 : 44] And verse 16, the disciples set out and they went to the city and they found it just as Jesus had told them and they go about preparing for the Passover.

Passover. Jesus is in complete control. He knows what is coming. He knows that his death is imminent but he doesn't waver from the task.

Even as the meal begins, as he sits with the twelve, we see again that one of them is going to betray Jesus. Mark has already just a few verses ago, as we saw last week in verses 10 and 11, identified Judas as the betrayer.

And here, Jesus articulates in front of the twelve that he is going to be betrayed. One who is eating the Passover with him is going to do it.

And then Jesus says again in verse 20, it is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. Jesus is in complete control.

[9 : 51] He knows that it had to be this way. Verse 21, for the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to the man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.

That Jesus is betrayed in order to be killed, that is part of God's plan. Jesus knows that. He's not taken by surprise.

but even though it's part of the plan, Judas has not absolved responsibility. Woe to the betrayer, says Jesus. Better for that man if he had not been born.

Jesus is in complete control and he, in full knowledge of what was to come, in full knowledge that he was to be betrayed by one of those in whom he had invested time and energy, in knowledge of all that, he chose to die.

It was no accident. Things didn't get out of hand, out of control. Jesus wasn't rolling with the punches, quickly thinking out plan B, C, and D, because plan A didn't work.

[11:01] This was plan A, his betrayal, his death. That was the plan all along. For the disciples, they perhaps knew, in theory, that Jesus was in control.

They'd seen him do amazing things. They'd heard his words. But when it came to his arrest, a few verses later, they fled.

It seriously did not look like Jesus was in control then, but he was. His death, horrible, and looking like a massive defeat, was the plan.

It was the will of the Lord to crush him. But it was not a purposeless death. Jesus' words in verses 22 to 25 reveal that his death is a death that has brought about the greatest rescue in history.

This was the event spoken of right back in Genesis chapter 3 when God promised that a serpent-crushing, suffering servant would come. This was the great and ultimate rescue exodus-type event that the liberation of Egypt many centuries before pointed to.

[12:21] It is here that we begin to see a little more of the implications of Jesus' seismic center of all of human history death. So our second point, we see the significance of Jesus as the Passover fulfillment, fulfillment, the significance of Jesus as the Passover fulfillment.

To really grasp the earth-shattering significance of Jesus' words here, we need to inhabit for a moment the world of the Israelites, the Jews.

Every single year, they would celebrate the Passover meal, which involved, verse 12, the sacrifice of a Passover lamb. Why do they do that?

What's the significance of it all? Well, think back to the very first Passover. Israel had been under the cruel slavery of Pharaoh, under the Egyptians for four centuries.

The promises God had made to Abraham centuries before that, promises of a great nation, promises of living in a land, enjoying God's presence, seemed like an awful long way off for them, in bondage in Egypt.

[13:39] But the Lord remembered his promises, and working through his servant Moses, he brought about their deliverance from slavery. It took ten plagues, with the final plague striking the devastating blow to Egypt.

All the firstborn in Egypt were to be struck down. man, but the Lord made provision for his people. He made provision for them to escape the judgment, and it was through the killing of a lamb, and taking some of its blood and painting it on the doorposts and the lintel of their homes.

Listen to the Lord's words from Exodus chapter 12, talking about the Passover meal. You shall eat in haste. It is the Lord's Passover, for 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, and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments.

I am the Lord. 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 when I strike the land of Egypt.

God's people would only be saved. They would only avoid God's judgments if they followed the instructions and killed the lamb.

[15:04] The lamb died so that their firstborn might be saved. And Jesus, likewise, in pointing to himself as a fulfillment of the Passover meal, indicates that his death is like that of the Passover lamb.

It is through Jesus' lamb-like death that his people escape God's judgments. Jesus is the final Passover lamb.

There is only one way to avoid God's judgment, which every man on earth will one day face. And the way to avoid it is found in Jesus, in his death.

only if we trust in his death on our behalf will he pass over us on that day of judgments, which is coming. Let's notice that this section here, verses 22-25, is not primarily about the Passover lamb, but it's about the Passover meal.

the breaking of bread and the sharing of the cup are normal parts of the Passover meal, and it is those elements, not so much the lamb, that are in view here. Notice what Jesus says about the cup.

