

THE LORD'S SUPPER

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(Delivered at Grace Baptist Church in the morning service)

TEXT: Matthew 26:17-30

INTRODUCTION:

We are going to look at the account in Matthew where Jesus ate his last meal with the disciples before he would be crucified.

Now Jesus had come to Jerusalem as he always did to observe the Passover feast. The Passover feast was an annual feast that occurred every year in the first month of the Jewish calendar. It was observed for seven days, from Nissan 15-22. It was a week of feasting and celebration to commemorate Israel coming out of Egypt.

You will remember that on that dreadful night in Egypt, the death angel swarmed over the country and all the first born males died in the night. But every household of Israel was to kill a lamb on the evening of the 14th and spread the blood on the doorposts so that the death angel would pass them by. And they were to eat the flesh of the lambs that evening along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

This was the original Passover and all other observances of the Passover were mere memorials so that they would remember and not forget what the Lord had done for them. And so every year, on the 14th day of the month, at evening, they would sacrifice lambs and they would have a feast where they would eat the flesh along with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Now I want to show you what Jesus said about the Passover.

And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him, And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

Luke 22:14-16

Israel's Passover in Egypt was a type of the real Passover. The lambs sacrificed at the first Passover in Egypt were types of the real Lamb. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Passover. He is the Lamb of God. Israel was set free from earthly bondage, but we are set free from the bondage of sin. The blood of lambs protected Israel from physical death when they came out of Egypt. The blood of Christ protects us from eternal death.

And so, Jesus came to Jerusalem, this last time, to offer himself as that great Passover lamb.

For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.

I Cor.5:7

The Jews had their Passover. And they had their memorial once a year. But we who have believed in Christ have a much better Passover. He is the real Passover. He is the substance of which that old Passover was merely a type.

When Jesus came to Jerusalem, he came to observe that old Passover one final time. But he also came to do away with it. You see, the lesser Passover is swallowed up by the greater Passover.

Now before Jesus arrived in Jerusalem, but while he was on his way, he took his disciples aside and told them exactly what was going to happen to him. (Mt. 20:17-19)

And a couple of days before the Jewish Passover, Jesus gathered his disciples around him again and he told them that he was going to be crucified. (See Matthew 26:1, 2)

That brings us to our text in Matthew 26:17-30.

The time when Christ ate the Passover

It says that it was the first day of the Feast. They called it the Feast of Unleavened Bread or the Passover Feast.

The place where Christ ate the Passover

The disciples came to Jesus and asked him,

Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover? (v.17)

1. Notice how well trained the disciples had become. They had come to understand that Jesus was the Master and they were his servants. They didn't come to Jesus with their suggestions, but they came to Jesus asking, *Where would thou eat?* Three years they had walked with Jesus and they had learned to ask his will. And so should we say, "Not our will, but Thine be done."
2. Notice how the disciples merely assumed that Jesus would eat the Passover. Though he was in grave danger and as far as they knew, he was likely to be taken at any moment, they assumed that he would obey the law of God. It was God's law to observe the Jewish Passover each year as a memorial. And the disciples knew by this time that Jesus was compelled to fulfill all righteousness.
3. The disciples knew that there was preparation to be done, for they said,

Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?

Now the Jewish Passover took a good deal of preparation. Lambs must be slaughtered and the meat prepared. All leaven must be removed from the house. All food products with leaven were destroyed or sold and removed. There was a thorough sweeping of the house to make sure there was not one crumb containing leaven. And then, of course, there was the preparation of unleavened bread and the securing of wine.

So the disciples asked Jesus,

Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?

4. The disciples knew that Jesus had no house of his own where he could eat the Passover. Here was the Creator of the world and yet he had no place to lay his head at night. Here he was in the prime of his adulthood and he had accumulated no earthly goods. I would be willing to venture that

every one of us has somewhere to call home. Most of us have cars and at least a few dollars in the bank. Not so with Jesus. There were many houses in Israel, but none for the King of Israel. And this is to teach us that his kingdom was not of this world.

