

## **REMEMBER**

Every culture has special occasions, festivals or commemorations. Sometimes it is in memory of someone important, or events that happened long ago, or it marks a certain season of the year. For many Chinese it will be Chinese New Year, for me it would be Christmas. And what we do and even what we eat on that day, are traditions that are often passed down from generation to generation.

The Bible also speaks of special days, days that God told his people to remember. Today we are going to look at one of those days that is very significant to us as believers. Of course it is the Passover. God told the people of Israel to celebrate this day.

### ***Exodus 12:14***

**This is the day you are to commemorate (remember) for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord – a lasting ordinance.**

### ***Exodus 12:17***

**Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come.**

So down through the centuries, in fact for more than 3,400 years, the Jewish people have celebrated the Passover. Our Jewish friend had a special family gathering for the occasion, as they do each year. Jesus celebrated this day. In Luke 2 we are told that his parents went up to Jerusalem every year to celebrate. We know the story of what happened when Jesus went with them at the age of 12. During the years of his public ministry we have record of him going up for the Passover with his disciples three times.

## **What were they to remember?**

God told them to remember this day. What were they to remember? Often we quote a verse from Isaiah that says, 'Remember not the former things, I am going to do a new thing.' There are some things we are not to remember, there are others we are not to dwell on, but God tells us to remember what he has done.

### ***Isaiah 46:9***

**Remember the former things, those things long ago.**

### ***1 Chronicles 16:11-12***

**Look to the Lord and his strength. Seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles and the judgments he pronounced.**

### **I think there are many reasons why we are to remember:**

1. By remembering, we never forget to thank him and give him honor.
2. But also as we remember it strengthens our faith, helps us to trust God in the present – we have seen his faithfulness, his provision and protection, seen his healing and power – and as we remember what he did in the past it builds our faith to trust him in the situation we are facing right now. What he did before, he certainly will do again.
3. It also stirs our hunger for God to move in our lives.

*Some of us have experienced wonderful moves of the Holy Spirit over the years. I have discovered that when I remember what God did, it stirs a desire for God to move again. As Graeme Lepper said to me last Sunday, 'Once you have experienced the move of the Spirit you are never satisfied with less, you only want more.'*

So God told the people of Israel to remember what he had done and to share it with their children. This is what Moses said to the people – ‘when your children ask you why you celebrate this feast, say, **“I do this because of what the Lord did for me.”**

*I think it is a wonderful thing for parents to tell their children, and their grandchildren, what the Lord has done in their lives. Of course younger people don't always want to hear about 'the old days', but make sure you share what God has done. You often have to catch the right moment to do that but it's valuable to do so.*

## **What did the Lord do?**

So let's look more closely at what the Lord did for the people of Israel on Passover night. The Israelites had lived in Egypt for 100's of years, but as the years went by they became more and more enslaved to the Egyptians, until their lives were filled with suffering. They cried out to God, he heard them and raised up a man (and of course that was Moses) to go in and confront Pharaoh, the ruler of the land, and demand he release the people so they could go and worship their God. Pharaoh refused, and so God sent a series of plagues, but the final plague would be the death of all the first born in Egypt. What happened that night and how God sovereignly moved was to always be remembered.

### ***Exodus 6:6-7***

**I will bring you out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.**

**I will free you from being slaves to them.**

**I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.**

**I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God.**

Each year as the Jewish people remember the Passover, they repeat these words. Jesus celebrated the Passover and he too repeated these words. Jesus understood though, that this deliverance pointed to an even greater Passover, one that would make salvation available to all mankind. So after 3 years of public ministry Jesus knew that the time had come for God to bring about the fulfilment that the Passover had pointed towards.

### ***John 13:1***

**It was just before the Passover Feast. Jesus knew that the time had come for him to leave this world and go to the Father.**

Jesus had told them again and again that he would be arrested and tried, that he would be crucified, although they didn't understand. That night as he shared the Passover meal with them, he showed them its true significance.

And just as God had told the Children of Israel to remember the Passover and what he had done for them, now Jesus tells his disciples to remember what he would do. **“Do this in remembrance of me.”**

We see a beautiful parallel between what God did for the Children of Israel and for you and I.

Jesus has brought us out from yoke of Satan.

He has set us free from power of sin.

