

Holy Week in Biblical Perspective

Maundy Thursday

“From the Last Passover to the First Lord’s Supper in One Night”

I Corinthians 11:17–34 & Matthew 26:1–2

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We have the Gospel account of our Lord instituting the Lord’s Supper and through the providence of God the institution of the Supper to guide churches and their practice which has been given over to the Apostle Paul. Paul embraces this responsibility in addressing the church at Corinth. These are the definitive words as to how God’s people are to celebrate this until He comes again. I Corinthians 11:17–34 says *[17] But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. [18] For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, [19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. [20] When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. [21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. [22] What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.*

[23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” [25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

[27] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. [28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. [31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. [32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

[33] So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— [34] if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

The grass withers, the flower fade, the Word of God abides forever and by His grace and mercy may His Word bless your soul.

The context of the Matthew text would have been at the close of Tuesday afternoon of Holy Week after Jesus had been teaching and this is what Matthew 26:1–2 says *[1] When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, [2] “You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified.”*

There are a couple of things I want to share with you. Many go back to the 19th and 20th century Jewish Seder using the Orthodox practices in Europe yet at Briarwood we have intentionally gone back to those accounts you find in extra Biblical writers as well as the Biblical texts as to what a first century Passover would have been. It would have been a simple meal and

would have been almost like our to-go meals today. In fact, you would eat it ready to move even as the people of Israel in the first Passover – they ate it ready to go out in the Exodus. After it was eaten they would pick up their staff to go out.

Where does this Passover come from? It comes from the Exodus and how God so blessed His people under the tenth plague to deliver them from the angel of death. There was quite a revival of Orthodox Judaism around the time of the birth of Christ. The centers of it would have been around Galilee and Jerusalem. Jesus does a lot of His ministry in those two areas in His three years of public ministry. In that context they would have been practicing all of the feasts and there were five of them that were outlined in the Old Testament for the covenant people of God to practice with regularity. They are listed in Leviticus 23 if you want to read about them on your own, but the preeminent one was clearly the Passover.

The Passover was the meal of extraordinary significance. So Jesus on this Tuesday of Holy Week let's everyone know that the Passover is coming in two days which would fall on Thursday. Jesus is being faithful to the calendar that God had revealed through Moses that had established. It would have happened in the month of Nisan and on the 14th day. Interestingly, while we are observing Maundy Thursday Judaism is observing their Passover. It begins on the 14th and the eating of it would start at night which would have been the 15th because the next day begins at sunset. So Jesus is on time Biblical when He identifies when the Passover will be celebrated by He and His Disciples.

We call this the Last Supper because it will be the last supper He has with His Disciples, but it is more than that for it's the last Passover supper and out of it will come the first Lord's Supper and the anticipation of the supper coming. Jesus said in Luke 22:17–18, [17] And He took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. [18] For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." This is the anticipation of Lamb's Supper, the Marriage Supper with the Lamb in Revelation 19:9.

The Passover that is initiated on that Thursday by Jesus, Peter and John and this tandem will become important after the ascension of Jesus in the church particularly in the church at Jerusalem we see in Acts 1 through 9. Here they work together under Jesus' direction and they are told they will find something very unusual. They will find a man carrying a jug of water in the middle of the day. That normally doesn't happen for it would generally be a child or a woman doing this at this time, but this will be different. Here is the account from Luke.

Luke 22:10–13 says [10] *He (Jesus) said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters [11] and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'* [12] *And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there."* [13] *And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.*

They are going to celebrate in what is known as an upper room which is where the man took them to. It is called an upper room because that is where the guests would stay in a home that has one. When Jesus is born Mary and Joseph come looking for this type of room which would be a guest room that someone might have, perhaps a relative but there was none. Although shortly after His birth Jesus was moved up along with His parents into the house with an upper room. Interestingly, Jesus begins in Bethlehem in an upper room and now Jesus will bring His earthly ministry to another upper room as He will bring His ministry to a close.

This upper room where the Passover will take place will take on significance. It's almost as if it was the epi-center of Christianity. With faithful study of the text I think one can make a case that it is this room where many of the disciples will flee in fear when He is crucified, even in fulfillment of what He told them that they would all forsake Him at that moment at the cross. They will also be at this room at the first resurrection day when Jesus comes to them as they are locked into this room fearful and He appears to them on the night of His resurrection day. Then interestingly, He'll appear to them in the same place one week later when finally Thomas, one of His Disciples, shows up. That will also be the place arguably where the disciples will go and pray for the Spirit of God to fall upon them. It will be large enough to accommodate 120 people. It will also be the place from where they select the Apostle to replace Judas Iscariot which will be Mathias. Then it will be the place they are praying where Peter in Acts 12 goes when he is set free.

