

Eat in haste, it is the Lord's Passover

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[0 : 0 0] As we participate in the Lord's Supper, as we will do in a few moments, our sight is largely directed backwards to the occasion when the sacrament was instituted by our Lord, and especially to His death in our place that immediately followed Jesus instituting the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. That's the direction in which we generally look. It's true that the institution itself invites us to look in other directions. It invites us to look forward to His coming, when we will no longer partake of symbols, but we'll see Him face to face. But our principal look, the principal direction in which we look tends to be backwards to the death of Jesus, and that is right and fitting. When Jesus and His disciples gathered to participate in their Passover meal that we read of there in Matthew's Gospel, they also did so looking back. But they look back to the first Passover, what we read of there in Exodus chapter 12. The verses that we read in Exodus relate to us the instructions that were given. If we continued reading through the chapter, we'd have read of how those instructions were obeyed and followed. But that is the occasion that

Jesus and His disciples would have been looking back to, particularly the disciples who wouldn't have had such clarity as to the significance of the occasion and what Jesus was going to do. They would have been looking back. We look back. Well, they too were looking back. But they were looking back to this other occasion, this first Passover in Egypt. And what I want us to do this evening briefly is to put ourselves in a sense in the shoes of those disciples as they gathered there on the eve of Jesus' death. And as they look back to the Passover, we also want to look back to that Passover. But to look back to it, that we would then in turn, from the Passover, look forward to what the Passover tells us, what insights it gives to us concerning the person of Jesus, the one who's described by Paul in his letters to the believers in Corinth as our Passover Lamb. And so as we consider the Passover, that first Passover, that first Passover, as we identify how it gives us a measure of insight into

Jesus and His saving work. So with that greater understanding, we trust that that will lead to greater gratitude and thanksgiving as we participate, but also more reasonable and intelligent worship and service to the one who has done so much for us. So let's do that. Let's think a little bit about that first Passover. Now in the verses that we read there in Exodus chapter 12, even though we limited our reading, nonetheless there's a lot there. There's a lot of details in the instructions that God gave to the people through Moses, and time won't allow us to think of every detail. But what we can do is focus our thoughts on one instruction given by the Lord to the Israelites concerning that first celebration of the Passover. And what I have in mind are, or what I want to direct your attention to, are the words that we find that in verse 11 of Exodus chapter 12. The final words, the final sentence there in verse 11 of Exodus chapter 12. The Lord directs this intriguing instruction to His people concerning the Passover, eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. If we're looking for a text, well that's our text. We won't be thinking just about those words, but that's our starting point. That is our text this evening.

Eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. As we think of this instruction, and as we consider how to develop it, what we can do is, or what we're going to do is, pose and answer three questions that revolve around this instruction, eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. First of all, to ask ourselves, and from the passage before us, answer the question, what was to be eaten?

[5 : 0 9] What is it that they were to eat in haste? And then, much more briefly notice, who were to eat? Who were those instructed to eat, invited to eat, commanded to eat? But then, thirdly, and maybe this is the more intriguing part of the text, and that is, how were they to eat? And we're thinking there especially of what is said, eat it in haste. How are we to understand that? Why this instruction, and what can we draw from it for ourselves? So, what is it that the people were to eat? Who were to eat? And then, how were they to eat? Now, as we launch into this, and even before we

pose and answer the first question, or try and answer the first question, just remind ourselves of what we said as we introduced the reading, that the Passover was instituted by God and first celebrated by the people in the context of the final plague that God had intimated would fall upon Egypt, the death of the firstborn.

And the Passover served as the means whereby the Israelites could be spared from that death. That was the reason why it was instituted. Now, leaving aside what it points forward to that we'll think of in a moment, but at the time it was instituted, that was its purpose. So, let's just have that cleared in our minds. First question then, what was to be eaten? Eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Supper. What does the it refer to? Well, the it is the Passover meal, to be eaten. And what can we say about the meal? What are we told about this meal that God's people were to participate in? Well, first of all, we can notice what it is that they were to eat. In verse 3, we're told, tell the whole community of Israel that on the 10th day of the month, each man is to take a lamb for his family. A lamb or a goat was to be set aside. And as we continue through the reading, we discover that that lamb is killed and eaten. That is the meal. The meal was the meat of this lamb that each household had to set aside.

