

His Last Days, Part 1: The Last Supper

Mark 14:12 ESV And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, “Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?” **13** And he sent two of his disciples and said to them, “Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him, **14** and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ **15** And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us.” **16** And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

- I. We’re beginning a new series today that we’re calling “His Last Days”. We will be examining the final activities of Jesus Christ before his eventual crucifixion and glorious resurrection. Today we’ll be taking a look at “The Last Supper”.
 - A. At the time of this story, Jesus was about 33 years, having ministered in Judea and Samaria for approximately 3 years. He had 12 close disciples, several other men and women who followed him faithfully, and many, many more who listened to his teachings and benefitted from his grace-filled ministry.
 1. In the last 33 years, Jesus had healed the sick, the blind, the deaf, the mute, the lame; and he had driven out demons with just a word. He had even raised the dead on at least three separate occasions.
 2. He’d done miracles in the natural world. He multiplied one little boy’s lunch in order to feed several thousand. He had ordered a storm out on the lake to cease and be quiet, and it had obeyed him. He even walked upon the waves!
 3. His life was attended with clear evidence of the presence of God. An angel choir sang at his birth. At his Baptism, the heavens opened, and the Spirit of God descended upon him, as the approving voice of his Father was heard audibly. That voice would be heard twice more during his ministry.
 - B. But Jesus had also stirred considerable controversy. The same teachings that awed the crowds on mountainsides threatened and enraged the Jewish leaders who saw this Nazarene Carpenter as a serious threat to their hold on the power.
 1. The Gospel writers have told us several times by this point in the story that Jesus’ opponents were actively conspiring to put him to death.
 2. This was no surprise to Jesus, however! Three times he had predicted the coming events to his disciples. **Matthew 20:17 ESV** And as Jesus was going up to Jerusalem, he took the twelve disciples aside, and on the way he said to them, **18** “See, we are going up to Jerusalem. And the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death **19** and deliver him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified, and he will be raised on the third day.”
- II. So now the Passover, the most significant festival on the Jewish calendar, has arrived and Jesus has intentionally made his way to the capital city. Jerusalem was the center of both the observation of the Passover, and the seat of power of everyone who wanted to put him to death. A collision is bound to occur.
 - A. The Passover commemorated the time when Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt. God had sent 9 plagues against their captors. He had turned the Nile into blood; sent frogs, gnats, flies; killed their livestock with disease;

crushed the land with hail; covered it with locusts, and shrouded it in a darkness that could be felt. But even after all that, the Egyptians still refused to let God's people go free.

- B. So His 10th plague would be the most devastating, causing The Egyptians to comply. God would send his angel to kill every firstborn son in Egypt. It would happen on a specific night, but the Israelites were given the key to survival.
 - 1. First, they were to smear the blood of a sacrificed Lamb on the frames of the doors leading into their homes, across the top and on the two side posts.
Exodus 12:13b ESV And when I see the blood, I will **pass over** you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.
 - 2. Next they were to eat a simple meal consisting of the lamb they had sacrificed, along with bitter herbs, unleavened bread, and wine. They were to eat their meal fully dressed and ready to leave Egypt, freed from bondage.
 - C. All of these things were deeply symbolic and sacred, therefore, the Israelites were to celebrate in this way annually, and in perpetuity. They were never to forget the great deliverance from slavery that God had worked for them.
- III. So to celebrate the Passover with the Lord was a big deal for the disciples. The only close comparison we can make to its importance would be a family Thanksgiving dinner, or Christmas Day. Three of the 4 gospels give us details about how they would prepare for the festival. We read Mark's account earlier.
- A. We see intentionality in Jesus as he considers his final Passover meal with his most beloved friends. **Luke 22:15 ESV** "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."
 - B. But the gravity of the moment was clearly lost on the disciples. Both Luke and John record that at some time during their meal, the 12 break out into an argument about who among them should be regarded as the greatest.
 - 1. Can you imagine being in the physical presence of Jesus Christ (God in the flesh!) and having a contest of bragging rights? It may sound absurd to us, but I've been in many Churches where that was exactly what was happening! I'm also ashamed to admit that it was too often me doing the bragging!
 - 2. But John tells us that Jesus, "knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God"¹ rose from dinner, and robed in nothing but a towel, just like a slave, washed the braggart's feet, telling them, "let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves."²
 - C. If all of that wasn't awkward enough for everyone present, Jesus drops the ultimate dinnertime bombshell when he abruptly announces, as they are all casually reclining at the dinner table in the middle eastern fashion, **Matthew 26:20 ESV** "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."
 - 1. We cannot even begin to understand the shock this brought. It would be like like your dad casually carving the Thanksgiving turkey and suddenly announcing, "By the way, uncle Larry has hired a hit man to kill me."
 - 2. No one in the room seems to doubt the accuracy of Jesus' prediction. The atmosphere was charged with fear and suspicion as all the disciples, in turn, ask Jesus, "Is it I, Lord?" Jesus answers that "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me."

