

“Christ’s Final Passover, Part 1” Matthew 26:17-29, Sermon Notes
Pastor Marc Wragg
Saving Grace Bible Church
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Morning Worship Service

“Now on the first *day* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" ¹⁸ And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I *am to* keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'"" ¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.” (Matt. 26:17-19 NAS)

Textual Purpose: Jesus instructs His disciples to prepare the Passover

Sermonic Purpose: Jesus demonstrates ultimate control over all details leading to His death

Introduction

We turn our attention back to the study of God’s Word where we are looking at the final hours of our Lord’s life

Who is in control of all things, is not necessarily the one who is responsible for all things

- This conundrum in the doctrine of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility has pretzeled the minds of many for generations
- If someone is in control then they are responsible. They have to be right?
 - No that is not true and that is evident in our text this morning
- This struggle is evidenced in the death of Jesus. Who is responsible for our Lord’s death?

When we ask the question, who is responsible for the death of Christ, the scriptures give us many answers

"For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again." (Jn. 10:17 NAS)

Jesus makes it clear that He is the one who lays down His life. He gives himself over to die as the lamb of God

- Jesus will not perish until He lays down His life

But there is more:

Matthew says it was the religious leaders who plotted together to have Jesus killed

Matt 26:3-5

“Then the chief priests and the elders of the people were gathered together in the court of the high priest, named Caiaphas; ⁴ and they plotted together to seize Jesus by stealth, and kill *Him*. ⁵ But they were saying, "Not during the festival, lest a riot occur among the people." (Matt. 26:3-5 NAS)

- These religious leaders were responsible for the death of Christ as they planned on putting him to death
- So that Matthew records these leaders are responsible for Christ’s death

Matthew also makes it clear that it was Judas working on behalf of the religious leaders that carried out the death of Christ

“Then one of the twelve, named Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, ¹⁵ and said, "What are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you?" And they weighed out to him thirty pieces of silver. ¹⁶ And from then on he *began* looking for a good opportunity to betray Him.” (Matt. 26:14-16 NAS)

We could blame the religious leaders for their trial and condemnation of Christ and their persuading the Roman authorities to execute judgment on Christ

We could blame the Gentiles who carried out the orders

But Peter Says it was God

"Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know-- ²³ this *Man*, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death.” (Acts 2:22-23 NAS)

- God’s eternal plan was for the Son to be nailed to the cross
- And at the same time Judas is responsible for betraying Christ
- And the religious leaders are responsible
- And the Gentile authorities are responsible
- And we are responsible for He went for our sins

The sovereign hand of God was at work through the whole event. This is what we see as we work our way through this section of Scripture

- God was and is in control of everything
- There was not a single event outside of the control of the Son of God
- Everything happened just as He said it would according to His perfect timing

As we saw last week Judas was looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus

- This started from the meal on the previous Saturday
- A meal in which all the disciples attended and Judas and the rest of the disciples complained about the extravagant worship showed Jesus by a devoted woman
- This woman was Mary as indicated in John’s Gospel

Judas thought he was in control. As the text indicates in verse 16

“And from then on he *began* looking for a good opportunity to betray Him.” (Matt. 26:16 NAS)

- He thought he was working under the radar
- He thought his plans were hidden
- He thought there was no way Christ would know what he was doing

The religious leaders thought they were in control as they sought to arrest Christ but at a time that was convenient for them

- They thought they could do what they wanted, when they wanted

But while they demonstrated their desire to take Christ out of the way, they missed the working of God

As Judas was desperate to find an opportunity to betray Christ, he missed the fact that in his betrayal he was fulfilling exactly what Christ told them. One of them would betray Him

- Even as Judas was carrying out his desires, he was fulfilling God’s perfect plan

Even Jesus makes it known throughout that He knows what is coming and He has reminded His disciples multiple times