That was what was to be eaten. What can we say about the lamb? What are we told about certain characteristics that were to characterize the lamb? Well, what do we read there in verse 5 about this lamb? The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. But particularly this characteristic that's highlighted, that they were to be without defect. We don't know if this is the case, but it may be that the time lapse that there was between selecting the lamb, we notice there on the 10th day of the first month, to the day in which the lamb was actually killed and then consumed the 14th day, it's possible that the time, at least in part, was to give each household the opportunity to be sure that the lamb was indeed without defect. So, it wasn't sufficient to just have a cursory look at the lamb and say, well, this one seems okay. It was important that in as much as it was possible the lamb be without defect, I think we can make the point, it's I think an entirely reasonable point, that no lamb would have been a perfect specimen. That would have been impossible to secure, but every effort was to be made to ensure that the lamb was without any evident visible defect.

This was the primary characteristic of the lamb that was to be killed and then consumed. So, it was a lamb, it was to be without defect, and then of course it was in turn to be slaughtered.

In verses 6 and 7, we read, take care of them, that is these lambs or goats, until the 14th day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they eat the lambs. So, the selected lamb is to be killed, to be slaughtered. This is the central element of the Passover together with what follows in eating the meat of that lamb. And as the central element, it doesn't surprise us that there's different aspects to this, and there's three in particular that I want to note concerning this slaughter of the lamb. The first thing to notice is that the blood of the lamb was to be shed. Take care of them until the 14th day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight. Now, this wasn't simply a pragmatic matter. If you're going to eat the lamb, well, you've got to kill it. You might say, well, obviously they've got to kill the lamb. How are they going to eat it if they don't kill it?

[10:19] But there's more to it here. It's not simply killing it in order that they can then roast it and eat it. The killing of the lamb served a sacrificial purpose. That's not something we're drawing out by implication, but rather the language of sacrifice is language that we find explicitly in the passage beyond the reading that we had. But if we look at verse 27 of chapter 12, when there is this summary of what has taken place or is to take place, we read, it is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord.

In the first few verses, the word isn't found, but here very clearly we're given this indication that it wasn't simply killing it in order to eat it. This killing in itself had a significance. It was a sacrifice that was being offered. The blood was being shed with a sacrificial purpose. And of course, we know that in the Old Testament, in the sacrificial system, the shedding of blood as a sacrifice points to the need for and the means provided to secure forgiveness of sins. This was a central element here. The animal was sacrificed. Its blood was shed as a sacrifice. But not only was the blood shed, we also discover that the blood was then applied in a particular and peculiar way. There in verse 7 we're told, then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the door frames of the houses where they eat the lambs. So, the shed blood is now applied to the door

frames of their houses. Now, this application of the blood was evidence of faith on the part of the household that they trusted and obeyed the instructions given by God for their protection. Now, the measure in which they would have understood what was going on, no doubt that would have varied greatly across the many thousands of households that participated. But nonetheless, all who participated by so doing, by applying the blood on the door frames, by that they were declaring, I'm obeying God, I'm trusting in what

God has indicated is the means that I can enjoy His protection from death, the death of the firstborn. That faith lies at the heart of what is going on here is also confirmed to us in another part of Scripture. If we think of the great gallery of men of faith in Hebrews chapter 11, and notice there that we find Moses being mentioned, but Moses being mentioned in the context of the Passover celebrations.

So, in Hebrews chapter 11, and in verse 28, we read as follows, By faith he, that is Moses, kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood so that the destroyer of the firstborn would not touch the firstborn of Israel. By faith Moses did this, and I don't think it's unreasonable to see that if that was true of Moses, it was true also of the people that Moses represents in this chapter. They not only shed the blood, but they then apply the blood as instructed by God, and in so doing, demonstrate their faith in God's saving provision. So, the blood was shed, the blood was applied, and the outcome is that death was averted. Verse 13 of Exodus chapter 12, the blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, this is God speaking, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt. The blood here is spoken of as a sign. It's a sign for the people, but also a sign for God that indicated that the household, the residents of that house identified with God, were loyal to God, were obedient to God, and God could see that because of the blood painted on the door frames. And what would happen? Well, God would pass over them at the time of the killing of the firstborn, hence the name, the Passover. God passing over those who enjoyed the protection of the blood that had been shed. So, this is what was to be eaten, this lamb slaughtered in this way, and the blood applied in the manner described. Of course, all of this, and we can see this, and we know this to be true, and all of this points forward in such a clear way, in such a marked way, it points forward to Jesus. A lamb was to be chosen, and we're reminded of the words of John the Baptist when he saw Jesus approaching. We read in John's gospel, in the very first chapter, John saw Jesus coming towards him and said, look, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, a lamb who was to die as a sacrifice, fulfilling in a much greater way what was true of the Passover lamb.

