

The Promise of Passover

Joshua 5:10-12

Preached by Phillip Kayser at DCC on Sunday, November 13th 2022

We are back in Joshua today, and I will be reading Joshua 5:10-12. These three verses describe the first Passover that most of them have had in 38 years. It must have been an incredible time of joy as they were readmitted to this feast. Imagine being barred for that long. I can't. But let's read. [Reading]

I. Introduction - a brief overview of the relationship of Old Testament circumcision and Passover to baptism and the Lord's Table.

Before we dive into the passage, I want to show the relationship of circumcision and Passover (from the Old Testament) to baptism and the Lord's Table (in the New Testament). The New Testament says that those two sacraments correspond to our two sacraments. The last time I preached on this chapter we looked at circumcision, and showed how it parallels New Covenant baptism on many levels.

Today we will look at the second sacrament of the Old Testament - communion. Communion came in different forms, depending on the time of year. It was practiced weekly as fellowship meals that followed the peace offerings, and it was practiced annually at six different festivals. But Passover was the mother of all communion meals out of which the other communion meals flowed. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper He used the language of Passover. Obviously the bloody parts of the Passover fell away once Jesus was sacrificed, and that's why only unleavened bread and wine remain. And the same was true of circumcision. The bloody part of the circumcision/washing ceremony fell away and only baptism was left in the New Testament. But the essence of both sacraments continues into the New Testament.

But back to Passover, 1 Corinthians 5:7-8 says that we continue eat the Passover feast when we partake of the Lord's Table, and 1 Corinthians 10 says that we continue the essence of *all* the Old Testament communion meals in the Lord's Table. In fact, in that chapter Paul says we can learn from those Old Testament communion meals how to properly partake of the Lord's Supper ourselves. So we are going to do that by looking at this Passover meal. Obviously it doesn't say everything that could be said about Passover observation, but it is at least an introduction.

II. The conditions for the passover (cf. vv. 2-9) and the significance of “Gilgal” to the Passover

First of all, there were conditions for partaking of the Passover meal. A stranger couldn't come in and start partaking without demonstrating to the Levites (the pastors) that he met those conditions. My book on Communion lays out *all* the conditions that Scripture gives, but let's just look at the ones hinted at in verses 2-9.

A. Have already received the first sacrament of entrance (v. 2-3)

First, they got circumcised in these verses, and the fact that that happened before Passover was not an accident. The law of God laid down the rule that no uncircumcised person could partake of the Passover or any of the other communion meals. Well, that meant that most of these Israelites had not partaken of communion for many years - 38 years to be precise. Exodus 12:48 says, “No uncircumcised person shall eat it.” Numbers 9 and other passages indicate that ritual cleansing was also needed - a baptism. That was an absolute rule.

But second, we saw that there were a number of things had to be in place before people could get circumcised. So those too are preconditions for Passover. They had to repent of their sins and put their faith in the coming Messiah. That's why Romans 4:11 says that Abraham's circumcision was a sign and seal of his justification by faith. If they were under discipline, they had to put off the behavior that led to that discipline. Once they did that, they and their children could receive circumcision.

Third, we saw last time that circumcision had to be done under the authority of the Levites, who were the pastors.

Fourth, it was normally supposed to be done at a public ceremony and not be a private event. And that's why the circumcision in verses 2-9 was public. As embarrassing as that would have been, it was public.

So last time we saw that all of this believing generation had just gotten circumcised by the pastors (the Levites) as a sign of their justification by faith alone. And since believers and their children were to be circumcised, all of their male children were circumcised along with them. I won't repeat what we said back then. And I won't get into the baptism side of things, other than to say that while the males got circumcised, both males and females were baptized, and their baptism was called a circumcision. And Numbers 9 and some passages in Leviticus lay out all of the rules for that.

Well, in the same way, before anyone can partake of communion in the New Testament, he has to be baptized with water by an ordained minister of the Gospel in a public ceremony. We are willing to rebaptize people for whom that didn't happen.

