Review:

Did you gain any insights as you read through Genesis 12-20?

THE LORD’S SUPPER

Matthew 26:17-20 (NIV)

17 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 18 He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'" 19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. 20 When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve.

What do you know about the Passover Feast?

God sends Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt where they have been slaves under Pharaoh. Through Moses, God performs nine miraculous signs to convince Pharaoh to let the people go but each time Pharaoh refuses to comply. The following passage reveals the tenth and final warning to Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave Egypt.

Exodus 12:1-20 (NIV)

1 The Lord said to Moses and Aaron in Egypt, 2 "This month is to be for you the first month, the first month of your year. 3 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. 4 If any household is too small for a whole lamb, they must share one with their nearest neighbor, having taken into account the number of people there are. You are to determine the amount of lamb needed in accordance with what each person will eat. 5 The animals you choose must be year-old males without defect, and you may take them from the sheep or the goats. 6 Take care of them until the fourteenth day of the month, when all the people of the community of Israel must slaughter them at twilight.

7 Then they are to take some of the blood and put it on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses where they eat the lambs. 8 That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast. 9 Do not eat the meat raw or cooked in water, but roast it over the fire--head, legs and inner parts. 10 Do not leave any of it till morning; if some is left till morning, you must burn it. 11 This is how you are to eat it: with your cloak tucked into your belt, your sandals on your feet and your staff in your hand. Eat it in haste; it is the Lord's Passover.

12 "On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn--both men and animals--and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord. 13 The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.
14 “This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the Lord—a lasting ordinance. 15 For seven days you are to eat bread made without yeast. On the first day remove the yeast from your houses, for whoever eats anything with yeast in it from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel. 16 On the first day hold a sacred assembly, and another one on the seventh day. Do no work at all on these days, except to prepare food for everyone to eat— that is all you may do.

17 “Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, because it was on this very day that I brought your divisions out of Egypt. Celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. 18 In the first month you are to eat bread made without yeast, from the evening of the fourteenth day until the evening of the twenty-first day. 19 For seven days no yeast is to be found in your houses. And whoever eats anything with yeast in it must be cut off from the community of Israel, whether he is an alien or native-born. 20 Eat nothing made with yeast. Wherever you live, you must eat unleavened bread.”

What is the point of the Passover Feast?
The Passover Feast was a meal that God commanded the Israelites to celebrate once a year as reminder of their dramatic rescue from slavery in Egypt (Exodus 12). Their freedom came about as each Israelite took a lamb, slaughtered it, put the blood on the doorposts of their home and then ate the roasted lamb as part of the meal. As they did this a destroying angel went through Egypt killing the firstborn male of every household that did not have the blood applied to their house. In such a way God finally convinced Pharaoh to let the Israelites leave.

The Passover had a number of elements that God commanded them to include in the feast. What do you think was the meaning of each element to the Israelites who celebrated the first Passover?

The Lamb: The Passover lamb/goat was a substitute death for the firstborn male of every household. When the lamb’s blood was spread on the doorposts it was a sign to the destroying angel that that was a household of faith and he would “pass over” that home.

The Bitter Herbs: The bitter herbs were a reminder of the bitterness of slavery that they had endured for many years. It was to be a contrast to the freedom and blessing they would receive in years to come.

The Unleavened Bread (bread without yeast): The Israelites were not to make bread with yeast to emphasize how quickly there would be a turn of events and they would flee quickly from Egypt. Yeast takes time to rise – they would not have that time. That is why they were even instructed to eat in haste with their cloaks and sandals on and their staff in their hands.

When the destroying angel went through Egypt the response was immediate. They sent the Israelites away out of fear that that the whole nation would be destroyed.

Over the years the Israelites added symbols to the feast to help every generation remember the dramatic way God rescued them as a nation from slavery. These symbols are still used in Passover celebrations today.
Present Jewish Passover Symbols

What do you think is the meaning of each symbol?

**Roasted lamb shank bone:** a reminder of the lamb that was sacrificed in place of the first born male of the family.

**3 Loaves of unleavened bread called the Unity:** a reminder of how quickly they had to leave Egypt once the destroying angel had passed through.

During the feast the middle piece of bread is taken and broken in half.  
One half is wrapped in a cloth and hidden behind a pillow until later in the meal.  
The upper and lower pieces are eaten at various stages in the meal.  
The hidden piece is brought out near the end of a meal, broken and each participant is given a piece to eat.

**Horseradish (bitter herb):** a reminder of the bitterness of slavery and the way of life they experienced in Egypt.

**Charoseth (chopped apple and cinnamon):** a reminder of the bricks and mortar they used to make bricks as slaves in Egypt.

**Parsley dipped in salt water:** a reminder of passing through the Red Sea to become a free, growing, and independent nation.

**A hard boiled egg splashed with salt water:** This is sometimes used to symbolically represent a full meal. It is a reminder of the hardness of Pharaoh’s heart and the tears of the Israelites who slaved under Egyptian taskmasters.

Sometimes a bitter vegetable (romaine lettuce) is also used, instead of salt water, to represent the bitterness of slavery.
4 Cups of Wine: The pouring of each cup of wine initiated the start of a new phase of the feast. The cup would be poured at the beginning of each section and then drunk to conclude that section.

