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Sermon Notes

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The Many Dimensions of the Last Supper

Mark 14:12-26

One of the greatest evidences of the deity of Christ is his meticulous foreknowledge of future events, including free choices made by various people. In today's account, we will see a few of those amazing examples... examples of the infinitely detailed and meticulous foreknowledge God has about everything before it happens.

I. Jesus Prepares the Passover

A. God's Stunning Foreknowledge

1. God is eternal, existing outside of time and above time

Psalm 90:2 Before the mountains were born or you brought forth the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.

2. When it comes to human history, God knows the end from the beginning and the beginning from the end

Revelation 22:13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

3. AND he declares many of his purposes centuries beforehand

Isaiah 46:9-10 I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. ¹⁰ I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please.

B. The Passover Itself a Supernatural Preparation

1. We discussed this last time, so there's no need to go into detail
2. Almighty God when planning the Exodus of the Jewish nation from Egypt included the ten plagues as part of it, that he might display his power to all the earth
3. The most terrifying of all was the Tenth Plague, the plague on the firstborn:

Exodus 11:4-5 "This is what the LORD says: 'About midnight I will go throughout Egypt. ⁵ Every firstborn son in Egypt will die, from the firstborn son of Pharaoh, who sits on the throne, to the firstborn son of the slave girl, who is at her hand mill, and all the firstborn of the cattle as well.

4. Ezekiel 20 makes it plain that the Jewish nation were every bit as idolatrous as the Egyptians and that their firstborn deserved to die as well
5. But God graciously made a provision to save the sons of Israel... by the shedding of the Passover Lamb, and the application of the blood to their houses

Exodus 12:12-13 On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn-- both men and animals-- and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³ The blood will be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt.

6. God established the Passover as a timeless ceremony for the Jews in every generation

Exodus 12:14 This is a day you are to commemorate; for the generations to come you shall celebrate it as a festival to the LORD-- a lasting ordinance.

7. God in his wonderful foreknowledge and sovereignty established this ordinance as a picture of the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ
8. Every generation of Jews for fifteen centuries had commemorated the Passover with the slaughter of the lamb

9. In this last week of Jesus' life, the time for the fulfillment of that repeated ceremony had at last come
10. Mark directly links Jesus' disciples' question with the slaughter of the Passover Lamb

Mark 14:12 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

The Passover itself was preparation for the death of Jesus!

C. More Stunning Foreknowledge!!

Mark 14:13-16 So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. ¹⁴ Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹⁵ He will show you a large upper room, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." ¹⁶ The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.

1. The providence of God extends beyond merely comprehensive foreknowledge... but it does include that
2. God in his eternality knows all details, even the tiniest details, that will happen before any of them come to pass

Matthew 10:29-30 not one [sparrow] falls to the ground apart from the will of your Father. ³⁰ And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

3. In this case, what's amazing is the DETAIL of a man carrying a jar of water, and the timing of their conversation
4. There were hundreds of thousands of Jews there in the big city of Jerusalem
5. What are the odds that the two disciples that Jesus sends into the city will meet up with just the right man at just the right time?

6. But God has ordained all things that come to pass and this is a beautiful example of it

Illus. When I was in college, my mentor, Tim Schuman, ran the Boston Marathon. I drove him to the start of the race in Hopkinton, and gathered his belongings; and we foolishly agreed to meet in Boston near the finish line. I was a native of that state and should have known better

The finish line of the Boston Marathon was in the heart of the city near the Prudential Center... there were probably over a million people within a five mile radius of the finish line. Parking was a near impossibility... and the odds of bumping into Tim at whatever time he finished were close to nil. Remember, this is before the cellphone era.

Similarly, what are the odds that at just the right time these two disciples' paths would intersect with the one man carrying the jar of water would could lead them to the upper room that was being prepared? Furthermore, there were eleven gates into the city in those day. WHICH ONE??

