

PASSOVER

APRIL 4th | READ EXODUS 12:1-28; LUKE 22:7-20; I CORINTHIANS 11:17-28

Countries are known to have some pretty bizarre traditions. For instance, in Finland they have an annual competition in which a husband carries his wife over an obstacle course. In Denmark, if you are twenty-five or older and single, people throw cinnamon at you. As if dating weren't hard enough! Here in the USA we have a tradition in which we let a rodent predict the future. I'll let you figure that one out on your own! Many of us have family traditions that are celebrated annually. It may be an anniversary, or Christmas, or some other holiday celebration. We wouldn't dream of changing these cherished traditions much less totally reinterpreting them, yet this is exactly what Jesus does with the Passover.

For about three thousand five hundred years orthodox Jews have been celebrating Passover. It is a meal taken as a family that commemorates God delivering his people from Egyptian slavery. About two thousand years ago, Jesus had gathered with his disciples in Jerusalem to take the Passover meal. As Jesus is reclining at a table, he takes the wine and divides it. He takes bread and distributes it. He then totally reinterprets what had been celebrated and commemorated for one thousand five hundred years! He said the bread that they had in their hands was representative of his body. He said the wine they had in their cup represented the new covenant that was to come about through his shed blood. What could all this mean? I'm not sure we can fully understand what must have been going through the disciples' minds at this point. "What is Jesus doing?" "That's not the way it is done!", "What has he done to our sacred tradition?" Jesus was actually explaining the Passover to them. He said in effect, "That sacrificial lamb God prescribed so long ago was a foreshadowing of me." "That blood on the doorposts and lintel is a foreshadowing of my death." "My Father will see my blood and His judgment that should fall on you for your sin will instead fall on me. In grace, he will pass over you."

As we think through what Jesus taught his disciples and what Paul taught the church regarding the Lord's supper, may our hearts be full and our minds stimulated by the richness and beauty of all that is being conveyed. The best of traditions point beyond themselves to a reality that transcends the repeated event. Therefore, let us not observe communion merely for the sake of repeating a tradition, for in so doing we will have lost communion with one another and the deeper significance of the meal. The observance of the Lord's Supper is a beautiful time of remembering what Christ has done for us, communing with one another, and proclaiming Jesus' death for the sins of the world.

May the Lord teach you the beauty and depth of his table as you focus on him this week.

In Christ,

John