

Matthew Chapter 26-28 – The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus – Part 2

Matthew 26:17-30 – The Last Passover

Introduction

This section in Matthew is the final narrative of the book. It is an account of the Mount of Olives to the last Passover, from Gethsemane to Golgotha, from the cross to the resurrection, and for the eleven, from being followers to commissioned as apostles.

In the last lesson, we covered Matthew 26:1-16 and discovered a plan for crucifying Jesus was solidified and everyone responsible for the crucifixion (the Father, the Son, the elders, and Judas) was all in alignment. This was exemplified by Mary, who prepared Jesus for His burial through anointing with perfume ointment.

Matthew 26:17-30 – In this section, we will see the content of the Last Supper, its importance for the disciples, and its impact on history.

The Preparation – Matthew 26:17-19

The feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread were instituted in Exodus 12 when God redeemed Israel. Passover was celebrated by first selecting an unblemished, year-old, male lamb on the tenth of Nisan, keeping it until the fourteenth of Nisan, sacrificing the lamb near twilight, putting some of its blood on the doorposts of the house, roasting the lamb with fire and eating it that night with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. On that night, the angel of death would go throughout Egypt, and if he saw the blood, death would pass over the house, and the first-born son would be spared.

The procedure for the Feast of Unleavened Bread would be to continue to eat unleavened bread for another seven days. The unleavened bread pictured the nation's haste in leaving Egypt because they did not have time to let their bread become leavened.

Both feasts were to be kept through all their generations as a memorial of God's great work of redemption on their behalf. The Feast of Unleavened Bread came to refer to the whole Passover season. The first day would have been the actual day of Passover and marked the beginning of the entire eight days of this memorial season.

Normally, we would just teach this from Matthew, but to substantiate this explanation, we turn to Luke 22:1-16. In this text, we substantiate that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is called Passover. As stated, the actual day of Passover was the beginning of this eight-day memorial feast. We also learn that it was Peter and John who were sent to prepare the Passover.

The Passover Problem

Does Jesus have Passover before Passover? Remember that Jewish days begin at sundown, not midnight. Passover began at sundown, about 6 pm. Jesus was tried, crucified, and dead by 3 pm the same day. Jesus was crucified on Passover day, even though He already had the Passover meal. However, Jesus would not have been crucified at the same time as the Passover lambs would have been killed and roasted (Luke 22:7; Mark 14:12).

The Passover Meal – Matthew 26:20-30

The actual Passover ceremony is not described in this text. Did they perform a Seder? Probably not. In fact, if Jesus did lead a Seder, I believe some of its contents would have been recorded in the Gospels. The first mention of a Seder was in the late First Century. I theorize that the modern Seder was compiled by Jewish believers to help explain Christ to Jews during Passover.

Matthew does not record the same amount of detail as Luke or John. Why not? We must remember the purpose of Matthew and realize that the entire content of the Last Passover does not advance the message that Jesus is the Messiah.

Jesus then gives them the bad news during supper. One of them will betray Jesus. The disciples had previously heard the news about His impending death by crucifixion, but the revelation that Jesus would be betrayed by one of the twelve was new. At that moment, the disciples were extremely unsure of themselves. Each of them insisted, “Surely not I.” This also indicates that each of them was not aware of Judas’ treachery.

Jesus informed them that the one who dipped his hand in the bowl with Him was the betrayer. Apparently, that did not solve anything for the eleven, as other texts asked for a more specific answer. So why did Jesus say this? To let Judas know that He knew. In verse 25, Judas said to Him, “Surely it is not I.” Betrayal insists on anonymity; the fact that Jesus knew that Judas was betraying Him created a problem for Judas, and it moved up the timeline.

In verse 24, we have an interesting statement from Jesus. It would have been better if Judas had never been born, being the one who would betray the Son of Man to the authorities for crucifixion. What does this mean? Is this an idiom?

Job 3:1-7; Jeremiah 20:14-18

After reexamination, I believe that this is an idiom. This, then, means that Judas will never be remembered for anything good and that his birth will be a day of cursing and not rejoicing.

Judas will incur great woe; this is not to speak of eternal damnation but a severe earthly punishment. The people of the Earth during his time and immediately after his death cursed his life. Judas was not upheld as a hero in Jewish circles. Everyone regarded Judas as a pitiful, sad, dishonest man. No one held him in high regard. He was a shame to his parents and all his family.

The Lord’s Supper – Matthew 26:26-30

The timing of these events is difficult to piece together. When did Jesus say this to the disciples? Was this to the twelve, or did Judas leave first? If we take Luke as the most chronological Gospel, the Lord’s Supper comes before the revelation of the betrayer.

Matthew tells a story; evidently, his process was to give the bad news first while maintaining a chronological arc. Matthew tells the content of what is needed in story form rather than in strict chronological form. I believe the conflict about the timing of this section of the Passover is overblown.

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I believe that the Passover meal was a very Jewish concept that could be honored by Gentiles but has lost its Jewish flavor even as early as the Second Century.

The account of the Last Supper is found in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is not found in John. Why is that observation important?

John is the Gospel to the world and not to the Jews alone. I believe that if the Lord's Supper was designed to be "for the Church," it would have been in John as well, and we would have seen some instruction in other Epistles, other than a corrective measure.

Observations:

- Paul corrects the usage of this memorial because the Corinthians were not honoring Christ but being selfish (1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 33-34).
- In the same letter, Paul teaches that Jesus has become our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7)
- The intent for "The Lord's Supper" was to bring a new facet to the Passover Meal.
- The bread and the cup would now remind them of Jesus in conjunction with the Exodus.
- This does not prohibit our use of this remembrance, but we should understand the Lord's Supper in its original setting.

Verse 29 - Jesus then states that He will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom.

The first thing we observe is that Jesus is going to die very soon. Wine was an everyday drink among people. Therefore, if He would not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom, then He must be leaving before He has another drink.

Next, we are not in the Kingdom; Jesus has not had a drink of wine yet.

Finally, Jesus will drink wine "anew." This indicates a different attitude, not in sorrow but in joy, not in death but in life, and not in apparent defeat but in overt victory.

We can imagine Jesus in the kingdom taking His first drink of wine with its special meaning.

Verse 30 – We don't know what the hymn was, but traditionally it was the Hallel – Psalms 113-118.

Psalm 113, 114:1-2, 115:9-13, 116:1-4, 117, 118:1-6, 17-24

This is a truly remarkable conclusion to the Passover; everything is in place, and now they head out for the final night.