B. Have reversed excommunication/discipline (vv. 4-6)

But let me talk a bit more about that second prerequisite - that if there was church discipline, then the church discipline had to be reversed before people could come to communion. Verses 4-6 of this chapter already briefly rehearsed the history found in much

more detail in the books of Numbers and Deuteronomy. It showed that 38 years earlier the adults had rebelled against God over and over and had eventually come under God's discipline and were excommunicated from the church. Because they weren't members of the synagogues, they were not allowed to circumcise their children. They were still part of the nation (you didn't have to be circumcised to be part of the nation), but they were not members of the church. One might think that children shouldn't have to suffer for what the parents did, but that is God's covenantal way of dealing. So as those children became adults, they made their own profession of faith.

Now, I did mention that there was a believing remnant that *was* circumcised and did partake of the communion meals throughout that entire period, but the bulk of Israel did not. So this ceremony was a reversal of that discipline. And the application that I make is that God guards His table jealously and He expects His ministers to do so as well. We ask visitors to wait if they have not been baptized by a minister and have not made membership vows in an evangelical church. Some people complain about waiting; well many of these Israelites waited 38 years.

C. Repentance and faith were required (vv. 2-9)

And of course, other passages indicate that discipline couldn't be reversed without repentance. That should be obvious. These people were already believers, but there had been compromise in their lives. If you look at verse 9 you will see this hinted at. Then the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." They had been acting more like Egypt than like God's people, and they had repented of that. They had left Egypt 40 years before, but Egypt had not left them, and it was just now, on this day, that the reproach of Egypt was finally eliminated. That is an amazing statement. It didn't matter that they were believers; the reproach of Egypt was still clinging to them. It didn't matter that they had previously won some battles. By failing to be circumcised, they were still identifying with the world. Before they could take the conquest of Canaan, God wanted them to have a radical renunciation of the world and commitment to His ways of doing things. Were they God's people? Yes. But were they prepared for the conflict? No. God wanted it to be unmistakably clear that they were committed to Him unto death. And He reinstated the rite of circumcision, a painful operation which demonstrated a radical commitment. Now, that's passed away in the New Testament, so don't worry - we don't require circumcision in New Testament times. But we do require baptism.

D. In the Passover they were renewing their vows of loyalty and devotion

Next, by partaking of the Passover, they were renewing their vows of loyalty and devotion to God. Fellowship and worship are things Satan fears. And this was one of the big items that God wanted in their lives before they went into the conquest. Verse 10 says, "So the children of Israel camped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight on the plains of Jericho." This was a feast that highlighted both their walk with God and their walk with each other: both worship and fellowship. If Satan can break either worship or fellowship, he has achieved a major inroad into our lives. And Satan had done that a number of times in the previous 40 years. Many years earlier, when king Balaak

got Balaam to curse Israel, what was his strategy to make Israel ineffective? Balaam told him to do two things: get them to fornicate and/or to intermarry with unbelievers which would destroy the covenantal fellowship and teach them to worship other gods which would break the power of worship. If Satan can break our horizontal relationship with the body, he can hinder our relationship with God. And if he can destroy our close worship and fellowship with God it will automatically affect our relationship with each other. 1 John is so explicit about those things being essential to the Christian walk. So these Israelites were bound to the Lord and to each other through these two sacraments.

III. The Christ-centered meaning of the Passover - How Passover grounds the conquest of Canaan in Christ's future redemption (see reverse for chart).

But this Passover meal also ties the entire conquest of the rest of the book to the future redemption of Jesus. Let me quickly explain what is meant by this lamb. Exodus 12-13 gives God's instructions on the Passover meal and requires that these instructions be passed on from generation to generation. So we can assume that the Levites instructed these Israelites in the meaning before they partook. I've included a chart on the back of your outlines that gives 20 ways in which Passover perfectly prefigured Jesus. I'll only highlight four or five of those twenty points to give you an idea.

