

Last Passover Supper

Matthew 26:20—30

(Also Mark 14:17—26; Luke 22:7—39; John 13—17)

There is much that went on during the Passover meal. Jesus is only a few hours away from being crucified and is giving His Disciples last-minute instructions and encouragement to get them through the coming trial. The next few days will be, in a sense, a mini-tribulation and also a time of preparation for the Disciples to take over where Jesus left off in bringing Israel to their Messiah. They will also become emboldened to face the seven-year Tribulation and equipped to bring the Little Flock of the believing remnant through this time of Jacob's trouble.

Mathew and Mark give little information about the events at the Passover supper. Luke gives a few more details while one-fourth of the book of John, five full chapters, details the events of this last Passover. This indicates the importance of this last supper with His Disciples. Much teaching today in the book of John is separated from the events of the last Passover supper but seeing Jesus' teachings in light of these events and looming Tribulation is very enlightening. The following is a quick synopsis of events at the last supper:

Passover supper

The Passover supper itself was fairly typical. Jesus had arranged for an upper room for them to meet together for this meal. The meal would have consisted of a lamb, bitter herbs and unleavened bread (Exodus 12:8). Other foods could be eaten with these three things including wine. There are many details about how Jesus arranged for the meal and what when on after the meal but there is very little information given about the actual meal.

Bread and cup (Matthew 26:26—29; Mark 14:22—25; Luke 22:14—20)

This is the first time that the feast of Passover is connected to Jesus' death. Previous to this the feast was a remembrance of Israel escaping from Egypt. We now understand that the feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread and Firstfruits are shadows of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. The Disciples are told to do this remembrance after each successive Passover until Christ drinks of the fruit of the vine in the Kingdom. I believe this will happen at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

One of them will betray Jesus (Matthew 26:21—24; Mark 14:18—21; Luke 22:21—23; John 13:18—30)

Jesus announces that one of the 12 Disciples will betray Him. This seemed to be brought up at least a couple of times that evening. Each Disciple asks if he is the one who will be the betrayer, including Judas who had already plotted to betray Jesus into the hands of the religious leaders. The rest of the Disciples were completely clueless as to which one of them it could be. These Disciples were all part of this group because the Father told Jesus to pick these twelve (Luke 6:12—16). Judas was included as part of this group so as to fulfill scripture and become a sign to the Disciples that Jesus truly was the Christ (John 13:18 Acts 1:16).

Contending over who is greatest (Luke 22:24—27)

Questioning each other as to which Disciple would betray Jesus incredibly lead the Disciples to argue over whom was the greatest amongst them. Each one was probably bragging about how loyal they were and that there was no way they would ever turn against Jesus. They still had a lot to learn because they were operating in the flesh thinking they were strong enough in their own flesh to resist Satan.

Foot washing (John 13:3—17)

Jesus proceeds to wash each of the Disciple's feet in a symbolic act of humility and service to demonstrate to them how they were to love each other and deal with believers in humility. These Disciples were being groomed to take over Jesus' ministry and needed to learn to be looking out for the needs of fellow believers, not thinking only of their own personal desires.

Ruling in the Kingdom (Luke 22:29—30; John 14:1—7)

The Disciples were given the promise of ruling in the Kingdom back in Matthew 19:28 just before leaving Galilee for Jerusalem. Now, Jesus reminds them of their future with Him just hours before His death. John 14:1—3 is usually interpreted to say that Jesus will be going to heaven to prepare a place for us to reside for all eternity. This is another unfortunate tradition that falls apart with a little bit of study.

The promise in Luke of ruling in the Kingdom perfectly coincides with this teaching in John. The passage in Luke is very specific about the Disciples ruling in the Kingdom. John speaks of this same promise just after the Passover meal explaining in more detail about their position in the Millennial Kingdom. The term “Father’s house” is usually understood to be heaven in spite of the fact that John earlier uses the term to refer to the temple (John 2:13—17). Jesus is telling the Disciples that they will be ruling from Jerusalem in the temple in that will be prepared by the Son. This temple is described in Ezekiel 40—44 and will be brought to earth at the Second Coming as the seat of government in Jerusalem for the whole world. The Disciples will be governing from the many rooms it contains. This promise is to the Disciples only, not to all believers and certainly not to the members of the Body of Christ.

