

The theme of the gospel of Matthew is the Kingdom of God. Jesus is bringing the Kingdom. But, it is an upside-down Kingdom. It is not the kind of Kingdom one would expect. This King will be coronated by rejection and betrayal – even by his own people. But that was his plan all along: to give his life as a ransom for the very ones who only deserve judgment.

Turn to Matthew 26 (781). The heart of this passage is the institution of the Lord's supper but it is bracketed by betrayal. Let's consider four points from this passage: preparation for Passover, the betrayal of Judas, the institution of the Lord's Supper, and yet more betrayal.

I. Preparation for Passover 17-19 - What is Passover? Last week Cooper mentioned its significance. He said that for us, it would be like combining Juneteenth, July 4, and New years. It was a big deal. It celebrated the Exodus. It is the celebration of God freeing his people from slavery and forming them into a nation. Last week you all looked at Exodus 12, where we learn about the Passover. If you weren't here, let me remind you what happened. Pharaoh would not let God's people go until a 10th and final plague: the death of the firstborn. **Exod 11:4-6**. But God would spare his people through a sacrificial lamb. Each Israelite home was to sacrifice an unblemished lamb and put blood on each doorpost and lintel. There is an emphasis on the blood of the lamb: **12:7, 13, 22-23**. God would see the blood applied and pass over their home. They would escape judgment through the blood of the unblemished lamb.

Passover, therefore, became one of the main celebrations for Israel, as it celebrated their formation into a people. The Exodus was the grandest of all God's mighty acts in the OT. All males were expected to visit the temple during Passover. Jerusalem was normally around 30K people, but swelled to 180K during Passover. This commemorative meal was the high point of Passover.

This Passover meal was marked by explanation from the father. **Exod 12:26-27**. Right from the beginning God's will was for Father's to lead out at the dinner table in explaining the mighty acts of God. Normally, the father would expound the story of the Exodus and the formation of the people of Israel, but as we'll see, Jesus is going to break script, . . . to talk about himself. / The Passover service revolved around the four promises of **Exod 6:6-7**, each associated with four cups of wine.

Jesus has this all planned out. Go into the city and tell my dude I'm ready. I got a guy. Just like we saw when he was about to enter Jerusalem. **21:1-4**. Jesus has his face set like flint toward Jerusalem. Though it may not appear that way, Jesus is in charge. He knows exactly what he is doing. Way back in **16:21** he told them the plan. He has a mission to accomplish, a people to purchase. Jesus says "my time" is at hand. This was planned before the creation of the world. Acts 2:23: "this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God." Acts 4:27-28: "for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place." Jesus knows the time has come.

II. Betrayal of Judas - 20-25 Jesus tells the 12 that one of them would betray him. They become sorrowful and ask if it is them and Jesus indirectly points to Judas. We are used to this story, but need to remind ourselves of how scandalous this is. The Lord Jesus Christ will be betrayed by one of the 12 disciples.

Judas falls away. Friends if one of the disciples of Jesus himself can fall away, we must be on guard. Prone to wander Lord I feel it. Here is my heart, take and seal it for thy courts above. We must focus on finishing well. We must not rely on some event in the past, but are we faithfully following today. Like Judas, we may enjoy great religious privileges and we may make a great profession, but if our hearts are not made new by the Spirit, we are no better than Judas. We need to hear this in Abilene, TX, where there is lots of religion. Lots of superficiality. Lots of talk about Jesus with not a lot of actually following Jesus in His Word.

Notice the hopeless condition of the lost - **24**. It is better to never have lived at all than to live and then die without Christ. Jesus appeals to final judgment again and again. Hell is real. This is why this is all so serious. Eternity is at stake. The wrath of God is coming for all who don't follow Jesus till the end. Better to never be born than to face the wrath of God.

III. The Lord's Supper - 26-29 - Sadly, these words that should produce unity have caused much division, mostly due to faulty exegesis. Famously, Luther and Zwingli had a debate at the Colloquy of Marburg in 1529 and could not come to terms regarding the nature of Christ's presence in communion. Luther wrote on the dinner table "This is my Body" and underlined the word "is." **PIC**. Luther is my boy. It pains me to say this, but on this point he still had a little Rome sloshing around in his system.

There are four main views on communion: 1) Transubstantiation – this is the Roman Catholic view. They say the substance of the bread and wine actually becomes the body and blood of Jesus.¹ This is how they put it in 1551 at the Council of Trent: "After the consecration of the bread and wine, our Lord Jesus Christ is truly, really and substantially contained in the venerable sacrament of the holy eucharist under the appearance of those physical things."

This is where the phrase *hocus pocus* comes from. The Latin for "this is my body" is *hoc est corpus meus*. This undergirds their whole view of the Mass. It is a literal reenactment of Christ's sacrifice. So, it is not finished. Christ must be sacrificed multiple times a week. I find this view very problematic and without biblical or theological warrant.

