

S T U D Y G U I D E



Kingdom Feast:

C O M I N G T O T H E L O R D ' S T A B L E

by R.C. Sproul



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Kingdom Feast

Coming to the Lord's Table

R.C. Sproul



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421 Ligonier Court, Sanford, FL 32771

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The Significance of the Passover

MESSAGE INTRODUCTION

The institution of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper did not occur in a historical vacuum. The Lord's Supper was instituted in the middle of the traditional Jewish Passover. This Old Testament feast was central to the worship of Israel, and Jesus gave it an entirely new meaning. He Himself became the Passover Lamb. In this lecture, Dr. Sproul examines the origin and meaning of the Old Testament Passover in order to provide the context for understanding the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. To be able to explain the historical context behind the institution of the Passover
2. To be able to explain the points of connection between the Passover and the Lord's Supper

QUOTATIONS

And the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it, but every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised him. No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house; you shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. If a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised. Then he may come near and keep it; he shall be as a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person shall eat of it."

—Exodus 12:43–48

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

—1 Corinthians 5:6–7

LECTURE OUTLINE

A. Introduction

1. At the very heart of the life and worship of the early Christian community was the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and throughout history this sacrament has been known by several names.
2. Members of the early church used to celebrate what they called an "agape feast," or a love feast, in which they celebrated the love of God and their love for one another in this holy supper.
3. The sacrament has also been called the "Lord's Supper" because of its reference to the Last Supper that Jesus had with His disciples on the night before His death.
4. The sacrament has been referred to as "Holy Communion" because of the emphasis on our mystical union and communion with Christ in the Supper.
5. The Lord's Supper also became known early on as the "Eucharist" because this is the Greek word that means "to thank," and the Supper was seen as a time when the people of God gathered to express their gratitude for what Christ had accomplished on their behalf.

B. The Passover Context of the Lord's Supper

1. The Lord's Supper is a drama that has its roots not only in the Upper Room experience that Jesus shared with His disciples, but also in the Old Testament Passover.
2. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during the celebration of the Passover on the night before He died.
3. The link between Christ's death and the Passover is also seen in Paul's writings when he says, "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us."
4. The Passover story begins with the enslavement of the people of Israel in Egypt.
5. The Israelites cried out to God, who heard their cry and called Moses to the task of delivering the people out of bondage.
6. At God's command, Moses went before Pharaoh and told him to let the people go.
7. A power struggle between God and Pharaoh ensued, and God sent several plagues upon Egypt.
8. The tenth plague was the worst in that it involved the death of the firstborn sons of all the Egyptians.
9. In the context of the declaration of this tenth plague, God institutes the Passover.
10. Each Israelite family was to sacrifice an unblemished lamb, place its blood on the door of their house, and eat its roasted flesh with bitter herbs—all while dressed and ready to leave at a moment's notice.
11. God would pass over the houses marked with the lamb's blood, sparing them from death.

C. Saved From What?

1. People often ask, "Are you saved?"
2. A good response is, "Saved from what?"

3. The term *to save* means a number of things in Scripture.
4. The ultimate meaning of the term *saved* in Scripture is “to be saved from the ultimate calamity—falling under the wrath of God.”
5. We are not only saved *by* God; we are also saved *from* God.
6. The idea of being saved from God is dramatically displayed in the Old Testament Passover feast.
7. In the New Testament, Jesus changes the Passover and indicates that His blood will now mark those to be saved from the wrath of God.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Which term for the sacrament of the Supper reflects its emphasis on the giving of thanks to God?
 - a. The Eucharist
 - b. The agape feast
 - c. The Lord’s Supper
 - d. Holy Communion
2. Which term for the sacrament of the Supper reflects its emphasis on our mystical union and communion with Christ in the Supper?
 - a. The Eucharist
 - b. The agape feast
 - c. The Lord’s Supper
 - d. Holy Communion
3. What Old Testament feast provided the context for the institution of the Lord’s Supper?
 - a. Hanukkah
 - b. Passover
 - c. Pentecost
 - d. Purim
4. In preparation for the Passover meal, what animal were the Israelite families commanded to sacrifice?
 - a. A bull
 - b. A lamb
 - c. A goat
 - d. A dove

BIBLE STUDY

1. Read Exodus 12:1–51, and answer the following questions:
 - a. Why is it significant that God tells Moses that this Passover will be the beginning of a new calendar for Israel?

- b. Is the Passover ceremony centered on individuals or on families?
 - c. What principal things does God command the Israelites to do in preparation for the Passover?
 - d. Does the Passover distinguish between the act of sacrifice and the sacrificial meal? If so, is the eating of the lamb the act of sacrifice or the sacrificial meal? Is this distinction significant? If so, why?
 - e. How are future generations of Israelites to participate in this great act of redemption?
 - f. What prerequisite for participation in the Passover is emphasized repeatedly in 12:43–48?
2. Read Matthew 26:2, 17–19; Mark 14:1, 12, 14, 16; and Luke 22:1, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15. How do these texts prove that the Lord's Supper was instituted during the celebration of the Passover?
 3. In 1 Corinthians 5:6–7, Paul refers to Christ as “our Passover” who was sacrificed for us. What is the significance of this statement in light of what the Old Testament says about Passover?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Explain the basic features of the Old Testament Passover. What was involved? Who was involved? What did they do?
2. The Passover was a communal, family-oriented sacrament of the old covenant. What significance, if any, does this have for our understanding of the Lord's Supper?
3. Does the book of Exodus clearly indicate whether young children partook of the Passover meal? Is there any sense in which young children participated in the sacrament of Passover simply by virtue of the fact that they were in a house marked by the blood of the Passover lamb? What relevance might your answers have in the debate over whether young children should be permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper?

APPLICATION

1. Reflect on what it means to be saved from the wrath of God, to have God's judgment pass over you. The next time you partake of the Lord's Supper, give thanks (Eucharist) to God for marking you with the blood of the Lamb and sparing you from His judgment and wrath.
2. Take the time to study Exodus 12 in depth. Find a good commentary on Exodus (for example, Currid or Mackay) and discover what this feast meant to the Jews and why Jesus strongly desired to partake of it with His disciples.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Calvin, John. *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.17

Currid, John D. *Exodus*, 2 vols.

Mackay, John L. *Exodus*

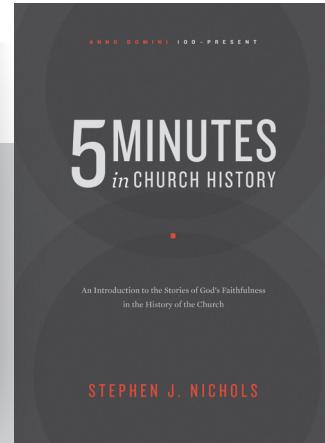
Mathison, Keith. *Given for You: Reclaiming Calvin's Doctrine of the Lord's Supper*, chapters 5–6

Nevin, John Williamson. *The Mystical Presence: A Vindication of the Reformed or Calvinistic Doctrine of the Holy Eucharist*

Sproul, R.C. *What Is the Lord's Supper?*

Wallace, Ronald. *Calvin's Doctrine of Word and Sacrament*

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