The Bible says, *For our sakes he became poor.* (2 Cor.8:9)

But when God ordains a man to poverty, nevertheless, he does not lack provision. The Bible says God feeds the tiny sparrow and of how much more value is a man than a bird? And of how much more value is Jesus? And Jesus simply looked to the Father for daily provision.

And Jesus taught his disciples to have the same simple reliance. He taught the disciples to pray,

Give us this day our daily bread.

Jesus told his disciples,

Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples.
(v.18)

Though Jesus had no house, he had friends and followers and servants who had houses. And he told his disciples to go into the city and find this man.

Now notice that Jesus invited himself and his disciples into this man's house. Jesus didn't tell the disciples to go ask if they could come. He said, "Tell the man that we are coming." This would indicate that this man was a close friend of Jesus and whatever Jesus needed this man considered it his duty and joy to provide without question.

Note that Jesus invited himself and his disciples.

Example: Now ladies, how would you feel if your husband came home and said, "Hon, I have invited thirteen people over for dinner tonight."

But this is a good lesson for us. Whatever it is that Jesus asks of us, it is our duty to do it and to do it without question. We should be available to him at all times. Our house is his house and he is welcome to take up residence there and to use it for his own purposes if need be.

And furthermore, if Jesus has friends, they are welcome too. You know, when you take Jesus as your God, you take his people as your dearest friends. And so, Jesus tells this man, I am coming to eat the Passover at your house and I am bringing twelve of my closest friends!

Now the disciples went on into the city and they prepared the Passover meal and that evening Jesus sat down with them.

Now remember that this dinner must have been a very, very sad occasion. Jesus had told them he was about to be crucified. Now how is that for a heavy spirit at dinner time? And I suspect there was a hushed quiet around the table. It was a somber time. It was a very nervous time. And the disciples wondered what would happen.

The dinner conversation

Jesus broke some startling news to them.

One of you shall betray me. (v.21)

1. This shows the omniscience of Christ. He knew that Judas would betray him. He knew ahead of time. When no one else knew but Judas, yet Jesus knew. Never forget that Jesus was God in the flesh. Jesus knew.
2. This shows the great love of Christ. When he knew what was about to befall him, for the love of those whom the Father had given him, he never turned back. He didn't run away. He didn't hide, but he freely offered himself as that Passover Lamb.

Now this was the first time that Jesus revealed to his disciples that one of them would betray Him. He had previously revealed that he would be betrayed. But what he now says is,

One of you shall betray me. (v.21)

And this must have cast a very uncomfortable spirit over the dinner. In fact, notice what it says next:

And they were exceeding sorrowful. (v.22)

This was undoubtedly a tearful dinner. They were not only sorrowful, but they were exceedingly sorrowful.

Example: This reminds me of the time Paul was going to Jerusalem and he knew he would never return to the church at Ephesus. And he called the elders of the church at Ephesus and he preached to them and he then he knelt down and prayed with them all. And it says they wept sore, and they fell on his neck and they kissed him in their great sorrow.

And likewise these disciples are exceeding sorrowful because they are about to lose a greater than Paul.

And they began to ask

Lord, is it I?

1. Notice how the innocent are apt to suspect themselves. Peter and James and John and Matthew and all the others were asking, "Is it me, Lord."

This is a very healthy condition in true Christians. We should always suspect ourselves. We never know how we may be tempted. We never know when or how long God may leave us to our own devices. And so our proper attitude is not to be high-minded but to fear lest we also fall.

And it is interesting that just before he instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, he put the disciples to self-examination. Each of the disciples were examining his own heart and were asking, "Lord, is it I?"

This is the attitude with which we all must come to the Lord's Table.

But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

I Cor.11:28

And Jesus said,

He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. (v.23)

This yet does not identify Judas, for all the disciples were dipping in the dish. This was another statement which affirms that one of his disciples would betray him – although they didn't know which one.

But it is more than just a disciple that will betray Jesus. It is someone who eats a most sacred meal with Him. It is a very intimate friend who will betray Him. It is a partner in religion who will betray Him.

