

Matthew 26:17-30

"The Commencement Of The New Covenant"

There is an intensity about Matthew 26 emotionally. I think familiarity desensitizes & robs us of that reality. But to really try & take in what's happening here, dwelling on it can be overwhelming...

It's a chapter that exemplifies & deals both w/light & darkness. We see the tug of war between truth & treachery, good & evil, righteousness & wickedness, devotion & deception... & At the *heart* of it *all*; the *reason* for it *all*; is our redemption. It's the love of God *for* us, that caused Jesus to sacrifice Himself for the sake *of* us.

But it blows me away that all this tension & turmoil is swirling around Jesus emotionally, spiritually, mentally... All w/in 24hrs or less of the cross & He didn't *need any of it*, yet He opted to deal w/*all of it* due solely to His love for you & for me.

Who among us could ever hope to comprehend the height & the width & the depth of such love? When the Psalmist thought on it he said, "*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; It is high, I cannot attain it.*" Ps 139:6 Yet that's the message of the gospel. It's the romance of redemption. God's relentless pursuit of you & me in the Person of J.C. who has loved us & given Himself for us upon the cross...

The Ch opens w/the ominous announcement of Jesus informing His disciples that He will delivered up to be crucified in 2 days. As the shock of that is sinking in we're brought into the courtyard of the high priest where the Jewish Supreme Court (the Sanhedrin) are in fact plotting & planning to take Him by deception & kill Him...

From there we flashback 4 days earlier at a dinner w/Jesus & His disciples at the house of a man by the name of Simon whom Jesus had healed of leprosy. & As they were there a woman by the name of Mary broke open a costly flask of fragrant oil (today's value perhaps \$30-\$40k) & begins to pour over Jesus from head to toe, she begins to wipe His feet w/the hair from her head, but the disciples don't get it. They begin to ridicule her, & accuse her of being reckless in her extravagance toward Jesus, but Jesus rebukes them. What they saw as a waste, He received as a good work & worship worthy of reward.

We don't know, perhaps that was a trigger point for Judas, but we read in Vs 14 that at that point he went to the chief priests & said, "What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?" Again, one giving *to* Jesus, the other seeking to gain *from* Jesus, one's devotion, the other's deception. "And they counted out to him 30 pieces of silver." So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him. In Vs 17 we catch up to the timeline, it's Thursday morning...

Vs 17-20

I want you to notice the intentional ambiguity w/regard to the instructions Jesus gives His disciples. There's an air of secrecy surrounding this last Passover. Why? Because Judas is seeking for an opportunity to betray Jesus at this point. He needs to be able to direct authorities to Him at a time when there aren't multitudes of people around Him (remember they were worried it might start a riot).

So Jesus doesn't just say, "Oh, go to so & so at the corner of such & such street & tell him we'll be there tonight about 6 pm." He sends Peter & John (Luke tells us) & says, "Go into the city (Jerusalem) & you'll see a man carrying a water jug (that would be a clue since normally it was women who went & drew water from the well); follow him & when he gets home tell him I'll be keeping Passover at your house w/My disciples." That way Judas won't know where they're eating until they all go there together.

Few things I want you to see/remember/realize out of this passage. #1 Let's remember again what the Passover celebration was. We went over it last time but it's significant & worth repeating. The Passover was a feast that commemorated the deliverance/redemption of Israel out of the bondage & slavery of Egypt. You recall the passage there in Exodus, all the plagues that Moses was bringing upon Egypt at the command of God in the effort to convince Pharaoh to let Israel go. Perhaps you remember the staff becoming a snake, the waters being turned to blood, the flies, the frogs, the locusts, the boils, lice, hail mingled w/fire, death/disease of livestock, darkness & ultimately it would culminate in the Passover.

