

In The Upper Room

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Luke 22:1-23

When Moses encountered God at the burning bush, the Lord said to Moses, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). I saw a pastor one time use that as an intro to his sermon; he was barefoot when he went into the pulpit.

When I read our text, which I have preached many times over many years, my heart is always humbled, because I am so overwhelmed with their majesty and profundity. I know I can't do them justice. I can't really share the depth and the wisdom that is in these verses. So I pray that God's Holy Spirit, who is the teacher—not the preacher—will open our hearts, our ears and our eyes to this beginning section of the Passion narrative in the Gospel of Luke.

All the way back in Luke 9:51, it says that Jesus “steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.” Literally from the time He was in the temple at 12 years old and said to His parents, “Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?” (Luke 2:49). Jesus came for one purpose into the world: to die as the substitutionary Lamb on the Cross for the sins of the world. I like it that John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). So Jesus came as the Passover Lamb; He was what the Passover lamb typified and pointed to. It is fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ at His death, burial and Resurrection as Jesus died on the Cross and arose for our sins.

In the narrative passage of the upper room in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, none of the Gospels put them in chronological order; they are in topical order.

There are six sections in our text. First, in verses 1-2, we have the setting and time of Jesus' upper room meeting. “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called Passover.” Many times these two events are blended together and just called the Passover. “And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might kill Him, for they feared the people.”

What does that mean that “They feared the people”? That means that these ruling leaders wanted Jesus to die. They had already determined that they were going to kill Jesus. The only questions were when and how. We'll see how that worked out with Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Him.

The chief priest and the scribes comprised the Sanhedrin of Israel, which is like our Supreme Court. It consisted of 70 leaders. They had come to the conclusion that Jesus had to die. But they feared the people in that most of them at Passover—Jerusalem swelled by millions of pilgrims at this time from Galilee—might riot, because they believed Jesus was the Messiah. These members of the Sanhedrin didn't fear God; they feared the people. They were hypocrites, because their hearts weren't purged from the leaven, which was supposed to be purged from their homes at Passover.

It was required that all male Jews attend the Passover, along with Pentecost and the feast of Tabernacles, in Jerusalem each year. The Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover worked like this: on the 10th of Nisan, which is our April, they would pick a lamb for the Passover feast. Then on the 14th day of Nisan, they slayed that lamb, and for seven days after that, they would celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They would not use leaven in their bread.

This was all to commemorate the Exodus from Egypt. They were slaves in Egypt, and God delivered them from Egypt by the plagues. The tenth plague was the death of the firstborn. God instructed the Israelites to take the shed blood of a lamb and put it on the doorposts and lintel of their homes with a branch of hyssop. So when the death angel passed over the houses of the children of Israel and saw the blood, he would pass over their homes and only took the lives of the firstborn of the Egyptians where the blood was not applied. Where the blood was applied to a home, the judgment of God passed over.

What you need to remember about the judgment of God is the only way it can be appeased or satisfied is by the death of an innocent. So Jesus had to become as the Lamb who died for our sins. It is the picture that was given in the Passover; the lamb that was slain was a type of Jesus Christ, and when His blood is applied to our lives, the judgment or wrath of God passes over us. So this all surrounds the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

First there was the Passover—the slaying of the lamb—and then there were seven days of unleavened bread. Leaven is always a picture of evil. But it's interesting that the spiritual leaders, in verse 2, still had the leaven of hypocrisy in their hearts; they were the ones plotting against Jesus.

Just because someone is a spiritual leader doesn't mean they are spiritual. These spiritual leaders were acting as the devil's instrument instead of doing the will of God.

The second section is verses 3-6 in which Judas is willing to betray Jesus, so Satan entered into him. "Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot..." which could be a town in southern Judea, so he was named after it. He was the only apostle who was not from Galilee. And I believe this was Satan rather than a demon that had entered Judas, influencing him to betray the Lord. "...who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money." And we know that it was 30 pieces of silver, a small sum to betray the Son of God. Judas was a thief; he was pilfering out of the money bag. "So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude."

