

To Seek and to Save the Lost

The Passover with the Disciples

Luke 22:7-20

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Scripture

Jesus was in the vicinity of Jerusalem on Thursday, Nisan 14, 30 AD. Hundreds of thousands of people, perhaps as many as two million people, were in Jerusalem and the surrounding area. They were there to celebrate the Passover (on Nisan 14), which was followed by the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread (Nisan 15-21). Jesus knew that he was about to die, and so he made preparations to celebrate the Passover with his disciples and also institute the Lord's Supper.

Let's read about Jesus' Passover with his disciples in Luke 22:7-20:

⁷ Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. ⁸ So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." ⁹ They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" ¹⁰ He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters ¹¹ and tell the master of the house, "The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?" ¹² And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." ¹³ And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

¹⁴ And when the hour came, he reclined at 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 tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸ For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹ 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." ²⁰ And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the

new covenant in my blood.” (Luke 22:7-20)

Introduction

In his commentary on the Gospel of Luke Dr. Philip Ryken notes that in America a person condemned to die is allowed to select and eat a special meal before execution. What a prisoner eats and drinks is often published because people want to know what the condemned criminal chose to eat and drink before dying.

We could ask the same question about Jesus. He too was about to be condemned to die, and he had one last meal on Thursday evening before dying the next day. In a very intentional way Jesus chose to have a Passover meal as his last meal with his disciples. A few hours after eating the Passover meal Jesus was betrayed by Judas Iscariot and arrested. By early Friday morning Jesus had endured four kangaroo trials, mocking, abuse, a denial by Peter, and a Roman flogging that almost killed him. Jesus was then crucified before noon, dead by late afternoon, and buried before sundown.¹

The final meal eaten by Jesus is often called “the Last Supper.” Leonardo Da Vinci has a famous painting of Jesus and his disciples eating the Passover meal that is called “The Last Supper.” (In fact, it is the most reproduced painting in history!) It is helpful to keep in mind, however, that there really were two meals eaten that night. Jesus and his disciples ate the final, divinely-sanctioned Passover meal and, at the same time, Jesus inaugurated the first, divinely-sanctioned Lord’s Supper, which was to be eaten by Jesus’ disciples on a regular basis until he returns. So, today we are going to look at the last Passover meal and the first Lord’s Supper meal.

Lesson

Jesus’ Passover with the disciples in Luke 22:7-20 teaches us

¹ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, vol. 2, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 459.

about the institution of the Lord's Supper.

Let's use the following outline:

1. The Preparation for the Passover (22:7-13)
2. The Eating of the Passover (22:14-18)
3. The Institution of the Lord's Supper (22:19-20)

I. **The Preparation for the Passover (22:7-13)**

First, let's look at the preparation for the Passover.

It was Thursday, Nisan 14, 30 AD. Luke said in verse 7, "**Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.**" In Jesus' time the two feasts of Passover (on Nisan 14) and Unleavened bread (Nisan 15-21) were often conflated and one name was used to designate both.

Properly speaking, though, it was Thursday morning, Nisan 14, the day of the Passover. **So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it"** (22:8). Most likely, **Jesus sent Peter and John** on this errand because he did not want Judas to know ahead of time where they would celebrate the Passover meal. He did not want Judas' imminent betrayal to interfere with his plans to eat the Passover meal with his disciples.

Understandably, Peter and John **said to Jesus, "Where will you have us prepare it?"** Keep in mind that there were hundreds of thousands of pilgrims in Jerusalem. However, most of the citizens of Jerusalem rented out rooms to pilgrims so that they could celebrate the Passover meal. Jesus **said to Peter and John, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you."** Usually women carried water, and so **a man carrying a jar of water** would have been easy to spot. Sometimes slaves carried jars of water. Continuing, Jesus said to Peter and John, **"Follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there."** Presumably, Jesus had

made a previous arrangement with the owner of the house. **And** so Peter and John **went and found it just as** Jesus **had told them, and** they spent the rest of the day getting all the food and drink together, and **they prepared the Passover** (22:9-13).