1. Point one shows that the lamb itself represents Jesus, the Lamb of God sacrificed for us (Ex. 12:3; John 1:29). 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, "Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us."
2. Point two gives the requirement that the lamb be without any blemish (Ex. 12:4,5). I give two New Testament verses that show this pointed to the sinlessness of Jesus (1 Pet. 1:19; 2 Cor. 5:21).
3. Point 4 shows the lamb set apart four days before Passover and brought for inspection (Ex. 12:3,6) - it had to be inspected by the pastors. Interestingly, on the very day that thousands of lambs were being herded through the streets of Jerusalem to be inspected by the Levites at the temple, Jesus went to the temple surrounded by those lambs.
4. Point 5 shows that the lamb was slain on exactly the same day Jesus was crucified (Ex. 12:6; John 19:14,31).

And I won't take the time to go through all 20 points of correspondence, but when you see how Passover was a sign and seal of Christ's redemption, you can see how this was such a perfect preparation for them going into the land of Canaan. Joshua himself was a type of Jesus advancing the Gospel, but there is no Gospel without redemption. By partaking of this sacrament these believing Israelites were acknowledging that they could not take the conquest apart from Christ and His work.

IV. The timing of the Passover (v. 10b)

There is also some interesting stuff here related to timing. Since Joshua is a type of Christ, it shouldn't surprise us that even his chronology parallels Christ's in many ways. Let me give you several timing examples:

In chapter 1 Joshua was commissioned to his ministry in Canaan on New Year's day, Abib 1 - with Abib taking on the name Nisan after the exile. Well, Abib 1 or Nisan 1 is a very significant date. Michael Rood calculated that Abib 1 was when Jesus emerged from the desert to begin his ministry, and John the Baptist announced Him to everyone, saying, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" So it is not surprising that Exodus 40:2 commanded the tabernacle to be set up on Abib 1, and the tabernacle opened its doors to ministry on that day. The tabernacle was also a type of Jesus and His ministry. But the key thing is that Joshua and Jesus both are commissioned to ministry on New Year's Day.

Chapter 4:19 says that Israel crossed the Jordan River on Abib 10. Well, that is the date of Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

In obedience to Exodus 12, verse 10 of our chapter says that they kept the Passover on the 14th day of Abib. That's when Christ as a Passover sacrifice was crucified.

But verse 11 says that they ate of the produce of the land of Canaan the next day, eating unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day. Well, that is almost a direct quote of Leviticus 23:14. Let me quote that in context, because it gives instructions on what they are to do when they come into the land. It says,

"Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: 'When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. 11 He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. 12 And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the LORD. 13 Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the LORD, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. 14 You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.'

Well, Jewish Karaite commentators were the first to have pointed out that the only way Joshua 5 can be reconciled with these instructions is if the Passover of *that* year landed on a Sabbath.¹ Well, this hint not only gives us a very precise chronology, but it also shows

¹ For example, Karaite Jew Nehemia Gordon, in his online article "The Truth About Shavuot," explains the only means of reconciling that verse with Leviticus 23:14. He says, "When Joshua 5:11 describes the eating of "unleavened bread and parched grain... on this very day" it is using almost the precise wording of Leviticus 23:14 "and bread and parched

how Israel was carefully following God's law to a t. So we have Passover immediately followed by the wave offering, followed by their eating grain from the land on the 15th.

If the last section of this chapter follows immediately after the 15th, then this theophany of the Second Person of the Trinity occurs on the 16th - resurrection day. We can't be absolutely sure of that, but it would then prefigure Christ's resurrection power rather well.

There are three additional things we can learn from all of this beautiful timing. The fact that four Sabbatic structures (four weeks) are built into the first six chapters typifies the fact that Jesus is our rest. We must first rest in Him before we can begin our dominion work. After all, He gives us the strength to take dominion.

Second, all of this shows that they were committing to obey God's laws in even its tiniest details. If God said it, they did it. God blesses those who are loyal to His law.

