

Holy Week in Biblical Perspective
Maundy Thursday – The Lord’s Supper
“Three Suppers”

Exodus 12; Matthew 26:17-29; John 13:1-20; Revelation 19:6-10a

Dr. Harry L. Reeder, III

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This is a very special time that we come together on Maundy Thursday and the opportunity we have to affirm what the Bible teaches about three covenant renewal suppers. In the old Covenant, which is anticipatory of the coming of Christ, there is the covenant meal of the Passover that is given, anticipating the Passover Lamb who would take away the sins of His people. Then comes what we celebrate now, until Christ comes again, the new Covenant supper of renewal which we identify as the Lord's Supper. And thirdly, there is the anticipation of that glorious Day when we will all be together, all of His people from every tribe and nation at the Lamb’s Supper – the Supper of the Lamb, and the Bible says on that day, our singing will sound like the thunderous roar of waves just washing over the heavens in praise to our God. The suppers are very important. They are what we call a means of grace. God has given them to us in order to teach us and to help us grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

The supper we partake of on Maundy Thursday give a clear picture of all three suppers that are indicated. Let’s start by looking in Matthew 26 and the institution of this supper. I want to read some selected verses concerning our Lord's establishment of this supper. This is the fourth day after Palm Sunday. On this Thursday, our Lord earlier in the day had sent two disciples on to prepare the Passover where He is going to institute the Lord's Supper. In other words, this day will be the last Passover, because He will fulfill it on the next day as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, and He will institute the first Lord's Supper. He will declare with anticipation of another supper that He will physically be present with us and that is the supper of the Lamb.

It’s interesting to note that the disciples were sent and they go because Jesus has already made all of these preparations and they find the man. Jesus will institute the Lord's Supper in a place that's going to become known in the Scriptures as the upper room. That is a upper room that belongs to the father of someone who's going to become rather evident in the Bible known as John Mark. Under Peter's direction, he wrote Mark's gospel – the Gospel of Mark and then became a secretary and a companion to Paul. He went out on the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas. He is a really interesting individual. He is also the cousin of Barnabas. We keep coming back to this upper room. The disciples are going to hide there while Jesus is being crucified. Jesus is going to come there on the night of the day of resurrection and meet with them. He'll come back there one week later to meet with them. He will send them there to pray for the Spirit of God to fall upon them when He ascends. It is from that upper room that the New Testament testimony of His church will first be established in Jerusalem as the Spirit of God falls upon them. It is there that they will pray for the deliverance of Peter at a later date. In a real sense, this upper room becomes the epicenter of Christianity. It's here that the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper take place.

Matthew 26:17-29 says [17] *Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?”* [18] *He said, “Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I*

will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples. ” [19] And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

[20] When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. [21] And as they were eating, he said, “Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me.” [22] And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, “Is it I, Lord?” [23] He answered, “He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. [24] The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born.” [25] Judas, who would betray him, answered, “Is it I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said so.”

[26] Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” [27] And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, [28] for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. [29] I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.”

So here is this moment that they have come to the table. The Apostle John gives us some indications of things that take place at this Passover. Perhaps you have been invited to see Passover Seders and have heard some rather intricate explanations. On Maundy Thursday we explain the Passover, but there's nothing much intricate. Exodus 12, shows us this is a very, very simple meal. Its value is not in its contents directly, but in what the contents are pointing to, what they are teaching. It is a covenant meal sacrament, which means it's a sign – it signifies it teaches something, and it is a seal of God's covenant presence with His people.

This meal, like the Lord's Supper, has three elements to it – remember, repent and get back to the basics. Remember, I am the One that delivered you out of Egypt, My covenant people, Israel. Clean out the leaven. Remove the sin in your lives and amongst My people and pick up your staff and be ready to follow Me. Dare I put it in our language of today? This was a meal to go. This was not so much a lavish feast to sit and enjoy for hours. It was a meal that had as its primary element the Passover lamb and all of it was to be eaten. If it wasn't, it was to be burned by the next morning. It was to be eaten almost as it were ready to go. Take your staff to follow the Lord.

There's so many intricate things in this Passover. One of them in Exodus 12, tells us that this is given and it's called the Passover because God was about to bring judgment upon the first born of Egypt. And the way His people escaped that judgment is the blood of the lamb that was slain was put across the lintel of the door post. When God saw the blood, He would pass over you because a sacrifice has been made in your place – a judgment of your sins has already occurred. So now God is holy in His forgiveness of His people.