But this is an example of detailed foreknowledge and divine providence

The timing of everything was choreographed, and all the necessary provisions had been made

D. The Details

1. The man carrying the jar of water DID meet them at the right gate at just the right time
2. He led them to the house that Jesus had arranged for he and his disciples to eat the Passover
3. The owner of that house met them at the door of his house and led them to what would become the most famous upper room in human history... the place where the Last Supper would occur, where the resurrected Jesus would appear to his Apostles, where

the Holy Spirit would be poured out on them on the Day of Pentecost... the most significant room in history

4. When Jesus had made these arrangements, we don't know... but it was good that he did
5. Remember that when Jesus was born in Bethlehem, there had been no room at the inn
6. Rooms were even more at a premium at the time of the Passover in Jerusalem
7. And yet, the room was provided and all the furniture was sufficient... it was "large" "upper" and "furnished and ready"
8. Everything was in place
9. The two disciples then could begin their preparations... the unleavened bread, the lamb, the wine, the tablesettings, cups, plates, napkins, cushions... everything that they would need

Far more significant was God's meticulous provision for the death of Jesus on the cross in detail... at the exact time and place and in the exact manner by which all the prophecies would be fulfilled for our salvation

II. Jesus Predicts Judas's Betrayal

The betrayal of Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve Apostles, ranks as one of the most repulsive acts in human history.

We already know that Judas was never truly a disciple of Jesus, but that he was called a devil by Jesus back in John 6

We know also that Judas was just in it for the money, because he used to steal money that had been contributed to Jesus and his followers

And we saw last time that Judas went to Jesus' enemies and agreed to betray him for the price of thirty pieces of silver

Now in this passage, Jesus predicts it and announces it to the rest of the Apostles:

Mark 14:17-21 *When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. ¹⁸ While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me-- one who is eating with me." ¹⁹ They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" ²⁰ "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. ²¹ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."*

What makes the betrayal so heinous was the loving heart of Jesus for him and for all the Apostles:

A. The Tender Affections of Jesus

Luke 22:15 *And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."*

This is a very significant statement, for it displays the ultimate heart of Jesus for all of us... the delight of close, loving fellowship

We will return to this idea at the end of the sermon

But it also displays the unspeakable pain that Judas's betrayal must have caused the loving heart of Jesus.

It is also remarkable because the other disciples had been arguing about which of them was the greatest... that was precisely why Jesus washed their feet as recorded in John 13... to give them a display of loving service that should have characterized their hearts toward each other

John 13:14-15 *Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. ¹⁵ I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.*

B. Jesus Predicts Judas's Betrayal

1. Timing: while they were reclining at table

- a. Leonardo daVinci's famous portrait of the Last Supper shows them all sitting upright as if on chairs at a long table... also they were all facing the same direction, so daVinci could show their faces
 - b. But the Near Eastern pattern of banqueting was one of reclining on the floor at a very low table
 - c. Their heads would have been close to the table, their feet away from it
2. If this Passover followed the traditional pattern, it would have begun with a prayer of thanksgiving for God's deliverance, protection, and loving grace for the Jewish nation
 3. Then there would have been four successive cups of diluted red wine
 4. Then a ceremonial handwashing, symbolizing the need for purification from sin
 5. Then they would have eaten bitter herbs, symbolizing the bitterness of their centuries of bondage in Egypt; at that same time, loaves of flat, unleavened bread would have been passed out to eat; these loaves of unleavened bread would have been broken and dipped into a thick paste of mashed fruit and ground nuts
 6. Then they would have sung two Psalms of Praise from Psalms 113-118
 7. At that point the head of the household usually explained the story of the Passover and its symbolism to everyone in the house
 8. Then the roasted lamb and unleavened bread would have been served
 9. After that main course had been consumed, the third cup of red wine would have been passed out, and the rest of the Psalms of Praise from Psalms 113-118 would have been read and they would have finished with the fourth and last cup of red wine

10. Somewhere in all of this, Jesus announced the coming betrayal; John 13:21 tells us that it made Jesus deeply distressed and troubled

Mark 14:18 "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me-- one who is eating with me."

