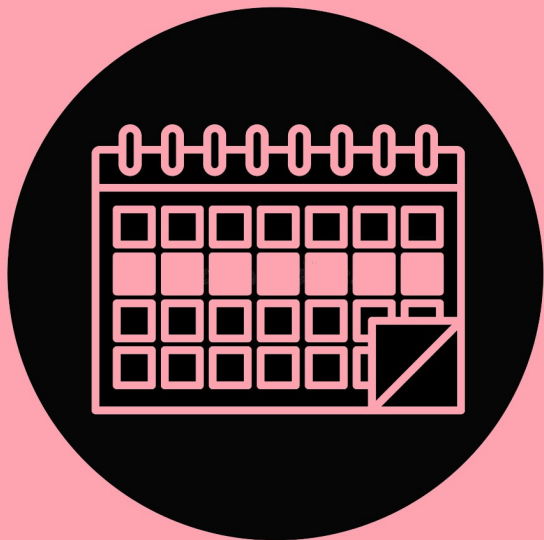


14 Reflections on Passover & Holy Week

Thank you for hosting a Passion Month dinner! Here are just a few helpful ideas: 1) Distribute the cards near the end of the meal (but before anyone tries to clean up!) 2) One of the goals of using these cards is to get a variety of people involved. With that in mind, be sure to distribute the cards to readers of all ages. 3) Many of the concluding questions were written with all ages in mind, so be sure to encourage participation. 4) As the host, after beginning with card #1, look for gentle ways to keep the momentum going as the cards are presented in order. May God bless your time together!

#0





Holy Week is the seven-day period between what we call Palm Sunday and Easter (Resurrection Sunday). It also includes Good Friday. This week overlaps with the Jewish celebration of the Passover meal and Feast of Unleavened Bread. Like the Passover meal, our meal together is also a time to remember **God's role as Redeemer**, the Redeemer of his people. We'll do that by considering what Scripture teaches us about these special days.

Which of the special days (or holidays) on your calendar is your favorite and why?

#1





The Bible regularly tells us that God knows about and cares about **our need for redemption**. Exodus 3:7–8 tells us this about His concern for the people of Israel who were slaves in Egypt: *Then Yahweh said, “I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey...”*.

What would be the worst thing about being a slave?

#2





The first Passover was a **night of judgment and death.**

God would judge the Egyptians, but 'pass over' the homes of the Hebrew slaves. This is how the people of Israel were taught to teach about that night: *And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of Yahweh's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. (Exodus 12:26-27)*

The Hebrews understood they were also sinners before God.
Can you think of a time when you were spared
from a hard consequence?

#3





Redemption means buying someone out of slavery or captivity by paying a ransom. Though the people of Israel did not die the night of the Passover, **a lamb was slain** in each household, a male lamb “without blemish” (Exodus 12:5). We read this about that lamb's blood: “Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it... The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 12:7, 13)

The people were protected by the blood of the lamb. If you could have one thing to protect yourself in a dangerous situation, what would it be?

#4





The book of Exodus tells us that **unleavened bread** (i.e., bread without yeast) was part of the Passover meal (12:8). Why? We go on to read: *In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste... And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough that they had brought out of Egypt, for it was not leavened, because they were thrust out of Egypt and could not wait, nor had they prepared any provisions for themselves. (Exodus 12:11, 39)*

The bread was a reminder of how quickly the Hebrews had to leave Egypt; so quickly, they couldn't prepare enough food for the trip. Share a time when you had to depend on God alone for what you physically needed.

#5





Redemption is a gift of God's grace, love, and faithfulness. Moses later reminded the people of Israel of this in Deuteronomy 7:7–8... *It was not because you were more in number than any other people that Yahweh set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but it is **because Yahweh loves you** and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers, that Yahweh has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

Have someone pray and thank God for his grace, love, and faithfulness, and that he is our Redeemer as well.

#6





If we jump ahead in time to **the days of Jesus**, the people of Israel were looking again for redemption. As another Passover feast drew near, we read in the Gospel of John that, “The next day the large crowd that had come to the feast heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem. So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying out, “**Hosanna!** [which in Hebrew means “O save [us]!”] Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!” (John 12:12–13)

We remember that day as Palm Sunday. Can you think of people in our world today who rescue or save people?

