

August 26, 2001 by Steve Brandon



Our Lord's Last Passover

Luke 22:14-20

1. Preparation for the Passover (Luke 22:14)
2. Anticipation of the Passover (Luke 22:15-18)
3. Transformation of the Passover (Luke 22:19-20)
4. Celebration of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-29)

Open your Bibles this evening to Luke, chapter 22.

This evening is an evening for which I have anticipated for quite some time. This evening, for the first time, we have an opportunity to partake of the Lord's Supper together as a church. I have looked forward to it, because it marks another step for us in the establishment of a church here in Rockford.

- We began as a little group in the Pearson's basement.
- We have progressed to a public place on Sunday nights.
- We have an identity - "Rock Valley Bible Church."
- I have quit my job.
- I have moved here to Rockford.

ALL of these have continued to be steps in the direction of planting an independent church. Tonight, we take another step. It is the step of regularly partaking of the Lord's Supper.

Until this time, we have chosen not to initiate the Lord's Supper here in Rockford, primarily because many of you have been partaking of it at Kishwaukee Bible Church on Sunday mornings. However, since my family has moved up here and we are in the process of breaking away from Kishwaukee Bible Church, I thought it best that we begin this evening with this practice.

Jesus, Himself, instituted this practice on the night in which He was betrayed. Let's read the account which Luke gives to us of this event.

Luke 22:14-23

14 And when the hour had come He reclined [at the table,] and the apostles with Him.
15 And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;
16 for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."
17 And when He had taken a cup [and] given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves;
18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."
19 And when He had taken [some] bread [and] given thanks, He broke [it,] and gave [it] to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."
20 And in the same way [He took] the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood."

I thought it best for us to begin our celebration of the Lord's Supper by examining the historical account in which it was inaugurated. I have entitled my message this evening, "Our Lord's Last Passover." This was the last meal which Jesus would partake before His crucifixion. Jesus knew that it would be His last meal as he told His disciples, "I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (22:16). "I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes" (22:18).

For this reason alone, it intrigues me greatly. I have a fascination which I must confess to. I have always been intrigued by people who are on death row. It doesn't matter who it is or what crime has been done. It doesn't matter whether they have been converted in prison or not. It doesn't matter whether they are great criminals. I have consistently had a fascination with those who are going to be put to death.

I generally follow the news story pretty closely. When these events come about, I tend to read as much from the newspaper articles as I can. The most recent person in high profile person to be executed in this country was Timothy McVeigh in Terra Haute, Indiana. When his execution drew near, I read about anything I could about his execution. From memory, I can tell you that he was transferred to his holding cell (just across the wall from when he was to be put to death by lethal injection) the day before he was executed. I can tell you that he ordered two half-gallons of mint chocolate chip ice-cream as his last meal. I can tell you what his last words were. He said, "I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul." (How wrong he was).

It is not that I agree with Timothy McVeigh's political position, because, in fact, I don't. I believe that his crime was awful and that the state was correct in putting him to death. Furthermore, I am in no way sympathetic towards him. But I am intrigued by those who know they are

dying at a specific time. I believe that the reason I am intrigued is that their life is boiled down to a few short days. They know that their end is near. Their actions during this time will have been planned and rehearsed.

For Jesus, it was no different. He knew that His last meal would be this Passover meal which He would eat with His disciples. He was anticipating this meal, for He said, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (22:15).

You cannot believe it to be an accident that this meal was chosen as His last. Jesus knew that He was going to die. All of the gospel accounts tell us that Jesus repeatedly told His disciples that He was going to Jerusalem, where He was going to be handed up to the religious leaders of the day, and be killed. For instance, in Luke 9:22, we read, "The Son of Man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised up on the third day." The turning point in the gospel of Luke is found in 9:51, where Luke writes, "And it came about, when the days were approaching for His ascension, that He resolutely set His face to go to Jerusalem."

Jesus knew that the time of His death was upon Him. And our Lord went through great pains to see that He might partake this meal with His disciples. Let's look first tonight at the ...