This should warn us all that mere religion is no cure for an evil heart. Judas participated in all the religious ordinances of Israel. And they had no effect on him. Judas observed Israel's most sacred feast (the Passover feast) and he observed it personally with Jesus and it had no effect on him. When Jesus prayed, Judas bowed his head like all the others and yet the prayers were empty sayings to him.

And this should instruct us that it is not religion that saves us but it is a Person who saves us. It is not rites and ceremonies but it is the Holy Spirit that makes us alive. Judas performed all the ceremonies with a heart that was as stony as it ever was. And the ceremonies had no effect on him.

And Jesus said,

Woe to that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed. (v.24)

This was a very stern warning to Judas and if ever there was an opportunity to awaken the conscience this was it. But the conscience of Judas was defiled by sin. And more than defiled, it was dead.

But this warning also served as an opportunity to awaken the consciences of the other disciples - that they might repent of their sins as well. Except for the grace of God, it could have been Peter or John or any of the others who would have betrayed Jesus.

Judas said, Is it I? (v.25)

Now Judas knew it was him. But he wanted to appear as though he didn't know. And so, he said, *Is it I?*

We know from the gospel of John that Judas left the dinner before the others. (John 13:30) And, he went out into the night.

Now, we have seen the conversation around the table, and now we see,

The institution of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper (vs.26-28)

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it.

For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

So we see that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper in this little assembly in the upper room. And we find that the subsequent churches continued to observe this memorial. And Paul, further defined this ordinance in I Cor. 11. Paul said,

As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come. (v.26)

Now I want you to see here three things about this statement by Paul:

1. He leaves open the frequency with which the ordinance should be observed. He simply says, as often as you do it. He doesn't say every day, or every week or every quarter. He simply says, as often as you do it you shew the Lord's death. There is no specific command in the Scriptures as to how often this is to be done. Perhaps some New Testament churches observed the Lord's Table every Lord's Day. But Paul simply says, "As oft as you do it."
2. Paul tells us the chief purpose of the ordinance. It is to show the Lord's Death. It is a memorial. Whereas Israel's Passover was both a memorial of coming out of Egypt and a type that looked forward to the sacrifice of the true Lamb of God, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is a

ceremony that looks back to that accomplished sacrifice. As often as we do this, we show the Lord's death.

3. Paul tells us how long we are to do this. We are to do it until he comes again. When he comes again he will be with us daily and we will see the marks in his hands and feet and there will be no further need for a memorial.

The elements of the ordinance

You will notice that there are two elements of the ordinance. There is bread and there is wine. You may remember that Bro. Mark McNair preached a very instructive sermon recently about the nature of these elements.

We believe that the bread that was offered in this ceremony was unleavened bread. This was required at the Passover Feast. All leaven was to be removed. This signified that all sin and all impurity was to be put out of the house. When Jesus died for us, he cast our sins as far as the east is from the west. He blotted out the transgressions that were against us. And so, we believe there is significance to using unleavened bread in this memorial to the One who put away sin forever.

Also, please know that the bread is a very appropriate symbol of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible says He is the bread of life. Now the Israelites ate Manna from heaven, but we eat the true bread of life. By eating we mean accepting, we mean believing and appropriating all the graces that flow from the atonement which he has made for us. By eating it means Christ in us, the hope of Glory. By eating it means submitting to Him and his government in our lives. By eating is meant being satisfied with His provision for us.

We also believe that Jesus offered wine to the disciples. This would have been the typical drink at the Passover. Wine is the fruit of the vine which has fermented. As Bro. Mark taught us, grape juice has leaven in it. But as it ages and ferments it uses up the leaven in the fermentation process. And so, wine has been purged of the leaven.

So, we have unleavened bread and an unleavened drink.

By drinking the wine we mean appropriating all the benefits of the blood of Jesus Christ. It is he that died for sins and unless his blood is applied to us our sins are not forgiven. And so we drink of the cup as a symbol to show that we have consumed of the benefits of the death of Christ and his blood has been applied to the door posts of our lives.

The ceremony itself

A moment of reflection and confession.

A prayer.

Read v. 26

Read v. 28