

June 19, 2005 by Steve Brandon



His Last Meal

Matthew 26:17-30

His Last Meal was ...

1. Passover (verses 17-19)
2. Sorrowful (verses 20-25)
3. Meaningful (verses 26-30)

I have a fascination with people who are soon to be executed for their crimes. There is something about people anticipating their death that intrigues me greatly. When all of the appeals are said and done, and a criminal is sentenced to die, I'm sure that their minds must focus heavily upon their upcoming death. They will have opportunity to visit with their families one last time and say their good-byes, to write out anything that they would like to communicate after their deaths, to request and enjoy the final meal of their choosing, and to say their final words. I'm sure that many of those who face this situation put a bit of time into what they will say to their friends and family, what they want to eat as a final meal, and what they will say with their final words.

Whenever I see a headline saying that someone was executed, you can be sure that I will be reading the article. I want to know the circumstances behind everything that took place in the last few days of their life. Who did they talk with? What sorts of things did they say? What sort of attitude did they have? What did they eat? What were their final words?

In our text this morning, we find Jesus gathering His disciples together for His one last formal teaching moment with them before He would be executed. Jesus will eat His last meal, say His good-byes to His disciples, and teach them one last time. During this meal, Jesus spoke many things to His disciples. So crucial was this time that John devoted about 20% of his entire gospel to explaining what took place on the night in which Jesus was betrayed and handed over to be crucified. Matthew devotes a mere 14 verses to this event. That doesn't mean that it isn't important to Matthew. It means that Matthew will distill the importance of the evening down to its most crucial elements.

My message this morning is entitled, "His Final Meal." By way of outline this morning, I want to give you three characteristics of the Final Meal that Jesus Christ ate with His disciples. First of all, His last meal was ...

1. Passover (verses 17-19)

Let's begin in verse 17, "Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?'"

The Passover is a yearly feast that Jewish people celebrate. They celebrated it in Biblical times. They continue to celebrate it today. The Passover is a feast of remembrance. It is the time in which the Jewish people were to remember how God delivered them out of their Egyptian bondage. It is a bit like our Independence Day that we celebrate every Fourth of July. But, it is much bigger than our Independence day. So significant was this deliverance, that the Jewish calendar began on the month in which they were redeemed from slavery. The first month of the Jewish calendar is the month of Nisan, which occurs in the early spring. They started their calendar on the day that they started their nation.

In Exodus 12, God gave the Jewish people very explicit directions in how they ought to celebrate the Passover. On the fourteenth day of the first month of the year, the Passover lamb was to be slaughtered and its blood put on doorposts of their houses (Ex. 12:7). By this action, the Hebrew houses were spared when the LORD came throughout all of Egypt to destroy the Egyptians. When He saw the blood, He would "pass over" that house. Thus, the name, "Passover." When the lamb was cooked, it was to be "roasted with fire" and "eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs" (Ex. 12:8). It had to be eaten as soon as it was cooked (Ex. 12:10). If any wasn't eaten on the night of the Passover, it was to be "burned with fire" (Ex. 12:10). In other words, you couldn't take doggy bags home from your Passover feast.

So, when the disciples asked, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" it was a good question. It was the 14th of Nisan. Many pilgrims had come up to Jerusalem, intent upon celebrating the Passover. The question was "where are we going to celebrate the Passover, Jesus?" Apparently, the disciples didn't yet have a plan as to where they were going to have the Passover.

One of the most interesting of topics to speak with those who are married is the differences between each of their families in which they grew up. Families have different traditions. Some do things some ways and some do things in other ways. There are times in which these traditions clash, not because they are sinful traditions, but simply because they are different. Families clash over the time to open Christmas presents. Do you open them on Christmas Eve or on Christmas Day? When you are going someplace, are you on time or are you always late? Are birthdays a big deal to be celebrated on that day with a big party? Or are birthdays usually celebrated with only cake and candles. Every married couple has to deal with these types of things.

The clashing that has taken place in the meshing of our families in my marriage has to do with how far we plan ahead with our holidays. In my wife's family, they knew where and when they were going to celebrate every holiday. Celebrations were planned months in advance. In my family, we plan on getting together on various holidays, but where exactly we gather isn't so important to my family. At times, the decision

is made only days in advance. It has been a difficult transition for my wife, who likes to plan ahead.

