

Plot & Passover: The First Communion

Luke 22:1-30

David Sunday

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In Luke 22, we find the account of the last supper. The date, according to Justin Taylor and Andreas Kostenberger in their book The Final Days of Jesus, was April 2nd AD 33. That's 1,981 years, 11 months and 24 days ago. According to my calculations, taking leap years into account, that's 723,614 days ago. In history, in a real place, the Son of God gathered His disciples to a table where He fed them bread and wine and said, "This is My body. This is My blood." It was the last meal that He would eat with His disciples, the last meal that He would eat in His pre-glorified body. It was the final Passover meal of the Old Covenant. After this meal, Jesus would not sleep. He would be up all night until the next day when He would be nailed on a cross for our sins. Some of us may feel tired from missing a little bit of sleep last night with the time change. Jesus was up all night after this meal.

As we are carried to the communion table, the same Jesus Who met His disciples at the last supper and fed them His body and His blood in these symbols is with us today. He's with us at this table to nourish our faith, to bind us to Himself just as He did for His disciples at the last supper. And what I want us to do is draw out of this passage some direction for how we can find our deepest fellowship with our unseen Lord here at His table. I want to just let the Word prepare us to commune with Christ as we look at this passage. I hope that you would be actively exercising your mind and your heart, worshipping Him and thanking Him for these truths. That you would be entering into these truths actively so that when we come to the table, we will know that we are not just going through a ritual but that we are enjoying communion with our Lord Christ.

We should be thinking about the heinousness of our sin and the sovereign majesty of God in triumphing over it (vv. 1-6).

¹Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. ²And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.

Judas to Betray Jesus

³ Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴ He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. ⁵ And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. ⁶ So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

We should be thinking about the heinousness of our sin, but not stopping there. We should be thinking also about the sovereign majesty of our God in triumphing over our sins. In verses 1-6, we see that the context of this last supper was a dark, dark cloud. A plot was gathering. The chief priests and the scribes were looking for ways to put Him to death, but they feared the people. Then we read in verse three that faithful word, “Then...”—maybe the most terrible word in this passage. *“Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve.”* Up to this point, none of the disciples had suspected him or even knew that there would be one among their number who would blatantly betray the Savior.

John Piper has said,

“The most spectacular sin that has ever been committed in the history of the world is the brutal murder of Jesus Christ, the morally perfect, infinitely worthy, divine Son of God. And probably the most despicable act in the process of this murder was the betrayal of Jesus by one of His closest friends, Judas Iscariot.”

We see the essence of all sin in Judas’ sin, including the sin of the chief priests and the scribes. What is sin ultimately trying to do? It’s trying to bring about the abolition of God, the death of God, the destruction of God. It comes out blatantly in Judas’ betrayal, but the essence of that sin lurks latently in all our hearts and in all our sins. In all our sins, there is this latent opposition and rebellion toward God. We read in chapter 20, verse 14, when God sends His Son into the vineyard that they said, “This is the Heir. Come let us kill Him that the inheritance may be ours.” Sin is a heinous thing.

Learn from the tragedy of Judas to resist the beginnings of sin in your own life.

As we read about Judas’ sin and we look at the betrayal that surrounds this supper, I never tire of speaking these words, the marvel and the wonder of them. As we come to the Lord’s Supper on the night our Lord Jesus Christ was betrayed, He took bread. In the time of greatest desolation, betrayal by those who were closest to Him, he took bread. So as we come to the table, we need to be thinking and learning from the tragedy of Judas to resist the beginnings of sin in our lives. Judas’ sin was not something that just popped up suddenly. It had been growing and

developing gradually like a cancer. Its origins were probably in the corrupting power of money and greed that were getting a hold on his heart. Don’t think of Judas in fatalistic terms, that “the devil made him do it.” Yes, Satan incited him but Judas was responsible. The spirit of treachery had been growing in him for a long time and he had been letting it grow.

Learn from him that sin always carries us further than we think it will. It always goes out of control. It gets to the point where it’s no longer in our power to manage. Someone once said, “One of the penalties of sin is that it obliges us to keep on committing it.” So the lesson as we look at Judas is to resist beginnings.

When you take this bread and this cup, realize, rest and rejoice in the fact that the gospel triumphs over all evil!

Come to this table and say, “By Your death, O Christ, I am crucified to the world and the world to me and sin no longer has dominion over me.” Use this table as a means of grace, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to mortify the beginnings of sin’s uprising in your heart. Think of the heinousness of sin, but also learn of the majesty of God’s power in triumphing over it.

Though there is a conspiracy afoot to murder the Son of God, a conspiracy that will result—in less than 24 hours—in His death, God has a counter-conspiracy that He’s working. God is going to bring out of this despicable act the most dramatic display of His kindness and grace for which He will be praised for all eternity. God is going to make sure that while men are plotting their very worst, He is positioning His Son for His final move in His redemption of the world. The very spear that pierces Jesus’ side will draw forth the power—the blood that will save the world from their sins.