One thing to note in this section is that Jesus was in sovereign control. In fact, throughout the next thirty-six hours or so, it may seem as if things were out of control, but everything was developing according to God's divine plan. There may be times in your life when things seem to be out of control, but if you are seeking to obey God, as Jesus did, then you can have assurance that God is sovereignly working out all things for his glory and your ultimate good.

II. The Eating of the Passover (22:14-18)

Second, let's look at the eating of the Passover.

According to commentator Kent Hughes, Thursday, Nisan 14, was given entirely to preparing for the Passover meal. Normally, only one of the twenty-four divisions of priests served at the temple throughout the year. But during Passover all twenty-four divisions of priests served at the temple. They arrived at the temple very early on Thursday morning. Their first duty was to burn all the leaven that had been collected the previous night. By noon all work ceased.

At 3 p.m. on Thursday afternoon the killing of the lambs began. Sometimes goats were killed, but lambs were the preferred sacrifice. The killing of the sacrificial animals was completed in three huge shifts. When the first group entered and filled up the temple precincts, the gates of the court were closed. A priest's shofar played a sustained blast, and the sacrifices began. The pilgrims approached two long rows of priests holding silver and gold basins. Each Jew killed his own animal. The priest caught the blood in the basin, which was then tossed at the base of the altar. The worshiper then left the temple with his animal to be taken home and prepared to be eaten.

The animals were sacrificed on Nisan 14 between 3:00 p.m. and 5:00 p.m. When the sun set at about 6:00 p.m., the new day of Nisan

15 began. That is when the Passover meal was eaten, and the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread began (Nisan 15-21).²

And when the hour of 6:00 p.m. came, Jesus reclined at table, and the twelve apostles with him (22:14). Jesus served as the host for the Passover meal, and reclined at the bottom of a U-shaped table. There would have been twelve other couches around the outside of the tables where the apostles reclined to eat the Passover meal.

You may recall that the Passover meal commemorated the deliverance of the people of Israel from their slavery in Egypt (see Exodus 12). On that night the angel of death killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. However, in order to preserve the life of the firstborn in their families God told the people of Israel that they were to kill an unblemished lamb and spread its blood on the lintels and door posts of their homes. When the angel of death saw the blood, he would *pass over* them and spare the life of the firstborn. Because the meal was eaten in haste, there was no time to bake bread with leaven. And so the people of God ate the lamb and unleavened bread before the exodus out of Egypt.

That first Passover meal was eaten while standing. The people of God were about to leave their bondage to slavery in Egypt. However, in Jesus' day the Jews no longer ate the Passover meal standing. They reclined because they were no longer slaves.

In order to understand better what transpired on the night of Nisan 15, 30 AD, John MacArthur describes briefly what took place during a Passover meal. There were several stages in the Passover meal, which was spread out over a period of hours and interspersed with conversation. The meal opened with a prayer thanking God for his preservation, deliverance, protection, goodness, and blessing. Next came the first of four cups of diluted red wine, known as the cup of blessing. That was followed by a ceremonial washing of the hands, symbolizing the need for cleansing from sin. It was most likely at this point that the disciples began arguing among themselves about who

² R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 313–314.

was the greatest (Luke 22:24). In response, Jesus washed their feet (John 13:3-5) and instructed them concerning humility. The next element was the eating of bitter herbs, dipped along with pieces of bread into a paste made from fruit and nuts. That act symbolized the bitterness of Israel's slavery in Egypt. Then the participants sang Psalms 113 and 114, the first two of the Hallel Psalms (113-118), after which they drank the second cup of wine. After that the father of the family, or as in this case Jesus as the head of the table, explained the meaning of Passover. Then came the main meal, consisting of the roasted sacrificial lamb and unleavened bread, after which they drank the third cup of wine. The ceremony closed with the singing of the remainder of the Hallel Psalms (115-118), and the drinking of the fourth cup of wine.³

As Jesus and the twelve apostles reclined around the table and were about to begin eating the Passover meal, **he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God"** (22:15-16).