I was comforted to see the disciples of Jesus approach the Passover, without having any clue as to where exactly they were going to eat the meal. It appears to me that the Brandon family might be a bit more Biblical, deciding at the last minute.

Jesus had a plan. He knew what was going to take place. He said (in verse 18), "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples."'" These aren't very clear directions. They are quite vague. Jesus didn't name who this man was. Jesus didn't tell his disciple what this man looked like. Jesus didn't give his address or directions to where the house was. Jesus didn't describe the house where he lived. You almost get the sense that the disciples were supposed to walk into town and this guy would be there. Mark tells us that this man would be "carrying a pitcher of water" (Mark 14:13). This is a bit more detail, but really, it doesn't help much. If I was one of the disciples, I would have asked Him for a few more details before heading out.

Do you have any thoughts as to why Jesus was so vague? I believe it was so that Judas couldn't prepare an ambush ahead of time. In verse 16, we read that Judas was "looking for a good opportunity to betray Him." What a better time than during an evening meal, when Jesus would be defenseless, eating with His disciples. But, if Judas didn't know where they would eat the Passover, then no ambush could be planned. Jesus could be assured that He could have His last meal in peace.

When the disciples went into the city, everything went just fine. The plan worked. Verse 19 tells us that "the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover." They found this man "carrying a pitcher of water." When they found him, they followed him to the house where Jesus and His disciples would celebrate their Passover celebration. These disciples "prepared the Passover."

Now, the Passover was far more than simply a meal. It was a religious service that took place with Scripture readings and blessings and prayers and symbols and discussions about what took place in the days of Moses. So, there was a lot of preparation that these disciples had to do. Not only did they have to prepare a meal, but they also had to prepare for everything that was involved in the Passover ritual, itself. (Perhaps you men might want to note that it wasn't only the ladies who were doing the cooking back in those days. These servant disciples were ready and willing to prepare the meal as well.)

The Last Meal of Jesus was the Passover (verses 17-19). In verses 20-25, we will see that His last meal was ...

2. Sorrowful (verses 20-25)

Verse 20 picks up the story at the Passover celebration itself. "Evening had come. [The meal had been prepared, and Jesus] was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples" (Verse 20).

I'm sure that at first, the atmosphere was certainly festive. Food had been shared. Scripture had been read. The soft murmur of discussion filled the air. Certainly, there were times of laughter as they told each other of some funny thing that took place yesterday. I can imagine one of the disciples joking about what happened to Peter, saying, "Did you guys happen to see Peter's blunder in the temple yesterday? He was walking up the steps to get to the temple mount. He thought that he had arrived at the top, but there was one more step. He trips on the step and falls flat on his face. And then, I saw him get up, hoping that nobody saw him, acting all cool-like. But I saw him. It was quite humorous." It was the most celebrated holiday in the year. Certainly, it was a joyous time for all.

They were having a wonderful time until Jesus dropped the most unpleasant news of the evening. Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me" (verse 21). It was as if the life was taken out of the party. Suddenly, the conversations stopped when they realized what Jesus had just said. What was joy and mirth was suddenly turned into a somber reality.

I remember such an occasion at my house some eight to ten years ago. I believe that it was a Sunday afternoon. We had a bunch of people over at our house. I can't even recall whether it was friends or family that was over. But, I can remember sitting at the dinner table, receiving a phone call from a old college buddy. For four years we had played soccer together. He was our goalie and MVP of our team my senior year. I hadn't spoken with him for quite some time. It was a bit strange that he called. But, I was excited to hear his voice for the first time in years. I said, "Hey, Stump! How are you doing! Boy it's been a long time." On the other end of the phone, he wasn't quite as upbeat as I was. He had some sad news for me. One of our teammates, Burney Dunn, who started as a sweeper for us on our championship team, had been brutally murdered. I believe that Burney was in Alaska, studying for his doctorate. He was in bed one night. His landlord came upon him and murdered him. It took the joy of the moment into a complete turn-around. Moments earlier, I had been excited to speak to a long-lost friend. But now, the reality of the phone call had begun to sink upon my heart. It was a bit difficult to continue in the festivities and fun, knowing what had happened in recent days.

