

FPFWC Christian Development



Liberating Gospels

April 2022

Spring Quarter

April 9, 2022

Lesson #2 – Passover with the King

SCRIPTURE TEXT – Matthew 26:17-30

ICE BREAKER –

1. What does Communion mean to you personally?

Key Verse: I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.—

Matthew 26:29

LESSON BACKGROUND

Our lesson takes us about midway into the week of Passover, after Jesus and many others had arrived in Jerusalem for the feast. (Other accounts of the meal are found in Matthew 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–24; Luke 22:17–20; John 13:1–30; compare 1 Corinthians 11:17–34). God commanded the Jewish people to observe the Passover Feast in memory of their dramatic deliverance from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12). Passover became a national spiritual holiday. God had commanded it to be celebrated in Jerusalem on the 14th day of the first month (Leviticus 23:5; Numbers 28:16). This was the month of Nisan (formerly called Abib in the Hebrew religious calendar), which is late March and early April.

During Jesus' time, groups of pilgrims slew their lambs at the Jerusalem temple, where the blood would be sprinkled on the altar. Then they went to celebrate the meal with their families or other companions in groups of at least 10 people. Despite the lamb's centrality to this feast, the bread and fruit of the vine play much larger roles in the accounts of Jesus' last supper (see Mark 14:12–26; Luke 22:7–38; contrast John 13:1–30). The symbolism of the animal's absence from the story should not be lost on us. As our lesson begins, the sacrifice was already present.

LESSON COMMENTARY

The Objective of Jesus' Death: Inauguration of the New Covenant (26:17–29)

26:17–19. Verse 17 introduces Thursday of Passion Week. It was customary for the citizens of Jerusalem to provide accommodations for the Passover pilgrims (many of them family and friends). It cannot be known if Jesus made some previous arrangements with this man who would become His host for Passover or if this was an exercise of His divine omniscience. Mark 14:13 and Lk 22:10 both mention that this man would be carrying a pitcher of water. It was typically woman's work, so he would have been easy to spot. **My time is near** (v. 18) notes again

the theme of Jesus' death, His knowledge and God's sovereignty over it, and its connection here with the Passover celebration.

26:20–25. That Jesus knew what was in Judas' heart but never let on to the other disciples is a remarkable testimony to His patience and self-control. Judas was assigned the place of honor closest to Jesus during their celebration (v. 23). Verse 24 presents the mysterious balance between divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Cf. also Ac 2:23–24; 4:27–28. God determined the time and circumstances of Jesus' death, and brought them about through the sinful actions of Judas. But this neither absolved Judas of guilt nor placed upon God the moral culpability of Judas's treachery.

26:26–29. For the treatment of the Lord's Table in the other gospels, see the comments on Mk 14:22–25; Lk 22:17–20; and 1Co 11:23–26. Jesus altered the traditional celebration of Passover so that it would commemorate His death. **This is My body** (v. 26) was a metaphor, not unlike the metaphors by which He likened Himself to a vine, a shepherd, or a door. The text gives no hint of any miraculous transformation as they ate the bread. As a Passover meal, it included many symbolic elements. The unleavened bread represented the haste to depart from Egypt, and the bitter herbs represented the bitterness of slavery. When these elements were discussed and consumed in the traditional Passover meal, there was no expectation that they would be mystically transformed. In the same way, when Jesus held up the elements and declared they were His body and blood, no listener would have expected it to refer to a mystical transformation. Rather, they would have understood it to mean a symbolic representation of Jesus body and blood.

The Mishnah, which is the recorded traditions of the Jewish people collected around AD 200, prescribes how Passover should be observed (though there is no way to be certain that it reflects how it was practiced in Jesus' day). See specifically *m. Pesach*. 10. They enjoyed four cups of wine at different points in the Passover meal, corresponding to the four promises of God in Ex 6:6–7. Jesus may have introduced the Lord's Table after the third cup, called "the cup of redemption." **This is My blood of the covenant** parallels Ex 24:8: Behold the blood of the covenant [LXX to *haima tes diathekes*], which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words. When God made the covenant of Law with the Jewish people, the blood of bulls was used to institute it (Ex 24:5–6). But in Mt 26:28, Jesus said, **for this is My blood of the covenant** [*to haima mou tes diathekes*, emphasis added]. The wine is a symbol of His shed blood through which He inaugurated the new covenant, a covenant forecast in the OT. God would transform the hearts of His new covenant community, forgive their sin (Jr 31:31–34), and give them the Spirit (Ezk 36:25–27). See the comments on Jr 31:31–34 and Heb 8–9. The Lord's Table is also a symbol of the messianic kingdom, which is compared to a great feast (v. 29) (see 8:11; 22:2; 25:10; Is 25:6–10; Rv 19:7–9). While the disciples would engage repeatedly in the Lord's Table, Jesus would not again until He joins them in the consummated kingdom. The Lord's Table is a profound memorial (not "just" a memorial!), and conveys sanctifying (not saving) grace, strengthening the believer who reflects upon the tortured body and spilled blood of the Son of God.

The Boast of Jesus' Disciples (26:30–35)

26:30–35. Judas took the steps to betray Him apparently when they left the upper room for the Mount of Olives (v. 30). Jesus predicted that the disciples would flee from Him at His arrest (v. 31), and cited the messianic passage Zch 13:7, which prophesied their dispersion (for the details, see Craig Blomberg, “Matthew,” 91–93). In contrast to the evil shepherds in Zch 13:1–6, the “Good Shepherd” would be struck down. God calls that Shepherd “My Associate,” a word used for one’s blood relatives, for those who shared ancestral ties or ethnic background (Lv 6:2; 18:20; 19:11, 15, 17; 24:19; 25:14, 15, 17). This suggests that the **SHEPHERD** is more than a mere mortal but God’s equal. Jesus reassured them that He would **go ahead of** them into **Galilee**, where they would again regroup after being scattered and once again be with Jesus.

LESSON NUGGET – Jesus eagerly anticipated the opportunity to be with His disciples, even though He knew one would betray Him, one would deny Him and all would forsake Him. He sought to help them and prepare them for the trial before them.

Sources: *Moody Bible Commentary, Standard Lesson Commentary, and The Essential Everyday Bible Commentary*