1. Preparation for the Passover (Luke 22:14)

Luke 22:14 says, "And when the hour had come, He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him." This hour was not the hour of His death. This hour was the hour of the Passover meal, for which Jesus went through great lengths to prepare.

Look back at verses 7-13 to see how carefully Jesus planned His last meal.

Luke 22:7-13

7. Then came the [first] day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover [lamb] had to be sacrificed.

8 And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it."

9 And they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?"

10 And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters.

11 "And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"'"

12 "And he will show you a large, furnished, upper room; prepare it there."

13 And they departed and found [everything] just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.

He told Peter and John to go ahead of the rest of the apostles and prepare it. He gave them very specific directions.

- Go to Jerusalem.
- Find a man carrying a pitcher of water.
- Speak to him.
- He will show you the room we will use.
- Prepare the meal there.

As you women know, who have others in your home for meals. It takes much preparation to serve a meal, especially for two men, who aren't used to such preparations. Peter and John would have set the table for 13 (the 12 disciples and Jesus). They would have made sure that they had at least three ingredients (as required in Exodus 12):

- A Lamb (for a sacrifice) (Exodus 12:3-8).
- Unleavened Bread (because the Lord's people left in haste) (Exodus 12:8)
- Bitter Herbs (because their time in Egypt was a difficult time) (Exodus 12:8)

We also know that they prepared drinks for the meal. For, we see Jesus, during the meal (in verse 12), partaking of "the fruit of the vine," the common drink of the day. On top of the basic Biblical requirements for the meal, they probably prepared other things (like the Jews do today).

- The Karpas - green vegetables
- The Haroset - the sweet mixture of apples, nuts, and cinnamon.

The traditions of the Passover meal are rich and interesting. We save it for another time to look more extensively into the current Jewish practice, which points to Jesus Christ as Messiah in an unbelievably clear way. But here, I have given you just enough to give you a taste of what transpired in the setting up of the place for the Passover.

Jesus had certainly eaten this meal before with the disciples. They had been together in ministry for over three years. The Passover was the biggest Jewish holiday of the year. But, there was something special about this particular Passover, which Jesus anticipated with great delight.

2. Anticipation of the Passover (Luke 22:15-18)

Luke 22:15 - "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

The KJV gives you the sense of the Greek, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover." This is a common Hebrew way of saying something with great force, emotion, and surety. For instance, in Genesis 3:16, God spoke to Adam and said, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely (or, more literally to get the sense of the idiom, 'eating you may eat'); but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die (or, 'dying you shall die')." Notice how we have translated this idiom. "You may eat freely." "You shall surely die." Here in Luke 22, "I have earnestly desired to eat."

Jesus tells the disciples here that He is greatly, greatly, greatly, greatly, desiring to eat this meal with them.

Perhaps we can compare this to the desire of our own precious children, who greatly desire to eat breakfast on Christmas morning, because they know that after breakfast, they get to open their presents!

The question that naturally comes to my mind when Jesus says this is, "why did He so desire to eat the meal?" Let me give three reasons for Jesus' desire. (I give credit to Albert Barnes, the commentator, for giving seed to these reasons).

1. He loved the Passover Holiday.

The Passover holiday, like the Sabbath, was instituted by God to be a blessing for His people. Passover was established to help Israel remember God's great work of redemption in delivering Israel from under the tyranny of the Egyptians. It was a time in which the entire nation would reflect upon the goodness and greatness of God to Israel. It was usually a time of great fellowship with others.

As Jesus walked the earth in His humanity, what more would Jesus love than the earthly blessings and benefits of the gathering of His closest companions to celebrate God's redeeming work?

This next weekend, we will celebrate Labor Day. It is a day in which we, as a nation, celebrate our labor by resting for a day. This day has been established, as most holidays are, to be a blessing for us. Likewise, the Passover was established to be a blessing and rest to Israel. Even today, the Orthodox Jews do no work during the previous week leading up to the Passover celebration.

