

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS
Commentary by Michael Sigler
November 10, 2013

Beginning of Passover

Read Exodus 12:1-14

Key verse: “This day will be a day of remembrance for you. You will observe it as a festival to the Lord. You will observe it in every generation as a regulation for all time” (Exodus 12:14).

The parallels between Passover and Holy Communion are striking.

The Passover event, in which God acted to free the Israelites from slavery, was the central act of salvation by God in the Old Testament. The ongoing commemoration of Passover as an act of worship became the highpoint of the religious year for the Israelites. God commanded them to observe the celebration of Passover “in every generation” as a “day of remembrance” (Exodus 12:14).

The sacrificial death of Jesus, through which God saves us from sin and death, was the central act of salvation in the New Testament. Jesus commanded His followers to celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion “in remembrance” of Him and of His death and resurrection. To this day, Holy Communion is the highpoint of Christian worship.

For Christians, not only are there striking parallels between Passover and Holy Communion, but Passover points prophetically and typologically to the death and resurrection of Jesus. For example:

1. Passover required the sacrifice of a “flawless” lamb (Exodus 12:5). When Jesus came to the Jordan River to be baptized by John the Baptist, “John saw Jesus coming and said, ‘Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world!’” (John 1:29).

Peter wrote: “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

2. In the Passover event, the Israelites were to place some of the lamb’s blood on the outer doorposts of their houses (Exodus 12:7). When death came to Egypt’s firstborns, God promised to the Israelites: “The blood will be

your sign on the houses where you live. Whenever I see the blood, I'll pass over you. No plague will destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:13).

Through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, God frees all who trust Christ as Savior from the penalty of sin: Hebrews 9:22 says that "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." 1 John 1:7 offers this assurance: "If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin."

3. Instructions for the Passover meal includes the provision that, when the Passover lamb is eaten, "Do not break any of the bones" (Exodus 12:46).

John, an eyewitness to the crucifixion of Jesus, is careful to note that the soldiers broke the legs of the two men crucified on either side of Jesus, in order to hasten their deaths. But when they came to break Jesus' legs, they discovered that He was already dead, so they did not break His legs (John 19:31-33).

John sees this event as a prophetic fulfillment: "These things happened so that the Scripture would be fulfilled: 'Not one of his bones will be broken'" (John 19:36).

Whenever we celebrate Holy Communion we are reminded that, by His sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus freed us from the penalty of sin and opened the way to forgiveness and new life. Thanks be to God!

(Contact Michael at msigler@fumcfwb.com.)