

Ephesians 14-04-20a

This is Sunday morning, the 20th of April, 2014. It's Resurrection Sunday, and we are doing two things at once. We're continuing our study in the book of Ephesians, but we are also going to cover something in keeping with the occasion and with the celebration that is uniquely ours as Christians, as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, as His body on this earth.

We turn special attention to this crowning and culminating part of His work of obedience and love expressed toward us. And so we will begin this morning in Ephesians chapter 4, and we'll be going a place or two beyond that, but we will begin as we always do, by taking a moment to go to the Lord in prayer. Father, it is a privilege that never grows old, that we never take for granted, that is never a commonplace, to be able to come before You to claim Your grace and Your provision in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We thank You for Him. We thank You for His work on our behalf, which we, even in glory, will probably never fully be able to comprehend, to empty Himself and take on the form of a servant and come here to this earth and dwell in the fallenness and the corruption that is of our own making, to minister to us, to teach us, to set an example for us of the life that can be lived in the power of Your Spirit and in obedience to Your Word and Your will. And then culminating in the sacrificial work on the cross that secures for us salvation and relationship with You, deliverance from our sin and our sentence of death, to make possible for us a bright future, both in this life and in the life beyond, to have the prospect of dwelling in Your presence and seeing new revelation of Your person and Your character forevermore.

We thank You for the Lord Jesus. We thank You for recognizing His work on our behalf and imputing it to us so that we have His privileges, we stand before You clothed in His righteousness and possessing His eternal life. We thank You for this passage of Scripture that is before us, an expression of Your thought embodied in the Lord Jesus, and we ask Your blessing on us as we study it together.

May each one find meaning and motivation in it for the time that remains to us in this life so that we can walk worthy of the calling with which we have been called. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen. In Ephesians chapter 4, we are enjoined, we are exhorted to walk worthy of the calling with which we have been called.

What is that calling? It is to be the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in His personal absence. He was here, but He didn't stay here. One of the more intriguing questions you can ask, I asked myself this question and because I couldn't answer it, it is not the subject of our special this morning.

Sometimes you ask a question and you don't get the answer and that wouldn't be a thing to present as the topic of the class. Well, here's the question. I don't know the answer.

God bless you. Go in peace. Here's the first question I asked myself some time ago when I was thinking about this Sunday morning and the opportunity to think about the implications and the details of the Lord's work we celebrated this time of year.

Why did it happen the way it did? And I'm talking specifically about the resurrection and the intervening period between the resurrection and the ascension. We see a connection obviously between Passover as an observance and as a feast in the councils of God that were delivered to Israel through Moses and that annual celebration on 14 Nisan extending through the following week, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and then culminating at Pentecost seven weeks and a day later. But why? We can say, well, here's the pattern in the Old Testament and here's the fulfillment in the New Testament.

But I have some questions that I don't have the answers to, so I'll just share the questions and you can puzzle over it, preferably after the study this morning and not during because we're going to be studying something else. But here's just a couple of the things that intrigue me and I think there is an answer and I think as with all things pertaining to God's truth, it is meaningful and pertinent and would have great application once we figure it out. It may be one of the things we learn later on when we've got more capacity, but think about this, and I do have some hints, I have some theories, but it hasn't formed itself into something ready for prime time.

Think about the other ways that this sacrifice could have been offered. I've suggested this before, couldn't the Lord Jesus have ascended Mount Sinai and the heavens would have parted and there would have been a heavenly altar or maybe even there on Mount Zion and in the same place where Abraham was ready to offer Isaac, here is this, the Lord in great majesty surrounded by angelic hosts of glory lays Himself down on the altar, so to speak, and it wasn't accomplished that way. The Jews do not swing a whip and they do not pound a nail, do they? They are the agent, they cause it, they instigate it, but they do not accomplish it at first hand, they do it by proxy.

Who actually arrests and crucifies the Lord Jesus? I'm talking about the arrest that results in His death sentence. Who does it? It's the Gentiles, it's the Romans. Now, why is that? Why couldn't this have been done maybe at a slightly different time? Why is it that God timed this and set it up so that the Romans are in charge and the Jews are a vassal state, so to speak, with a foreign government executing this kind of justice? God could have timed this and could have set it up circumstantially in any one of a number of ways.

This is the way that He chose. The Jews do not pound the nails. They do not, at first hand, accomplish this death.

Why? Why does God implicate, in fact, at many critical junctures in the history of God's people, you find that God purposely involves Gentiles. Why was Moses born at a time when God's people were in slavery to Egypt? Well, we have a few more clues about that. We say, well, Egypt

represents the world of unbelief and rejection of God and to come out and be delivered out of the false systems that they represent.

And all of that is true. But they're still Egyptians. They're not Edomites.

They're not Moabites. They're not Ammonites. They're Egyptians.