1. The Cup of Sanctification  Celebrates that they are a people set apart to God to be holy.

2. The Cup of Instruction  Explains the meaning of the Passover symbols. Children were to ask four specific questions regarding the meaning of the symbols. The Father would then explain the significance of each, relating the whole exodus story.

3. The Cup of Redemption  Celebrates their freedom from bondage.
**What does it mean to “redeem” something?**
To redeem something means to pay the price to purchase something back.

   For example: If you pawned your watch you could redeem it by paying the debt owed. In biblical days, if a family owed a debt they couldn’t pay, a child/servant could be taken as a slave for compensation. The Father could redeem his child/servant by paying the ransom price, or by offering a servant of greater working value.

4. The Cup of Praise  Celebrates God who set them free.

Matthew 26:26-28 (NIV)

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Jesus, during his last supper, reinterpreted these elements as symbolically referring to himself. Why do you think Jesus would compare his life to the Passover experience of the Old Testament? The Passover was all about an escape from bondage and death through the substitute sacrifice of a pure, spotless lamb. He is essentially saying the Passover experience was simply a picture of the “real” escape from bondage and death caused by our sin. By dying on the cross he would become the substitute sacrifice for our sins and create a new “exodus” to true freedom.

Our modern day celebration of the last supper focuses on two main elements, the bread and the wine. As we take a closer look at each element, try to determine the symbolism from a “New Testament perspective”.

THE PASSOVER BREAD:

Why are there three pieces of bread called a Unity?
We understand this to be representative of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Why is the bread made without yeast?
Yeast often carries the symbolism of sin which grows and spreads. In this case, the bread is without yeast in order to depict God who is without sin.

What is the significance of the middle loaf being taken, broken, wrapped in a cloth and hidden behind a pillow?
This second piece of bread represents Jesus, the Son of God, whose body was broken on the cross, wrapped in burial cloths and then laid in the tomb behind a great stone.

What, potentially, is the symbolism of the bread having holes and stripes?
The stripes represent the lashings Jesus received on his back and the holes represent the nail holes in his hands and feet.

*Isaiah 53:5 (NASE)*
> But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed. [and with his stripes we are healed. KJV]

THE WINE

The cup Jesus referred to in the last supper was the third cup called the Cup of Redemption. What is Jesus saying is the symbolism of this cup of WINE?
Jesus is declaring that through his death on the cross, he is the substitute sacrifice whose blood will be shed so that we may be forgiven and set free from bondage to sin. In other words, he is paid the ransom price (death) on our behalf.

We could also consider that he is the “greater one” given on our behalf, to set us free.

The wine becomes a symbol of his blood that was shed to set them free.

In scripture wine has both the symbolism of God’s wrath being poured out and in complete contrast, a picture of his abundant provision and joy. In what ways does Jesus’ death fulfill both of these pictures?
God vented his wrath against all sin through Jesus death on the cross. His blood that was shed satisfied the demand for justice against sin.
However, also through the blood that was shed, we can receive the joy of forgiveness and the abundant blessing God wants to pour into our lives.
What emotions might we expect to be evoked as we celebrate the Lord’s Table?

1) Sorrow

   We experience sorrow due to the fact that it is our sinful rebellion that led to the crucifixion of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour. He was innocent yet he paid terribly for our sin.

2) Joy

   We experience joy because Jesus has rescued us; through him we can receive forgiveness and be restored back to a relationship with God. Through Christ’s death on the cross we receive new life with God through eternity.

1 Corinthians 11:26 (NIV)
For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

1 Corinthians 11:24,25 (NIV)
24“This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.”
25“This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Why do you think Jesus wants us to continue to celebrate this feast?

If escaping from another country was an important cause for celebration, how much more so is escaping our bondage to sin and judgement? It is all about remembering what Christ has done for us on the cross, the price he paid and the freedom he has purchased for us.

It is easy for us to forget. We quickly forget the good things others have done for us, we quickly lose perspective, we quickly lose sight of where we came from and where we need to go.

It also reminds us of where we are headed and encourages us to live out that reality in our lives now. You are a child of the King who is coming back to claim you as his own; live a life worthy of that calling and look forward to Christ’s return.

Why do you think it might be important for a church to celebrate this together?

In the same way that the Passover was celebrated as a family, it is important for the “Family of God” to celebrate it together. It is the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that has pulled us together and created us as a family. As we all eat and drink the symbols together we are proclaiming that Jesus has redeemed us, he is worthy of our attention, and we will stay true to the life and relationship he has called us to.

There is a spiritual bonding that takes place among us as a church celebrates this feast together. To miss out on this experience is to miss out on a deeply significant celebration that Christ has given to us as a gift to bless and strengthen us.
How often do you think we should celebrate the Lord’s Table?
The Passover was celebrated by the Jews once a year.
Some churches celebrate the Lord’s Table every week as a continual reminder.
Some churches celebrate once a month so as not to make it routine and become immune to its significance.
The New Testament does not tell us how often to celebrate it. It only says that “whenever” you do it, do it remembering who Jesus is and what he has done for you.

What do you think are some of the personal benefits you might receive from celebrating the Lord’s Table with your church family?

What might be lacking in your life should this ceremony be neglected in your life?

HOME STUDY:

Read Genesis 21-30