11. The disciples were shocked and began trying to find out who it would be:

Mark 14:19 They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?"

12. The true disciples knew enough of the sinfulness of their hearts to wonder if it could be them... this is evidence of their humility; but also of the shocking nature of this news

C. Jesus Identifies His Betrayer

Mark 14:20 "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me."

John 13:22-27 His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³ One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴ Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." ²⁵ Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶ Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. ²⁷ As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him.

It seems like accepting the piece of bread identifying himself as the betrayer was a willing choice on Judas's part... it also shows Satan's activity in and through him

Satan had already prompted him... now Satan was entering into him to complete the betrayal

John 13:2 The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus.

D. The Infinitely Deep Theology of the Betrayal

1. Here is the most complex and significant case of divine sovereignty and human responsibility

Mark 14:21 The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

2. The first statement means that Judas's betrayal of Jesus was part of God's sovereign plan for Jesus' death
3. It was predicted in scripture, and it was ordained by God
4. Nothing would change it... it would most certainly happen

Speaking of the plots of Jesus' enemies leading to his death:

Acts 4:28 They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.

5. BUT WOE to the man who betrays the Son of Man
 - a. This is the statement of divine judgment uttered by prophets
 - b. It shows that Judas is still responsible for his actions
 - c. He is judged for his motives and purposes as well as what he does to betray Jesus to his enemies
6. Then Jesus says, "It would have been better FOR HIM if he had never been born"
 - a. Judas is identified as a "son of lostness"
 - b. The only man we know for certain is condemned to eternity in hell
 - c. Yet this very man was knit together in his mother's womb by the God who would later condemn him to hell
 - d. Every moment that God was knitting him together in his mother's womb, and every moment that Judas lived on earth

sustained by God's power and purpose, God knew full well what he would do

- e. WHY DID GOD MAKE HIM then, if it would have been better for HIM never to have been born?
- f. Answer: It was better for US and for the GLORY OF GOD that he would be born... and so he was!
- g. It is not true that God has a wonderful plan for each person who is born... God has a wonderful plan for his own glory and for the benefit of his chosen people

- 7. Satan is also responsible for Judas's actions... and amazingly, Satan by moving Judas to betray Jesus was destroying his own dark kingdom:

Hebrews 2:14-15 Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death-- that is, the devil-- ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.

III. Jesus Symbolizes the New Covenant

Mark 14:22-24 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." ²³ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴ "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them.

- A. Jesus Uses the Ceremony of the Old Covenant to Declare the New Covenant
- B. He Gave the Bread a New Symbolism
 - 1. The unleavened bread had been a symbol of the HASTE with which the Jews ate the original Passover meal and the danger they were in that night, their last night of bondage in Egypt
 - 2. Now it would symbolize his BODY by which they would be delivered from their true slavery... slavery to sin and death

3. The bread is also a symbol of the LIFE that Jesus' death gives us, like the manna

John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

4. In doing this, Jesus established a regular pattern of worship in the New Covenant

C. The Cup

1. After supper, he took the cup and gave it to them all to drink
2. He identified the symbolism of the cup with these significant words: "This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"
3. Luke adds the word "NEW"

Luke 22:20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

4. The Old Covenant had been established and symbolized by the blood of animals... the blood of bulls and goats and lambs
5. By this, it was made clear that the shedding of blood was essential to our salvation

Leviticus 17:11 For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life.