So the Passover was the time when Jesus would meet in the upper room, He would then be arrested and crucified.

Satan entered into the heart of Judas Iscariot. How does that work? Was Judas a true believer? Was he saved? No, he was not a true believer. In every way, Judas was responsible for his own decisions. Just because God sovereignly preordained that Judas would be the one

to betray Jesus, Judas was still free to make his own decisions.

We see that in the upper room, Jesus was constantly appealing to Judas. He showed love to Judas. I believe He even washed Judas' feet. Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him. By the way, this is the upper room discourse that John covers in his Gospel in chapters 13-17. It starts in chapter 13 by Jesus washing the disciples' feet.

If I was Jesus—and I'm not—and knew that Judas was going to betray me, I wouldn't have washed his feet; I would have thrown the water in his face! "You, get outta here! You wicked man!" But I believe Jesus appealed to him and washed his feet. Judas was sitting next to Jesus at the table, and Jesus dipped the sop in the sauce and gave it to Judas. It would be a toast to Judas, a reaching out to him in love.

But in every way, shape and form, even though it was preordained by God that someone would betray Jesus, Judas betrayed Him. Judas was responsible. You ask, "How do you work that out?" The sovereign, preordained plan of God and the freedom of man—even though we can't seem to understand them or reconcile the two, they are both taught in Scripture. So they reconcile in a higher unity. We don't always understand God's ways or how they work, but we must accept Scripture as being true, even when we can't comprehend how the two work together.

Quite often people ask me, "Pastor John, can a true Christian, a born-again child of God, become demon possessed?" The answer is, "No." The Bible says that when you are born again, you not only are indwelt by the Spirit, but you are "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise...until the redemption of the purchased possession" (Ephesians 1:13-14). That sealing speaks of ownership and security. God seals you by His Spirit, and nothing can break that seal. So you are in Christ, and being in Christ, you are secure. You don't have to worry about being taken over by some demon.

The Bible says that Satan may tempt us and attack us. But the Bible also says that you should "resist the devil and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). So if he doesn't flee from you, it's your fault because you're not resisting the devil. God also says, "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you" (James 4:8).

So Judas was responsible for his dastardly deed. We don't always know the motive for what he did, but Judas covenanted with them to get money.

It's interesting that the disciples had no idea that Judas was the betrayer. If they had known, do you think they would have made him the treasurer? He was keeper of the money bag. But he was stealing out of it. And the Bible says, "The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows" (1 Timothy 6:10). So we need to be careful that we fear God, that we don't love money and that we just obey the Lord in every aspect of our lives.

But Judas conspired to betray Him. And the spiritual leaders had no idea how they would get

Jesus without the crowds starting a riot, but verse 6 says that Judas would “betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude.”

The third section of our text is the preparation for the Passover meal, verses 7-13. “Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed.” That would be the 14th of Nisan, which is the day Jesus Christ would be crucified. “And He sent Peter and John, saying...” Luke is the only one who tells us who the two guys were who went to find the upper room and prep it for the Passover.

I think it’s interesting that Jesus knew Judas was going to betray Him, but He wanted to have this upper-room time with His disciples before His Crucifixion. He organized it in such a way that Judas wouldn’t know where the upper room was. Only Peter, John and Jesus knew where the upper room was and where they would go. And tradition says that the home where they had this Passover meal in the upper room was the home of John Mark, the one who wrote the Gospel of Mark. And it was the same house that Peter went to in Acts 12 after he was released by an angel and went to the home where the disciples were gathered, Rhoda came to the door and freaked out, thinking it was Peter’s spirit. It could be that same house.

Jesus didn’t own His own house; He had to borrow a room in which His disciples would have Passover. He didn’t have His own donkey; He had to borrow a donkey on which to ride into Jerusalem. He didn’t have His own tomb to be buried in; He had to borrow Joseph of Arimathea’s tomb. Someone said, “No big deal; He only needed it for the weekend.” He had to borrow a boat to use on the sea of Galilee from which He preached.