- They have heard the news
- They have been told what was going to come

Even as Jesus was coming to Jerusalem He knew what He was getting into

- He knew he was going to face opposition from the religious leaders
- He knew that He had to be careful as He traveled around
- He knew they were looking for opportunity to kill him

So when Mary broke the vial of perfume and poured it on Jesus she was doing this preparing for the burial of Christ

- Jesus tells His disciples that is what is happening so that they are aware of the significance of what is taking place

Again in this Jesus is demonstrating all things are working out according to the purposes and plans of God

- Nothing is outside of God’s directing

This continues in our text this morning

Body

“Now on the first *day* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?”¹⁸ And He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, “The Teacher says, “My time is at hand; I *am to* keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.””¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.” (Matt. 26:17-19 NAS)

Matthew starts by establishing the time

- This is the first day of unleavened bread
- This was in accordance with the teaching of Moses in Leviticus

“These are the appointed times of the LORD, holy convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them.” (Lev. 23:4 NAS)

“In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at twilight is the LORD's Passover. ⁶Then on the fifteenth day of the same month there is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the LORD; for seven days you shall eat unleavened bread.” (Lev. 23:5-6 NAS)

The Passover was to be celebrated on the 14th day of the first month of the new year which was Nisan

- The two holidays were back to back
- First was the Passover celebrated on the 14th of Nisan and the second was the Feast of Unleavened Bread which was celebrated over the next 7 days
- In total these festivals would start on the 14th and end of the 21st of Nisan
- Together they covered 8 days

The two festivals were often associated together. This is what we see here in Matthews account

Now on the first *day* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" vs 17

Matthew describes this as the first day of the Feast of unleavened bread, but the question of the disciples is, where do you want to eat the Passover

The two holidays went together. And thus the Passover was often used to describe all 8 days and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was also used to describe all 8 days

- The terms were used interchangeably
- Obvious this was because the events occurred consecutively

But clearly on day one of 8, on the 14th day of Nisan the Passover was to be taken

- The Passover was to be taken at twilight. Lev 23:5

So on the morning of the Passover the disciples came to Jesus to ask him about preparations for this meal

- They were going to go off and arrange all of the details for the Passover meal

Now notice, clearly they are going to eat the Passover meal

“Now on the first *day* of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?" (Matt. 26:17 NAS)

“And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I *am to* keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'""¹⁹ And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.” (Matt. 26:18-19 NAS)

- In verses 17, 18, and 19 it is clear that the disciples are going to prepare a place for them to eat the Passover

“Now when evening had come, He was reclining *at the table* with the twelve disciples.²¹ And as they were eating, He said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me." (Matt. 26:20-21 NAS)

It is clear here that the Disciples are going to prepare the Passover and Jesus is going to eat the Passover with His disciples. He was there at the table eating the Passover with his disciples

Mark 14:12-17

“And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover *lamb* was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to 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 will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him;¹⁴ and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, "The Teacher says, "Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"¹⁵ "And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished *and* ready; and prepare for us there."¹⁶ And the disciples went out, and came to the city, and found *it* just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.¹⁷ And when it was evening He came with the twelve.” (Mk. 14:12-17 NAS)

Luke 22:14-16

“And when the hour had come He reclined *at the 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 say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." (Lk. 22:14-16 NAS)

It is abundantly clear here that Jesus is instructing His disciples to prepare the Passover meal

Luke 22:8 Tells us Jesus gave this command to Peter and John

“And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." (Lk. 22:8 NAS)

- Now Jesus sends two of the disciples out to make preparations
- Only two were allowed to go out because of the requirements at the temple.
- Tradition only allowed for two men to deliver the lamb for sacrifice. This was because so many would be entering into the temple. It allowed for there to be enough room for all the lambs to be sacrificed

Now again look at the details which are brought out by Matthew:

“And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I *am to* keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.'"" (Matt. 26:18 NAS)