Likely, this upper room is owned by a follower of Jesus. Likely, it is owned by the father of a young boy named John Mark but I don't have time to go into the evidence that supports this. John Mark becomes important in the ministry of Barnabas, his uncle and also in the ministry of Paul. John Mark will also write the Gospel of Mark where he will reveal that likely he was the one that had been watching from a distance, having been awakened that night having gone to follow Jesus to the Garden of Gethsemane and had barely escaped the soldiers that were there (Mark 14:51–52). His father was very likely the brother of Barnabas, but regardless of that this room becomes the epi-center of Biblical New Testament Christianity. It's here the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper take place.

Once Peter and John found the place they would go and make preparations for the meal so what would that consist of in this simple yet very detailed meal? We will look at what the meal's contents are and how they were to go about celebrating the Passover. Regarding the contents they would need to get water, wine and the wine would be prepared as two cups of water for every one cup of wine, likely using new wine. There would be a lamb with bitter herbs and a sauce that would be used to sop/dip the meal with as they would partake of it. The shank of the lamb is probably what would have been used for consumption. They would first sacrifice the lamb with the blood being poured out at the temple and receive the lamb back to partake of the entire meal before midnight that night as they would then move out in haste after the meal. It is this meal Jesus comes to present to them.

Peter and John have made all the arrangements and now they are ready to eat the supper. It is now the 15th of the month of Nisan. There would be ten steps they would go through but I will not be walking you through them all, only a couple of them. The first thing done would have been the observance of Exodus 30:21, the baptism of hands and feet. It is the pouring of the water and the washing of the hands, then the pouring of the water and the washing of the feet. One would pour water from a pitcher as one would put their hands out and thus they would be ritually washed or otherwise known as baptized.

Normally this kind of washing was a dirty job for you can't imagine the streets of Jerusalem or any village in the first century. So normally a servant or a slave would do this but likely all the hands of the Disciples had been baptized and were ready to eat the meal but no one had taken care of the feet. The Bible says you were to wash your hands and your feet lest you die. Jesus steps up and likely took two towels, one being larger. He takes off His outer garments wrapped Himself with one of these towels for when the water was poured the feet would be held in His lap as He knelt down to wash the feet. Jesus would have poured the water into the basin and carried it to each of the Disciples and would wash their feet.

This was a very uncomfortable moment for here was the Master, the Lord, doing what a slave or servant would normally be sequestered to do. While the towel was around the one washing the other towel would be used to dry the feet. John records the account of Jesus washing Peter's feet in John 13:6–11 this way; [6] *He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?"* [7] *Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand."* [8] *Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet."* *Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."* [9] *Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"* [10] *Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you."* [11] *For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."*

Jesus takes His seat and now the Supper can begin in earnest. The meal would begin with a prayer of thanksgiving after all the baptism had taken place. Next they would drink the first cup of wine and sang a hallel (song of praise), Psalm 113 probably the first half of it and after that the oldest son in the family would say 'Father, what is the meaning of this supper?' Then would come the explanation that we were in bondage and the seed of Abraham in this supper is birthed as a nation, a covenant nation with God. In this meal a lamb will be sacrificed with the blood placed on the door using three swipes, two on the posts and one on the lintel. There the triune God of glory would pass over because of the substitutionary sacrifice but yet reminded that the wages of sin is death. God would bring us out with a strong hand to bring us to the Promised Land. God would fulfill all His prophetic word to Abraham and to the patriarchs as He would bring us to the Promised Land.

This meal would be established so that every year three things would be done. One we would remember our deliverance. Two we would remember the God who appointed the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb so that our first born would not come under the judgment of God, as He birthed us as a nation and would bring us to the Promised Land. Our covenant keeping God is faithful and thirdly we would also repent. We clean out the leaven because we want to clean out sin in our life and then we're renewed. We take up our staff to follow the Lord with renewed obedience and that salvation is not what we do but what God does for us. Because God saves us from oppression then we hate sin which would be our oppressor. God has won the victory over His enemies and our enemies in that holy war with Egypt, therefore God will win the victory over all our enemies. So the instruction would take place in the home.

This is the very first of the family of God, the church that is there with Jesus at this Passover. Jesus now sets about teaching. John gives us His teaching while Matthew, Mark and Luke give us the supper. John gives us the inside details as he is the one who was sitting right next to the Lord and led by the Holy Spirit to do so. He also records the sermon that Jesus preaches and the High Priestly prayer of John 17. There are six of Jesus' sermons that are recorded in the Bible and five of them are recorded in Matthew with only one in John which is the one Jesus gives at this supper. Jesus of course preached more than these but they were not recorded. This sermon given at the supper starts in John 13 and goes to John 17 which give us the intricate moments that happen in the upper room.