I don't think you should miss the fact that to put the blood on the door post would have required three movements of the towel or the brush or whatever would be used in order to do so. You can always see the dynamic of the Trinity unfolding right within the Old Testament. People have asked me why we have three chimes at the beginning of our 8am Sunday morning service and our chimes are not chronological. They're theological. This is a gathering of God's people to worship our Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Here, this Triune God has established a covenant meal whereby they can renew their relationship – remember I delivered you so clean out the leaven – the sin. Grab your staff for I've renewed you for a new obedience that you might follow Me out of love, not following Me so I will deliver you but following Me because I have delivered you. I am your Redeemer. So they would then partake of the meal.

This meal was very simple. Most of the Seders you go to actually have been patterned off of traditions that developed over hundreds of years, and most of them are taken from the various ghettos of the European places of Jewish occupation but here is a great resource book on this from one of the great theologians, Alfred Edersheim titled *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. In it he shows this was a very simple meal, but let's now look at John 13.

John 13:1-20 says *[1] Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end. [2] During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray Him, [3] Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going back to God, [4] rose from supper. He laid aside His outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around His waist. [5] Then He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. [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."*

[12] When He had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed His place, He said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? [13] You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. [14] If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. [15] For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. [16] Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. [17] If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. [18] I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate My bread has lifted his heel against Me.' [19] I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am He. [20] Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives the one who sent Me."

Actually, this table would have been in a horseshoe. These would have been folded back on the night that Jesus reclined at the table and the tables would have been a lot shorter. They would have been sitting around it likely with pillows. We are pretty much aware of who would have been sitting where and how they would have been sitting. Peter would have been sitting at the end. When you hear the interactions, you can identify where they were sitting for these things to take place. Jesus would have been at the place of honor, which would have had someone for His protection both sides of Him. From the way things unfold, Judas was on one of His sides, and the Apostle John was on the other. When Jesus arrived, they were having an argument of who would get what places of honor and that was not the first time they'd had that argument. Even their mother was interceding for the sons of Zebedee to get such places of honor.

They have arrived and the meal has already started. It would have started with the taking of the first cup and as they poured the first cup, they would have passed it with a blessing, a benediction – Blessed be Jehovah, the One who has created for us the fruit of the vine for refreshment. Now they already would have gone through the rights of purification. There

would have been multiple baptism. There would have been the baptism of their hands. Remember what He said to Peter? ‘You’re already baptized. Now that you’re here. I’m going to baptize your feet. You have already washed your head,’ for they wouldn’t have come into the room without having done that. Something that had not happened yet was something not prescribed in the ceremonial law, but something very necessary if you had known what it was like to walk around the street of a first century village or a first century city with all of the refuse, and I won’t describe what it was like, but it would have been terrible, all over their feet and this washing would have been done by the work of a slave to clean their feet.

This is the moment that Jesus stands up. Having passed the first cup, He stands up, takes a towel and pours out water into a basin. He then takes the towel and goes over to Peter to wash his feet and you know, the interaction that takes place with Peter. The lesson here is that our salvation, not only of a right standing being purified by Christ, but walking for Christ, we need Him to wash us every day. We need Him to cleanse us, not to save us all over again, but to renew us and to refresh us. So, He has taken off His outer garments and puts the towel around Himself. In other words, He takes the posture and attire of a servant laying aside the outer garments. Here you can see the Incarnation as the Savior laid aside His privileges in glory to humble Himself, take upon Himself, and wrap Himself with a true human body, a true human soul, in order to humble Himself to the point of death, even death on a cross and here it is being displayed. Peter, with his statements, become the groundwork for our Savior to teach us that He alone can save us from our sins.

After He has finished washing all the feet of those that were there and yes, Judas was there, He goes next to this first bread would have been broken and, part of it would have been laid over on a plate that was usually sitting up. Then it would be laid to the side and then they would take the other. The first thing that would be done would be to go to the various herbs, bitter herbs, and the one most focused upon would have been radish or horseradish, which would have been wrapped up, then dipped into the vinegar and then it would be passed to each other. Who would Jesus have passed the sop that had been dipped, but to Judas and it would be passed around as the people are being served by the host with the first part of the meal.

