

THE LAST PASSOVER

Matthew 26:17-30

Matthew was written primarily to Jews presenting Jesus as Messiah and King...the sovereign Lord who came to earth in human flesh. Even in the midst of His *betrayal, trials, and crucifixion*, Jesus is shown in *humble, royal dignity*. Far from diminishing His *majesty and glory*... those events portray the powerful and crowning expression of His *sovereign grace and power*. Through man's ultimate act of *sinful depravity*...God accomplished His ultimate act of *righteous redemption*.

I. THE PREPARATION FOR THE MEAL: (17-19)

The Jewish calendar is filled with religious celebrations...and many of them involve feasts:

- **Pentecost or Feast of Weeks (Exodus 23:16)**...commemorates *God's provision at harvest time*. It was this feast which the Jews were celebrating in Jerusalem when **Peter** preached his first sermon and the Holy Spirit came upon believers (**Acts 2**).
- **Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (Leviticus 23:33-43)**... commemorates *Israel's wandering in the wilderness for 40 years*, when they lived in temporary dwellings and were dependent on God's direct provision for food and water.
- **Day of Atonement (Leviticus 23:27-32)**...this was the *highest holy day of the year*...culminating in the *once-a-year sacrifice offered for sins* in the *Holy of Holies* by the high priest.
- **Feast of Purim (Esther 9:16-19)**...celebrates the *protection from slaughter of the Jewish exiles* in **Persia** through the intervention of **Queen Esther**.
- **Feast of Dedication or Hanukkah**...commemorates the *victory of Judas Maccabeus over the Syrian tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes* and the *restoration of Temple worship* in **164 B.C.**

But in many ways...**Passover**...which is closely associated with the **Feast of Unleaven Bread**...this was the *central feast* of the Jewish year. These two feasts combined to make an *eight-day celebration* that began with the **Passover**.

The events recorded in this passage took place on **Thursday** of **Passion Week**...which was the first day of the combined **Passover** celebration and the **Feast of Unleaven Bread**. It was on that first

day that the **Passover** lambs were sacrificed (**Mark 14:12**). The **Feast of Unleaven Bread** followed immediately after the **Passover** ...with the entire *eight-day event* typically being called **Passover Week** (**Luke 2:41; Luke 22:1, 7; Acts 12:3-4**).

Both celebrations commemorated the deliverance of **Israel** from **400 years** of **Egyptian** bondage.

Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is near; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples."'" (vs. 17-18)...

"And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' And he will show you a large, furnished upper room; prepare it there."

~Luke 12:11-12

The place of the **Passover** celebration isn't designated in any of the Gospels, though it does say that it took place in **the city**...that is **Jerusalem**...probably in the home of someone who acknowledged Jesus as Messiah. The fact that he was willing to open his home indicated that he must have had an awareness of Jesus and His claims. From **Mark** and **Luke** we learn that the man would be *carrying a pitcher of water* (**Mark 14:13; Luke 22:10**). That in itself, would have made him *noticeably identifiable* because it was very unusual for a man to carry such a domestic article.

The disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover (vs. 19)...

The disciples who were sent to make preparations for the **Passover** meal were **Peter** and **John** (**Luke 22:8**). Besides finding the location...**the two disciples**...**prepared the Passover** meal which meant that they had to *purchase* and *prepare* the food.

Mosaic Law required that the lambs that would be sacrificed for **Passover** be selected on the **10th day of Nisan** (our **March/April**... the first month of the Jewish calendar) and that the lamb be kept in the household until it was sacrificed on the **14th** (**Exodus 12:2-6**).

This means that the disciples would have selected a lamb on the day of Jesus' *triumphal entry* into Jerusalem.

They would have had to have the *lamb* slaughtered by a priest at the Temple, which could only be done between **3:00-5:00 PM**. They would also have to buy *unleavened bread*, *wine*, *bitter herbs*, and *the ingredients* to prepare *the dip* for the **Passover** meal. It would have taken them most of the day to prepare the meal.

II. THE PARTAKING OF THE MEAL: (vs. 20-21a)

Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating... (vs. 20-21a)...

Each part of the meal was symbolic of some aspect of the *deliverance from Egypt*.

- **The lamb**...just as lambs had been slaughtered the night they left Egypt and their blood sprinkled on the door post to protect the firstborn from the death angel...so the lambs were now slaughtered and their blood sprinkled on the altar. Likewise, the lamb was cooked and completely eaten the same evening.
- **The four cups of wine**...served during the meal to symbolize God's four promises to His people just before their deliverance from Egypt.

"I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage. I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments. Then I will take you for My people, and I will be your God..."