God told Moses to tell the people that they were to take a lamb (w/out spot & w/out blemish) & they were to kill it, (shed its blood & roast it in fire) & they were to take the blood & smear it on the doorposts & the lintels. & It would be that that night the Lord would pass through the land & any who had believed God's word, responded in faith to God's word & had applied the blood of the lamb to their home, He would "Passover" them & the judgment of death would be w/held from them. But all who refused to respond, didn't believe, they would suffer the judgment of the death of their 1st born. As you might imagine Israel responded in faith & were "Passed Over", Egypt refused to respond & were judged... So the "Passover" feast, was an annual event whereby they would commemorate their deliverance from the slavery & bondage of Egypt by the blood of the lamb. (It's important that we remember that & we'll see why in a few minutes).

#2 Question: who was this "masked man" 😊 who was carrying the jug?

We don't know. Evidently, he was simply an unnamed friend of Jesus'. He operated off the radar, worked behind the scenes & made the necessary preparations in availing His home to the Lord. Trust me when I tell you, great will be his reward. We don't even know his name, yet one of the most famous scenes in our Lord's life (the last supper) would take place in his home.

Here's what I want you to see. You may be one of those people. No one applauds you, acknowledges you, or even knows your name. You serve behind the scenes, you fly under the radar, making things right for Jesus & His people to come & be blessed & hear His word, great will be your reward. I have no doubt that those of us who are seen & given a public platform, the accolades & acknowledgment of man receive many of our rewards here & now. But the unnamed, unknown, those who serve in secret will be rewarded openly by our Father who sees in secret (Matt 6:6).

Finally; I love the simple phrase found in Vs 19. "The disciples did as Jesus directed them." They didn't gripe that He was being vague, they didn't ask for clearer direction, He gave them an instruction & they just did it. God help us to be obedient to His word. Too many times we argue w/His instruction, make excuses to justify our *disobedience* to His instruction, but it's in hearing His word & then *doing His word*, that's where the blessing lies. Disciples are doers of the word. They did as Jesus directed them; & prepared the Passover.

Now even though *we'd* reckon this to be Thursday evening, according to the Jewish way of reckoning, it's actually Friday at this point (Vs 20). Remember, the ancient Jew didn't recognize the day beginning at sun up, but at sun down. This is how Jesus could eat the Passover & be killed on the same day. Because most Jews would normally eat Passover at the end of the day (Friday afternoon), however it seems Jesus ate it at the beginning of the day (the previous evening). If that's true, it may explain why there is the mention of the bread, the dip & the cup (we'll see in a minute [all elements of Passover]) but no mention of the lamb. Because they would be eating this meal before the lambs were slain at the temple. That would also solve the apparent dilemma that John presents in having Jesus crucified at the approximate time the Passover lambs were being sacrificed. How could Jesus eat Passover & still be crucified when the lambs were being slain?

He simply ate the meal the evening before (still on Passover, but prior to the lambs being slain). However, it would be inaccurate to say there was no Passover lamb present at this supper. Jesus Himself would fulfill that portion as He points out in the following Vs.

Paul the apostle as well would later refer to Christ, our Passover being sacrificed for us (1 Cor 5:7).

Vs 21-25

Can you imagine this? Right in the midst of the meal, Jesus drops a bomb, (shock & awe), “Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.” One of His closest friends, who had lived *w/Him* & learned *from Him* for the last 3 yrs was going to betray Him.

& Again we like to point out that the cross was not something that happened because Jesus was caught off guard so God just used it. No, it was part of the plan, Jesus *knew* it was part of the plan (wanted His disciples to know it was part of the plan) & keeps it in the open all along.

But what blows us away is the Lord’s compassion toward Judas throughout the entirety of the event. He doesn’t call him out, embarrass him in front of the others, this whole time he still has the opportunity to repent & the others never needed to be the wiser. He didn’t say, “Guys, I’ve kept it in long enough, Judas has struck a deal & he’s about to betray Me.” He’s still giving Judas space to think this whole thing through.

