

The Last Passover, Part 2

Scripture: Matthew 26:20–30

Code: 2383

REVIEW

I. EXPERIENCING THE LAST PASSOVER (vv. 17-25)

A. Setting the Time (vv. 17-19; see pp. xx-xx)

LESSON

B. Sharing the Table (vv. 20-21a)

1. Reclining at the table (v. 20)

"When the evening was come, he sat down with the twelve. "

That's all Matthew says about the actual Passover meal, or Paschal meal as it was often called. It is now after six o'clock on Thursday evening. Later in the night Christ will be captured and brought to a mock trial early in the morning. Then He will be crucified and die around three o'clock on Friday afternoon. Christ and His disciples had to eat the Passover meal Thursday night before midnight, and nothing could be left in the morning.

Verse 20 says Jesus "sat down" or reclined. When God initially established the Passover in Exodus 12:11 He said, "Thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste. " But through the years the feast had developed into a more leisurely custom since there was no need to leave some country in haste. They adopted the custom of reclining when they ate the Passover, as they did for other feasts.

2. Proceeding through the meal (v. 21)

"As they did eat"

That takes us into the Passover meal itself. There was a defined sequence in the meal.

a) The first cup of red wine The first thing they did was say a blessing and then drink the first of four cups of red wine. It was customary to mix the wine with water so that the participants would not get drunk. In fact they used a double amount of water lest they should desecrate such a sacred occasion by becoming intoxicated. That first cup of wine was accompanied by a blessing (Luke 22:17), which symbolized the blessing of God. b) The washing of hands This ceremonial cleansing symbolized the participants' need for personal cleansing before they could eat the meal. Since they were celebrating God's salvation, they wanted to be sure there was nothing unclean in them. How could they celebrate the saving work of God while entertaining the sin from which He had saved them? (1) The argument It is likely that at this natural interlude in the feast, the conversation of the disciples turned to a familiar theme. Luke 22:24 says, "There was also strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. " While they were washing their hands as a sign of their inward cleansing, their souls were filled with pride and self-serving ambition. There was no connection between what they were doing on the outside and what they were doing in the inside. That is not unlike the many people who come to the Lord's Table and go through the motions while entertaining sin in their lives. (2) The rebuke At this particular time, Jesus realized their need to have their feet washed (John 13:1-5). If the washing of the hands was symbolic, the washing of the feet was practical, especially if you were reclining at a meal and your head was only a few inches from someone else's feet! In those days the people wore sandals, which didn't keep off much of anything, so their feet were either muddy or dusty. It was a common custom to wash one's feet whenever entering a home. But in the case of the disciples in the upper room, no servant had washed their

feet. And certainly none of the disciples would stoop to do it because they were arguing about who was the greatest. Not one was willing to take the role of a servant and disqualify himself from greatness. I believe it was at that time when Jesus "rose from supper, and laid aside his garments, and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet" (John 13:4-5). Jesus gave them a profound lesson on humility and condescending love--on meeting the needs of others by taking the role of a slave. When Jesus was finished He said, "If I, then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another's feet" (v. 14). That lesson on humility was a strong rebuke to their pride, but Jesus also gave them a verbal rebuke for their pride (Luke 22:25-27). So the disciples were fully confronted with their sin before they got any further in the meal. c) The bitter herbs The bitter herbs were symbolic of the bitterness of bondage in Egypt. They were first dipped into salt water or vinegar. d) The second cup of red wine When the father or head of the table--in this case the Lord Himself--held the second cup, he instructed the present company on the meaning of the Passover meal. The participants then sang from the Hallel, from which the English word hallelujah originates. It means "praise" and is comprised of Psalms 113-118. At this point in the meal they would sing Psalms 113-114 and then drink the second cup of wine. e) The unleavened bread The participant washed their hand a second time as sign of respect for the bread they were about to eat. The host combined it with bitter herbs and dipped them in a sweet apple and nut sauce called charoseth, which was then passed to the guests. f) The lamb The lamb was then brought out. This was the major part of the meal. Dipping the bitter herbs and unleavened bread into the charoseth prior to eating the lamb was like an appetizer. Sometimes all three were combined together and dipped in the sauce. This is probably the sop mentioned in John 13:26-27.

