Living Word
Lutheran Church
LCMS

Why don't we celebrate the Passover?

This is a question I've been asked before - usually around this time of year, since Passover usually falls close to Easter. This year it is especially appropriate because Passover begins at sundown on April 12 - just a few hours before the day we know as "Maundy Thursday." The day when Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples in the Upper Room.
Passover is the celebration of God delivering His people from slavery in Egypt. You can read about it in Exodus Chapter 12, but here are the highlights:

God had brought a series of plagues upon the Egyptians. These were designed to help them see that He is the one true God and that they should do as He said - let His people go. Release them from slavery, so they could go settle in the land God had promised to them.

After the plagues, Pharaoh, the Egyptian leader, promised to release the Israelites. But each time he went back on his word and kept them in slavery. So God planned one final plague: death of the first-born male - of both man and cattle.

But God provided a way for the people who followed Him as God. to escape the plague If they sacrificed a lamb and put the lamb's blood on their doorpost, God promised that the angel of death would see the blood as a sign of their faith in Him and pass over them sparing them from the plague.

God then commanded His people to commemorate this great "salvation event" each year with a special "Passover Meal." This celebration would force the people to remember how He had saved them and also force them to tell their children about it.

So, why don't Christians celebrate the Passover? Probably mostly due to the fact that, since Christ came, Passover is usually viewed as an "Old Testament" festival that we are no longer required to observe. In fact, the Old Testament Passover event was designed to point ahead to what God would do on an "eternal scale" when he sacrificed His own Son ("The Lamb of God"). The angel of eternal death promises to "pass over" everyone who through faith in Jesus has the doorposts of your heart covered by the blood He shed on the cross. We are then released from slavery to our sin and set free to enter the Eternal Promised Land of heaven.

But just because Passover is an Old Testament festival that pointed ahead to Christ doesn't mean we can't celebrate it after Christ has come. In fact, celebrating the Passover is a huge part of our Christian heritage and helps us come to a greater understanding of how Jesus Christ fulfilled the Old Testament. Celebrating Passover is definitely a good thing to do.

A few years back we had a representative from Jews for Jesus (Jewish people who believe that Jesus is the Messiah) present "Christ in the Passover" for us. We shared a Passover Seder (meal) prior to learning how the meal actually pointed ahead to Christ and to what He would do for us on the cross.

I contacted the Jews for Jesus to see if they would be in our area this year to present "Christ in the Passover" for us again. They didn't have room in their schedule this year, but have us booked for April 2, 2007. They asked that we show a video presentation of "Christ in the Passover" this year in preparation

for the "live" version next year.

Maundy Thursday is the day Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper while celebrating the Passover meal, so for our Maundy Thursday observance this year we will watch the video presentation. Following that "Christ in the Passover" presentation we will celebrate the Lord's Supper with renewed understanding of that special meal.

Listen to this quote from David Brickner, Executive Director of Jews for Jesus: "I love to see the eyes of my fellow Christians light up as they realize the significance of the Lord's Supper in light of the beauty of Passover." Make a point to come to our "Christ in the Passover" presentation on Maundy Thursday @ 7:30. I believe your eyes will do just what David Brickner said.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net