Peter to be sifted by Satan and will deny Him (Matthew 26:31—35; Mark 14:27—31; Luke 22:31—34; John 13:37—38)

Jesus actually told Peter twice that he would deny Him. The accounts in Matthew and Mark were said after they left the upper room for the Mount of Olives while Luke and John were said while in the upper room. Matthew makes it clear that all the Disciples insisted they would never deny Jesus yet all of them did just that, as Jesus said they would. The Disciples were learning not to depend upon self-determination to please Christ but to depend fully on the Father, just as Jesus did throughout His life on earth. When Peter denied Jesus, I’m sure Satan thought he caused another Disciple to fail and fall away from Jesus Christ. With Jesus’ death, Satan probably was gloating in how masterfully he was able to destroy God’s plans.

Promise of the Holy Spirit (John 14:16—29; 16:5—15)

After telling the Disciples that He would be leaving them He encourages them with the promise of another Comforter in the person of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit will not come unless Jesus Christ goes back to heaven. The Holy Spirit will be operating under the direction of the Father and will teach them all things, bringing to remembrance the teachings of Jesus. It is through the giving of the Holy Spirit that they will have peace. Jesus told them in advance what will happen so when the Holy Spirit is given they will believe.

Jesus tells them that He will send another Comforter. The Greek word used for another means another of the same kind. Both Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are God so when Jesus leaves and the Holy Spirit arrives God will still be with the believers.

Teaching on the vine and branches (John 15:1—11)

This teaching applies directly to believers in Israel and is not relevant to the Body of Christ. Those who abide in Jesus were the only ones to bear fruit. This is why the religious leaders were not able to bear fruit that was acceptable to God (Matthew 7:15—23). Those who did not abide in Jesus will cut off and cast into the fire—eternal damnation.

Many use this passage of Scripture to prove a loss of salvation to those who are not faithful to the end. Rightly dividing Scripture, separating Israel’s truth from truth written to us, is the only way to properly understand that this was written to Israel. Those in Israel were cut off because they were never saved. They had a covenant relationship with God even though most were unbelievers. We in the Church, the Body of Christ, are all saved and sealed unto the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30). It is impossible for us not to abide in Christ because it is He who is holding on to us as evidenced by the Holy Spirit.

Contrast with the world (John 15:1—25)

The Disciples are defined by their love for each other. This is a supernatural love that they can have only because of their relationship with the Son. This is a love that the world cannot understand because they reject the person who makes it possible for them to be bound together and care for each other. In contrast to the love between believers is the hate of the world for anything spiritual. They want nothing to do with Christ and many do all they can to get rid of these people who have been regenerated. The world hated Jesus and His Disciples then as much as they hate us today. Those who hate the Son also hate the Father because they are really one Person.

Warning of the coming Tribulation (John 16:1—4)

Jesus has not only been encouraging the Disciples with talk of the coming Kingdom but is making sure they are prepared for the trials and persecution that is coming. They need to know what is coming so when it comes they will know that it is all within God's will for it to happen. They will be reading the signs of coming events encouraged that the Lord will soon be coming back to finally set up His Kingdom.

Jesus will be leaving (John 16:16—28)

Imagine how the Disciples felt when Jesus told them that He will be leaving them. They had been with Him daily for about three years and had completely accepted that He was their Messiah and now He was going to leave them. This is why Jesus told them about the coming Comforter and why He was directing their attention to the glorious joy they will experience after the metaphorical labor pain of the Tribulation.

Jesus' prays for the Disciples (John 17:1—26)

In the closing prayer while in the upper room, Jesus prays earnestly for the Disciples. Jesus indicates that He has finished the work given to Him by the Father (verse 4), that is to make know the Father's name to the Disciples by giving to them the words the Father gave to Jesus (verses 6—8). They have believed that Jesus was indeed sent from the Father and they would soon be a testimony of that fact to all of Israel.

Since their future mission will be to reach Israel with the Gospel of the Kingdom it was important that they be protected from the attacks of Satan. Peter was going to be sifted by Satan but instead of being destroyed he rose up to be a powerful speaker for God to all of Israel. This humble, unlearned fisherman boldly proclaimed Christ to the highest government officials.

This prayer highlights the importance Jesus placed on prayer. He did nothing apart from the Father but throughout His life put Himself in subjection to Him. Prayer was an indication of how dependant He was on the Father. He was born a human who needed to grow in wisdom and understanding. His understanding came from the Word of God through Scripture and directly from the Father. He is the supreme example of what the Father expects from us. To be Christ-like is to put complete trust in God in all areas of our life never allowing our self to get in the way. The world preaches self-confidence, self-worth, self-reliance and self-esteem while God's Word teaches self-denial and self-control. We need to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive unto God through the power of Jesus Christ or Lord (Romans 6:11). By giving ourselves over completely to God, allowing Him to work unimpeded by self, we will have become Christ-like.

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