2) Consubstantiation – Martin Luther made up this view. He said that the substance of the bread and wine is not changed but that the unchanged substance of the bread is united with the substance of the body of Christ. He insisted that Christ's body is really present in, with, and under the elements.

3) Memorialist – this is the view of Ulrich Zwingli and historically most Baptists have held this view. It states that communion is merely a remembrance of the death of Christ, but I always say that when we are talking about the cross, there is never a "merely."

4) Spiritual Presence – this was the view of Calvin and most Reformed Christians as well as Methodists and Episcopalians in their own way. Calvin said the bread and wine are signs and guarantees of a present reality. I hold a combination of 3 and 4. Many Particular Baptists held this view that the Spirit

¹ Aristotelian philosophy distinguishes between the substance and accidents.

binds believers together to him through faith in communion. We spiritually feed on Christ by faith. We are spiritually nourished at the table, not due to the bread but due to the gospel. 1 Cor 10:16: “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”

2LBC: “The supper of the Lord Jesus was instituted by him the same night wherein he was betrayed, to be observed in his churches, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance, and showing to all the world the sacrifice of himself in his death, confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof, *their spiritual nourishment, and growth in him*, their further engagement in, and to all duties which they owe to him; and to be a bond and pledge of their communion with him, and with each other.”

It goes on to say, “That doctrine which maintains a change of the substance of bread and wine, into the substance of Christ's body and blood, commonly called transubstantiation, by consecration of a priest, or by any other way, is repugnant not to Scripture alone, but even to common sense and reason, overthrows the nature of the ordinance, and has been, and is, the cause of manifold superstitions, yea, of gross idolatries. / Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this ordinance, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but *spiritually* receive, and feed upon Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death; the body and blood of Christ being then not corporally or carnally, but *spiritually present* to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses.”

Jesus takes the bread and says, “take, eat, this is my body.” Jesus means this *represents* my body and this *represents* my blood. Just as when Jesus says I am the gate or I am the vine, these words were never meant to be taken in a woodenly literal sense. The bread cannot literally be the body of Jesus because Jesus is physically holding the bread. Plus, the disciples were Jewish and it was sinful. Deut 12:23: “Only be sure that you do not eat the blood, for the blood is the life, and you shall not eat the life with the flesh.”

Look again at **28**. Here Jesus gives us the theological reasoning behind this meal and his pending death. Jesus says this is my blood of the covenant. He ties his death to the concept of covenant. This is a quotation from Exodus 24, which is the ratification of the OC. The heart of the OC is the Decalogue, the Ten Words found in Exodus 20. Then we have the rules of the OC found in Exod 21-23. **24:3-8**. So, why does Jesus quote Exodus 24? He is saying he is bringing about a new covenant. In 1 Cor 11:25, Jesus says this cup is the new covenant in my blood (Luke 22:20).

This draws us back to Jeremiah's famous NC promise. **Jer 31:31-34** unpack/walk through: Unlike: 7x I will / Inward / Relationship / Regenerate / Full and final forgiveness. This is the definitive end of animal sacrifice. By his death, Jesus is bringing the OC to an end. The cross is the theological end of the OC with its temple, the veil is torn and his judgment on the temple in AD 70 that he predicted in ch. 24 is the *historical* end of the OC with its temple. Not one stone left.

If the Jewish father would normally speak of the formation of the people of God at the Passover meal, Jesus speaks about the formation of a new covenant people. His blood will inaugurate the covenant.

Jesus is a sort of new Moses who inaugurates a NC and here there is no Passover lamb, for *he is* the Passover lamb. *His* blood covers us and through it the judgment of God will pass over us. He is the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. He brings about a new and greater Exodus, freeing us not from Egypt or Rome but from Satan, sin, and death.

Jesus says his blood is poured out for many. This is an allusion to **Isa 52:7-53:12**. Jesus is the suffering Servant who bore the sins of many to bring the Kingdom of God by his substitutionary death on the cross. / Jesus says this is my blood of the covenant that is poured out for many. Why? For the forgiveness of sins. Fundamentally, this is our greatest need. Our sin has separated us from a holy God. On our own, we are doomed to face the wrath of God. When his holiness meets our sin, wrath is the response. We need atonement. We need a mediator. We need forgiveness. We need a Savior. We need a ransom. And this meal is a celebration that God has provided just that through Jesus. This is why Jesus came. To redeem sinners. This is what this whole gospel is about. **1:21, 20:28**.

That is what this meal celebrates. And it is a celebration, because it commemorates the death of Jesus by which our greatest problem is taken care of. We regularly partake in what Andrew Fuller called the “Sacred Supper” in order to taste afresh the love of Christ. We are forgiven through faith in Jesus.