~Exodus 6:6-7

- **The bowl** into which the *unleavened bread* and the *bitter herbs* were dipped...contained a paste called *charoseth*, composed of finely ground *apples*, *dates*, *pomegranates*, and *nuts*. It was a thick, brownish mixture that symbolized the *mud* and *clay* that was used in the making of *bricks* for the Egyptians. *Cinnamon sticks* were sometimes added to the *charoseth* symbolizing the *straw* used for making the *bricks*.
- **Unleavened bread**...represents the *evil influence of sin*.
- **Bitter herbs**...reminiscent of the *bitterness of bondage*.

Any part of the **Passover** meal not eaten before morning was to be burned (**Exodus 12:8-10**).

III. THE PREDICTION AT THE MEAL: (21b-25)

He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." (vs. 21b)...During the celebration, Jesus stated that **one of** those sitting with Him was about to **betray** Him. This revealed His *omniscience* (**John 2:25**; **John 4:29**).

Betray...Gk. *paradidomi*, literally means *to give over* and was often *used of delivering a prisoner over to prison or punishment*.

In the ancient **Near East**, the eating of a meal with someone was considered *a mark of friendship*. Therefore, to eat with a person *just before betraying him* would be considered *treason*.

Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?" (vs. 22)...a sign of genuine *humility* and *concern*.

And He answered, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me (vs. 23)...What Jesus is saying and emphasizing is that **the one** betraying Him, had been sharing *very close fellowship with Him*...to the point that they had even eaten out of **the same bowl** with Him.

The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." (vs. 24)...

Just as it is written of Him...

"Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; but the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He did not open His mouth; like a lamb that is led to slaughter, and like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He did not open His mouth. By oppression and judgment He was taken away; and as for His generation, who considered that He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?"

~Isaiah 53:4-8

“All this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures of the prophets.”

~Matthew 26:56a

But woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born... Jesus was pointing out to **Judas** the consequences of his betrayal, for while he had already taken the money to betray Jesus, the act wasn't yet accomplished...*repentance* was still possible.

And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” Jesus said to him, “You have said it yourself.” (vs. 25)...Not surprisingly, **Judas** call Jesus, “**Rabbi**”...not “**Lord**” as did the other disciples (vs. 22, 49).

Jesus' words weren't understood by the other disciples, as **John** emphasized...

“Now no one of those reclining at the table knew for what purpose He had said this to him. For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, ‘Buy the things we have need of for the feast’; or else, that he should give something to the poor.”

~John 13:28-29

If the disciples had understood...it's doubtful they would have let **Judas** leave the room. But since they didn't understand...**Judas** departed (**John 13:30**).

IV. THE PROCLAMATION FOLLOWING THE MEAL: (vs. 26-30)

Here, Jesus *transformed* the **Passover** meal of the **Old Covenant** ...marked by the *shedding of the lambs blood*...into the **Lord's Supper** of the **New Covenant**...which would be marked by the *shedding of His own blood*. He gives everything a new and special meaning. The **bread** and **wine** would from this point on, until He returned (that is, throughout the Church Age)...it would represent His **body** and **blood**.

This was in keeping with what was promised in the **New Covenant** (**Jeremiah 31:31-37; Jeremiah 32:37-40; Ezekiel 34:25-31; Ezekiel 36:26-28**)...a covenant that would replace the old **Mosaic Covenant**. His blood was soon to be shed **for many** (vs. 28)...for the **forgiveness of sins**...the *remission of sins*.

“And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.”

~Luke 22:20

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.”

~Leviticus 17:11

“And according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”

~Hebrews 9:22

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” (vs. 26)...

And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins (vs. 27-28)...

Christ ended the **Passover** and instituted a new memorial to Himself. It is now called the **Lord's Supper** or **Communion**...and has been followed by Christians and the Church since His *death, burial* and *resurrection*...and will be *until He returns* (**I Corinthians 11:23-26**)...*in remembrance of Him*.

Jesus committed this ordinance to the Church to be followed as a continual reminder of His completed work for our salvation.

But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.” (vs. 29)...This gives *an assurance of His return...the second coming of Christ*.

After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives (vs. 30)...probably **Psalm 118**...the last psalm of the **Hallel**. They then went out to the Mount of Olives where Jesus *prayed fervently* to His Father...where He was *betrayed by Judas*...and where He would be *arrested by the officers of the chief priests and elders*.

LESSONS WE CAN LEARN:

- *The blood of Jesus Christ made atonement for the sins of all mankind...*Gentile as well as Jew. And this atonement is for all who place their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- The **Lord's Supper** not only is a *reminder of our Lord's sacrifice for our sins...*but also a *reminder of His promise to return* and share His kingdom blessings with us.