Third, doing both sacraments before rushing into conquest shows huge trust in God. Let me explain. From a human perspective it would have been much more advantageous for Israel to take advantage of the fear that the Jordan River crossing produced in the Canaanites in verse 1 and rush into battle. Take the advantage. In verse 1 the Canaanites are at a disadvantage and would have had no time to prepare a counteroffensive. But God does two unusual things. Right in front of Jericho God has them get circumcised. With how sore the men would have been, that could have made them sitting ducks. They would not have been

grain... you will not eat until this very day." The new produce of the land was forbidden until the Omer offering was brought. Joshua 5:11 is saying that when the Israelites entered the Land for the first time, they observed this commandment and waited until the terms of Leviticus 23:14 were fulfilled. In other words, they waited for the Omer offering before eating the grain of Israel. This has been widely recognized by Jewish Bible commentators throughout history, such as the 11th Century rabbi Rashi who explains on Joshua 5:11, "morrow of the Passover is the day of the waving of the omer. Joshua 5:11 is saying that the first Omer offering in the Land of Israel was brought on the "morrow of the Passover." Immediately after this, the Children of Israel were permitted to eat of the new crops of the Land. For the first time, the Israelites pulled out their sickles and ate of the good bounty of their new homeland... What all this means is that the first Omer offering in Israel took place on the 15th day of the First Hebrew Month. The first year that the Israelites entered Canaan, the 14th of the First Hebrew Month must have fallen out on a Sabbath so that the 15th of that month was a Sunday. In that year, the "morrow of the Passover" happened to also be the "morrow of the Sabbath," what we call "Sunday morning." This proves the Pharisee interpretation of Leviticus 23:15 to be wrong. According to the Pharisees, the Omer offering could only be brought on the morning of the 16th of the First Hebrew Month, but in the year that the Israelites entered Canaan, they brought the sacrifice one day earlier." Nehemia Gordon, "The Truth About Shavuot," posted June 3, 2014 at the following web address: http://www.nehemiaswall.com/truth-shavuot?utm_source=Karaites+Korner+Newsletter&utm_campaign=4c9fc54bda-shavuot2014special&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_349b8032ee-4c9fc54bda-155489469.

able to fight. But they trusted God. Second, God made them wait till after the Passover (one day) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (which lasted another seven days). This would have given plenty of time for the Canaanites to prepare for battle. It removes all advantage of surprise. But God wanted them to trust Him. And my takeaway is that devotion to God must precede service or our service becomes man-centered. Rather than rushing into battle they worship. If you are a driven person, it can be tempting to dive into your work-day before having devotions (because you think you don't have time for devotions, right?). But that is backwards. You don't have time to *not* have devotions. You must seek God's grace before you dive into your work or you are doing your work without seeking God's presence and blessing.

V. The significance of the plains of Jericho to the Passover (v. 10c)

Notice next that they celebrate Passover "on the plains of Jericho" - in other words, on the flat ground immediately in front of that great city. You could not get a more literal illustration of Psalm 23:5 than this. That great Psalm says, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies." Let's think about that. God prepared a table before them in Egypt 40 years before, and that too was in the presence of their enemies. That first Passover meal in Exodus 12 was a joyous thanksgiving feast that God was about to provide judgment on Egypt and freedom from slavery. They celebrated victory before they saw victory. This too was a thanksgiving meal that God was sufficient for their conquest. They hadn't even started the conquest yet, but they are rejoicing in God's victory. Unlike the previous generation that was eventually barred from the meal, these saints did not look at Canaan as being impossible for God to take. They rejoiced that God was greater than their greatest enemies, and they were eating this thanksgiving meal in faith that if God was for them, who could be against them?

And many commentators point out that this section shows Joshua to be a second Moses leading Israel in a second exodus from the wilderness. So there are a lot of little lessons like this that we can learn.