Spared by the blood of the Lamb and formed by the blood of the Lamb. Jesus’ death produces the NC community and communion is a community forming meal. 1 Cor 10:17: “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” The many become one in this celebration. This is why local church membership and communion are tied. Baptism is the front door and communion is the family meal. Bobby Jamieson writes, “The Lord’s Supper doesn’t just represent our unity; it ratifies and seals it. Because it enacts our fellowship with one another, the Lord’s Supper makes many one. This is why church membership is first and foremost inclusion at the Table, and church discipline is first and foremost exclusion from the Table.”²

This is why churches have historically “fenced the table.” What is that about? Church discipline is an act whereby we can no longer affirm the profession of a member so the church excommunicates them, ex-communications them. When someone is disciplined, it doesn’t mean that they can’t come here; it means they can’t participate unless they repent. And you shouldn’t take communion if not a member in a local church. You should take the Lord’s Supper unless it is in the midst of a people you have authorized to withhold it from you if you stop following Jesus. Back in the day, some churches would have interviews and grant tokens for the Lord’s Supper. That was their way of ensuring that no one took it in an unworthy manner. / Jesus says he will not eat with them again until he drinks it anew in his Father’s kingdom.³ Their fellowship is soon to be broken, but not definitively. It will be restored.

IV. More Betrayal - 30-35 – Jesus warns his disciples that they will all fall away. They will stumble. He quotes from the prophet Zechariah. We have seen that this whole last week of Matt 21-28 is filled with Zechariah being fulfilled in the first coming of Jesus: Zech 9:9-10 in Matt 21:4-5, Zech 12:10-14 in Matt

² *Going Public*, 165.

³ New wine is an OT metaphor for joy and flourishing (Gen 27:28, Deut 33:28, Prov 3:10, Amos 9:13), that will be completely fulfilled in the new creation.

24:30, Zech 13:7 in Matt 26:31; Zech 14:21 in Matt 21:12; Zech 11:12-13 in 26:15 and 27:3-10, allusions to Zech in Matt 25:31 and 26:28.

The falling away of the disciples is in fulfillment of what Zechariah 13 said. Zech 13 is about the restoration of Israel, and her being cleansed from idolatry. The shepherd will be struck and the sheep will scatter, but he will renew his people through the scattering, so that the chapter ends with these words in 13:9: "And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The LORD is my God'." Jesus is the Good Shepherd who restores his people.

Peter is confident that he won't fall away, though. Always. He has misplaced confidence in the self. His spirit is willing but his flesh turns out to be weak. He says though all these others fall away, I am with you - ride or die. He says, I will never fall away. As Solomon says, pride before the fall. Jesus helps his humility. On the contrary Peter, you will deny me. In fact, not only will you fall away, but you will fall away three times before the rooster crows. And they all counter, we will not fall away. We will even die with you. Time will tell.

Friends, in the heat of the moment, when the going gets tough, will you turn out to be a Judas or a Peter? There may come a time when you are tested in a significant way like Peter. But more likely if you stay in America, you will have smaller tests, but you will have tests. Usually revolving around our sexual ethic. When there could be bad consequences, will you stand with Jesus over against the sexual revolution that has won the West? Or will you stumble? That is the word for "fall away." It is the same verb Jesus used in **13:20-21, 24:9-10**.

Some of you are already experiencing this testing, but most of us will soon enough. Friends, we just have to resolve to be called haters, bigots for what the Bible teaches about mankind, about gender and sexuality, about exclusivity, about hell. Jesus said that if you are ashamed of him or his words, he will be ashamed of you at his coming.

How can we avoid this? What was the difference between Judas and Peter? They both fell away, but one repented and the other didn't. That's the issue. That is the difference between faithful followers and the unfaithful. It is not that Christians don't sin and non-Christians do. No, we all sin. We just hate it and turn from it. Christians repent.

It reminds me of Thomas Cranmer? Do you know him? He wrote the Book of Common Prayer for the Anglicans. He was a promoter of Protestant theology but when Mary I (Bloody Mary) took the throne, she stopped it all and locked him and others up lest he recant. And he did recant of his teaching to Roman authorities in Jan 1556. He fell away from the truth of God's Word for a moment. But then he recanted his recantation. He publicly denied papal authority and transubstantiation. In fact, as the Catholic church was burning him for believing in Scripture Alone, he put his hand in the fire first, the very hand that had signed the recantation before.

As he died, he echoed Stephen and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. . . . I see the heavens open and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." And you better believe the Lord received him. Because there

is grace for Peter's and Cranmer's. There is grace because Jesus knows the frailty of his disciples. Even these right here in this passage. He knows they are feeble and will fall away. Yet, he invited them to his table. He knows our frailty. He knows our weak constitution. Yet, he invites us. In fact, the invitation to the table is only for weak people, like these disciples. The main qualification is to know you are unqualified.