2. He loved His disciples.

Jesus knew that this was the last time that He would partake of this holiday with them (verses 16 and 18). This Passover was the last opportunity He had to prepare them for His death and departure. Not only would He suffer and die, but the apostles also would suffer greatly for following Christ.

During and after the Passover, Jesus warns the apostles on several occasions of the danger that awaits them. Within hours of celebrating the Passover, Jesus told Peter, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; But I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31,32).

During His prayer in Gethsemane, He warned his sleepy disciples, "Pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Luke 22:40). When Jesus found them asleep, He said, "Why are you sleeping? Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation" (Luke 22:46).

Tradition has it that all but one of the apostles suffered martyrdom for their faith in Christ Jesus. Jesus had one last opportunity to prepare His disciples for the difficulties that would soon follow.

3. He loved the church.

At this particular Passover meal, Jesus was to institute an ordinance, which would be for the edification of all Christians, who would ever live. For followers of Christ, no longer would this event be known as the Passover, but it would be known as the Lord's supper. (Throughout the ages of time, there have been two ordinances, which the church has practiced: baptism and the Lord's supper. The Lord's supper was given just before His death. The command to baptize was given just after His resurrection.)

The celebration of the Passover was established as a reminder to the Jewish people of the last meal eaten while they were in bondage in Egypt. God gave this meal to remember Israel's redemption when the angel of death passed over the homes where the blood of a lamb had been applied to the lintels of the doors.

But Jesus was going to change all of this and point the Passover to the True Passover Lamb -- Himself! This would edify Christians for all times to come. Which brings us to the third point tonight....

3. Transformation of the Passover (Luke 22:19-22)

The key comes in verse 19, "And when He had taken [some] bread [and] given thanks, He broke [it] and gave [it] to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

This certainly would have startled the apostles, who first heard these words. God had created the Passover feast to be celebrated as a remembrance of the Lord's deliverance of the sons of Israel from Egypt. He had instructed the Israelites to perform this ordinance "for you and your children forever" (Exodus 12:24). For 1500 years, Israel had done so. They had remembered how the LORD redeemed Israel from the bondage of slavery.

Today, the Jewish people have developed an elaborate ritual of words to say at the Passover feast. There is a book, called the Hagadah

(which means, "the telling"), which details the ritual surrounding the Passover feast. We don't know exactly how long the Jewish people have been following this exact ritual, but by the time of Christ, there were certainly some customary words that were spoken at every Passover meal -- words which the disciples would have known quite well.

But now in the midst of the meal, Jesus says something that had never been said before at a Passover meal. Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of Me!" Jesus was transforming this holiday away from a celebration of God's redemption in Israel to a celebration of Himself! When the apostles heard Jesus speak these words, their ears must have perked up. For years, they had participated in the feast of the Passover, which always pointed back to God's redemption of Israel. But now, Jesus points the Passover celebration to Himself.

Sometimes, at home, I like to sing a hymn for my children and change a word or two to see if they are paying attention. For instance, I might sing, "And can it be that I should gain an interest in the newspaper." At once, when my children hear words like this, they quickly protest and say, "No, daddy, in my Savior's blood is how it goes." They can quickly hear when things change. I usually respond by saying, "Ohhhh, you're right. Thanks for helping me."

So here, the disciples would have noticed what change Jesus was making. Perhaps they might have protested in their minds what Jesus just said, not fully understanding the implications of Jesus' upcoming death. It is one thing to change one word of one hymn when informally singing it to your children. However, for Jesus to change the Passover, which God had established 1500 years prior, would have been a tremendous shock to the apostles with Him at the dinner table that night.

Praise the Lord that Jesus changed this holiday. For it has been a great edification to the church down through the ages. How quickly we can "forget" Jesus. How quickly we can involve ourselves in other things.

But tonight as we celebrate the Lord's supper, we come to "Remember Jesus."