VI. The blessings of the Passover (vv. 11-12)

But let me talk for a bit about the *blessings* promised in the Passover. This is so encouraging. Frequently when I come to the Lord's Table, I think about these blessings. The original Passover explicitly promised seven blessings in Exodus 23. It was after all their covenanting with the Lord who owns all things and can provide all things.

According to Exodus 23 Passover has these seven blessings:

1. God promised to send His angel to protect them (v. 20)
2. Second, God promised to protect them from enemy attack (vv. 22-23)

3. Third, He promised them success in conquest (v. 24)
4. Fourth, He promised them protection from sickness (v. 25)
5. Fifth, He promised them protection from miscarriage (v. 26)
6. Sixth, God promised to disposses their enemies, implying an inheritance (vv. 27-31)
7. And seventh, He explicitly promised that they would inherit the land in verses 30-31.

Obviously we don't have all those promises listed in these three verses. They are promised elsewhere in the book. But even these verses give us two symbolic figures that God would fulfill all His promises just as He said He would.

A. God's provision of food (v. 11)

The first is that God provided a downpayment (as it were) by giving them their first Canaanite food totally free of charge. Verse 11 says,

And they ate of the produce of the land on the day after the Passover, unleavened bread and parched grain, on the very same day.

Where did they get that grain? They didn't plant any grain. The only thing they had been eating for the previous forty years was manna. Well, verse 11 calls it the "produce of the land." The citizens of Jericho were holed up in the city and they had abandoned their farms and fields. So all Israel had to do was come in and start harvesting. Some commentators believe that this grain had already been harvested for them and was in the storehouses on the farms. All they had to do was scoop it out. That may be. But either way, the key point is that just as they will pillage the land during the upcoming wars, this is their first taste of plunder. And they didn't even have to fight to achieve it. This is a downpayment of their inheriting the entire land.

But the next phrase in verse 11 indicates that they were able to eat the produce of the land "the day after the Passover." It was a sign that He would fulfill His promises.

And they are actually going to relax for the next seven days because the day after Passover begins the seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread. And it mentions them eating unleavened bread. I've already commented on how all of Leviticus 23:10-14 is implied by the quote from that passage. When they were willing to follow God's law, God poured out the blessings of provision upon them. Well, in the same way, when we come to the Lord's Table, we can come with faith and rejoicing that God will indeed fulfill His promises to us and will provide everything that we need - that is, if we are eating in faith and in holiness.

B. Manna no longer needed (v. 12)

But moving on - since food was now plentiful, God's supernatural provision of manna was no longer needed. Verse 12 says,

Then the manna ceased on the day after they had eaten the produce of the land; and the children of Israel no longer had manna, but they ate the food of the land of Canaan that year.

They had experienced this miracle of manna every single day (except the Sabbath, obviously) for the past forty years. Yet an entire generation of unbelievers failed to appreciate this daily miracle. They continually grumbled. Yet here is a generation that has the daily miracles cease, yet they operate from faith - probably one of the most faith-filled generations ever. This illustrates that miracles do not always produce faith and faith does not need miracles to faithfully serve God. We should not overemphasize the importance of miracles. It's not that there aren't going to be more miracles in this book. There will be - and we believe in miracles. But God will not miraculously provide for us when our diligence can provide what is needed. In other words, God is not interested in subsidizing laziness and irresponsibility. Don't expect miracles to cover for your laziness. A. W. Pink words it this way:

The practical lesson which we are to draw therefrom is, that we are not to expect extraordinary supplies when they can be had in an ordinary way: God works no unnecessary miracles. It is blessed to remember that the Lord had not discontinued the manna when the people despised it (Num. 11:6), nor even when He severed His covenant-relation with that evil generation; but had mercifully continued to give it for the sake of their children, who had now grown up and entered Canaan.²

So the question comes up, "Why then did God extend His miracles and mercies to an unbelieving generation?" He did it for the sake of the elect who were not yet in covenant. In other words, God supplied miracles for the parents for the sake of this generation who would come to faith. And in the same way, we shouldn't get frustrated when God doesn't hammer His enemies in America the moment we ask Him to. He may be extending mercies to enemies for the sake of His future elect. He certainly did that to Canaan forty years earlier because He was going to save Rahab - who probably wasn't even born yet, and He was going to save her family. And later He was going to save the entire tribe of Gibeonites. And as to His blessing these believers when they weren't being consistent, I am so grateful that God deals with His elect gently. He puts up with a lot of inconsistencies in our lives. He doesn't just pound us. He is very gracious.

