

# Jesus Prepared His Own Passover

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Mark 14:12–16  
Frank Walker, Ph.D.

I've titled this morning's message, "Jesus Prepared His Own Passover" because the passover he celebrated with his disciples really was *his* passover.

There are several indications of this in today's text. The disciples' question in verse 12 is a good example of this. They didn't say, "Where will we eat the passover?" but "Where will you eat it?" Then, when Jesus told his disciples what to say to the owner of the upper room, he said, *Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?* The emphasis was on him observing the feast. He was the host; his disciples were guests. And finally, the whole passage shows that Jesus controlled everything. He sent his disciples to find a specific man who lived in a specific house, who would also make sure that the room he needed was perfectly ready to be used.

Why is this important? Because just as Jesus hosted the meal that prefigured his death for our sins, so he also controlled the reality this meal represented. Not long before this, he said, *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father* (John 10:17–18). He also controls who benefits from his death. Question 54 of our catechism says that "the Son of God, by His Spirit and Word, gathers, defends and preserves for Himself unto everlasting life a chosen communion."

Nothing happens by chance. Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, didn't just show up with expensive perfume two days before the passover. The Jews and Judas didn't just happen to plan their conspiracy at the same time. No, everything had been orchestrated by Jesus to fulfill God's eternal plan to save a people for himself.

## Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread

With this background, let's now consider this morning's text.

Verse 12 gives us a second indication of time. The first was in verse 1, which says that the feast of the passover was just two days away. Here we learn that the day of the passover had arrived.

This time reference is very precise. Mark says that the events in our text took place on *the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover*. Passover was a single day on the Jewish

calendar that commemorated God’s deliverance of the Jews from Egypt. In the first passover, every family killed a lamb and ate it with bitter herbs and unleavened bread. However, the feast of unleavened bread technically started the next day and lasted several days. It celebrated the removal of sin from God’s people. It’s easy to see how these two things — redemption and purification — went together. Even the order was important: deliverance comes before sanctification.

But in our text, the first day of unleavened bread took place on the same day as the passover. Why? Because by the time we get to the New Testament, the Jews had merged these two celebrations into one. The rabbis of the first century often referred to the passover simply as the day of unleavened bread.

This means that Jesus arranged for his betrayal, arrest, trial and death to take place at the exact time when God’s people were celebrating both redemption and purification. He did this to teach his disciples and us that both celebrations prefigured his death. He came to redeem and purify his people. Paul may have had this in mind when he wrote these words about Jesus to Titus: *Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works* (Titus 2:14).

If we had only Mark’s gospel, we might suppose that Jesus’ disciples proposed celebrating the passover. They were the ones who asked about it. But this isn’t right. For one thing, the disciples didn’t ask, “*Should we go into town and prepare the passover?*” but “*Where should we prepare it?*” They assumed they would celebrate it, just like they always had. And second, Luke’s account of the same incident shows that Jesus told Peter and John to prepare the passover before they asked where to do so. They asked for a location because they wanted to do everything exactly as Jesus wanted. Here, again, we see Jesus in control.

## The Upper Room

In our text, Jesus responded to the disciples’ question by commissioning two of them to secure a location. But it wasn’t actually Peter and John who did this. The location had obviously been secured already. Jesus secured it. But how? Did he secure it by his sovereign power over the created universe, controlling the man carrying the water and the owner of the house, or had he previously signed a rental agreement with the owner?

We could go either way with this. The fact that Jesus knew his disciples would meet a man carrying a jug of water favors divine omniscience unless we imagine that this man stood somewhere with his jug until the disciples arrived. And this would have been especially remarkable since the men of that culture rarely carried water. Women did. The only men who carried water were servants. On

the other hand, the unusual way Jesus instructed his disciples to speak to the master of the house suggests a prior arrangement. The disciples weren't to ask, "May the Lord use your room for the passover?" but "Where is the guest chamber — a specific room — where the Lord shall eat the passover with his disciples?" In fact, verse 15 goes further and says that the owner of the house had already prepared a large upper room, i.e., a room that would accommodate thirteen men, for Jesus. He had furnished it with couches and rugs for a meal, and presumably had gone through everything to remove every trace of leaven.

So, I'm not sure we can answer this question completely. Maybe the correct answer is a combination of divine omniscience and a prearranged contract. In any case, we have to insist that Jesus was in control and did everything with purpose.