And yet, Jacob's second youngest son has two offspring, Ephraim and Manasseh, and they are half Egyptian. He marries an Egyptian. Joseph, who in so many ways foreshadows the Lord Jesus, marries an Egyptian.

The half tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, are half Egyptian. There is the implication of the Assyrians in the demise of the northern kingdom. There is the implication of the Babylonians, and King Nebuchadnezzar in particular represents many things in the discipline and judgment of the southern kingdom.

God does not deal with His people in a vacuum in the Old Testament day. It is in juxtaposition and in some cases in the very midst of the Gentile world. And there's a reason for that.

And you see it again when it comes to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus. But what about this? God set up the feast system, and it would foreshadow both the first and second advents of the Lord Jesus. We've seen this many times, right? So why is it the way it is? Why is it that the Feast of Unleavened Bread comes right after Passover? It obviously initially commemorates the exodus, the coming out of Egypt.

They didn't have time to leaven the bread and wait for it to rise, so they ate the unleavened bread. They're traveling in haste. Why? It is that way, and the Lord Jesus is crucified just as the Passover lamb is being sacrificed.

More about that shortly. But why did God set it up the way He did? Why do you have Passover? I get the symbolism for Passover, and you've got to pick a time of the year, so okay, we can start there. But then you've got a week following Feast of Unleavened Bread.

It's all Passover. You can look at a modern Jewish calendar, by the way. I looked at one a couple of days ago, and the days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread are called Passover 2, Passover 3, Passover 4, all the way to the end of that feast.

That's what they call it. The Passover was approaching. They saw the whole thing as a unit.

Then you've got, of course, the 50-day count from Passover to Pentecost. Why 50 days? You've got some clues. You've got the Jubilee idea, seven sevens.

There's obviously some symbolic things going on. But here's what I'm really working toward. Here's the question I couldn't answer and therefore can't make it the subject of our study this

morning, but I offer it to you because it does impinge, it does pertain.

If you were setting up this whole resurrection of Lord Jesus and the ascension and the beginning of the church age, would you, from scratch, do it the way God did it? Would you know to do it the way He did it? Here's my actual question. All of that's background. That's the scenery.

Here's the actor standing on the stage now. Why did Jesus leave before Pentecost? What better way to introduce the church age than for Jesus to be there at Pentecost? Holy tongues of fire descending and the Lord Jesus ascending. Why didn't He stick around for Pentecost? He left before that, didn't He? He had to give them sort of a temporary infilling or endowment of the Spirit.

He breathed on them and here's something to tide you over. Wait in Jerusalem until you receive power from on high. Why didn't Jesus stick around and wait? The church age, Jesus is gone when it starts and has been gone for some days.

Why is that? Why didn't He stick around? I can see Pentecost being a great day. The plan of Sam, I think I'd have picked that day for Jesus to ascend. He would have been in Jerusalem.

The upwards of 200 gathered in one place. Jesus goes up and everybody sees Him go and songs of praise. Ye men of Jerusalem, why stand ye gazing? Jesus leaves and it's sort of a private party.

Ye men of Galilee, why do you stand? Because who saw Him ascend? Only the men of Galilee. Why is that? You've got a built-in audience at Pentecost where all of these people are going to be assembled and gathered. Hand off the torch.

It's like a good relay race. Here's the runner starting right here. Here's the one coming up behind.

Just hand off the baton. It's seamless. No gap.

There's a gap. Why is that? I don't know. But it intrigues me.

There are so many things that God does and they are deeply meaningful and significant. But the Lord Jesus wasn't here on day one of the church age. He wasn't here in this momentous dispensational shift.

It's huge. We are free from the curse of the law. When did that happen? Did it happen at the cross? Did it happen Sunday morning at the resurrection? Or did it happen at Pentecost? I don't know.

I don't think anybody knows. You can speculate, but the Bible doesn't say. We know that somewhere in that period the law ceased to pertain.

Did the church age begin on Resurrection Sunday? Apparently not. Did it begin at the

Ascension? Apparently not. Did it begin in Acts chapter 2 when they were all gathered and God the Holy Spirit descended and fulfilled one of the final prophetic statements that the Lord Jesus made? You will receive power from on high.

That is traditionally, and I think it's correct. I think that's when our age began. But why did it happen the way it did? There is a puzzle there that if we solve it would be very fruitful in terms of understanding and application.

However, that is not our topic this morning. As I say, it does impinge. It does pertain.

I think there is a clue to answer that question in what we are going to look at. Friday night we did our study in Ephesians chapter 4 as well. Do you remember what the essence of that was? What the main idea was in Ephesians chapter 4? We looked at verses 3 and 4. Having exhorted us and beseeched us to walk worthy of the calling with which we have been called, Paul says, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love.