6. But the endless repetition of the animals sacrifices proved their ineffectiveness, and the author of Hebrews makes plain how merely symbolic animal blood was

Hebrews 10:3-4 But those sacrifices are an annual reminder of sins, ⁴ because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

7. Instead, the New Covenant is established, also based on blood... but this is the blood of Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, shed once for all for the sins of his people

Hebrews 9:12 [Jesus] did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

8. This is the New Covenant shed once for all time, never to be repeated again... and by faith in the blood of Christ are our sins forgiven forever

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace

D. On the Doctrine of Real Presence

1. Jesus' statements here, "This is my body" and "this is my blood" are the most significant for those who believe in the doctrine of real presence... that the bread of the eucharist, the Christian communion meal, is ACTUALLY the body of Christ, and the wine of the cup is ACTUALLY the blood of Christ
2. For Roman Catholics, they add the philosophy of transubstantiation, from Aristototele
3. Martin Luther rejected transubstantiation, but taught real presence nonetheless
4. In his debate with Ulrich Zwingli over the Lord's Supper, Luther wrote in chalk on the table "Hoc est corpus meum"... Latin for "This is my body"
5. However, when Jesus actually spoke these words the first time, no one asserts that the bread became the actual body of Jesus, because his actual body was actually there, holding the bread; and his actual blood was flowing through his actual veins while he held the symbolic cup
6. Jesus often used symbolic language... "I am the door for the sheep"
7. Specifically in the case of his assertion, "Eat my flesh and drink my blood" in John 6,

John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

IV. Jesus Symbolizes the Future Heavenly Feast

A. The Prediction

Mark 14:25 "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."

1. Prediction #1: This is the Last Supper... the last time Jesus would eat with them on earth before his suffering
2. Prediction #2: Jesus is also predicting that in the Kingdom of God, he would drink of the fruit of the vine ANEW... the word "anew" lines up with the promise that everything will be made new in the future age

Revelation 21:5 And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

The word "NEW":

Luke 22:20 "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Hebrews 8:13 By calling this covenant "new," he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.

Revelation 21:1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away

Revelation 21:2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.

B. The Future Heavenly Feast

The image of feasting in heaven is a powerful and recurring theme...

It goes to the ultimate desire Jesus has for an intimate eternal loving relationship with us

Luke 22:15 And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

So many times in the Gospels, we see a future heavenly banquet promised and described:

Matthew 8:11 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 22:2 "The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son.

Matthew 22:4 Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.

Luke 22:29-30 And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, ³⁰ so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom

So he describes the intimacy of close fellowship available even now... but perfected ultimately in heaven:

Revelation 3:20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.

V. Lessons and Applications

A. Lord's Supper: Look Back... Look Ahead

1. The Passover was a yearly reminder to the Jewish nation of their deliverance from bondage in Egypt
2. So also the Lord's Supper is a continual reminder for us Christians of the blood of Christ shed for us on the cross for our sins

1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death

3. So it is vital for us to be forever mindful of what Jesus did for us
ONCE FOR ALL TIME...

Luke 22:19 And he took 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."

We need REMINDERS, because we are so prone to forget

We need to think continually of the blood of Jesus shed for our sins...
so we can be humbled and also thankful

4. But also LOOK AHEAD

1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

- a. This causes us to look ahead with faith to the Second Coming of Christ when at last he will destroy all his enemies...
- b. The Last Enemy to be destroyed is DEATH
- c. And then, we will FEAST with Christ, sitting at table with him

So... at the Lord's Supper... and indeed everyday: be mindful of your sins forgiven at such a high cost, the body and blood of Jesus Christ, given for you

Be thankful for that indescribable gift of grace

Be humble at it

Be willing gladly to forgive others, as you have been forgiven

Be expectant of the eternal feasts we will have in heaven!!

B. Beyond That... Think Again of the Lord's Stunning Sovereignty

- 1. His meticulous prediction of the man carrying the jug of water entering the city of Jerusalem at just the right moment
- 2. Understand also God sovereignly rules over the daily events of life here on earth
- 3. Not even a sparrow falls to the ground apart from God's will

4. Understand the mystery of divine sovereignty and human responsibility in the case of Judas Iscariot... God ordained what he would do, and Judas is completely responsible for his choices and his actions