Of course we’re reminded of the fact that Jesus knew what was in man. He wasn’t there when Judas struck the deal, but He knew it was going down. & What blows us away is the reaction of the disciples. Not one of them went, “It’s *Judas isn’t it!*? I *knew* there was a reason he was always keeping his distance, wearing that black cape & waxing the tips of his mustache!” ☺. We always envision Judas as some dark, sinister character, but the disciples didn’t. He was so trusted, so beloved by the group that he was the one they trusted *w/their* money, he was the treasurer. If you wanted to support the ministry of Jesus, they’d say, “Just go ahead & give it to Judas, he keeps track of that for us.”

Before they suspected him, they thought of themselves! “Lord, is it I?” Each of them began to question the integrity/vulnerability of their own heart! Incredible... Now I have to say, the construction of the Greek sets the question in such a way that it anticipates a negative answer, but the question was there nonetheless. “It’s not me, is it?”

It’s a shining moment in the lives of the Lord’s disciples. Transparency, a willingness to examine their own hearts in the light of what He was sharing *w/them*. & I think it’s a great question to ask ourselves as we read through the scriptures. Not just *w/in* the context of *disobedience*, that propensity is always *w/in* us (most definitely). But all the more in the context of *obedience*. If you read something that’s a call to action, ask, “Lord, is it I?” Are you calling *me* to serve You in this capacity?

“Am I the one You’re calling to give, to pray, to speak to that person or change this area of my life?”

Vs 23

Don’t think of Jesus giving them a cryptic code here & now they’re all wondering, “Who just dipped w/Him? Why wasn’t I paying attention?” They *were all* sharing from the common bowl. It was Jesus’ way of saying, “It’s one who is *near* to Me, who’s been considered a close *friend* to Me.” In ancient Israel when you shared a meal, & dipped from the common bowl, you were entering a bond w/one another. You were saying, “That which is sustaining you is sustaining me, we’re one in this way.” It was very intimate. (That’s why the religious leaders were always freaking out when Jesus would eat w/tax collectors & prostitutes.)

So Jesus is saying, “It’s someone I’ve shared life with, who’s been *with* Me, received *from* Me.” Really, it’s the pain of the betrayal that’s in view here. It wasn’t simply a prophetic tick on the timeline, it was personal to Jesus, it was painful to Jesus that one of His closest friends would betray Him.

It’s drawing from Ps 41:9, “*Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, Who ate my bread, Has lifted up his heel against me.*” If you’ve ever been turned on by someone who was just sort of there but never really close to you, you can kind of deal with that. But when it’s someone you’ve done life with, you’ve poured into them, had them in your home, sought to encourage them, instruct them, or be there for them through the thick & the thin & then *they* turn on you, *they* betray you, begin to undermine & somehow do damage to you, that’s different. It’s hard to understand & connect those dots. That’s what was happening to Jesus. Believe me, He understands your hurt.

In Vs 24 we see the balance of freewill & God’s sovereignty. God knew it would happen, but it didn’t excuse Judas’ choice to do it. It was written in the psalms & in the prophets that Messiah would be taken, tried, tortured & put to death, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would’ve been good for that man had he never been born... wow.

But you know, the same might be said of anyone, everyone who rejects Jesus, who refuses to believe upon Jesus. It would be better to have never been born, than to betray the Son of God & refuse to surrender your life to Him...

In Vs 25 we see the height of hypocrisy. Notice the others called Jesus, “Lord”, but Judas called Him, “Rabbi” or teacher.

He said, "Rabbi, is it I?" Again, expecting that negative reply. The others asking truthfully. Judas dealing in treachery. Jesus said, "You have said it." Now when you study the scripture you discover Judas was seated to the left of Jesus (places of honor on the left & right). John was on the right, Judas was on the left, Jesus leaning on His left elbow would've simply leaned back & said this very discreetly, the others may not've even heard it. It certainly didn't register anyway, or they'd have never let him leave (as John tells us he does right in here). Jesus told him that what he was doing, he should do quickly & Judas went out, & it was night.

Btw if you'd like more insight into what happened this night in the upper room you'll want to read Jn 13:31-17:26. It's here that Jesus washed their feet, shared more of His heart w/them & offered the high priestly prayer we read in Jn 17.