I want to note two points about Jesus' statement. *First, Jesus had an intense longing to eat this Passover meal with his disciples.* He was about to suffer and be crucified in order to save sinners, but his great desire was to eat his last meal with those whom he came to save.

And second, Jesus was teaching that this was the last, divinely-sanctioned Passover meal that would be eaten. When Jesus said, **"For I tell you I will not eat it [that is, the Passover meal] until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God"** (22:16), it may seem as if Jesus was telling his disciples that he would eat Passover meal again after an undetermined delay. However, that is not what Jesus meant. Philip Ryken points out that in Hebrew usage, the word **"until"** does not necessarily imply that something will happen again. To cite just one example, when the Bible says that the prophet Samuel "did not see Saul again until the day of his death" (1 Samuel 15:35), this does not

³ MacArthur, John F (2014-10-01). Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series) (p. 280). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

mean that Samuel bumped into Saul the day that he died, but that he never saw him again at all. Similarly, Jesus was telling his disciples that this was their last Passover. Soon that sacrament would find its true fulfillment in the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they would never have occasion to celebrate it together again. Instead, the people of God would celebrate the new sacrament of the new covenant in Christ by eating the bread and drinking the wine of the Lord's Supper.⁴

Luke said that Jesus **took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."** (22:17-18). The **cup** that is mentioned here in verse 17 is the first cup in the Passover meal. Jesus gave thanks to God, presumably for the wonderful way in which God saves his people. But then, instead of having each disciple drink from his own cup of wine, Jesus had them drink from a common cup when he said, **"Take this, and divide it among yourselves."** Jesus was emphasizing the communal aspect of the meal. They were in fellowship with one another – in communion.

Jesus went on to say that he would not drink of the fruit of the vine **"until"** the kingdom of God comes. Again, it would seem that the word **"until"** here in verse 18 means the same as the word **"until"** in verse 16. So, Jesus was restating that this was the last Passover and that he would never eat another Passover meal with them again.

You see, Jesus was helping his disciples understand that a transition was about to take place. The Passover meal celebrated the exodus of God's people out of their bondage to slavery in Egypt. It was a celebration of the old covenant. However, Jesus was about to institute the Lord's Supper, which is a celebration of a greater exodus of God's people out of spiritual bondage to sin by the death of Jesus. The Lord's Supper is a celebration of the new covenant. The Lord's Supper is a sacrament of fellowship with Jesus and with Christians.

⁴ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 462.

III. The Institution of the Lord's Supper (22:19-20)

And third, let's look at the institution of the Lord's Supper.

The Passover meal continued. Jesus was the host, of course, and he would have led them in the various stages of the meal. At some point, when the sacrificial lamb was eaten, along with the unleavened bread, Jesus instituted what we call the Lord's Supper. Luke said that Jesus **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"** (22:19). The unleavened bread represented the bread of affliction because it reminded the people of God of their persecution as slaves in Egypt, as recorded in Deuteronomy 16:3, "You shall eat no leavened bread with it. Seven days you shall eat it with unleavened bread, the bread of affliction – for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste – that all the days of your life you may remember the day when you came out of the land of Egypt." The unleavened bread was now given a new and greater significance. It represented Jesus' body and the affliction he would endure on the cross.

Jesus' statement was filled with significance. Let's look briefly at each clause.

"This is my body" means that the unleavened bread *represents* his body. Jesus was not saying that the bread literally became his body. How could it? He was literally there when he handed them the bread. The disciples understood that Jesus was speaking *figuratively*, just as when he said, "I am the door," or, "I am the vine."