Surely such news wasn't pleasant for these disciples to hear, either. Certainly, they knew what Jesus meant by these words. Jesus, Himself had told them on four different occasions (Matt. 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 26:2) that He was going to die. (We looked at all of those verses last week.) But, on top of that, everyone in Jerusalem knew about Jesus, the great teacher. Many had seen the way in which the religious establishment of the day had hated and despised Jesus. Certainly, there were rumors on the street that Jesus was a wanted man. Had Jesus been out west in the olden days, there would have been "Wanted" posters along with His picture posted all around town. The rumors probably spread that they were trying to seize Jesus and put Him to death. The disciples had certainly heard these rumors.

So, when Jesus said that He would be betrayed, they knew what He was talking about. But, I don't believe that it ever crossed their minds that the way in which Jesus would die would be because one of His close disciples would betray Him. Here for the first time, Jesus revealed the way in which He would be captured: a betrayer from within. The thoughts in their own minds of Jesus being betrayed was difficult for them to take. They knew of His great love for them. They knew of His care and concern for them. Jesus was love and followed by His disciples. To think of one of the disciples actually turning Jesus in to the authorities to be killed was almost unthinkable. They were a tight band of followers. They could say with the Three Musketeers, "All for one and one for all!" And then, to hear the words that one of them would

betray Jesus. It boggled their mind. But, this is what Jesus said. He said, "Truly I say to you that **one of you** will betray Me" (verse 21).

It makes sense that verse 22 says that they were all "deeply grieved." More and more the reality of His upcoming death was sinking in upon their hearts. It was causing them greater and greater sorrow. And then, one of the disciples began to think in his heart (perhaps it was John, the one with a tender heart), "If one of us is going to betray Jesus, it might be me! Oh, shudder the thought! That I would betray my Lord. No! Never! Surely not I, Lord?"

When the first disciple asked this question, the hearts of the other disciples would have begun to pound in their chests, lest they be the one to betray Jesus. Perhaps Thomas, the one who doubted, was the next who said, "Surely not I, Lord?" And then Andrew, "Surely not I, Lord?" And then Peter and the rest, "Surely not I, Lord." I believe that such a scenario is the best understanding of this text that we can have. Literally, our text reads, "one after another" asked this question (as can be seen in the margin of the New American Standard Version at verse 22).

So as to reinforce His words, Jesus affirmed that it would indeed be one of the twelve who were sitting right there at the Passover feast, Jesus said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me" (verse 23). Indeed, it will be one of the disciples. What a terrifying thought. To hand Jesus over to the authorities to be killed after walking and talking with Jesus for three years, after seeing His miracles first hand, after having a front row seat at all of His sermons, and after getting to the point that you begin to mouth the words of Jesus while He is teaching, because you have heard Him teach so much, is unbelievable!

Jesus knew that this was the way that it must be. In Psalm 41:9, David lamented when those who devised his hurt were his closest of friends. He said, "Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me." It is one thing to be captured by your enemies. That is bad enough. But, it is entirely another thing when it is your friend that turns against you! That is far more hurtful! You expect for your enemies to turn against you. You don't expect for your friends to turn against you.

But, it was all part of God's plan. Verse 24 says, "The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him;" Jesus again alludes to how He must die. It must take place. Jesus acknowledged here that His course would go just as it was "written of Him." The death of Jesus upon the cross was an event that was fore-ordained from the foundation of the world. The early Christians acknowledged that the death of Jesus was "predestined to occur" in accordance with God's purpose (Acts 4:28). Peter and Paul both acknowledged how our salvation was determined before time began, according to the good pleasure of God. Paul is very clear about this in the first chapter of Ephesians. Peter is very clear about this in his first epistle, as well. Wrapped up in our salvation is the death of Christ.

The Son of Man, going the way "just as it is written of Him" was certainly a difficult thing. When Jesus prays in the garden, He was desperately seeking a way out of the pain and suffering that He would experience. He was seeking another way, other than the wrath of God poured out upon His flesh. But, Jesus willingly resigned Himself to the will of the Father (Matt. 26:39). As difficult as the crucifixion was, it was a good thing! But, the betrayal of Judas was a terrible thing.

Jesus continued with some strong and hard words in verse 24, "woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed." We see the identity of this man in verse 25. After all of the disciples had said to Jesus, "Surely, not I, Lord?" Judas comes to Jesus and asks the exact same question. "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" Judas was lying through his teeth. He had already struck his deal with the high priests (in verse 15). He was looking for an opportune time. We see his lying in verse 25, which reinforces the fact that He was already in the process of betraying Jesus.