- a) According to the custom of a middle-eastern dinner, each guest would tear a piece of bread or meat and dip it into a common bowl of sauce. As they would have all done that at this point in the dinner, Jesus is saying that someone present has had the audacity to enjoy Christ's hospitality while planning his demise.
 - b) Jesus also pronounces a curse on the perpetrator, even as he acknowledges his betrayer is working according to God's plan. **Mark 14:21 ESV** "For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."
- D. Notice that everyone in the room says, "Is it I, **Lord?**" Horrified that they could possibly stab their Master (which is what "Lord" means), whom they love so much, and to whom they have submitted their lives, in the back!
1. **Matthew 26:25a ESV** Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, **Rabbi?**" Judas never calls him "Lord", but simply "Rabbi" or "teacher". Jesus was not someone to whom he thought he owed worship and submission; he said as simply one more voice, and one opinion among many in Judas' life.
 2. But loyalty to Christ requires that we acknowledge his supremacy, submitting our lives to his command. Otherwise, he is not Lord, but just another lifestyle accessory; another token of our carefully crafted identity.
- E. In the light of this talk of betrayal, Peter, who had been the de facto leader of the disciples (and was probably arguing the loudest to be considered the greatest earlier!) is filled with indignation and throws all of his fellow disciples under the bus!
1. He tells Jesus, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away."³ and then, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death."⁴
 2. Imagine his shock when his beloved Lord looks him square in the eye and says **Luke 22:34b ESV** "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."
- IV. This annual celebration was not turning out like the disciples had hoped! If I were to assign one theme to that night, it would be "unrealized expectations". It was beginning to seem like everything the disciples had hoped for in their time with Jesus was circling the drain. Where could they place their hopes?
- A. They had believed that Jesus would use his divinity to whip the Romans and send them packing as he took his rightful place as the King of all the Jews. It was only logical that they (his closest friends) would occupy the 12 highest positions in that future kingdom, so why not jockey for the best positions now?
1. But here is Jesus, wearing nothing but a towel, looking like a common household slave, and washing their feet! And he has the audacity to say to his future cabinet members **John 13:15 ESV** "I have given you an example, that **you also should do just as I have done to you.**"
 2. They thought they would rule, but now they have been called upon to serve in the most sacrificial, even humiliating ways. **Unrealized expectations.**