C. Shocking the Twelve (vv. 21b-24)

1. The shocking announcement (v. 21b)

"[Jesus] said, Verily I say unto you that one of you shall betray me. "

The translators used "betray" because Judas was a betrayer, but the Greek text literally reads, "one of you will deliver Me up. " What a shocking announcement! When anyone shared a meal with another person in that part of the world and at that time in history, he was identifying himself as a friend. The idea of eating a meal with someone and then turning him over to his executioners was unthinkable. In Psalm 55:12-14 David contemplated such a betrayal: "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it. Neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hidden myself from him; but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and my familiar friend. We took sweet counsel together, and walked into the house of God in company. " David was betrayed by a friend, not an enemy. The same is true in Jesus' case. So when Jesus told the disciples that one of them would deliver Him over, they knew one of them would do it, knowing that Jesus would tell the truth.

2. The sincere disciples (v. 22)

a) Their sorrowful demeanor (v. 22a) "They were exceedingly sorrowful" That is a strong way to indicate the degree of their sadness and grief. Some may have even cried. The parallel account in John 13:22 says, "Then the disciples looked one on another, doubting of whom he spoke. " They didn't know whom Jesus was talking about. They didn't know it was Judas because he was a capable hypocrite, excellent at playing out his masquerade. The parallel account in Luke 22:23 says, "They began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing. " Judas was so adept at his hypocrisy that the rest of the disciples had actually chosen him to be their treasurer. They didn't have any doubt about his integrity--they trusted him with their resources, which were meager at best. Jesus had done nothing to expose Judas in front of all the disciples. If anything, Jesus did everything He could to pull Judas close to Him. Judas sat to Christ's left during the meal, a place of great honor according to Jewish historian Alfred Edersheim (The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980 reprint], II:494). Jesus also dipped bread and

gave it to Judas (John 13:26), another symbol of Judas's honored position at the meal. b) Their wholesome distrust (v. 22b) "Every one of them [began] to say unto him, Lord, is it I?" Why would each of the disciples be so quick to imagine himself as the traitor? Since Christ had just rebuked them for their pride and ambition, they felt ashamed. And they were doubly ashamed when Jesus washed their feet. In fact, Peter told Jesus, "Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me" (John 13:8). After having been so soundly rebuked, the disciples were especially sensitive about their weaknesses. So it is not surprising that even they didn't trust themselves regarding their possibly betraying Jesus. That shows great integrity on the part of the disciples. They knew that deep down inside them was a sinful principle so ugly, it might lead them to betray the One they loved. Commentator William Hendriksen said they had a "wholesome self-distrust" (The Gospel of Matthew [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973], p. 905).

3. The symbolic revelation (v. 23)

"He answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. " Christ and His disciples had no knives or forks; they ate with their hands, dipping the bread, the herbs, and perhaps even the lamb. When Jesus said, "He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish," He could have been referring to any of the twelve because they all were dipping food into the dish. In John 13:18 Jesus quotes from Psalm 41:9, pointing out the incongruity of the betrayal, "He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me. " That refers to Ahithophel, who betrayed his friend David (2 Sam. 16:20-23). Ahithophel is a picture of Judas, the ultimate traitor. The parallel account in Luke 22:21 says, "The hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. "

4. The sovereign plan (v. 24a)

"The Son of man goeth as it is written of him"

Christ was not a victim of a plan gone wrong. His betrayal is exactly what God had prewritten in prophetic history. No one did anything to Christ that was not a direct and immediate fulfillment of God's eternal plan. That is why Revelation 13:8 refers to "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. " In Acts 2:23 Peter says Jesus of Nazareth was "delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. " That was the divine plan.