This is the means. This is the actualization of a worthy walk. This is its measure.

This is its expression. This is its fulfillment. If we are walking worthy of our calling, we will have taipeno frosune.

We will have gentleness. We will have longsuffering. We will be able to bear with one another.

All four of these are one another commands. It doesn't get any more practical than this because this defines our life. It's the one another.

None of us are an island. None of us are isolated in some way, shape or form. We all have contact with other believers and we should.

We are commanded to. Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together as the manner of some is. It's a command.

Be united in fellowship. Be speaking the truth to one another. Be loving one another.

Those over five dozen one another commands require an other for fulfillment. And you cannot walk worthy of your calling if you do not have active Christian fellowship. Endeavoring, verse 3, to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

That will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee because he trusteth in thee. Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit. There is, verse 4, one body and one Spirit.

There's one body of Christ on this earth. Remember my question that's not the subject of our study this morning. Why did Jesus leave before the church age begins? Don't have two bodies of Christ on the earth at the same time.

There's one here. He leaves. Now we are his body.

Animated by, empowered by, enabled by, guided by, linked to God the Father by one and the same Spirit. That Spirit which descended on the day of Pentecost. Which is my argument for that being day one of the church age.

Why? That's the Spirit entering the body. Energizing, enlivening the body. So we are enjoined to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

The body of Christ should not be divided. It shouldn't be opposed to itself. We are to be wrestling against external enemies, not internal ones.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood. It shouldn't be a matter of isometrics. You remember that? I haven't heard about it lately, but it used to be when I was young.

They had, oh, isometrics. While you're driving, you know, oppose your muscles against each other. Has anybody ever accomplished anything by isometric exercise? The most I can say for it is you can help keep yourself awake when you're driving late at night.

Everybody else is gonzo unconscious. And you've got the chin wag going and you're trying to keep straight. You can, by stimulating a little bit of circulation, you know, I shove both feet into the floor.

Put her on cruise control, of course. Get your feet off the pedals. But you can try to force the blood to move a little quicker.

And it will clear your mind. And it will help you stay awake. A little free tip there.

But isometrics, in terms of actual, you know, bodybuilding and so on, I mean, at best, it's sort of a maintenance thing. You need to push against something else. Push against gravity.

Push against weights. Push against, you know, your time as you're running or whatever. It's external.

We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and rulers of the darkness of this age. I want those outside. I don't want those inside.

I want them outside my body, not inside. I want them outside our fellowship, not inside. That's where our struggle and our strife comes.

Because we endeavor to keep the unity of spirit and the bond of peace. Now, well and good, we are the body of Christ and that's important. Yes? How does that pertain to Resurrection Sunday? How does it pertain in terms of looking at something uniquely related to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ? Well, we're going to look at the upper room meal.

This is recorded, as few other things are, in all four Gospels. So it is important. As we have seen in the past, and this will be review, but it's a good refresher to lay a foundation for where we're going.

This supper, the upper room meal, when Jesus sends His disciples ahead and says, prepare the Passover, people generally conclude, and it is a widespread belief, that Jesus ate the Passover meal the night before He was crucified. This is not possible. It's just not possible.

Why? Because all four Gospels tell us that it was not the Passover. All four Gospels tell us it was the day of preparation. And let me just give you, by way of quick summary and review, this is a condensation of a study we did a few years ago.

First of all, John 13, 1. You remember John 13, this is where Jesus washes the disciples' feet and then begins the upper room discourse. Before the feast of Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come, that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. Now, before the feast of Passover, it says.

And then we have the events, the washing of the disciples' feet, and the things that follow in John 13, 14, 15, 16, and so on. Mark 14, verse 17. This is the beginning of Mark's account of the upper room.

As I say, previous to that, in Mark 14, verse 13. So His disciples went out, came into the city and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover. This is the day of preparation.

Everybody prepared the Passover the day before. It is the day of preparation. Now, Jesus says, He sets it up as though He's going to be there to eat the Passover.

And He tells His disciples, prepare the Passover, get it all ready. What He doesn't tell them is, He will not be there to celebrate it. Not in that upper room.

He is going to fulfill and, in one sense of the word, observe Passover, but not in the way they think. Where is the guest room in which I may, I might eat the Passover with my disciples? He doesn't make a sermon out of the fact, I'm going to prepare it, and we're going to be there the night before, but I'm not going to be there the day of. And He just says, He simplifies it.

It is an observance. They need a place where they can all meet. And He just says, where is the place where I might eat the Passover? They prepared the Passover.

All of this preparation had to be done ahead of time because the Passover itself is a Sabbath. The day following it is also a Sabbath. First day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

So, in the evening of that day where they prepared the Passover, it can't be the Passover because they prepared the Passover. And that's the day of preparation. It's the day preceding.

