

“In the Upper Room” OR “The Last Passover”

November 20, 2016

Mark 14:12-26

I. Introduction

For all those gathered in Jerusalem, Passover was one of the high points of the Jewish year. It was a celebration of the first Passover which had been established by God nearly 1500 years earlier. It commemorated the night the Hebrew people were liberated from slavery in Egypt. In [Exodus 12:3-6](#) God said that the Passover lamb was to be selected on the 10th day of the month of Nisan (our March-April), examined for blemishes, and then slain on the 14th day of the month. For the Jews, the Passover feast was a memorial of a past victory. But in this one Passover meal, on the night before His death, the Lord Jesus would institute a new supper that would be the memorial of His death.

From the disciples’ viewpoint, the activities of the days leading up to the Passover feast had contributed to their growing enthusiasm. It all began with the healings of blind Bartimaeus and his friend outside of Jericho followed by the meeting of Zacchaeus in Jericho proper. When they arrived at Bethany and stayed at the home of Martha, Mary, and Lazarus—seeing Lazarus alive and well would have been enough, but then Mary had anointed Jesus during the meal at Simon the Leper’s house. Then on the next day there had been Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem riding on the colt of a donkey. But it didn’t stop there because on the next day Jesus had driven the merchants and buyers out of the Temple. The rest of the week may not have been quite so active, but every time Jesus was confronted by men representing the Jewish leadership, He always came out on top. For the disciples, the Passover meal was going to be the “*icing on the cake.*”

II. Preparations for the Passover Meal

Certain things had to be done before the Passover could be celebrated, so “[Jesus’ disciples asked him, ‘Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?’](#)” Since Jerusalem was filled to overflowing, rooms would be scarce but for Jesus there was a room. [Luke 22:8](#) says that “[Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, ‘Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.’](#)” In addition to setting up the room, if they had not already done so, they would have to buy unleavened bread, wine, bitter herbs, and the dip for the Passover meal. In accordance with Mosaic Law, the lamb had already been purchased, now Peter and John would have to have the lamb slaughtered by a priest at the Temple. This could only be done between the hours of 3 and 5 in the afternoon. Then going back to the room, they would have roasted the lamb whole, set up the room for the Passover, and prepared the rest of the meal.

Perhaps the secretive way of having the 2 disciples find the meeting place was necessary to prevent Judas' betrayal before the right time. Had Jesus announced earlier where the room was, Judas would surely have told the chief priests and elders. Then they could have arrested Jesus secretly there after dark—before the meal and before the final instructions Jesus was going to give. By sending Peter and John with the instructions to follow “a man carrying a jar of water,” Judas had no way of knowing the location. He and the other nine would not find out where the room was until they arrived later that evening. The location was kept secret until the last minute so that everything would happen in God's timing.

Jesus knew that this was His last opportunity to teach the disciples. (*John chapters 13-17 record many of these teachings.*) This was also the last time He would have an intimate fellowship with these men who have spent the last 3 years with Him. But most importantly, it would be the time of His transforming the Passover supper of the Old Covenant marked by the shedding of lamb's blood, into the Lord's Supper of the New Covenant which would be marked by the shedding of His own blood. As Jesus held the cup, He said in [Luke 22:20](#), “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” For these reasons, the location of the Passover meal needed to be kept secret. So Peter and John “left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.”

III. The Passover Meal

A. The Announcement of a Betrayer Sometime after 6 o'clock on Thursday evening—Friday evening by the reckoning of the Galileans, Jesus arrived with the other disciples to celebrate the Passover meal. Mark recorded 2 of the things that happened: Jesus' announcement of a betrayer in their midst and the institution of the Lord's Supper.