Judas was a betrayer, but a betrayer by his own choice. He rejected grace and the offer of salvation. He made his own choices, yet God in His marvelous sovereignty used Judas's betrayal to accomplish His holy purposes. So we see that an unholy man in the hand of a sovereign God accomplishes a holy end. But that doesn't make Judas a good man. During my senior year in seminary, I decided to do my thesis on Judas. I was amazed to find a number of books taking the position that Judas was a hero who should be exalted. They claim Judas forced Jesus to the cross to fulfill prophecy. Some even believe Judas purposely planned the crucifixion of Christ so that the world could be redeemed. Don't believe it! That's simply not what Scripture says.

5. The severe curse (v. 24b-c)

a) The announcement of the curse (v. 24b) "Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is [delivered over]!" The man who betrayed Christ is cursed. Jesus said he was a devil (John 6:70).

John 12:6 says he was a thief. He loved money and sold Jesus for money. Judas had no desire to usher in the Kingdom on Christ's terms. He had no desire for the salvation of the world. The Old Testament predicted that Christ would die on a cross. Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 describe the crucifixion in minute detail. It was written that He would die on the cross for the sins of the world.

Yet even though that was in the plan of God, the man who turned Jesus over is still a cursed man. b) The application of the curse (v. 24c) "It had been good for that man if he had not been born. " It would have been better to have never been born than to endure what Judas would endure--existence in eternal hell. The degrees of punishment in hell are related to one's level of rejection: the more truth you understand and reject, the greater one's punishment in hell. Therefore, the severest damnation in hell is reserved for Judas who, in the words of Hebrews 10:29, had "trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, with which he was sanctified, an unholy thing. "

Judas rejected the very One he had lived with for three years. Judas made his own choices, and they were the source of his own damnation. Yet the choices fit perfectly into the sovereign plan of God. God controls not only the good, but also the evil of man to accomplish His own ends. Jesus doesn't identify the betrayer in Matthew 26:24; He just pronounces damnation on him. However, I believe He also gave Judas ample opportunity for salvation and repentance.

D. Signifying the Traitor (v. 25)

1. Masquerading the truth (v. 25a)

"Then Judas, who betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I?"

Judas had to say that. If he had said nothing, he would have been unmasked. He had to play the game. Everyone else asked Jesus that question, so he had to say it. He continued to masquerade his hypocrisy as if he could hide anything from Christ. He called Jesus ha didaskalos, which means "master" or "teacher"--an aspect of Christ's life he was no more committed to than any other. All he wanted was money and glory.

2. Confirming the truth (v. 25b)

"[Jesus] said unto him, Thou hast said. "

a) A special proof John 13:24 tells us that at that particular moment Peter leaned over to John, who was on the right side of Jesus, and told John to ask the Lord who the betrayer was. Apparently Peter didn't hear the discussion of Matthew 26:25 between Judas and Jesus. So John said, "Lord, Who is it? Jesus answered, He it is to whom I shall give a sop, when I have dipped it. And when he had dipped the sop, he gave it to Judas Iscariot" (John 13:25-26). At that point John knew who the betrayer was while the rest did not. b) A satanic possession John 13:27 reveals the most frightful thing that ever happened in the life of Judas: "After the sop Satan entered into [Judas]. " The devil himself entered Judas, who had just become a supreme agent of the fallen angel Lucifer in working against Jesus Christ. Although anyone who rejects Christ becomes a victim of Satan in that they unknowingly serve him (cf. Acts 26:18), Judas became a victim in the unique sense that he was indwelt by the devil himself. In John 13:27 Jesus tells him, "What thou doest, do quickly. " Verses 28-29 say, "Now no man at the table knew for what intent he spoke this unto him. For some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, Buy those things that we have need of for the feast; or, that he should give something to the poor. " Jesus got rid of Judas before they actually ate the meal because he was to have no part in the Lord's Table.

Why was this celebration of the Passover the final one? Passover was the oldest Jewish institution, with the exception of the Sabbath. For nearly 1500 years the Jewish people had celebrated Passover. God instituted Passover before the Aaronic priesthood, before the Levitical rituals, and before the giving of the Mosaic Law. But this Passover was the last divinely sanctioned Passover. Any Passover celebrated after this one is not authorized by God. It is a remnant of a covenant that has been replaced. Jesus celebrated this Passover to bring it to its end and began a new memorial feast. This new feast is not of the Old Covenant, but of the New. It was not initiated by the sacrifice of a lamb in Egypt, but by the Lamb of God on Calvary. So Jesus ended the old before He began the new.