VII. Two other implied lessons

There are just two other implied lessons that I want to give.

² Arthur Walkington Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 140.

A. God called them to flexibility

The first is the need for flexibility. And you can see this in almost every chapter in the rest of this book. But verses 11-12 indicate the need to suddenly adapt to a new diet and a new way to trust the Lord. Previously many had trusted God for miraculous manna. Now they were trusting God for ordinary means of survival and prospering. God is not like the modern church which never kills any program even after it has outlived its usefulness. God brings change into the lives of His people, and we need to be willing to adapt.

B. God called them to memorialize the past and to anticipate the future

The last lesson I see here is that God called them to memorialize the past and to anticipate the future. We become imbalanced if we are so present oriented that we fail to appreciate the past and fail to be driven by the future. Exodus 12:14 said of the Passover, "So this day shall be to you a memorial..." They were called to memorialize the great deeds of God in their deliverance from Egypt.

But the Lord's Supper was also anticipating the future. It gave promises for their future good. Obviously, all other blessings flow from the blessing of Christ Himself - who was still in their future. They are looking forward to the coming of the Messiah prefigured by this feast. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." So for us it's past. But let's not forget that when the Lord's Table signs and seals Christ's redemption to us, it signs and seals all the blessings that flow from His redemption. We come to the table with expectation of more future blessings. Pink worded it this way:

[Passover] sets forth the grand truth of redemption, which is the foundation blessing of believers, the fountain from which all others flow; and the Passover was kept upon Israel's entrance into Canaan to signify that their possession of the Inheritance, no less than their deliverance from Egypt, was owing to the merits of the blood of the Lamb.³

For us the Lord's Table is a memorial of what Christ has done in the past. So we do look back; we do appreciate the past mercies of God. But we also look forward to His generosity in our future. I've already read seven blessings listed in Exodus 23. Let me give you a few others. Exodus 12:24 promises covenant succession to many generations. That is such an encouraging promise to claim - especially when our children have wandered from the faith. We ask God to be true to His Word and we come in faith and even rejoice in faith at what God is going to do with those wandering children. *That's* the way we need to approach this subject. Some people call Abraham's laugh the laugh of faith. We can laugh in the face of Satan when he comes to discourage us and we can tell him that we are trusting God to bless our efforts with our children. Our labors in the Lord on behalf of our children are not in vain. When you come to the Lord's Table you can claim this promise. Resist all doubts and rejoice.

³ Arthur Walkington Pink, *Gleanings in Joshua* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1964), 135.

Ezra 6 connects God's cultural blessings with the meal, and that chapter and other chapters speak of the fruits of God's grace such as joy.

2 Chronicles 30 ties answered prayers and healing to the meal. Of course that chapter also mentioned sickness for those who partook unworthily, just like Paul does in 1 Corinthians 11. But 1 Corinthians 11 also says that we can eat for the better and not for the worse. The Lord's Table does bring bad news to those who partake unworthily, but it is primarily good news. We can claim God's promise of healing when we come to this table.

So when you come to the Lord's Table, rejoice for all that God has done in the past and rejoice by faith in His sufficiency for your future. Romans 8:32 says, "He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" The ordinary blessings found in the rest of this book are gifts God gave to those who were in covenant with Him. So I would urge you to not be like the previous generation of Jews who doubted, grumbled, and refused to give thanks. Commit yourselves to rejoice by faith and to give thanks by faith when you come to the Lord's Table. Amen.