#7





If we move from Sunday of that week to **Thursday**, we learn that Jesus followed God's call to **remember Israel's redemption** from Egypt. This is what we read in the Gospel of Luke: *Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." ...And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it [again] until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."* (Luke 22:7–8. 14-16)

If you could prepare any kind of meal, what would you have on the menu?

#8





Jesus talked about this meal being “**fulfilled**”. But how? Many years after the Passover recounted in Luke's Gospel, the Apostle Paul would describe what happened at that meal: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is **my body**, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in **my blood**. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*

(1 Corinthians 11:23–25)

The unleavened bread was first a reminder of what fact about the first Passover? According to what we just heard, how did Jesus change this?

#9



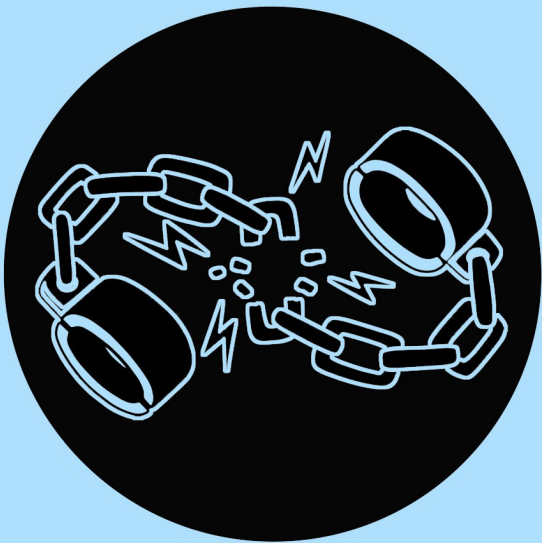


In Luke's Gospel, Jesus said this about that Passover cup: "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." How was His blood poured out? **On the cross** where He died, on that Good Friday long ago. John's Gospel identifies Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) Peter describes him as One "like... a lamb without blemish or spot." (1 Peter 1:19) Paul not only writes that "Christ, **our Passover lamb**, has been sacrificed", but that, "In him we have **redemption through his blood**, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

Have someone pray and give thanks for Jesus, "our Passover lamb".

#10





As slaves to the Egyptians, the Israelites were crying out for redemption. But **why do you and I need redemption?** Paul explains this when talking about our new lives in Christ. He writes, *But thanks be to God, that you who were **once slaves of sin** have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.*
(Romans 6:17-18)

If you were held captive for a very long time, what's the first thing you would do after being set free?

#11





Wonderfully, just as “Yahweh had brought Israel out of Egypt” (Exodus 18:1), he also “brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus” (Hebrews 13:20). The good news of Easter Sunday is that the Lamb who was slain is also **the Lamb who was raised!** The hope of Easter Sunday is that we too will experience resurrection beyond death. We can rejoice “knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us... into his presence.” (2 Corinthians 4:14) And this resurrection hope doesn't point us to an ancient 'promised land', but “according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.” (2 Peter 3:13)

What are some ways that people without Christ attempt to deal with death?

#12





If like the Passover, God's redemption through Jesus is a result of his grace, love, and faithfulness, how can each of us experience this personally? **How can each of us know him personally as our Redeemer?** By faith/trust alone. Listen to how Paul explains this: *...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified [that is, 'declared innocent'] by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation [that is, 'a satisfying sacrifice'] by his blood, **to be received by faith.*** (Romans 3:23-25a)

Take a moment to share 1) some examples of common things in which people put their faith, and 2) some reasons why Jesus and God's redemption are so much better.

#13





While we fulfill a Passover celebration every time we observe **the Lord's Supper**, Scripture also calls us to celebrate each day as those redeemed. How? Through new lives of repentance and obedience: *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. **Let us therefore celebrate the festival**, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.* (1 Corinthians 5:7–8)

Take a few minutes (for any who would like to do so) to offer brief expressions of praise to our Redeemer and thanksgiving for his redemption.

#14