Vs 26-30

Again, this would've blown the disciples minds. Jesus reinterprets the elements of Passover in Himself. Now rather than speaking of redemption from Egypt (which was the protocol) He speaks of the remission of sins. Rather than speaking of the bread of affliction, He blesses & breaks the bread saying, "Take, eat; this is *My* body (given/broken for you)." (Luke 22:19) He took the cup & gave thanks saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is *My blood* of the *new covenant*, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

You see? Jesus is saying, "No longer do I want you to look back & remember the Passover lamb of Egypt, who's blood was shed so that you could be free from slavery in Egypt. But now you're to remember Me, the fulfillment of all that that foreshadowed. Remember *My body* broken for you, *My blood* shed for you so that by faith in Me judgment will pass over you & through My blood you're free from the bondage & slavery of sin."

We don't remember the sacrifice in Egypt, we remember the sacrifice on Calvary. When Jesus, the sin bearing sacrifice of God, the Lamb of God, was slain to take away the sins of the world. As Jesus broke the bread, it spoke of His body being broken for us. Isaiah said that like this, "*But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.*" **Isa 53:5** The fruit of the vine in that cup, was a picture of His blood shed for us. They were to be physical, tangible reminders of His work on our behalf.

& Think this through. Who but God could institute the new covenant? Jesus is saying, "This is the end of the Mosaic covenant, the end of the law, the beginning of grace." As John said, "*For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*" **Jn 1:17**

Write it down & look it up later Jer 31:31-34. Glorious promises of the N.C. Ezekiel says this, *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them."* Ezek 36:26-27

The Jeremiah passage speaks of the forgiveness of sins, that God will remember our sins no more under the new covenant. Under the old covenant, sins were covered, under the new, they're cleansed altogether, completely removed & remembered no more.

But the body must be eaten, the blood must be drunk. What does that mean? We spoke earlier of the intimacy of the meal. Jesus is saying, "You must receive me into the innermost depths of your being. I am the One who will save you & I am the One who will sustain & nurture you."

& We love the fact that the body came before the blood, the bread before the cup. You would think it would be the other way around. 1st He cleanses us, then He comes into us. Not so. He gave the bread 1st, "I will meet you where you are, I will come into you just as you are, *then* I will cleanse you by My blood." Don't think you have to get your act together before you surrender to Jesus. The opposite is true. The bread comes 1st, He will come into you & *He* will cleanse you. It's Christ *in us*, the hope of glory.

But we have to receive it don't we? Jesus offered the bread, they had to take it. Salvation is a gift to be received, not a reward to be achieved. It's by grace through faith in J.C. that we are saved. What can wash away my sin? Nothing but the blood of Jesus.

It's interesting that of all the things we could commemorate concerning Jesus. He calls on us not to remember His birth, His life, His miracles... but His death. We look back to the cross, & we look forward to His coming again. That's what Jesus did...

Vs 29

Family, this is yet to be fulfilled. Jesus will wait until we're all gathered together & then we will feast together at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).

Vs 30

We don't think a lot about Jesus singing. But He did. He would lift His voice in adoration & praise w/His whole heart to God the Father. It's scriptural to sing to God, to worship Him in song. What exactly did He sing? We don't know. We do know it would've been from the traditional Hallel psalms, probably from 116-118.

Words like these would've come from His lips that night.

“The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord: ‘O Lord, I implore You, deliver my soul!’” (Psalm 116:3-4)

“I will take up the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” (Psalm 116:13-15)

“Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles! Laud Him, all you peoples!” (Psalm 117:1)

“You pushed me violently, that I might fall, but the Lord helped me. The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation.” (Psalm 118:13-14)

“The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.” (Psalm 118:22-23)

“God is the Lord, and He has given us light; bind the sacrifice with cords to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will praise You; You are my God, I will exalt You.” (Psalm 118:27-28)

The sin bearing sacrifice, the Lamb of God bound/nailed to the altar of the cross. & Now it’s ours to remember & rejoice in His finished work on our behalf, until we see Him face to face. Then we will feast together w/Him & we will glorify Him forever. Amen?
Amen.