I believe that Judas felt the pressure to ask Jesus whether or not it was him, because all of the other disciples had asked this same question. He already knew that Jesus was speaking about Him. And yet, so as not to make it obvious, Judas certainly said the same words as well, "Surely not I, Lord?" When you are over at another's home for dinner and one person says, "This meal tastes wonderful!" Then, another says the same thing, "This meal tastes great!" Such compliments continue around the table. The one who doesn't say the same thing will commit a social faux-pas. It would have looked very bad for Judas to have remained silent when every other disciple expressed their questioning. But in so doing, his hypocrisy was clearly manifest.

Perhaps Judas had thought that there was some uncertainty in his mind as to whether or not Jesus really knew who it was. Perhaps Judas felt a bit like Achan, who had stolen from Jericho some things that were "under the ban" (Josh. 7:13). Achan didn't confess and thought that he could hide. But, the LORD chose the tribe of Judah from all of the twelve (Josh 7:16). And then the LORD chose the family of the Zerahites (Josh. 7:17). And then the LORD chose the household of Achan (Josh. 7:18). Only when Achan saw the sovereign choosing of him from among all of the sons of Israel, did he finally confess. But all of the uncertainty regarding whether or not Jesus knew that Judas was the man was removed when Jesus said, "You have said it yourself" (verse 25). In other words, "You are the man."

I am amazed at the grace that Jesus showed Judas. If I were Jesus, I would have liked to ring his neck right then and there. I would have liked to have prevented him from carrying out his plan. When you read John's account of this situation, you get the sense that Jesus identified Judas in such a way that it wasn't just absolutely clear to all of the disciples. At one point, Jesus said to Judas, "What you do, do quickly" (John 13:27). But, the disciples didn't fully understand what Jesus was saying. I would not be surprised to learn in eternity that Jesus had this pointed conversation with Judas away in the corner of the room someplace, so as to keep things a bit discreet.

The woe upon this man was awful. Jesus said, "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born" (verse 24). I remember one of my teachers in junior high once talking about the process of reporting our grades to the principal's office. In junior high, we didn't just receive a letter grade. We also received comments about our behavior. "Steve talks too much in class" or "Steve needs to remember to bring his homework to class" or "Steve is a joy to have in the classroom" or "Steve participates well." For each class, we received two or three comments which the teacher thought would be most appropriate. My teacher was explaining that all of these comments were coded, so that the teachers didn't have to print out each of these statements every time. They had a list of items from which to choose. I remember my teacher talking one time about how there weren't enough negative comments, especially for some of the most disobedient and rebellious little children. He said that one teacher was jesting about how bad some of his students were that he wished that one of the items on the list might

read, "We recommend that Steve be retro-actively aborted." That's a terrible joke to make about children, who are all precious in God's sight. But, that is exactly what Jesus said about Judas. Jesus may well have suggested a retro-active abortion. For Judas, it would have been good for him never to have been born.

Instead, he committed the worst crime that you can ever imagine. He knew Jesus in all the glory of His flesh He witnessed how Jesus was indeed "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). And yet, to Judas, 30 pieces of silver were worth more than Jesus. When Dante wrote his famous work, "The Inferno," describing his understanding of hell with its various degrees of punishment, he put various types of sin on the outer reaches of hell. As the sins became worse and worse, the people were placed closer to the center of hell, where the suffering was greater. Right in the center of hell, in the worst place of all, was Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus. It is a good picture of the wickedness of his sin. Jesus said, "It would have been good for that man if he had not been born" (verse 24). Judas is the only one in the whole Bible of whom this is said. His sin of betrayal is indeed a terrible sin.

The sin of Judas ought to haunt us. If it were possible for Judas to be with and around Jesus for three years and then betray Jesus, then certainly it is possible to be with and around the church of Jesus Christ for decades, only to find yourself to be a Judas. I'm not talking about losing your salvation. I'm talking about being with an among the company of His followers, while all the while, pilfering from the money box as Judas did (John 12:6). I'm talking about pretending to be an upright member of the church, all the while, living in unrepentant sin. I'm talking about making professions of your faith, but in the end, found wanting, as the hypocrites who Jesus so often confronted were.