"Given for you" speaks of the gift of himself on the cross and paying the penalty for all our sins, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:3, "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures."

"Do this in remembrance of me" teaches us that God's people are to celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly, and whenever they do so they are to remember all that Jesus has done to pay the penalty for our sin and reconcile us to God.

At this point Jesus and the disciples must have continued eating

the main portion of the meal. When it was time to drink the third cup of wine, Jesus took **the cup after they had eaten**, and said, **“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood”** (22:20). **The cup** represents the blood of Jesus and his sacrificial death on the cross. By calling the cup **“the new covenant in my blood,”** Jesus was replacing the old covenant of the constant shedding of blood of the sacrificial lambs at Passover with the once-for-all shedding of his own blood to pay the penalty for our sin.

In the Old Testament God made a covenant with his people through Moses and speaks specifically about “the blood of the covenant.” On the day that covenant was confirmed, Moses collected the blood of the people’s sacrifices into large basins and threw half of it on the altar (Exodus 24:6). He took the other half and threw it on the people, saying, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you” (Exodus 24:8). A covenant with God was always bloody. The old covenant was sealed in blood. This was a sign of God’s mercy, for the blood on the altar showed that the people had forgiveness of their sins, while the blood sprinkled on the people showed that they themselves were included in the covenant of salvation.

That was the old covenant. The old covenant required the people of God to shed blood constantly in order to remind them of the promises of God.

But Jesus instituted the new covenant. What is so unique about the new covenant is that it is established by the blood of God himself. Jesus shed his blood in a once-for-all sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins. God would no longer require the shedding of blood to pay the penalty for sin because he paid the penalty for sin by shedding his own blood.

Jesus’ last meal as one who was condemned to die was utterly significant. It was not a meal that he wanted for himself, as condemned criminals want on the eve of their execution. Rather, Jesus was thinking of a meal to give to his followers. He would give a meal to his disciples to remember before making the sacrifice they would never forget.

Conclusion

Therefore, having analyzed Jesus' Passover with the disciples in Luke 22:7-20, we should understand better what we are doing when we participate in the Lord's Supper.

Philip Ryken asks if you understand what Jesus has done for your salvation in his death on the cross? Do you understand the bread of remembrance and the cup of the new covenant that Jesus gives in the Lord's Supper? As Bishop J. C. Ryle explained, "The two elements of bread and wine were intended to preach Christ crucified as our substitute. They were to be a visible sermon, appealing to the believer's senses, and teaching the old foundation-truth of the Gospel, that Christ's death on the cross is the life of man's soul."⁵ This is also the foundation-truth of the Christian life: Christ's death on the cross for the life of your soul.

If you understand this sacrament and the sacrifice that it signifies, then know this as well, and know it for sure: Jesus desires to share his supper with you every bit as eagerly as he wanted to share it with his disciples the night of the First Supper. Jesus died for you as much as he died for them, and he loves you as much as he loves them. It is to you that the bread is given and to you that the cup is poured, because it was for you that his body was given and for you that his blood was shed.⁶

⁵ J. C. Ryle, *Expository Thoughts on the Gospels, Luke* (1858; reprint Cambridge: James Clarke, 1976), 2:396.

⁶ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, 471–472.

Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church
is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ
and membership in his church family,
develop them to Christlike maturity,
equip them for their ministry in the church
and life mission in the world,
in order to magnify God's name.*

Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

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PRAYER:

Our Father, thank you for the account of Jesus' last Passover and first Supper with his disciples. We thank you that Jesus instituted what we call the Lord's Supper, and that Christians have been able to remember the sacrifice of Jesus for sinners for almost 2,000 years.

O God, if there is anyone here today who is not sure of his or her salvation, will you grant that person faith in Jesus? Help each one of us to understand and believe that Jesus died to pay the penalty for sinners such as ourselves. And that there is no-one who is beyond salvation.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name.

BENEDICTION:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

CHARGE:

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!