Then later other bread would be used at following a second cup that would be poured out. The second cup would be poured out before they would move from the herbs into the lamb itself. The bread becomes what you and I would call silverware. It’s the way that they would handle their food. Then they would take the lamb and would fold it over and then dip it. They would do this again with the lamb. All of the lamb was to be consumed and whatever hadn’t been consumed would be burned up. So the unleavened bread or cakes are being used, the lamb and the herbs are all being absorbed and eaten as they are being taken.

Later on, tradition’s come where the children are asking questions during the meal. What does this supper mean? But that was not in the original direction. I will assure you that the parents would use the supper to instruct their children, even as we use the Lord’s Supper, to instruct our children where one can’t come to the table until they have come to the Lord Himself and He delivers you from your sins. In between the dipping of the bread with the herbs and the dipping of the bread with the lamb, Jesus informs them that He knows whom He has chosen and that not all there, are chosen. There is one whom Satan has entered. He has already struck the deal and when the disciples ask who it is who betrays Him, He says ‘he is the one that has dipped the sop’ that is the bread that had been held. That conversation was taking place over during this supper and then Judas says, “Is it I, Lord?” and Jesus says ‘what you do, do quickly’ and Judas rises and leaves.

Now, there would have probably been a number of questions as to why he would leave and we know Judas is the treasurer. They may have thought he left because he was handling the bill or whatever it is that's going on, but he would leave in order to betray Jesus and Judas would be soon bringing the guards after Jesus preaches the upper room sermon, gives instructions and after the high priestly prayer. Then they would walk back up the valley and they get to the Garden of Gethsemane, and Jesus will have a few moments of respite in prayer there before Judas shows up with the guards. Then while He is praying, even as His disciples are falling asleep, they will come to arrest Him, led by Judas, who just hours after this moment, will then betray Him with a kiss.

Our Lord is not finished yet with the supper. As they have arrived at the third cup and there is the afikomen bread that was left from the beginning, He then takes this and institutes now an even more simple meal. He will be the fulfillment of all of this. He is the One who will taste of the bitterness, of the judgment of God for all the sins of His people. He is the Lamb who will give Himself that we might be forgiven. He is the One who will accomplish what the Father has ordained and what the Spirit will apply. Now, He will give a new covenant meal that you and I are about to sit down, which is even more simple. He'll take the unleavened bread and break it and say, 'This is My body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of Me. Examine yourself and discern the body rightly. Preach the Gospel till I come again.'

Does that sound familiar? Remember, repent, and get back to the basics in your walk with Me. The covenant meal of the Old Testament is in anticipation of Christ. Those were the three steps. In the covenant meal of the New Testament it celebrates the redemption of Christ. Now we're called to remember and it is so easy for us to try to take our cues for the Christian life on how well we do, instead of looking back to the work He did for us on the cross, our Lamb. He says 'remember, I delivered you not from Egypt, but from the kingdom of darkness, not from Pharaoh, but from the dominion of Satan and not from forced labor, but from your sins. And I give you everlasting life so eat this meal until I come again.'

Then He makes an interesting statement – "I won't be with you until we eat it anew." There's a lot of discussion with theologians as to what He's talking about. It is my opinion that what He is saying is this; after the resurrection in His glorified body He is going to the right hand of the Father so Jesus is with us in the meal tonight, not by His physical presence, but by His real presence, by the sending of His Spirit, the One who was with Him from the womb to the tomb and to glory is now with us. We now spiritually feast upon Jesus and there's a third supper coming.

Revelation 19:6-10 says [6] *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. [7] Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; (This meal is not anticipating or proclaiming, but it is the meal of consummation for the Groom and His bride. Here the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.) [8] it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.*

[9] *And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." [10] Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, "You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God." For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.*

This is the truth of His Word. So we now come to that second supper looking forward to this third supper from Revelation 19, when we shall eat in the presence of the glorified Lamb who will now be with us by His Spirit, using these elements to bless our His people as we partake together. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for this time we could be together and time we have to come together and partake of this Your Lord's Supper. Empower us through Your Spirit to be a light to this dying world by going out and sharing Your Gospel so that others may come to know and follow You. We look forward to that third meal – the consummation meal – we will have with You in glory. Praise Your holy Name, Lord Jesus, Amen.