My advice and counsel to you is this: never presume that it won't happen to you. You need to be fighting for your faith constantly. You need to be praying for the Lord to strengthen your faith on a daily basis. To be sure, the Christian life will have its ups and downs. Though none of the disciples wanted to admit that they were the one who would betray Jesus, they still would be scattered that night! None would stand up and be among the followers of Christ. Even Peter, who said, "Even though all may fall away because of You, I will never fall away" (verse 33), denied Jesus three times (verse 34). This is the point of verse 31, "It is written, 'I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.'"

There will be times in which you fail your Lord. But, in the end the true from the false will be demonstrated. Though all twelve disciples were scattered, eleven of them were again restored after the resurrection. They continued on in their lives being faithful to the Lord, thereby demonstrating themselves to be children of God. But Judas didn't. He was lost. Though he expressed some remorse at betraying Jesus, even "returning the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders" (Matt. 27:3), he was never repentant. He had the time to go to Jesus and confess his sin. Instead, he "hanged himself" (Matt. 27:5).

See, its in the end that you demonstrate what you are. Jesus said that it is "those who endure until the end" who will be saved (Matt. 24:13). It's not those who "grow cold" in their love (Matt. 24:13) who will be saved. It's those who endure. This is what Jesus taught in the parable of the sower. Four soils produced four results. Some seeds sprouted and began to grow. But only one grew up to bear fruit. Fight the fight of faith until the end! This was Paul's advice to Timothy: "fight the good fight of faith" (1 Tim. 6:12). This is my counsel to you. At the end of Paul's life, he said, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7). Oh, may this be our testimony!

The Last Meal of Jesus was (1) Passover (verses 17-19) and (2) Sorrowful (verses 20-25). Let's turn our focus upon the Passover meal itself. His last meal was ...

3. Meaningful (verses 26-30)

Matthew 26:26-30

And while they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

These are very familiar words for us. We go over these words every four to six weeks at Rock Valley Bible Church when we celebrate the Lord's Supper (which we will do again this morning). It is appropriate for us to do so. In Luke's account of this scene, Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). We often celebrate the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Jesus.

But, before it was the Lord's Supper, it was the Passover. Jesus transformed the ritual into a celebration of His own death. You need to reflect upon how radical Jesus was in what He said at this meal. He took a tradition that had been celebrated for nearly 1500 years and changed it! Those who attend churches can hardly withstand changes after only a few years, much less 1500 years!

We don't know everything that was said during this Passover meal, but if it is anything like their celebration today (which is somewhat of a good assumption), we have some clue. If you would go into a Jewish home next Passover, you would most likely be confronted with a fabulous spread of food and different ornaments around the table. Everyone has a nice spread of dishes, with a cup of wine in front of them. An extra place is set for Elijah, in the hopes that he would come that very night. In the center of the table would be a plate with various different foods that would remind the Jewish people of their slavery in Egypt. A shank bone of a lamb reminds them of the sacrifice offered during the Passover. Several types of bitter herbs reminds them of the bitter slavery that they experienced in Israel. An apple-cinnamon mixture reminds them of the mortar that the Jewish people would use to build the bricks for Pharaoh's pyramids. Matzah (or unleavened bread) would be the only kind of bread permitted, reminding the Jewish people that they left Egypt in haste, with no time for the bread to rise.

During the meal, the Jews do many things today. The entire meal is a hubbub of activity and symbolism. They begin with lighting a candle and saying a blessing. They ceremonially wash their hands. They eat of the bitter herbs, to remind them of the bitterness of their slavery. The children will ask questions of the father of the family to enable the father to tell the story of how God redeemed Israel from Egypt. The story of

the ten plagues is told. They eat of the main course, the lamb. During the meal, they drink four different cups of wine, each of which describe a different aspect of the deliverance from Egypt. One represents sanctification. Another represents deliverance. The third cup represents redemption. And the fourth cup represents acceptance. Each of these cups celebrate the promises of God as found in Exodus 6:6-7). They take out some special, unleavened bread and distribute it to all to eat. Throughout the meal, there will often be blessings that are stated, such as, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who created the fruit of the vine." Or, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth." At other times, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who sanctifies our lives through the commandments and commands us to eat the bitter herbs." Then, they finish with a hymn. We could spend much time explaining the details of everything that they do. But, the point is this: the whole entire meal is filled with symbolism. Everything in the meal reminds people in one way or another of God's kindness to the nation of Israel when they were in slavery.

