

We can look with derision at the Israelite complaints in the desert. “After seeing the Passover, how could they eat miraculous manna and quail from heaven and long for cucumbers in Egyptian slavery?” What must they think, from their perspective in heaven, of our complaints of daily life, even with hard pews, long hymns, boring liturgy, boring lives, our longings for things harmful, even while the Lord gives us His very Body and Blood? Yet, which of us has been truly grateful -not taken for granted the overflowing blessing of God’s grace, of all the riches poured out upon us, not just in the material things, but even in what He bestows in His Supper? Repent.

Long ago, in the land of Egypt, a land of exile, slavery, the Israelites suffered under the iron fist of Pharaoh. Pharaohs had forgotten the saving work of Joseph; how he had delivered Egypt from famine. They’d enslaved the Hebrew people to build their cities, erect their monuments. Terrible hardships, brutal labor, despair was the lot for God’s people. They cried out in their misery; the Lord answered, bringing to bear the Old Covenant. He sent Moses to free the people; from the bondage of slavery and death, deliver them from land of exile to the promise land. The blood of the lamb spared them from the last plague against the harden Pharaoh.

The Passover meal was filled with tension. Without the blood of the lamb, the Israelites would have also been killed, not by Egyptians, but by God. The meal was costly in this sense: the lamb had to die. The firstborn had to die. The lamb’s blood marked the doorpost, shielded God’s people from God’s wrath, angel of death Passover; the lamb gave himself as meat to strengthen them for their journey from exile to promise land. Those exiles left bondage and slavery, but only to journey into the desert, toward a promise land.

Thousands upon thousands of lambs—buckets upon buckets of blood—this is the history of God’s people, of the Passover. And so, each year, each family in their homes gathers, were commanded to celebrate this great rescue, to once again sacrifice a lamb, smear its blood as they remembered the Passover, all that God accomplished by the blood of the lamb. God commanded a closed communion and an empty chair anticipating one whom He would send to fill it, even complete this Old Testament Sacrament.

Jesus gathers with His disciples to celebrate the Passover meal. Jesus treats this sacred Passover Liturgy as if it is His, its about Him, He goes off script and institutes the Holy Supper of The lamb.

God commanded this Passover meal, commemorating this complicated history of sinful rebellion and redemption, be kept forever. It is. It is kept to this day. Not by reenactments, but kept by the Lord's death and resurrection delivered in the Holy Communion.

The angel of death did not pass over Him: it stayed right there. It didn't see some lamb's blood and move on to the next house. It didn't kill one boy and go looking for the next. It stopped, dead in its tracks, and spent everything it had on Him. For Him, there is no mercy, no ram in the thicket, no change of heart in the Father or substitute. Thus the Passover is kept, and kept forever. And the angel of death is spent.

Thousands and thousands of lambs slain—buckets and buckets of blood smeared -all the Passover lambs, all the blood points to the cross. Behold, the Lamb of God slaughtered who takes away the sin of the world! And the Lord's Supper bestows upon us, most blessed of humanity, the fulfillment of God's promise, the New Covenant He makes with you in His blood.

There is tension still with us in the meal. We endure the death of loved ones. We suffer injustice. We are attacked by sins. We still have sorrows and tragedies. We still have fear and doubt. We still live in ingratitude and ignorance. We need this Supper tonight even as He commands we celebrate it often. He is abundant with His gifts. We like them of old, eat the lamb who gave Himself to be strength for the journey, you exiles, freed, leave a bondage of sin and slavery of death, journey through a dessert towards a greater promise land.

The Lord has not, never will forsake you. He hears your cries and answers in His New Covenant. The Lord provides what we need for the journey, a feast of joy in the midst of sorrow. The doorpost of your soul is marked. The angel of death passover you. You eat the Lamb who gave His life that you be spare. Thanks be to God: the Passover is kept. And that, for you, and for whatever is that you face, until such time as He deliver you exiles to the promise land to Himself in heaven.