The eating of the Passover meal involved a specified sequence of events. To begin, the first of four cups of red wine mixed with water was served. Wine was always mixed with water before drinking, but during Passover it was diluted with a double amount of water, lest anyone should become drunk at this holy occasion. Luke tells us in [Luke 22:17](#) that before taking the first cup, Jesus gave thanks. The next thing to happen was a ceremonial washing of the hands. This represented the need for moral and spiritual cleansing; cleansing from physical bondage to Egypt and from spiritual bondage to sin. The 3rd part of the Passover meal was the eating of bitter herbs, symbolic of the bitter bondage their forefathers had endured in Egypt. These herbs and pieces of unleavened bread were dipped into a paste of finely ground apples, dates, pomegranates and nuts which were symbolic of the mud and clay used in making bricks for the Egyptians.

The 4th step was taking a second cup of wine. At this time, the head of the household, in this case Jesus, would explain the meaning of Passover. Following that there would be singing from the Hallel, which means praise. The Hallel consisted of [Psalms 113-118](#). Usually at this point the first two Psalms were song. After singing, the roasted lamb would be brought out. The head of the household would again wash his hands and then break off pieces of unleavened bread and hand them out to be eaten with the lamb.

At some point in the celebration Jesus “said, ‘Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me-- one who is eating with me.’” The disciples knew that Jesus had been making enemies left and right and they hadn’t been surprised when He had said earlier that He was going to be betrayed. But as they were gathered around the table and He said that “one of you will betray me,” they must have been shocked! Up to the very end, they didn’t realize which one of them was the traitor. Since he was the group’s treasurer, Judas was probably one of the least expected.

Mark wrote that “They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, ‘Surely not I?’” Jesus’ response, “It is one of the Twelve one who dips bread into the bowl with me,” didn’t seem to help them out at all. In the East to break bread with someone means to enter into a pact of friendship and trust. It would be an act of the worst treachery to break bread and then betray the host. The thought of one of them betraying their Master was just unbelievable. John’s account shows this confusion—[turn to John 13:23-30](#).

From the divine point of view, Judas’ betrayal—Judas’ sin—was predicted in Scripture and was part of the plan of God—“The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him.” But from the human point of view, Judas was completely responsible for what he did and was guilty of this terrible crime. Jesus said, “But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.” God used Judas’ betrayal—Judas’ sin--to His divine purpose. Jesus’ warning of woe and judgment seems to be a final appeal for Judas to turn to God for salvation before it would forever be too late. Judas refused and after “Judas took the bread,” he went out to do his deed. Jesus knew who the betrayer was; John knew; Judas himself knew; but the rest were still in the dark.

B. Institution of the Lord’s Supper After Judas left and Jesus was alone with the 11 faithful disciples, He transformed the Passover meal of the Old Covenant into the Lord’s Supper of the New Covenant. The Passover Jesus was celebrating with the disciples was the last Passover. Jesus ended the Passover and instituted a new memorial. It would not look back to a lamb in Egypt as the symbol of God’s redeeming love and power, but to the very Lamb of God, who by the sacrificial shedding of

His own blood, took away the sins of the whole world. In that one meal Jesus terminated the old and inaugurated the new.

Jesus took two elements from the Passover feast to picture His own death. The broken bread pictured His body given for the sins of the world. The fact that He broke the bread does not symbolize that His bones were broken but that He allowed His body to be abused by the soldiers as they beat Him, nailed Him to the cross and pierced His side with a spear. Originally, unleavened bread symbolized leaving the old way of life in Egypt; it also represented their separation from the influences of sin, idolatry, and worldliness. Now the unleavened bread represents Christ's own sinless body sacrificed for the salvation of men. Jesus said, "Take it; this is my body." Luke 22:19 says, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." Jesus was instituting a memorial of His sacrificial death for His followers to observe.

In saying the bread "is my body," Jesus obviously wasn't speaking literally. He was still standing before them—nothing had changed. Eating His body was no more literal than His saying that He is the Vine and His followers are the branches (John 15:5) or John the Baptist calling Him the Lamb of God. The bread hadn't turned into His flesh. It was only a symbol of His body. It was still unleavened bread.