[16:01] But then we have the language that we've already mentioned at the beginning, the very explicit language of Paul in writing to the church in Corinth. In 1 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 7, he speaks of Christ, and he says this, for Christ, our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. It couldn't be more explicit.

So, a lamb, a sacrificial lamb. But then, of course, the lamb at the Passover was to be without defect. And again, this is language that we find applied to Jesus as he's presented to us as our Passover lamb.

Peter, in his first letter, in chapter 1 and verses 18 and 19, he speaks to the believers that he's writing to, and he says, you were redeemed. And then a little further on, he says the means of their redemption. You were redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish, without defect, a lamb without blemish, or defect, the very characteristic that was to mark the Passover lamb.

We also have what the writer to the Hebrews says concerning Jesus. In Hebrews chapter 9 and verse 14, how much more then will the blood of Christ, and here a comparison is being made with the sacrifices of the Old Testament, how much more then will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God. A lamb without defect, and a lamb without defect, who was slaughtered. Jesus' blood was shed as a sacrifice for our sin, and that is what we will remember this evening as we drink the wine. We will remember that the blood of Jesus was shed as a sacrifice for our sin.

But we also remember that that blood shed is applied to us as we trust in the merits of his death. It's as if we paint ourselves in his blood. The picture is maybe a seemingly gory one, but of course, this is the language that God has given us. This is the manner in which he describes for us his way of

redemption. The blood is shed, but the blood is then applied as we trust in Jesus. And of course, as with the Israelites on that first Passover, our death is averted as we enjoy the protection of the blood of Jesus. His death in our place over us, protecting us, covering us.

[18 : 53] That then speaks a little of what was to be eaten and how it points forward to Jesus, the lamb slaughtered and then eaten by the Israelites. But then much more briefly, notice who was to eat. Well, in verse 3, it's clear that all of the people are invited. In verse 3, we read, we tell the whole community of Israel that on the tenth day of this month, each man is to take a lamb for his family, one for each household. On this first occasion, the Passover would develop in the course of history to the point where it would be celebrated in a more corporate way in the temple.

But at this point, each head of the household is a priest or certainly fulfills a priestly function in separating the lamb and preparing the lamb and providing the lamb for himself and his family. But every family, every household was invited. And it would seem that on this occasion, every household responded to the invitation and participated as they were indicated to do. So, all were invited, all those who believed what God had told them, all who obeyed, all who trusted. But it's also true that measures were to be taken to ensure that none other than those who obeyed and trusted participated.

I think that's probably the reason for what were the instructions that are given concerning that none of the lamb is to be left uneaten. In verse 10, do not leave any of it till morning. If some is left till morning, you must burn it. Ideally, all would be eaten. But if some were left, it was important for it to be burnt, to be destroyed, because that was not to be eaten by any other than those who trusted in and obeyed God. And of course, this also points forward to our participation in the Lord's Supper. All are invited. All are invited to participate. All who trust in Jesus, all who would obey Jesus, are invited. None are excluded from that invitation. But only those who trust in Jesus are to participate. If you as yet are not trusting in Jesus as your Lord and Savior, then the table is not for you. The invitation is extended to you. The opportunity to put your trust in Jesus is one that is current even now.

[21 : 34] But if you choose not to do so, then the table is not for you. But all are invited. Then move on to the third question, and just think for a brief moment on this third question.