Now again Jesus demonstrates strict control of the details that are unfolding

- He speaks to them in code
- Go into the city and find a certain man

Well that is kind of vague

- Go find a man in the city – what kind of random instruction is that?
- Mark adds that this man will be identified as one who is carrying a pitcher of water – well this makes it a little easier
 - It would be like Jesus telling us go to Tampa and find a man wearing a Ross Perot shirt
 - The fact that Jesus could tell them in code who to look for demonstrates His control
- But apparently there was only one helpful key for the disciples to identify the man. Look for the one who was carrying a pitcher of water
- This would be unique because normally the women would be gathering the water and carrying it

Jesus demonstrates again His knowledge and control over what is going to happen

- He sends the two disciples in
- He sends them to the city of Jerusalem
- He tells them what to look for
- He tells them what to say
- And that will be the place where they will have the Passover that very night

Why go through all the detail? Why not be specific? Why not say – Go find John who will be at the market near the bread stand?

- Did Jesus not know the guy's name?
 - Clearly that can't be the case
 - He knew where the guy would be – the city
 - What he would be doing – carrying the pitcher of water
 - What resources he had – a large upper room available to have the Passover meal
 - Clearly if he knew these details he knew the name of the man

Jesus was secretive because He wanted to celebrate the Passover meal with His disciples

Luke 22:15

“And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;” (Lk. 22:15 NAS)

This meal with His disciples was very important and He was not going to let anyone stop it

- This is the meal where he is going to setup the Lord's Supper
- This is the meal where the disciples would celebrate the first communion service
- This is the meal where Jesus would be remembered as the perfect sacrifice who laid down His life for our sins
- This would be the meal where we come together regularly to remember our Lord's

And potentially getting in the way of celebrating this meal with His disciples is Judas' desire to betray Him

- Judas plan is thwarted for a few more hours by keeping the details of the Passover secret
- Otherwise Judas could have turned Christ in and had guards ready to arrest him at the house

In all of this Judas was kept from carrying out his evil intentions. He was frustrated by being one step behind Christ the whole time until Christ revealed him for the traitor that He was

Look at verse 21 – finally Jesus releases Judas to carry out his evil intentions

“And as they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.” (Matt. 26:21 NAS)

We will cover this next week when we come back and look at this text

- But in all of this Jesus is demonstrating His control and purposes and keeping Judas and the religious leaders at arm's length until the time
- And the time of Jesus sacrifice could not happen until after the taking of the Passover which would be then reinstated as the Lord's table

Now before we get there, we need to establish that this meal, which Jesus was sharing with His disciples, is indeed the Passover meal and not something else

- This is important as then the elements in the Lord's table connect to the historical details of God's redemption of Israel

Now you may be saying, well of course it is the Passover. Matt 26:17-19 says that three times

- And Mark and Luke affirm
- Great you were paying attention – well done

But we have a problem because John's Gospel presents a possible contradiction

- Or if you ask some liberal scholars a definite contradiction thus demonstrating the bible is not reliable
- So once again let us demonstrate that the Bible is trustworthy, and the fears of the liberal scholar need not worry us

Turn over to John's gospel:

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, Jesus knowing that His hour had come that He should depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” (Jn. 13:1 NAS)

- Some have argued here that John is indicating this whole meal was taken before the feast of the Passover
- They conclude that Jesus and His disciples had their own Passover -a different meal than the Passover meal
- But this cannot work as people were not allowed to sacrifice a lamb on their own

Actually what this is saying is before they took of the Passover meal Jesus washed the feet of the disciples

John 18:28

“They led Jesus therefore from Caiaphas into the Praetorium, and it was early; and they themselves did not enter into the Praetorium in order that they might not be defiled, but might eat the Passover.” (Jn. 18:28 NAS)

- The religious leaders were keeping themselves pure so that they could take the Passover meal
- They did not want to defile themselves because they had not yet taken the Passover
 - But how is this possible if Jesus had already taken the Passover with His disciples but the religious leaders had not yet taken the Passover?