- B. They thought they would be a prime example of cohesive, unified leadership, the judges of all Israel, but now here is Jesus, telling them that one of them would most assuredly betray him! What kind of way was that to start a new government? Imagine the criticism, mockery and scandal that awaited them! ***Unrealized expectations.***
- C. Now we find out that even their leader, the one Jesus called a Rock in Matthew 16, is about to be so scared that not only will he neither die, nor go to prison with Jesus, but he will deny that he even knows him! ***Unrealized expectations.***
- D. Have you ever been there? What was the safe bet or the sure thing that blew up in your face? How did you feel? Abandoned? Depressed? Dejected? Forgotten? How do you think the disciples felt? They had left everything to follow Jesus, including jobs, homes, and families. This was not the way it was supposed to turn out! Was Jesus oblivious? Did he care? ***Unrealized expectations!***
- V. When people who don't know Christ face unrealized expectations, they are shipwrecked. They have placed all of their hopes for the future in having plenty of money, good health, social acceptance, etc. But look how Jesus described those whose best laid plans disintegrate before their eyes...
- A. **Matthew 7:26 ESV** And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. **27** And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”
1. But faith in the goodness and sovereignty of God gives believers confidence and peace, even in the face of the worst lack, betrayal, or failure life can bring.
 2. Everything the disciples hoped for, and trusted in, was unraveling before their eyes, but Jesus was about to demonstrate that, despite all appearances, he still had an unshakeable plan, and was still entirely in control. How?
- B. **Luke 22:19 ESV** And he took bread, and when he had 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.”
1. Jesus was saying that the pure Passover bread, made without a hint of yeast, the same kind they had broken with their families on this holy night since childhood, was really pointing to Him and his salvation.
 2. It was not about something that happened for their forefathers hundreds of years ago, but rather it was about something that would happen to Jesus **for them** in less than 24 hours.
 - a) The Bread of Life⁵ would be broken, not because of any crime for which he was guilty, but his body would be given for **them**. The innocent one would be sacrificed for the guilty masses, their hands stained with his blood.
 - b) Henceforth, they would break and partake of the bread, not to commemorate a miraculous deliverance from Egypt, but now commemorating God's perfect Lamb, sacrificed for the sins of those who believe. He told them, “Do this in remembrance of me.”

- C. **Luke 22:20 ESV** And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.
1. The cup represented his blood that would be spilled. Like the bread, his blood wouldn’t **just** be poured out willy-nilly, but it would be poured out **for** them.
 2. Unlike the thousands of lambs, goats, and oxen that were slaughtered under the old Levitical priesthood, that would symbolically cover their sins so that they could be accepted in the congregation, the blood of this Perfect Sacrifice would make those who receive it really, permanently righteous in their standing before God.
 - a) This was a new covenant in his blood! The Old covenant worked on these terms: **Deuteronomy 28:15 ESV** “But if you will not obey the voice of the Lord your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you.”
 - b) But the New Covenant would work like this: **Acts 16:31b ESV** “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved...” Which covenant do you prefer?
- D. So even when the disciple’s expectations go unrealized, and even when your expectations go unrealized, may we wake up to the fact that nothing can stop the hand of the Lord, or derail his perfect, beautiful plan!
1. He wasn’t ever interested in giving those 12 guys cushy government jobs, and he was willing to use the unrepented greed in Judas, and cowardice in Peter to accomplish his glorious end: the salvation of all those who would believe!
 2. Jesus wanted to offer the human race a new covenant of grace to replace the old covenant of works, which was flawed because of human sin. He knew the cross was the only way to accomplish this goal, so he determined to embrace the cross for the joy that would follow his obedience.⁶
- VI. As you come to the Lord’s table today, be honest about the places where you’re frustrated because your expectations remain unrealized. Maybe you’re even mad at God because of the sickness that isn’t healed, the loved one that isn’t saved, the job or income you don’t have, the people that don’t accept you, or the vindication that still hasn’t come. Acknowledge the way you feel openly to God.
- A. But then take the next step of repentance. Confess to the Father that his way is always better (even if you don’t understand or see it yet) and that you trust his goodness, his grace, his wisdom and faithfulness. Tell him that you are satisfied to await his deliverance, however, whenever and from wherever it comes. Rejoice no matter the circumstances.
 - B. Then come to the table and remember what his death bought for you. Celebrate that you have a unfading covenant with God, that you have been declared righteous because of his sacrifice, and that all things are working together for the your good because you love God and are called according to his purpose⁷.
- VII. **1 Corinthians 11:23 ESV** For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this

in remembrance of me.” **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

¹ John 13:3

² Luke 22:26

³ Matthew 26:33

⁴ Luke 22:33

⁵ John 6:35

⁶ Hebrews 12:2

⁷ Romans 8:28