Verse 8, Jesus said, “‘Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat.’ So they said to Him, ‘Where do You want us to prepare?’” Jesus didn’t give them the address or tell them where. “And He said to them, ‘Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters.’” That would be unique, because women bore water in pitchers. Men didn’t do that. So this man would stand out bearing a pitcher of water. “Then you shall say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, “Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’” Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready. So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover.”

Jesus was going to say, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover meal with you before I suffer” (Luke 15). It was something heavy on His heart. He didn’t want Judas to know where the upper room was, because He didn’t want to get arrested quite yet. He wanted to have time together with them.

In John 13-17, Jesus taught so many wonderful truths to His disciples in the upper room the night before He was betrayed. I wish I could have been a fly on the wall listening to Jesus teach, but I’m so thankful that John recorded Jesus’ teaching in those chapters.

Also we’re going to see that as they ate the final, Passover meal, that Jesus no doubt would

have first washed their feet.

Our fourth section, verses 14-18, is the final Passover. It was not only Jesus' last Passover; it was the final Passover of the Jewish nation of Israel. Why? Because the Passover was going to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

When Jesus died on the Cross, He uttered the word, "Tatelestai," or "It is finished" (John 19:30), which means "Paid in full." And the Bible says that the veil in the temple separating the Holy of Holies, the place where God dwelt apart from sinful people, was ripped in two from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51).

So this Passover will be fulfilled in the Person of Jesus Christ; Jesus is the Passover Lamb. Bible students refer to the lamb at Passover as the anti-type or as a type of Jesus as the Lamb of God being the fulfillment of what that type pictured in the Old Testament.

Now Jesus is going to feast with His apostles in the Passover meal, verses 14-18, our fifth section. "When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him." In John 13, the first thing Jesus did was get up from the meal, laid aside His outer tunic, put a towel around his waist, took a basin of water and washed the disciples' feet. He gave them a lesson by saying, "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example" (John 13:14-15).

And I believe He also washed the feet of Judas Iscariot, which is a thought that amazes me. So Judas gets his feet washed.

It says in verse 14 that "He sat down." The idea is actually that He reclined on the dinner bed. The table was low to the ground and in a U shape. On the outer perimeter was a bed all the way around the table. A servant could come in through the opening to serve the food. The people would lay on the bed with their feet extended outward away from the table, so Jesus could wash their feet. They would lay on their left side, reach over with their right hand to get the food and roll back onto the dinner bed.

I think this is a great way to eat. Just drop in the food and you're already in bed! One time I had so much spaghetti at a friend's house that I had to spend the night. "I can't drive home!" I just fell on his couch and spent the night.

I think it was cool that they were laying on this bed. The apostle John would be on Jesus' right side, so he could lay back and lay his head on Jesus' breast to talk to Him. Judas was on Jesus' left side, which also was a seat of honor and Jesus was appealing to Judas.

Verse 15, "Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'" This verse blows me away. Jesus repeats the word "desire" twice. It is made for emphasis; He was emphatic. Jesus had this great longing to specifically eat this last Passover with His apostles, when the true fulfillment of the Lamb of God would die for the sins of the world. That was a picture of the Cross.

And He said, "...before I suffer." Suffer what? Suffer crucifixion, die on the Cross. So Jesus was predicting His Cross. He was still seeing the Cross looming large before Him. In all of Jesus' earthly life—in every waking moment of every day—He was seeing the Cross and knowing this was the time. This was the moment when He would go to the Cross to die for the sins of the world. It is the apex of all redemptive history.

Then in verse 16, He said, "...for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it..." referring to the Passover meal "...until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Jesus was referring to a future time when He returns as "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16).

I find it interesting that this week I read that while Jesus was on the earth in His humiliation to die by crucifixion, He never called Himself "King of kings" or "Lord of lords." John called Him that in the book of Revelation. Rather He described Himself as a servant. "The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28). He called Himself "the living bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:51) and "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). So He came in humility, in brokenness.