He has redeemed us by his blood.

And he has made us his people.

When we celebrate special days, or have celebrations, often we have traditions we follow, or special things we eat. The Chinese eat moon cake during the mid-autumn festival, we have Christmas cake and mince pies at Christmas, and Anzac biscuits on Anzac Day. What about Passover?

## **1. A LAMB**

God told his people to take a lamb. It was to be one year old, a male, without any imperfections. They were to keep it for 4 days and then on eve of Passover, 14<sup>th</sup> day of 1<sup>st</sup> month, they were to slaughter it and keep aside the blood. Then it was to be roasted, along with bitter herbs. In fact in Hebrew it is just the word 'bitter' – reminding them of the bitter experiences they had been through while in slavery. Many years later Isaiah spoke about the coming Messiah, who was also called the 'suffering servant'.

***Isaiah 53:7***

**Brought as a lamb for slaughter.**

Jesus himself is our Passover lamb. He is the true fulfilment of this feast. When Jesus began his ministry he went to the River Jordan to be baptized by John and when John saw him, said:

***John 1:29***

**"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."**

***1 Peter 1:19***

**A lamb without blemish and defect.**

## **2. UNLEAVENED BREAD**

So the Children of Israel were to roast the lamb along with bitter herbs, and then eat it with bread made without yeast – unleavened bread, they call matzah. God had told them they would have no time for the dough to rise, so they were to make it without dough. In Deuteronomy it is called 'the bread of affliction'. This too was a reminder of the afflictions they had suffered. When they make unleavened bread they pierce it with holes. In fact 800 in each piece of matzah. This is to prevent it from rising. If you don't pierce the unleavened dough it will become pita bread. Those holes on the matzah remind us of what Isaiah said:

***Isaiah 53:5***

**He was pierced for our iniquities.**

That night when Jesus took the unleavened bread to give it to his disciples, I am sure the words of Isaiah were in his mind. He was going to be broken for our brokenness, afflicted for our afflictions, pierced for our iniquities, just as Isaiah had said. So we read in Luke:

***Luke 22:19***

**And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."**

## **3. THE BLOOD**

So the Israelites would eat the roasted lamb with bitter herbs, along with unleavened bread, as they celebrated the Passover. But there was one other thing they had to do. The blood from the lamb had to be applied above the door and on both sides at the entrance to their homes. They had to stay in their homes that night.

***Exodus 12:13***

**The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see it, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.**

The Bible says that the life is in the blood. The lamb was giving its' life, so that the first born sons of the Israelites would be spared. It was the life of the lamb for the firstborn. Jesus is our Passover lamb – he shed his blood, gave his life for us. His sacrifice was adequate, not just for one person, but adequate for every man, woman and child throughout history, who is willing to accept what Jesus has done for them.

**1 Peter 1:19**

**We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish and defect.**

**Revelation 5:9**

**You were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.**

God has commanded that we don't eat blood because of its significance, so Jesus took the cup of wine to represent his blood. During the Passover meal there were 4 cups of wine taken, each one having meaning. They are often linked to the 4 promises that God made to his people in Exodus 6. "I will bring you out, I will free you, I will redeem you, I will take you as my own."

These were called, the cup of sanctification, the cup of judgment, the cup of redemption and the cup of blessing. When Jesus came to the end of the Passover meal, he took the third cup, the cup of redemption and this is when he said the words in Mark 14:24.

**Mark 14:24**

**This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many.**

Then he went on and said something we often miss,

**Mark 14:25**

**I tell you the truth, I will not drink again the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the Kingdom of God.**

Possibly Jesus never took the fourth cup of wine, the cup of blessing. He was saying, that cup I will drink with you in my Father's Kingdom. It was a promise, an assurance that he would return. Often when we have the Lord's Supper we quote the words of Paul, where he says "**For whenever you eat and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he comes.**"

The Passover is only a shadow of the things that were to come. The reality is found in Christ. The lamb, the bread, and the blood all pointed towards Jesus.

And he is here right now. He is wanting to do in our lives everything he gave his life for – for our deliverance, our healing and salvation, and to give us peace, joy and hope. We often sing that song, "Come and do what you do". In one sense he has already done it, we only have to come and receive. And then continue to come.

**Celebrate the Lord's Supper together**