There would be three cups given at this meal. When the second up was drank the last half of Psalm 113 would have been sung and then the meal would begin. The unleavened bread would have been broken and passed around among the Disciples. The herbs would have been used in the bread and the lamb and would be sopped in the sauce and begin to eat of the meal.

Then came a thunder bolt when Jesus said that one of them sitting at the table would betray Him. We see a more detailed account of this from John.

John 13:21–28 says [21] *After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, “Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.”* [22] *The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke.* [23] *One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side,* [24] *so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking.* [25] *So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, “Lord, who is it?”* [26] *Jesus answered, “It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it.”* *So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot.* [27] *Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, “What you are going to do, do quickly.”* [28] *Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him.*

Jesus tells Judas personally that it was him would betray Him. Judas had already the day before this meal arranged for the betrayal of Jesus. Perhaps this was the reason Jesus didn't tell the Disciples the exact place of the room but let Peter and John find out so that Judas would have infringed on this moment in His betrayal. Judas goes out in earnest to do what he planned and it will happen that night in the Garden of Gethsemane.

As Jesus continues with the meal then comes another powerful moment which is the third cup. It is called the cup of blessing. At this time Jesus goes back to the unleavened bread and says ‘This is My body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of Me.’ The bread is passed and each one takes from it. Then having poured the third cup He then passes the cup to His Disciples. This is where you have to do good translation in the text for Jesus doesn't say to drink all of it for it wouldn't have gotten past the first Disciple, but He says for all to drink it so one by one they passed it to one another in this embryonic gathering of the New Covenant, now a New Covenant meal.

This bloody meal with a sacrifice will be fulfilled in Jesus on the next day, what we call Good Friday because of His redeeming work. Now a bloodless meal is given. This meal pointed to Him and now the New Covenant meal points back to Him – His body and His blood. And we are to partake of it often. It is no longer a meal only given once a year. The Bible doesn't tell us how often but it does say often. We are also told to take it in a manner worthy when we take it so the New Covenant meal here so that we can remember, not Moses but Jesus, not the deliverance from Pharaoh and the oppression of slavery and labor, but the deliverance from sin, Satan, death, the grave and hell, the judgment that is due to us. It is because He is the One who would win the victory.

Now we don't need to sacrifice lambs time and time again which cannot redeem you but can point to a Redeemer. Now we have the Lamb of God, precious Messiah, who gives us a new meal to remember it's not your works that save you or your intentions that save you but it's at the cross that Jesus has saved you. Now repent. Now you can examine yourself and clean out your sin because you can be honest with it for you're not saved by your perfection. You are saved by the blood of Jesus and His perfect righteousness. Now you can clean out the leaven in your life in this covenant meal in renewal when you remember, repent and now recover, renew and get back to the basics and preach the Gospel until He comes again.

You are not worthy but you must come in a manner worthy. What does that mean? You don't just come but you come examining yourself. Come and partake of Jesus, His body and His blood. Clearly this is not some superstitious notion that His physical body which is now glorified and at the right hand of the Father, is visited upon this meal, any more than when Jesus gave it the first time and said ‘this is My body and blood.’ There He stood with the blood

coursing through His veins. He is speaking of spiritually digesting and ingesting Christ, His righteousness, His presence, His grace, His mercy by faith.

How does faith come? Faith comes by hearing thus the proper administration of this Table in a manner worthy will have first the preaching of the Word so that people can fix their eyes by faith upon Christ and then that they eat and drink of Him spiritually in the Lord. They can examine themselves. In our current crisis we can't do virtual communion for the Bible is clear in this manner. Five times in the words of institution it says 'when you come together' and in fact it says to wait for one another. It also says you are to come together and examine the body. You are to examine your relationships with each other for it is a gathered meal of God's people.

So our prayer is that you will use this study profitably as you see the last Passover fulfilled in Christ on Good Friday. Then you see the first Lord's Supper that we have been gathering together to celebrate for 2,000 years when the church, the gathered people of God, come together to worship the Lord, encourage one another and do not neglect the assembling of themselves together. When they come together they wait for one another as they now minister to one another and are able to pass the elements to each other under the oversight of elders who have made sure the preaching of the Word and the invitation is rightly given to all who are believers in Christ and members of the body of Christ.

I pray this Maundy Thursday will be special in anticipation of that Lord's Day. I can promise you that the Lord's Day when we again are not socially and medically limited will come together and celebrate the Lord's Supper, waiting for one another, encouraging one another, discerning our relationships with one another as we pass the elements to one another and gathering together for the better, not for the worse, because we come in the name of the Worthy One, Christ. We come together to His Table in a manner worthy whereby the Lord is exalted to remember our salvation at the cross, to repent of our sins that we may walk in a new obedience and to renew our commitment to preach, live and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations until our Savior comes again. Amen.