See God’s sovereignty here. See how God turns the evil deeds of men into the crowning acts of His grace and mercy. See how the victory of evil becomes sin’s very defeat and how the defeat of Christ becomes His triumph. See how the death of Christ becomes the death of death itself. As you come to this table and recognize the heinousness of sin, also rejoice in the sovereign majesty of God to overcome it and to bring great good out of it. Praise Him for that. Worship Him for that.

We should be thinking about our liberation from bondage to sin, death and Satan (vv. 7-13).

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 enters¹¹ 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.

What is it? It began as a Passover meal and even as this plotting and betrayal is going on, Jesus sends His disciples out to the market to buy a lamb, to get whatever is necessary to prepare this meal and to make sure there is a room prepared to celebrate this meal together in this city because the Passover had to be celebrated in the city. Jesus knows all things and He knows the details. He knows there's going to be a man carrying a water jar, which in that culture did not happen very often. The men did not carry the water jars; the women did that. But Jesus is directing all these circumstances to bring Him and His disciples to the point where they can go into a room in Jerusalem on the night before He's going to hang on the cross and celebrate the Passover. We see that in verse 13.

The same dinner that we are going to have on Maundy Thursday is not designed to bring us backwards into Jewishness; it's designed to show forth the wonder and all the specifics of what that Passover meal entailed, so that we can appreciate the wonder of Christ, our Messiah.

Jesus celebrates this Passover with His disciples and what was that a reminder of? It was a reminder of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt, out of bondage and out of slavery. It was a reminder of how the blood of the lamb was sprinkled over the doorframes of the houses of God's people in Egypt and that God said, “When the angel of death passes over, when I see the blood, I will pass over you. You will be delivered from destruction. It will not destroy you (Exodus 12).

Salvation is more than forgiveness – it is liberation from bondage.

So as we come to the table, thank God that salvation is more than merely the forgiveness of sins, as wonderful as that is. It's also the liberation from our bondage to sin. Remember as you take this cup and this bread, what Paul says in Galatians 1:4-5: that Jesus “*gave Himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to Whom be the glory forever and ever.*”

Rejoice in the fact that Jesus is our Passover Lamb. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5:7, that Christ, our Passover Lamb, is sacrificed for us and that when Jesus went to that cross, He was

accomplishing an exodus for God's people, a deliverance for the slave drivers of sin, Satan and death; so that we can come to this table and say:

Through your suffering,
I am free.
Death is crushed to death.
Life is mine to live.
Won through Your selfless love.

(In Christ Alone; Keith and Kristyn Getty)

I am no longer in bondage. I am free from the dominion of sin and death and Satan.
Think about that. Rejoice in that as you partake.

We should be thinking about the intensity of Jesus' love for us, His people (vv. 14-15)

We see this truth in verses 14-15:

*And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him.
And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.*

One paraphrase says, "With all my heart, I have longed to eat this Passover with you before the time comes for Me to suffer." It's an intense longing that's being conveyed there. "With desire, I have desired this. I have so looked forward to this brief respite with you, My people, before I go to the cross and become that Passover Lamb Who will be sacrificed once for all and I long to have this meal with you. With you who, right after this meal, are going to start bickering and fighting with one another about who's the greatest, but I love you. With you who, right after this meal, are going to betray Me and deny Me. With you who, when you find Me in the Garden of Gethsemane and see My tears of blood, when you hear My agony, you will be so out of touch with what I am going through that you won't be able to watch and pray with Me for one hour. You'll fall asleep. With you who don't really understand who I am or what I am going to accomplish or how greatly I have loved you. I long to be with you and to share this meal with you."

I wonder if it's ever occurred to you that when we come to this table, we're not just walking through some ritual that we do twice a month in our church. We are guests here. A table has been spread by the Host, our Great Shepherd, and the Savior Who gave His life for us. And we can only come because He has invited us and because He carries us and welcomes us to a table where we don't belong and He says earnestly, "I desire this fellowship with you, My people."

Think about His love. Think about His desire for you. Remember that it’s not about being good enough. That’s not what it means to worthily partake. For all who see the ugliness of their souls and who tremble at the word of warning that comes at the end of this passage where Jesus says, “There’s a traitor at the table.” For all who look within their hearts of darkness and say with fear, “Is it I, Lord? Is it I? I know I’m prone to wander, Lord, I feel it. I know I’m prone to leave the God I love.” For all who feel something of the reality of our sin, Jesus says, “Bring your sinful hearts to Me. Bring Me your shame, brokenness, contradictions and sinfulness. I will vanquish your sins just as powerfully as I drowned Pharaoh and his armies in the Red Sea. That’s what I do.”

Come not because you are strong but because you are weak. Come not because of any goodness of your own but because you need mercy and help. Come because you love the Lord a little and would like to love Him more. Come because He loves you and gave Himself for you. Think of His love.

We should be looking forward to the time when we will eat this meal with Christ in the Kingdom of God (vv. 16-18).