II. ESTABLISHING THE FUTURE PROVISION (vv. 26-30)

After having drawn the curtain on the Passover, Christ instituted the new feast. I want you to see three things: the directives, the doctrine, and the duration.

A. The Directives (vv. 26a-b, 27)

1. Sharing the bread (v. 26)

"As they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it [gave thanks], and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat"

We don't know exactly at what point the breaking of the bread took place, but the phrase "as they were eating" tells us it could have happen just prior to eating the roasted Passover lamb or

concurrently with it. Implied in Jesus' blessing (the direct object it does not appear in the Greek text) is His thanking God for the provision of bread (cf. 1 Tim. 4:4) and for the provision of His delivering power.

Jesus broke the bread because it came in large flat pieces, which had to be broken to be distributed. There's no symbolism intended in the breaking although some refer to the Authorized Version's mention of Christ's broken body (1 Cor. 11:24; [sc]KJV). However, His body was not broken. John 19:36 says that Christ's crucifixion fulfilled Scripture concerning the Messiah: "A bone of him shall not be broken. "

2. Sharing the cup (v. 27)

"He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it"

The Greek word translated "gave thanks" is euchariste[ma], from which we get the word eucharist, meaning "to give thanks" or "to bless. " This was the third cup of the Passover, which was called "the cup of blessing. " In 1 Corinthians 10:16 Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?" In 1 Corinthians 10:21 Paul calls it "the cup of the Lord. " So the cup of blessing in the Passover became the cup of the Lord in this new celebration.

Mark 14:23 tells us that all eleven disciples shared the cup. Similarly, all of us who come to the Lord's Table are participants. For many years in the Roman Catholic Church only the priest drank from the cup. That's foreign to the intent of Scripture. All of us participate in the death and resurrection of Christ, and all of us are partakers of His table.

B. The Doctrine (vv. 26c, 28)

1. Of the bread

"This is my body. "

a) The old symbolThat was a new concept. The unleavened bread had always been a symbol of leaving Egypt and the past life behind. Leaven symbolized influence, and the unleavened bread was a way of saying, "We're starting anew. Our old life will not influence us. "b) The new symbolBut now the unleavened bread symbolizes Christ's body. Luke 22:19 tells us Christ's complete sentence: "This is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me" (cf. , 1 Cor. 11:24). Jesus transformed the Passover, and that required a great deal of authority. Some people think Christ was referring to His literal body. That is what the Roman Catholic Church teaches in its doctrine of Transubstantiation. But that is not what Jesus meant. When Jesus said, "I am the true vine" (John 15:1), He didn't mean He was growing in a field with branches! It is merely symbolic of Christ's body--the reality of His life given in sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin.

2. Of the blood (v. 28)

"This is my blood of the new testament [covenant] which is shed for many for the remission of sins. "

a) The old requirementThat is a quote from Exodus 24:8. Jesus is saying that when God made a covenant with man, He required blood. When God made covenants with Noah (Gen. 8:20), Abraham (Gen. 15:10), and Moses (Ex. 24:5-8) blood was shed. God required the shedding of blood in making covenants with men. When God brought about reconciliation with Himself, the price was blood. That let man know that a relationship to God would cost the blood of a sacrifice. Hebrews 9:22 says, "Without shedding of blood is no remission. " A covenant with God always demanded more than simple death; the death had to be accompanied by the shedding of blood because the life of the flesh is in the blood (Lev. 17:11). The pouring out of blood by animal sacrifice--a graphic and painful demonstration of the loss of life--pointed to Christ, who would be the final sacrifice for reconciliation with God. b) The new redemptionJesus died to save us from our sin. But it wasn't enough for Him to die; His blood had to pour out through the wounds in His hands, feet, side, and the thorn marks in His head. The blood running out of Christ graphically demonstrated that life was flowing out of Him as He offered Himself as the final sacrifice for sin. So Jesus tells us that the importance of the cup is to remind believers of His blood, which shed on our behalf. The Greek word translated "shed" (ekchell[ma]) is the key to understanding Matthew 26:28. It means "gush,"

