

D A Y 2

The Last Supper

Today's Treasure
"He took the bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me'" (Luke 22:19).

On a fresh spring morning, the sun rose over the Mount of Olives and cast a spotlight on a city preparing for the most cherished celebration on the Jewish calendar. No other day held the same significance as the fourteenth of Nisan. The Passover feast had arrived.

Scripture assures us Christ knew everything that would happen to Him. I wonder if He closed His eyes a single time that Passover eve? Jesus' vantage point gave Him a bird's-eye view of the temple and all the pilgrims entering the city. In fact, when the sun rose that morning, appropriately, it rose right over His head. Malachi 4:2 says the "sun of righteousness [would soon] rise with healing in its wings." On this day the Son of righteousness began His walk to the cross. Surely Christ's tent of flesh had never been less comfortable to wear.

As the last spoonfuls of sand slipped through the hourglass, surely the blood pumped harder through His veins, overworking His heart. Would God have allowed Him to forego the tightness of dreadful anticipation in His chest? Would He have interfered with His Son experiencing the full gamut of the human body's involuntary anticipation? Did God allow His Son's hands to shake? Oh yes, I think Christ felt every bit of it.

Dread is not sin. Disobedience is. I believe Christ's humanity had never been more constricting or alarming. And it was only just beginning. Please read Luke 22:7-23:

How were Peter and John to identify the place to prepare the Passover?

What was Jesus' attitude toward observing the Passover with His disciples?

The people of Israel had observed the Passover for approximately 15 centuries. But that particular night, a change occurred. Christ not only observed the ancient memorial of the Passover, but also He instituted something new.

Describe the new observance Christ instituted. _____

That Jesus had given much thought to the approaching feast is evident in verse 15: "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." If we were to read the statement with the strong double construction of the original language, it would more accurately be reflected by the words, "with desire I have desired."² Even if we never fully grasp the significance of the evening, our perception can be deeply marked by the fact that Jesus considered it to be enormously profound.

Nothing about the evening was trivial or accidental. With the same omniscience He exerted to arrange the circumstances of the chosen venue, Christ also chose His two ambassadors. Until now, we have rarely seen Peter and John as a pair. We have seen Christ encounter each of them individually, but when they were grouped apart from the twelve, it has almost always been as a threesome with James, John's brother.

I don't believe Christ simply glanced up, saw Peter and John, and decided they'd be as good a choice as anyone to prepare for the Passover. Quite the contrary, this profound work was prepared in advance for them to do (see Eph. 2:10). It's likely the two men may have wished someone else had been chosen for the tasks, some of which were usually assigned to women. The Passover involved a fairly elaborate meal with a very specific setting. They may have grumbled, as we often do. Why? Because we may have no idea as to the significance of the work God has called us to do. Give some thought to the preparations Peter and John made. Read about the original Passover in Exodus 12:1-14.

What three symbolic foods were to be eaten during every observance of the Passover meal (v. 8)?

What is the significance of the unleavened bread (1 Cor. 5:6-8)?

The bitter herbs symbolized the bitterness of the suffering memorialized in the Passover observance: the bitterness of slavery, the bitterness of death, and the bitterness of an innocent lamb's substitution. The herbs, eaten intermittently during the meal, would intentionally bring tears to their eyes as a reminder of the associated grief.

While every part of the meal was highly symbolic, it had no meaning at all without the lamb. The most important preparation Peter and John made was the procuring and preparing of the Passover lamb. They had knowledge or understanding that the detailed preparation involving the lamb would soon be fulfilled in Jesus Christ. They may not have grasped the significance of it at the time, but eventually they "got it."

Who wrote the following verses under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and, in essence, what did they say?

1 Peter 1:18-20 _____

Revelation 5:6-8,12-13 _____

Peter and John are the only two of the twelve who were recorded referring to Jesus as the Lamb. Coincidental? Not on your life. Christ's ultimate goal in any work He assigns to us is to reveal Himself, either through or to us. The tasks He assigned them that day were used by the Holy Spirit to reveal to them the Lamb of God. The images and remembrances were deeply engraved in John's mind. Many years later he was inspired to refer to Jesus as the Lamb at least 30 times in the Revelation. Beloved, the tasks God gives you are never trivial. More than anything else, His desire is to reveal Himself to you and through you.

Can you think of ways He has revealed Himself to you through any of your assignments? Yes No If so, describe what you learned in the margin.

When the hour came, Jesus and His apostles reclined at the table. The Passover was a celebration for families and those closest to them. Christ was surrounded by His closest family. They may have been weak, self-centered, and full of unfounded pride, but they were His. He desired to spend this time with them.