During the Passover celebration that Jesus hosted, I'm sure that many of these same things would have been done. The story of the Exodus would have been told. We don't know how. But it would have been done. It may have been as simple as reading the account given in Exodus 6-12. The main course was the lamb (Ex. 12:8), whose blood would be put on the door posts to remember what the people of Israel did. Bitter herbs and unleavened bread would have been eaten as well (Ex. 12:8). Throughout the meal, there would have been many blessings offered for various different things. Wine was the common beverage of the day. Certainly, there would have been some at the meal to drink. And so, when Jesus took some bread after eating and offered up a blessing (as told for us in verse 26), it wouldn't have been anything unusual. Offering up different cups of blessing would have been normal. This type of thing was happening throughout the whole meal. Various foods would be presented and offered up and explained in light of the redemption of Israel.

But, when Jesus said, "Take, eat; this is My body," the disciples would have been surprised and perplexed. When He did the same thing with the cups of wine, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins," the disciples would have been surprised again. Everything up to this point was directed back toward Moses and what God had done through him. But now, Jesus is focusing the attention of the evening upon Himself.

These are some of the most debated words in all of the Bible. It's the meaning of these words that are debated. Roman Catholic theologians believe that the substance of the bread and wine actually change into the body and blood of Christ. This doctrine is called, "Transubstantiation." If one would attend a Roman Catholic mass, you would be able to see how deeply the Catholics believe this. After the change in substance has taken place, the priest will kneel before the wafer, believing himself to be kneeling before Jesus Christ, Himself. So central is this doctrine to the Roman Catholics that if you attack this doctrine, you attack the heart of their religion.

I believe that such an understanding is entirely wrong. The Passover meal is filled with symbolism. The elements eaten all symbolize something that took place in the past. Never would a Jew have thought that any of the substance of the food actually changed. But try as you might to persuade the Roman Catholics, much will be in vain. They will repeat like Luther did when debating Zwingli during the Reformation, "This is my body." They may even quote the Latin as did Luther, "hoc est corpus meum." However, I don't believe that this is how the disciples would have understood Jesus. Everything in the meal was highly symbolic. So also the words of Jesus.

Regarding the other views of the Lord's supper, there are essentially three others. First is the Lutheran view, which Martin Luther held to. He was able to see the difficulties of the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, but could never rid himself completely of their error. He maintained a view of the Lord's Supper often called, "consubstantiation." He maintained that the presence of Christ was "in, with, and under" the host (i.e. the bread). I believe that this is an erroneous view as well.

The two other views of the Lord's supper are represented by other key figures in the Reformation. Ulrich Zwingli believed that these words were symbolic and nothing else. John Calvin believed that though these words were symbolic, the importance that Jesus placed upon the Lord's Supper promised a real presence when the supper was celebrated. Not that there was anything inherently changed in the elements, but that Christ would "commune" with us in a special way during the Lord's Supper unlike any other time. If you would push me to the wall, I would probably embrace Calvin's position as the most Biblical. But, I digress.

The great reality of the Lord's Supper is in verse 28, "poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." It is at this point that Jesus would certainly have spoken about the lamb. We sacrifice the Passover lamb to remember how the Lord passed over the people of Israel. It is a perfect picture of how God forgives sin: through the shedding of blood. But from now on, it's not the blood of bulls and goats that take away sin. It is the blood of Jesus that will take away sin. When He was on the cross, He became the passover lamb. Jesus was saying, "it is my blood that will be poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." This is the message of the gospel. Do you want to be forgiven of your sins? Believe upon Jesus, the true Passover Lamb.

When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are to look back upon the death of Jesus. Though I entitled my message this morning, "His Last Meal," we see here another meal to which Jesus alludes. In verse 29, Jesus said, "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" He's talking about the day in which Jesus will fully consummate His kingdom. Though the Lord's Supper looks back, it also looks forward. The Lord's Supper looks back to the death of Christ and looks forward to the kingdom of Christ. This is what Paul alluded to when He said, "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26).

Those who love Him now will be with Him in His kingdom one day. Will you be there? [\[1\]](#)

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on June 19, 2005 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] For the sake of completeness, I simply have one comment on verse 30, "And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives." How appropriate is it for our churches to sing before, during and after celebrating the Lord's supper.