[16:23] Firstly, in verse 24, this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many. The Passover meal was not only a commemoration of Israel's great deliverance from Egypt.

it also spoke of the covenant which God entered into with his people. By describing his blood as being of the covenant and poured out for many, Jesus is saying that the Lord's supper and his death, of which it speaks, inaugurates the new covenant, new relationship with God between him and his people.

This is the new covenant that the Old Testament points forward to. Jeremiah speaks of this new covenant and how it's all about the forgiveness of sins.

We also read in Zechariah that this new covenant and the blood shed will rescue people from a waterless pit. In other words, rescue from the grave, from death itself.

Freedom from sin and from death, that is what Jesus' death will bring to those who have faith in him. So in declaring himself to be the fulfillment of the Passover meal, Jesus is saying not only is he the final Passover lamb who rescues his people from judgment, but also his is a sin-bearing death that brings in the promised new covenant.

[17 : 54] But there's more. Look at verse 25. Truly I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

Jesus clearly anticipates a day when the kingdom of God will be fully realized. He points forward to another meal, the final dinner party, the great banquet.

So yes, Jesus is the fulfillment of the Passover meal, but it's a meal that is not yet finished. Jesus is yet to return. So as you celebrate the Lord's Supper, you look back to what Jesus has done through his death.

And we by faith receive the wonderful benefits of the new covenant and share in the fruits of Christ's passion and victory. But we also look forward, we look forward to his return when we can enjoy that final, never-ending meal in the new kingdom.

So if you hear the call of Mark's account today, his call to repent and believe in the gospel, then what Jesus tells you about the magnitude of his death and what it achieves for you, if you have repented and believed the gospel message perhaps many years ago, then these things are true for you and will always be true for you.

[19 : 32] You need not fear. You can rejoice and you can look forward. You need not fear the day of judgment when Christ returns because Christ himself is your Passover lamb.

you have been rescued from judgment. Now that can be hard for us to think about, can't it? For the Israelites of that very first Passover meal, it was very real indeed.

The scars from their slavery were fresh. Their tired limbs reminded them constantly of their agonizing labor. Every morning they would be reminded afresh of the complete lack of freedom as their slave masters towered over them.

They would have heard the wailing all across the land that night of the Passover. The ear piercing screams of grieving parents.

They were very aware of what they had been rescued from. Can you imagine the joy, the relief, the sober relief they would have felt?

[20 : 46] Knowing that the Passover lamb had saved them. Perhaps it's worth reflecting on again what you have been rescued from. God's judgment is a terrifying thing.

But you have the Passover lamb. Jesus' death brings safety.

He brings shelter from God's judgments. So do not fear. You can rejoice because Jesus through the shedding of his blood has brought into being a new covenant through which a relationship between God and the many is made possible.

How is it possible? Because his death is a sin-bearing death that makes the forgiveness of sins possible. It is only through Jesus' death that you and I can have a relationship with him.

apart from Jesus we are cut off without hope. But what a wonderful Savior we have. Through his death you belong to him.

[21 : 56] You are his. The reign of sin and death is done. All may live from sin set free. Saved from the curse of God I am.

My Savior hangs upon a tree. We can rejoice. But we can also look forward. We can look forward with a certain hope because this Passover meal is not yet finished.

Jesus is to return and we wait expectantly for his return. Jesus through his death has not only won us forgiveness but also a place amongst his people in the future paradise world.

That is where we are headed. That is the future for his people. Life at the moment can be very difficult, can't it? We face hardships.

But this is not the complete picture. We look forward to that final meal. The benefits of Jesus' death are astonishing, aren't they?

[23 : 06] Jesus states clearly what his death is about and he invites his disciples to take part in his death as they eat the bread and drink the wine. And he invites you too to take part, to take hold for yourself the great benefits of his death.

Have you done so? If you have repented and believed the gospel, then these astonishing benefits of Christ's death are yours. you are safe in him.

Repent and believe. That is Mark's message to us this afternoon. And that's a message to take to others. Believe in Jesus because Jesus is the final rescuer, the only rescuer, and his death gives those who are his much to rejoice in.

God's love. So as we look forward to Easter, as we look forward to celebrating what his death has done, let us rejoice, let us look forward.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

[24 : 23] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.