Capture this meal with your imagination. I think we've inaccurately pictured the last meal as moments spent over the bread and the wine. Christ and His disciples observed the entire Passover meal together. Then He instituted the new covenant, represented by the bread and the wine.

As they gathered around the table at sundown, Christ took the father role in the observance. Soon after they gathered, He poured the first of four cups of wine and asked everyone to rise from the table. He then lifted His cup toward heaven and recited the Kiddush, or prayer of sanctification, which would have included these words or something very close: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who createst the fruit of the vine. Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, Who hast chosen us for Thy service from among the nations Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who hast kept us in life, Who hast preserved us, and hast enabled us to reach this season."³ This is very likely the blessing He recited in Luke 22:17.

 **Read back over the words of the Kiddush. Which part of it seems especially meaningful as you imagine the words coming from the mouth of Christ? Why?**

If Christ and His disciples followed tradition, they took the first cup of wine, asked the above blessing, observed a ceremonial washing, and broke the unleavened bread. These practices were immediately followed by a literal enactment of Exodus 12:26-27. The youngest child at the observance asks the traditional Passover questions, provoking the father to tell the story of the exodus. Many scholars believe John may have been the one who asked the questions at the last supper because of his position at the table.

Where was he during the observance according to John 13:23? (John is the one called the "disciple whom Jesus loved.")

Look at the very next verse. What did Simon Peter want John to do?

Early church tradition cited John as the youngest apostle.⁴ In all likelihood, John assumed the role of the youngest child in the family, asking the traditional questions that provoked Christ to tell the story of the Passover. Might this be the reason Peter nudged John to ask one more question?

The four cups of wine served at the Passover meal represented the four expressions, or "I wills" of God's promised deliverance in Exodus 6:6-7. At this point in the meal, Christ poured the second cup of wine and narrated the story of Israel's exodus in response to the questions. Oh, friend, can you imagine? Christ, the Lamb of God, sat at their table and told the redemption story! He recounted the story as only He could have—and then, at the very next sundown—He fulfilled it! Oh, how I pray He will tell it again for all of us to hear when we take it together in the kingdom!

The One sent "to proclaim freedom for the prisoners" (Luke 4:18) told the story of captives set free, spared from death by the blood of the Lamb. Oh, the perfect plan of

redemption, secured before God ever breathed a soul into man. Do you see, Beloved? The creation of humankind would have been pointless without this awesome plan of redemption. Before we ever lived to see our first temptation, God procured a “way of escape” for all who would choose it. Indeed, the redemptive decision was sealed and Christ was named the Lamb slain before the creation of the world (see Rev. 13:8). Hallelujah!

They ate the meal between the second and third cups. Now note the timeframe recorded in Luke 22:20.

When was this cup taken? _____

Although all four cups would have been observed at the last supper, not all four cups are specified in Luke’s Gospel. We know, however, exactly which cup is specified in Luke 22:20 because of its place of observance during the meal. The third cup was traditionally taken after the supper was eaten. It is represented by the third “I will” statement of God recorded in Exodus 6:6-7.

Fill in the third “I will” statement: “I will _____ with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment.”

This is the cup of redemption. I am convinced this cup is also the symbolic cup to which Christ referred only an hour or so later in the garden of Gethsemane when He asked God to “take this cup from me” (Luke 22:42). This was a cup He could partake only with outstretched arms upon the cross.

The imminent fulfillment of the cup of redemption signaled the release of the new covenant that would be written in blood. We know Christ did not literally drink this third cup because He stated in Luke 22:18 that He would not drink of another cup until the coming of the kingdom of God. Instead of drinking the cup, He would do something of sin-shattering significance. He would, in essence, become the cup and pour out His life for the redemption of man.

Whose Passover was it according to Exodus 12:11? _____

That most holy weekend, the Passover was completely fulfilled. “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). God instructed the Hebrew people that they were to continue the Passover feast, celebrating it as an ordinance (see Ex. 12:14). As Gentile believers, we have much to learn and appreciate about the Passover, but we have been commanded to remember the death of Christ every time we observe the Lord’s Supper (see 1 Cor. 11:26).

How seriously are we to take this observance (1 Cor. 11:27-31)?

Christ never took anything more seriously than the cup of redemption He faced that last Passover supper. His body would soon be broken so that the Bread of life could be distributed to all that would sit at His table. The wine of His blood would be poured into the new wineskins of all who would partake. It was time’s perfect night—a night when the last few stitches of a centuries-old Passover thread would be woven onto the canvas of earth in the shape of a cross. Sit and reflect.