



## **Matthew 26:17–19**

17 On the first day of the Festival 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.

## **Reflection**

It's Thursday morning. Jesus will not sleep again until he sleeps in death. Arrested and tried in the middle of the night, he'll be crucified at 9am the next morning. Today, all over Jerusalem, Passover lambs will be prepared, and the Lamb who will be slain for the sins of the world will make his final preparations.

As we've seen over the past few weeks the population of Jerusalem has swollen to beyond capacity for the annual Festival of Unleavened Bread, the most important day of which was the Passover, which started Thursday evening. The day was so important that the whole week had be-

come known as the Passover Festival. And the population of Jerusalem grew so large in anticipation of this week, up to six times its usual size, that they extended the boundaries of Jerusalem to include some of the neighbouring towns. Because the Passover festival had to be celebrated in Jerusalem, but Jerusalem was too small to accommodate all of the zealous Jews who would pour in from all over the Mediterranean.

The Passover was the most celebrated date on the Jewish calendar because it commemorated the miraculous events of the Exodus, more than a thousand years beforehand, when God saved his people from slavery to the Egyptians. For a people currently enslaved by the Romans, this was an occasion to defiantly and

publicly remember. Back then, in slavery in Egypt, on the night before the Pharaoh let God's people go, God sent an angel of death amongst the Egyptian households. God's people, and Egyptians who'd come to faith in God, were spared, however, by demonstrating their faith in obedience to God by sacrificing a lamb and painting its blood on their doorframes. Every household with the blood of a lamb painted on its doorframes was 'passed over' by the angel of death. Hence the name 'Pass-over'. This great salvation from slavery and death at the hands of the Egyptians was commemorated annually by Israel, according to the instructions in Exodus 12.

Today was the day. Jesus and his disciples had come all the way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. And the prepara-

tions that were needed to be made were highly traditional, and very involved, and so it's no wonder in today's passage, on the morning of the first day of the Festival that Jesus' disciples ask him,

“Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Pass-over?”

It's Thursday morning, which meant in just a few hours, towards mid-afternoon, lambs would be brought from all over Jerusalem, one for every household of 10 to 12 people or so. They'd be taken to the temple courts where the priests would slaughter them. The priests would take the blood in bowls and pass it along a long line until it was poured out at the foot of the altar. They would also burn the lambs' fat on the

altar as a burnt offering, all the while singing Psalms 113 to 118, Psalms that praise God for the Exodus and for hearing the prayers of his people.

Then after sunset, each household would gather together in a home to eat the Passover lamb, which by that time would have been roasted with bitter herbs that recalled the oppression of God's people in Egypt. The eldest male of the household, the father or grandfather, would preside over the meal praying a prayer of thanksgiving for the food and wine. A first course would then be served of greens and bitter herbs followed by the youngest boy in the household ceremonially asking the meaning of the meal. The head of the household would then explain the symbols of the meal in terms of the Exodus. Through-

out the meal the members of the household would sing those same psalms that the priests were singing.

So given the complexity and importance of the occasion Jesus' disciples ask him how he would like them to prepare. They're in Bethany, on the outskirts of Jerusalem, and before they even thinking about sourcing the lamb and other foods, at the most basic level they're going to need a room somewhere within Jerusalem to celebrate the meal. But Jesus had planned everything before the beginning of the world, and this was no different.

“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.’”

And they did. And as with every word that has ever passed Jesus’ lips, it came to be exactly as he said it would. And that evening Jesus and his disciples would be eating and drinking and singing those psalms in the upper room of that house, along with all Jerusalem. One of those psalms will be Psalm 118. We’ve heard it before in Matthew’s gospel. They sung it when the king arrived in Jerusalem riding a donkey like an all-conquering king who has come in peace. The little children sang it when this Prince of Peace was performing miracle after miracle, healing all those who came to him in the temple courts earlier in the week. And a day ago, the last words on Jesus lips after having shamed and called to account the failed leaders of God’s peo-



ple, right in the heart of the temple, the words he left them with were words from this psalm. Because this Passover psalm is all about him.

Jesus, the Lamb of God, is about to be slain for the sins of the world. His blood will run down, not a doorframe this time but a wooden cross. And those who put their faith in the blood of this Lamb will be passed over by the angel of death. The just and righteous wrath of God will pass over them because it was poured out on him.

## **Think**

With what time remains today consider the significance of the timing of Jesus' death at Passover. By the death of a Passover

lamb God saved his people from slavery in Egypt and led them to the Promised Land. By the death of the Passover lamb God saved his people from slavery to Satan, sin and death and will lead them to the eternal Promised Land in heaven.

You might also like to consider how carefully and reverently Jewish people celebrate the Passover even today. In fact, Jewish people celebrate the Sabbath and many religious festivals with great joy and reverence, remembering with longing many events in the Old Testament. But ours is a much greater salvation than theirs, and where they see only in part, we see the whole, majestic saving plan of our Triune God. Do you celebrate the life and death and teaching of Jesus with your family each week over a meal? How regularly,

carefully, and reverently do you celebrate what Jesus has done for you?

## **Pray**

And close your time today in prayer. Why not pray through Psalm 118, the Psalm that was ringing out through all of Jerusalem? It's all about Jesus, and appropriately for those of us who've place our faith in Jesus, it starts and ends with the same verse.

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is  
good;  
his love endures forever.