A more important question is, Why did Jesus identify where he would eat the passover in such an unusual way? Couldn't he have said, "We'll celebrate the passover at Jonah's house," or given his disciples an address like 725 Maple Street? He could have told them to go into town, turn left at the third intersection, and find the second house on the right. But, instead, he told them to find a man carrying water and follow him. Why did he do it like this?

There's one very simple reason: Jesus didn't want one particular person to know beforehand where he would observe the passover. According to the two verses preceding today's text, Judas had already betrayed him. If Judas had known in advance where Jesus would eat that evening, he could have had him arrested during the meal. But this wasn't what Jesus wanted.

What did Jesus want? Three things.

First, Jesus wanted time alone with his disciples. The main thing was, of course, to eat the passover, but there was more. Jesus also wanted to comfort his disciples, knowing that he would leave them very soon. He spoke to them extensively during the upper room discourse, which John preserved for us in the fourteenth through sixteenth chapters of his gospel. Jesus also prayed for his disciples. His high priestly prayer in John 17 probably took place there. Because this was his last meal with his disciples, he wanted to make the most of it.

Second, Jesus wanted to control the environment so his disciples could concentrate on what he was doing. He kept the passover in an upper room, where the distractions would be few. There he instituted the sacrament of the Lord's Supper and did so in such a way that showed that both the passover and the Supper were about him. He said, *This is my body*, and, *This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many* (vv. 22, 24). The passover lambs were types and shadows, but Jesus was his people's salvation. To appropriate his work, they had to embrace his work, which was symbolically set before them in the bread and wine.

And third, Jesus wanted to communicate a message of hope to disciples. After all, that’s what the passover was about — God intervening in human history to save his own. Exodus 12:42 says, *It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the LORD to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.* Every celebration of the passover was both a reminder of what God had already done for his people and a promise of what he would do for them in the future. Paul reflected this regarding the Lord’s Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:26. He wrote, *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.*

## As He Said

The last verse of this morning’s text tells us exactly what Peter and John did and found. XIX words in this verse (three in Greek) are especially important: *As he had said unto them.* Everything happened exactly as Jesus said it would.

There was nothing random or unplanned about the disciples meeting a man carrying water, Jesus securing the upper room, or anything he did. Everything went according to his plan. And remember that this was all part of a much larger plan that included his death on the cross and our salvation. As one commentator wrote,

Far from being crushed in the gears of history, Jesus was turning its wheels just as he wished. His death was no accident! In fact, the Last Supper and his words (“Take it; this is my body” and “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” vv. 22, 24) make no sense at all if Jesus was not master of his own death. Jesus maintained sovereign, premeditated, and detailed mastery. A God who is in control when the foundations of his own earthly existence are crumbling is a God who can be trusted to sustain us when it appears our life is tumbling in.<sup>1</sup>

And further, the events recorded in our text weren’t things Jesus came up with when Jesus realized how bad things had become. They took place according to the eternal plan of the triune God. There was no other possibility. God doesn’t change his plan when things go wrong because nothing ever goes wrong. Jesus is *the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world* (Rev. 13:8). And it was always his purpose to redeem you by offering himself as a sacrifice for your sins. Paul wrote that *God hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will* (Eph. 1:4–5). This should give you peace and hope.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *in loc.*

Verse 16 concludes with these words: *And they made ready the passover.*

This leaves us asking today if we've made the passover ready. Preparing for the first passover was both complicated and time-consuming. Four days before the actual sacrifice, every man went out to his sheep and chose a spotless, one-year-old victim, which he brought into his house for the kids to enjoy. Then, just as they began to think of it as a family pet, he killed it and roasted it with bitter herbs. The whole land of Goshen was filled with the aroma of roasted lamb, symbolizing a coming redemption.

But in the New Testament, it's a lot simpler. I'm not talking about the Lord's Supper, which is also simpler, but about what it means to appropriate God's redeeming mercy. How do we prepare for it? By going to Jesus Christ and believing in him. We must believe that he gave himself for our sins and rose again from the dead. Peter put it like this in his first epistle: *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God* (ch. 1:18–21).

So, have you made your passover ready? Or more accurately, has Jesus made his passover ready for you? We have to say it like this because the passover has always belonged to our Savior — now just as much as two thousand years ago. Have you partaken of his finished work? Have you gone to him by faith?

Don't hesitate to do so because apart from Jesus Christ there's no forgiveness, no peace and no hope. All these things come from his shed blood, which he offered in our place on the cross of Calvary. Amen.