Jesus said that He wouldn't eat the Passover meal "until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." That refers to the millennium, the 1,000-year reign of Jesus on the earth recorded for us in Revelation 20. Christ will return and sit on the throne of David to reign 1,000 years. His twelve apostles, minus Judas, will reign over the twelve tribes of Israel, and we, the church, will co-reign with Him in our glorified bodies.

So I believe this teaches a premillennial return of Christ and a literal, future kingdom of Christ. I don't believe we are in the millennium right now. I don't believe the church replaces the nation of Israel. I believe God has a future plan for Israel. Eschatologically, this is so fitting to understand that this is a future kingdom. Yes, we spiritually live in the kingdom of God right now, but there is going to be a literal kingdom with King Jesus on earth during that 1,000-year, millennial reign of Christ. What a blessing!

Verse 17, "Then He took the cup." When we read that, we normally think of the Lord's Supper, but that doesn't start until verse 19. This might have been the fourth cup; they had four cups for the Passover. The fourth cup was the cup of thanksgiving. It's interesting that Jesus did not drink this fourth cup.

So Jesus took the cup "and gave thanks, and said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you..." he also said this in verse 16 "...I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until..." again, He says "until" "...the kingdom of God comes."

In the Passover, Jesus was making it clear that they looked back at their redemption from Egypt, but they also looked forward to when Jesus would return and set up His kingdom. Like us at the communion supper, we look back at the death of Christ on the Cross, but we also look forward to the coming again of Jesus Christ.

When we have communion at Revival, it is a family affair; we all eat the bread and drink the cup together. But I don't like the modern trend of having communion on a table at the front or back of the church and letting people get up from the pews, go back and serve themselves communion whenever they want during the service.

That would be like your wife making a big meal, and instead of you and your wife and kids sitting around the table together, the kids get their plate of food, go to their bedrooms and shut the door and eat by themselves.

The very purpose of communion is that we pray together, we give thanks together, we eat the bread together, we drink the cup together and we look back together. That's the very purpose of communion. It's not to have a free-for-all and walk around the sanctuary, eating communion whenever you want. This has bothered me for years, and this is the first time I've mentioned it. I've been in churches that do this. It defeats the very purpose for which we have communion.

So this cup, in verses 16-17, is not the Lord's Supper; that's not until verse 20. Rather, it's the Passover cup. And during the millennium, during the kingdom age, the Passover meal will be reinstated, but it will be a celebration of Jesus, the Paschal Lamb, dying for the sins of the world. We will look back, and then we'll rejoice that we are with Him in the kingdom of God.

Verses 19-20 are the institution of the Lord's Supper. So this was after the Paschal meal was done. "And He took bread..." the divine order is always the bread first and then the cup, as in 1 Corinthians 11, where Paul talks about communion and its abuses "...gave thanks..." which is where we get the Greek word "Eucharist," which means "giving thanks" "...and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you...' or 'in substitution for you,' supporting the doctrine of substitutionary atonement "...do this in remembrance of Me."

I believe that communion, the Lord's Supper, is a memorial service. I don't believe in transubstantiation; I don't believe that the bread and the wine literally become the physical body and blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "This is My body" (verse 19), but His body was completely there intact. Rather the bread is symbolic and pictures His body. And the bread is unleavened; He was without sin and He was broken for us or given for us. This is speaking of the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ.

When we celebrate communion at Revival, we pass out the bread, and I ask you to hold your portion until we are all served. And then we pray and say, "Lord Jesus, thank You for Your body, broken for us." The bread is symbolic of the body of the Lord Jesus, broken on the Cross. The Bible says that not a bone of His would be broken (Psalm 34:20, John 19:33), but His body was broken for us. "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities....And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). So when we partake of the bread, we are remembering the Incarnation, when God became a man. This body was broken for us as a substitutionary atonement for our sins.