How were they to eat? And that really brings us to the text there in verse 11. Eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. It's an intriguing instruction that they're given in the midst of many instructions. And the question really is why? Why in haste? And maybe the first thing we could do is rule out one possible and seemingly a plausible explanation, that they are to eat in haste because of the danger and fear instilled by the Egyptians. When you read that, that might be the first thing that comes to mind. Well, why eat in haste? Well, Pharaoh and his armies at any point might come and seek to stand in the way of the people being delivered from Egypt. We know how fickle Pharaoh was. We know what a despot he was. It wouldn't be surprising if the people were fearful at the prospect of being delivered from Egypt. What would happen? You know, would the Pharaoh simply stand idly by? Of course, we know that in the event he did pursue them. And so, when we have this instruction, eat it in haste, we might imagine that behind it is the danger and the accompanying fear that might be present. As I say, it wouldn't be unreasonable for many of the Israelites to be fearful. But the eating in haste is not here presented as a description of how they ate. It's presented as an instruction, God's instruction, as to how they should eat. And the instruction is given to them regardless of whether they're fearful or other ones. And so, I think it's reasonable to conclude there's nothing to do with fear or danger. This is God instructing them. You are to do so. You are going to eat in haste. Kind of related to that, I think we can also say is that the haste was not because they're in a hurry. We've read the instructions, and the instructions include selecting the lamb on the tenth day, keeping the lamb for four days, and then on the fourteenth day, slaughtering the lamb. Now, if they're able to spend those four days looking after the lamb, it doesn't seem reasonable to imagine that the eating of the lamb would have to be in such a hurry. You know, there's, in a sense, there's no great hurry to leave. They will leave in God's good time. Again, eating in haste is not really, it seems to me, a matter of them being in a hurry.

[24 : 29] There's no rush to leave Egypt in that sense. The haste, rather, I would suggest, has more to do with a sense of urgency than hurry. There's a distinction there, isn't there? They are to eat in haste because of the urgency of the matter to hand, not because of any particular rush.

They are to eat the meal urgently. Now, what is this haste or urgency all about? Well, let me suggest three aspects to it. Now, these are things that are not found explicitly in the text, but I think

are reasonable inferences from the circumstances. There is to be in the Israelites, as they participate, a haste to be free, an urgency to be free, to be delivered from slavery in Egypt. Now, there would have been, I imagine, for many of the Israelites, a temptation to remain in Egypt. Egypt was all they knew. Beyond Egypt was the great unknown. In Egypt, they had a home and houses, the very houses they were to paint with the shed blood. That is where they belonged, so it seemed. But in Egypt, they were slaves. And there needed to be in God's people an urgent desire to be liberated and to leave behind slavery. And so, they were to eat in haste. Haste to be free. But also, and it's very connected, haste to be saved from the plague, from the death of the firstborn. The plague announced was a solemn one. It was a violent one. The firstborn were to die. And the Israelites were to take that solemn warning with seriousness and urgency, lay hold of the protection offered by God in the Passover.

Hence, this language, this language of urgency. Eat it in haste. But I think there's a third aspect to this that explains this instruction. And that is that in the Israelites, there was to be a haste, an urgency, to depart towards the promised land. The Passover was not only about participation and protection. It was about preparation for travel to the promised land. And of course, that's very explicit in what precedes this instruction to eat in haste. In verse 11, this is how you're to eat it, with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And again, the picture not so much of being in a rush, but of being prepared. This is preparation for travel. This is preparation for their departure to the promised land. And this is to be a matter that they are to take seriously and urgently. It should be their great desire to reach the promised land, to take possession of the promised land. And so they are to eat the Passover in haste.

Well, we can say that of those who first participated on this historic occasion. But I think we can reasonably apply these principles to ourselves and see that we too are to participate in the Passover, in its form in which we now participate, the Lord's Supper, in haste. Not in fear, not in a rush, but in haste. There is to be in us a haste, an urgency to be free from sin and the sin that so easily entangles us. There is to be in us a haste. There is to be in us a haste to go out into the world, God's world, and serve Him, take possession of His world for Him. And so the instruction given so long ago to the Israelites on a very particular historic occasion echoes through the centuries and comes to us also, eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. And so I say to you, God's people this evening, eat in haste. It is the Lord's Passover. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, we do thank You for

[29 : 04] Your Word. We thank You for the Passover. We thank You for the manner in which God's people were granted protection from the plague, the death of the firstborn. But we thank You very especially how the Passover Lamb points forward to Your Son, Jesus, our Passover Lamb. We pray that we would know what it is, to find our protection in Him and in Him alone. And these things we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.