We remember Jesus, the great Author and Perfecter of faith (Heb. 12:2).
We remember Jesus, the one who will judge the world in righteousness (Acts 17:31).
We remember Jesus, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).
We remember Jesus, the King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16).
We remember Jesus, the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation (Col. 1:14).
We remember Jesus, the Head of the church (Col. 1:18).
We remember Jesus, who is pre-eminent - has the first place in everything (Col. 1:19).

This week, my soul was thrilled when I was reminded of the parallels of Jesus' death with the Passover. If somebody had set about to write a religious fiction novel, I'm not sure that they ever could have dreamed up the incredible imagery, which God worked about in actual history.

- As the Passover was initiated on the evening before the redemption of Israel, so was the Lord's Supper initiated on the evening before the redemption of God's people from their sins.
- It was necessary that the blood of the Passover Lamb was shed, so the blood of Jesus was shed for our sins.
- The blood was sprinkled on the doorposts for protection, so the blood of Jesus Christ is our precious blood that protects us. "When I see the blood I will pass over you" (Ex. 12:13).
- The angel of death was upon those without the blood, so the wrath of God is upon anyone apart from the blood of Jesus Christ.
- The Passover Lamb was unblemished and spotless, so Jesus Christ was sinless and undefiled.

These parallels are so secure that Paul calls Christ "our Passover [who] has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7).

Jesus radically transformed the Passover. No longer is it to be done in remembrance of God's redemptive work in Israel. Jesus changed the course of history, when he spoke these words, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

Let's focus our hearts upon the ...

4. Celebration of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-29)

It is really quite simple. As Luke records for us here, ...

- Jesus took bread, broke it and gave it to the disciples to eat.
- Jesus took the cup, blessed it and everyone partook.

Yet, as simple as it is, Paul, in 1 Corinthians gives us some warnings in participating in the Lord's supper. Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians, chapter 11.

We won't exposit these verses fully now. At a later date we will. But tonight, I want to have us look at a few verses. In 1 Corinthians 23-25, Paul gives the account of what Jesus did on the evening of the Passover. In verses 26 and following, Paul gives an interpretation of our practice today.

"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

As we share this meal together, we are making a proclamation. We are proclaiming the death of Jesus Christ. Particularly, by eating, we are proclaiming our faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ. With this proclamation comes a responsibility: we need to be sure that we proclaim it rightly. Look at the next few verses.

1 Corinthians 11:27-29

27 Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.

You can come here tonight and go through the motions of this supper and actually bring judgment upon yourself (:29). You will bring this judgment if you partake of this supper in "an unworthy manner" (:27). The question becomes, what is it to participate in this supper in an unworthy manner? Let me give you a few ways in which this supper may be taken in an unworthy manner.

1. If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ

In participating, you are saying, "I am of Jesus Christ and it is in His blood alone that I place my faith and trust." As the hymn writer says, "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling." Partaking of this meal doesn't save you. Partaking of this meal is an expression of your faith in Jesus alone to save. If you are not a believer in Jesus Christ, partaking of this supper is partaking in an unworthy manner.

2. If you are unrepentant of some particular sin

In participating of this meal, you are saying, "I have repented of my sins." You are saying, "Jesus has all of me." Sure, there is sin you struggle with - that's the sanctification process. But, there ought not to be sin you are engaged in that you are determined to keep. There ought not to be any sin which you are refusing to release.

- Perhaps there are things you are reading of which you need to repent.
- Perhaps you are watching things God hates.
- Perhaps you hold a grudge against another person, whom you simply won't forgive.

These all are sins which need to be confessed. To remain unrepentant and yet still eat the bread and drink from the cup in this supper is to do so in an unworthy manner.

If either of these cases represent you tonight, I give you two options.

1. Cry out to God now and repent of your sin. Pledge before God to hate your sin and seek His help in overcoming it. or if you remain unrepentant,
2. Simply let the bread and the cup pass by you. Please do not take. For your own soul, do not eat or drink.

Finally, Paul says, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Cor. 11:28). Examine yourself now and then we will participate in this glorious supper together.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on August 26, 2001 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.