Verse 20, "Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in

My blood, which is shed for you.” “Shed for you” refers to the substitutionary, atoning death of Jesus Christ for you.

Notice that this is the cup of “the new covenant.” In Jeremiah 31:31-34, God said, “The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel....I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts....They all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” He will give them His Spirit.

It is only through the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, and not through a physical lamb, that our sins can be forgiven. So when Jesus died on the Cross, He fulfilled the Levitical demand for death in our place in order to forgive us of our sins. This is the new covenant.

I thank God for the new covenant! The old covenant couldn’t get you to heaven. It condemned us, exposed our sin. You can’t get to heaven by being good or keeping rites, rituals or laws. “The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). We should be thankful every day for the new covenant that God made and that He allowed us as Gentiles to be grafted into that and become recipients of the blessings of the new covenant in Christ.

When we have communion, we look back and we remember the Cross and give thanks. Then we look ahead and remember that Jesus promised that He would “not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” So we are thankful that our sins are forgiven, and we have the hope that we will be with Him one day in the kingdom of God on earth that becomes the eternal state of the new heaven and the new earth.

In our sixth section, verses 21-23, Jesus reveals the betrayal. “But behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table.” That must have been a shocker for the disciples. They were all in the upper room reclining on the couch close to Jesus, and Jesus said that “The one who will betray Me is here with Me right now.” Jesus said, “And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined...” by divine decree “...but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!” In other words, Judas was responsible for his own sin. “Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing.”

That indicates they didn’t know it was Judas. And it was a good thing that Peter didn’t know it was Judas, because he had a sword; he would have taken care of Judas. Peter had no idea. The rest of them had no idea. They would have asked, “Is it me?” That indicates a bit of their humility, but later they would argue who would be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven (Luke 22:24). Jesus had to remind them that He came to be a servant; not to be served but to serve others.

I think it’s healthy for us to have an understanding that but for the grace of God, go I. When you hear about someone’s fall or lapse into sin, do you say, “Oh, I knew it all the time! See the weird way she used to dress?” Rather, we should search our own heart and say, “Lord, is it

me?" We need to realize that if God doesn't keep us, if God doesn't protect us, if God doesn't watch over us, surely we will fall. Thank God for His keeping power and grace!

So by divine decree it was determined that Judas was responsible. We are all free, moral agents. We must believe in and put our faith and trust in Jesus Christ.

I want to close with six ways that Jesus specifically is our Passover Lamb. Number one, the lamb was selected and inspected on the 10th of Nisan (Exodus 12:3). Jesus was selected and inspected on the 10th of Nisan, Palm Sunday. The day Jesus rode into Jerusalem was the 10th of Nisan, and He rode in as the Messiah, the Savior.

Number two, Jesus is the Lamb of the Passover feast; He was without defect and without sin (Exodus 12:5). Jesus was as "a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1 Peter 1:19). "Without blemish" means that Jesus had no inherited defect. "Without spot" means that He had no acquired defect; He lived a sinless life.

Number three, Jesus was the Lamb of God because the lamb was to be sacrificed on the 14th day of Nisan in the evening, which Exodus 12:6 calls "twilight" or 3 pm to 6 pm. Jesus was actually crucified on the 14th day of Nisan, and it was at 3 pm when Jesus cried out, "Into Your hands I commit My spirit." Having said this, He breathed His last" (Luke 23:46). Jesus died right at 3 pm on Friday afternoon, just at the same time that all the lambs were being slain for the Passover.

Number four, the bread of the Passover was without leaven, which represents sin. Jesus was without leaven; He had no sin. He was the pure, sinless Lamb of God.

Number five, the lamb was to be sacrificed without breaking a bone (Exodus 12:46). Jesus was crucified, but "Not one of His bones [was] broken (John 19:36).

Number six, Israel was redeemed from Egypt by the blood of the lamb. And we, as God's people, are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. 1 Peter 1:18 says, "You were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver and gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." Jesus died in our place for our sins.