"pour out," or "spill. " Obviously we were saved through Christ's death--there was nothing in the chemistry of His blood to save us--but His blood needed to be shed because the only kind of sacrifices God accepted were those whose blood had been shed. Notice that Matthew 26:28 says Christ's blood was shed for many. It literally means "for the benefit of many. " Who are the many? All who believe, both Jew and Gentile. It was shed not just for the nation of Israel. Then Jesus said it was shed "for the forgiveness of sins. " His substitutionary death brought about forgiveness. That's why Jesus came. Our Lord instituted a memorial to His death the night before it occurred. He headed to the cross to pour out His blood as a sacrifice for sin. He instituted the bread and the cup as a memorial that we might remember His sacrificial death on our behalf. None of the sacrificial animals of the Old Covenant could take away sin. Only the blood of Christ could do that.

C. The Duration (vv. 29-30)

How long are we to celebrate the Lord's Supper?

1. The future celebration (v. 29)

"I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. "

Jesus is saying to keep celebrating it until He shares it with us in the Kingdom. Since He was giving the disciples tragic news about the pouring out of His blood, He injected the promise that He would come back one day and drink the cup with them in His kingdom. Thus verse 29 is a reaffirmation of His coming Kingdom.

2. The final hymn (v. 30)

"When they had sung an hymn, they went out into the Mount of Olives. "

They had already sung Psalms 113-114. They probably had sung Psalms 115-116. After the fourth cup they might have sung Psalms 117-118. Praising God was the last thing they did before going to the Mount of Olives.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Why did Jesus sit down at the Passover meal?
2. Describe the sequence of the actual Passover meal.
3. What probably began at the point in the Passover meal when the participants ceremonially washed their hands? How did Jesus respond?
4. What was significant about sharing a meal with someone in the Jewish culture of Jesus' day?
5. What effect did Jesus' announcement that one of the disciples would betray Him have on the disciples?
6. What was the disciples' question in Matthew 26:22? Why did they ask it?
7. Why was Christ not a victim at the hand of His betrayer?
8. What future did Judas assign himself by his choice to betray Christ?
9. According to John 13:27, what frightful thing happened to Judas?
10. Why was the Passover celebrated the night before our Lord's death the final, God-ordained Passover?
11. What directives did Jesus give for participating in His new feast?
12. What is the cup of blessing?
13. What does unleavened bread symbolize in the Lord's Supper?
14. What did God require when He made a covenant with man? What did He require in the New Covenant He made with man?
15. How long are we to celebrate the Lord's Supper?

Pondering the Principles

1. We know from Luke 22:24 that the disciples argued over who would be the greatest in the Kingdom when they were probably going through a ceremonial cleansing of their hands. At a time

when they should have been dealing with their sin, they were filled with pride. Evaluate the pattern of your life, and especially your attitude when you participate at our Lord's Table. How often have you come without truly dealing with a certain sin in your life? Take this time to examine yourself. Ask God to search your innermost being and reveal your sin. When you have isolated that sin, determine what kind of effort you will exercise to turn from it. Remember, your power to deal with any sin is only as strong as your dependence on God in all areas of your life. Be faithful to constantly examine your life.

2. The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to remember what God has done for us in providing salvation in Christ. What you have learned about Christ's sacrifice on your behalf that has been especially meaningful to you? Do you thank God regularly for the ultimate victory over sin and death that He has provided in Christ? After meditating on Isaiah 53, Ephesians 1-2, and 1 John 4:7-11, consider what impact Christ's death should have on your life. Having died to sin, are you living unto righteousness (1 Pet. 2:24)? Do you see good works in your life (Eph. 2:10) as a response of your gratitude for what God has graciously accomplished for you?

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