In the evening of that day, verse 17 of Mark 14, He came with the twelve. As they sat and ate, Jesus said, Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me. This is the beginning of the day of preparation, which began at 6 p.m. Thirdly, Luke 22, 14-16.

Notice we're going gospel by gospel. Gospel of John 13.1. Mark 14.17. Now Luke 22, 14-16. When the hour had come, this is the hour John spoke of, when Jesus knew that He'd be returning to His Father.

He sat down and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, With fervent desire, I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. But I say to you, Your new King James says, I will no longer eat of it.

But the best Greek manuscripts say, I will not eat of it. And that is the correct reading. It got modified probably because people wanted this to be the Passover, but it's not.

The best manuscripts say, Oumai esthio, which is from phago. This is where we get the word esophagus. This is involved with eating.

Oumai, I will surely not. Oumai is the strongest Greek negative. I will absolutely not eat it, the Passover, until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

That's what Luke 22, 15 says. With great desire, I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. But I won't.

I will not celebrate it with you until the Kingdom comes. Then He took the cup and gave thanks and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves. For I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes.

He took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, gave it to them, saying, This is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me. Likewise, He took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is shed for you.

Oumai, that is an emphatic negative. He will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. Fourthly, all four Gospels, in the mouth of two or three witnesses a thing is established.

This is four. All four Gospels tell us that Jesus was reclining at the table with His disciples. All four Gospels give us this detail.

The one thing that nobody did at the Passover observance was recline. Do you think Jesus forgot? Do you think the disciples didn't know how to do Passover? The Lord Jesus Himself can't remember how it's done? All four Gospels tell us they were reclining. Nobody reclines then or now at the Passover meal.

Nobody. How is the Passover supposed to be eaten? In haste, while standing, with staff in hand.

Exodus 12, verse 11.

Thus you shall eat it, with a belt on your waist, with sandals on your feet. Do they have sandals on their feet? How did Jesus wash their feet if they've got sandals on? They took off their sandals, He washed their feet, and then they put their dirty sandals back on? No. This was not the Passover.

They don't have their sandals on. They are not standing, and they don't have a staff in their hand. It's not the Passover.

All four Gospels tell us they reclined. They did what they always did at a standard meal. Exodus 12, verse 11 again.

Thus you shall eat it, belt on your waist, sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover.

The lamb was to be eaten furthermore. What was the nature of the preparation of Passover lamb? How was it prepared? It's not raw, so how was it prepared? Exodus 12, verses 8 and 9. They shall eat the flesh on that night, roasted in fire. It's a roasted lamb.

You know how to roast something, right? You put it over the fire. What do you not get when you roast something over the fire? If you have a pot roast, what do you get? Gravy. There ain't no pot roast without gravy, right? That's the beauty of boiling or cooking or stewing meat.

You have lots of liquid along with it. What did Jesus do with the bread when He handed it to somebody as He dipped His hand in the dish? There was a sop, right? You don't get sop with roasted lamb. There is no sop anywhere in a Passover meal.

It's eaten with bitter herbs. It's roasted meat. I say again, this is not the Passover meal.

Now, we say, well, interesting detail. I know a fact that a lot of people don't know. Praise God.

Pass the pot roast. Why is this important? Does it have an application? Yes, it does. It is critically important that this is not the Passover meal.

It has direct application for you and me, as we will see when we come back from the break. But, do not settle. This is the application of what we have seen thus far.

It is important to think about what the Word of God says, to pay attention to detail, to find it reasonable, to find its integrity and its consistent, unvarying witness to truth. We accept so many things, and it just gets further and further from the truth. There are eggs and Easter bunnies and things going on.

I heard a funny story. You may have heard this. There was a lady teaching a group of four-year-olds on Easter Sunday, and saying, you know, do you know what Easter is? And a little girl stuck

up her hand, and she said, yes.

And she said, well, this is the day that Jesus came out of the grave. And the teacher was very encouraged because the little child remembered what she had been taught. This is the day that Jesus came out of the grave.

But if he sees His shadow, he's got to go back in for seven more weeks. A partial truth doesn't cut it. An amalgamated truth isn't the truth.

We want to understand and rightly divide the Word of Truth. And that's what we're doing this morning. There is a reason why we should observe.

There's a reason why God put all of this evidence in the New Testament to tell us that this is not the Passover meal. The confusion is understandable. Jesus sent them in to prepare the Passover, which is the place where they will stay for the entire week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

It's all called the Passover. You've got to prepare a place for us to stay, a place for us to eat. Prepare the Passover so that I can eat with my disciples.

This is the room where they ostensibly will eat for the whole week. It's all called the Passover. We're so culturally removed that it's been missed.

And from early days, it's been ritualized and it's been shoehorned into a model it does not fit. It's important that it's not the Passover. And when we come back, we'll see why.