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.”*

We should be looking forward to the time when we will eat this meal with Christ in the Kingdom of God. We should always remember that the Lord’s Supper is not just looking backwards; it’s looking forward. Jesus looks forward in this passage to the time when He will eat again in the Kingdom of God with His disciples. This will be His last meal in His pre-glorified body, but there is another meal coming called the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:6-10). Believers are people who are betrothed to Christ and are to be presented to Him as a spotless, radiant, virgin bride.

Revelation 19 reads like this:

⁶ *Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out,*

*“Hallelujah!
For the Lord our God
the Almighty reigns.*

⁷ *Let us rejoice and exult*

*and give him the glory,
for the marriage of the Lamb has come,
and his Bride has made herself ready;
⁸ it was granted her to clothe herself
with fine linen, bright and pure”—*

for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.

⁹ *And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited
to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the
true words of God.”*

At this table, Jesus wants to help keep our hearts purified and readied for this marriage supper. He wants this table to be like Tim Keller says, “The hors d’oeuvres of our future bliss.” The appetizer. The rehearsal dinner that gets us longing and desiring for the time when we will eat it with Him in the Kingdom of God. Look forward to that.

We should affectionately remember our union with Christ as we recall and reapply the gospel to our hearts (vv. 19-20).

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.*

Then finally, the Lord’s Supper is a covenantal meal. It is speaking to us, not only of the fact that our guilt is done away with or that the bondage of our sins has been broken once for all, but we’ve been brought into a new relationship, a new communion with God that’s based on a blood covenant with Him which cannot be broken. We are reminded as we come to this table that our relationship with Christ is a marriage relationship and He pledges to us as people, “I will be your God and you will be My people, for better or for worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health. Even death will not part us because I have triumphed over death and I’m alive forevermore.”

No circumstances will be able to change or alter this covenant that Jesus made with us in His blood, which is why our marriage covenants are so sacred and invaluable. They reflect the covenant relationship that God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, has entered into with us, His people. The Lord’s Supper is a time for us, as the betrothed bride of Christ, to cultivate ardent love and longing in our heart for Christ so that we will not be guiled away from Him like the serpent deceived Eve. So when Jesus says to us in verse 19, “*Do this in remembrance of me,*”

He's saying much more than, "Just don't let this slip out of your mind." He's saying much more than, "Just go through some mental activity." It's more than just recalling to mind something that happened way back in the past. It's more than just remembering a date like July 4th, 1776.

Remembrance in the Bible means participating here and now in the acts of the past and the future. When the Israelites partook of the Passover meal, they were there with the generation that came out of Egypt. And when Christians partake of the Lord's Supper, we are there at the cross. new are not merely spectators; we are participating in it. It's more than just recalling it mentally. It's not, however, reenacting the cross; that happened once for all. It's, by faith and through the working of the Spirit, making present that which took place in the past. It means to come to this table, take this cup and this bread and say, "Christ died for me. I'm part of it. I'm one with Him and with His people in His death and resurrection. I'm intimately involved in it, even when I'm doubting my faith and I'm weak. Even when I'm struggling to comprehend the words of Scripture and I'm feeling weary and broken.

Jesus says, "Take the bread. Take the cup. You can see it. You can touch it. You can share it. You can taste it. You can eat it and drink it." Through these signs, God assures us, "I am yours and you are Mine forever. I will be your God and you will be My people. I will be merciful toward your iniquities and I will remember your sins no more."

"Remember me," Jesus says. An affectionate remembrance of our union with Christ. Those of you who are married, when you celebrate your anniversary, how would your spouse feel if you just marked the occasion by saying, "I seem to remember marrying you 22 years ago this day." Hmm. As a matter of fact, it happened. That's very anticlimactic and it isn't honoring of the affectionate union that exists. Remembering an anniversary doesn't merely mean to state the facts. It means to pursue, cherish and love one another afresh the way that we vowed to do on our wedding day. To rekindle that tenderhearted longing and desire. To celebrate the union that God has made. That's what it is to remember.

So as we eat this bread and drink this cup, may we proclaim and believe and embrace this gospel afresh. May we celebrate and enjoy forgiveness, the gift of new life and fellowship through the blood of the everlasting covenant. May we come, not to a dull, religious ceremony, but to a joyful, affectionate remembrance of Christ through His cross. As one pastor says, "The gospel isn't one and done. It's rinse and repeat again and again."

Let's come to the table, you who see your sin. You who have need of the Savior. The fact is that only Jesus can do a helpless sinner like you any good. You who are broken over the realities of sin in this fallen world, but recognize that God, in sovereign majesty, has triumphed in

Christ and your only hope is Him. I love that song. I love how it traces the effects of our sin in Romans 3, “Then we say our hope is you, Lord. You will make all things new.”

So God, I pray that as we come to this table now, that You will carry us here; feed us richly; and, by the workings of Your Spirit, bring about powerful impressions on our minds and hearts of the reality of Christ with Whom we are in a living, lasting, loving union that cannot be broken. And God, I pray that we would be strengthened by grace as we feast here. Because it's in Jesus Christ's name that we pray. Amen.

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