The watered wine—"the fruit of the vine"—pictured His blood. It was a symbol of His blood that was shed for the remission of sins. Hebrews 9:22 says, "In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." The cup symbolizes Jesus' blood—His atoning death—the giving of His pure and spotless life for the corrupt, wholly sinful lives of unsaved man. Jesus' shed blood established a New Covenant between God and man. The Old Covenant was meant for the Jews, the New Covenant is meant for all who believe. Jesus' blood made atonement or paid the penalty for the sins of all mankind, Gentile as well as Jew. The "many" in Mark 14:24 includes all those who trusted in God before Christ died as well as those who have and will trust in Him following His death and resurrection.

Although they didn't know it at the time, Jesus' promise "not to drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God," was another assurance to them of His return after His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. The Lord's Supper isn't only a reminder of our Lord's sacrifice for sin but also a reminder of His promise to return and share His kingdom blessings. At the end of this present age, we will gather with all His disciples and share this supper in celebration with Him.

The hymn that Jesus and His disciples sang before they left the Upper Room was probably the last psalm of the Hallel, Psalm 118—we read the first 9 verses as our responsive reading this morning. Imagine our Lord being able to sing praises to God in the face of His coming rejection, suffering, and death.

IV. Conclusion

The Passover Jesus celebrated with the disciples was the last divinely sanctioned Passover ever to be celebrated. The Old Covenant and its observance have been replaced by a New Covenant and a new observance. Paraphrasing [2 Corinthians 5:17](#): “the old has gone, the new has come.” Now the Lord’s Supper is a memorial to the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross for the sins of those who accept His gift. The Lord’s Table is a time to look backward at what Jesus has done for each one of us. But it doesn’t stop there. It is also a time to look forward. Jesus didn’t remain in the tomb. He rose again and we can look forward to when we will see the establishment of His kingdom on earth and enjoy celebrating the Lord’s Supper with our Savior and Lord in person. The Lord’s Table is a time to look forward to His coming kingdom. But it doesn’t stop there either, we are reminded in [1 Corinthians 11:28](#) that the Lord’s Supper is also a time to look inward—it is a time of self-examination and holding oneself accountable before God for what we do and don’t do. Like Judas, we all need to watch out that we don’t fall; that we don’t follow the leading of the devil.

The Lord’s Supper is a time to look backward, forward, inward and a time to look outward; Paul wrote in [1 Corinthians 11:26](#) that when we celebrate the Lord’s Table, we are “proclaiming or announcing the Lord’s death until He comes.” The Lord’s Supper is also to remind us of our hope—our salvation—so that we are ready to go tell others that Jesus saves—we are to tell others the Gospel.

Finally, as we remember and celebrate the Lord’s Supper we are reminded that in the past, the present, and the future God loves us and will be with us in all we do and say. No one walks alone. As Jesus said in [Matthew 28:20](#), “Surely I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Thanksgiving Day is just 4 days away—a day set aside to thank God for all the blessings He has given us. As you give thanks for the food placed before you, as you give thanks for the family and friends that God has given you, as you give thanks for the freedoms we have in this country, as you give thanks for all the things the rest of the world does without—things like fresh, clean running water and electricity both 24/7, for doctors, hospitals, medicine whenever you need them just to name a few things, don’t forget to thank God. Thank God for the Greatest gift of all—Jesus Christ who died on the cross, was buried, and was raised the 3rd day according to the Scriptures ([1 Corinthians 15:3-4](#)) so that we might have eternal life. Thank God for His love, mercy and grace.

It seems right to close with the last 2 verses of the Hallel—the last two verses the disciples and Jesus may have sung before they went out to the Garden of Gethsemane—[Psalm 118:28-29](#):

*“You are my God, and I will give you thanks;
You are my God, and I will exalt you.
Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good;
His love endures forever.”*