“Now it was the day of preparation for the Passover; it was about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold, your King!” (Jn. 19:14 NAS)

You see there appears to be a contradiction in the account of John and the synoptic gospels

John has said that the religious leaders had yet to partake of the Passover. How is that possible?

First you need to understand the scale of the Passover

And with the Passover we know in Jerusalem that Josephus records around this time 250,000 lambs were slain for the Passover

- With 10 adults per lamb that would be 2.5 million people

Those lambs would be slain between the hours of 3 and 5

- That two-hour window was all that was allowed for the Passover lamb to be sacrifice
- For 250k lambs to be slain in two hours it would take 600 priests each sacrificing 3.5 lambs per minute for two hours. Or one every 15 seconds
- That is a lot of death
- The blood from those lambs would be trickling down the mountain

Now all of this was in preparation of the Passover

How were so many lambs offered in one day?

- The answer to that question is found in our problem with this meal being the Passover
- The apparent contradiction between the synoptic gospels and the gospel of John helps us see the difference in historical traditions
- There is no contradiction at all
- The difference is explained by the traditions of the Jews from Galilee and the Jews in Jerusalem

Calendar

- The difference is in how they counted when a day began
- One counted the day from Sunrise to Sunrise while the other group counted a day from sun set to sun set
- For Jesus and his disciples, who were from Galilee and the north districts of Israel they counted a day from sunrise to sunrise
- The Sadducees and those in Jerusalem counted the days from sunset to sunset
- This allowed all the people coming in from Galilee and the surrounding areas to be able to make their offering
- As Jerusalem swelled the need to be able to handle the growth of sacrifices increased
- God was even sovereign over the use of the calendar in order to prepare his disciples by having the Passover meal with them and then being the perfect sacrifice

Remember again there was only a two-hour window for all the lambs to be sacrificed

- Also remember that Jesus when he was crucified at 3pm
- At the time the sacrifices had begun
- At 6th hour and the 9th hour – the 9th hour is 3pm
- Matt 27:45

Jesus took the Passover with His disciples and He instituted the Lord's table. Then he went to cross to be the lamb of God to take away the sins of the World

Other proofs of the disciples having taken the Passover

1. Jesus ate the meal in Jerusalem, and he remained within the confines of Jerusalem

"And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I *am to* keep the Passover at your house with My disciples.""" (Matt. 26:18 NAS)

"And He sent two of His disciples, and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him;" (Mk. 14:13 NAS)

"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 that he enters." (Lk. 22:10 NAS)

And after the meal He stayed within the city limits to fulfill what is required for the Passover

2. The meal was partaken at night

"Now when evening had come, He was reclining *at the table* with the twelve disciples." (Matt. 26:20 NAS)

Normally meals were taken in Israel between two periods of time

1. 10 and 11 in the morning
2. One late in the later afternoon
3. Only special meals were taken in the evening

3. Jesus limits the meal to His disciples which was over 10 (the required minimum amount). This meal being a small intimate group indicates the importance of this special meal. Pointing to it being the Passover

4. They ate this meal while reclined at the table

“Now when evening had come, He was reclining *at the table* with the twelve disciples.” (Matt. 26:20 NAS)

- This posture was reserved for special meals indicating that the Passover meal was the meals the disciples enjoyed with Jesus

5. The bread was broken during the meal rather than at the outset of the meal

“And as they were eating, He said, “Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.”²² And being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, “Surely not I, Lord?”²³ And He answered and said, “He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me.”²⁴ “The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.”²⁵ And Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, “Surely it is not I, Rabbi?” He said to him, “You have said *it* yourself.”²⁶ And while they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” (Matt. 26:21-26 NAS)

In an ordinary meal the bread would be taken and broken at the beginning. The implication here is that this meal is a special occasion. And in the case of the Passover the meal the bread would be broken and dipped at multiple points

6. Jesus served wine at the Passover meal. Wine was necessary for the Passover meal

7. When Jesus told Judas to go do what he was going to do quickly the disciples concluded that Judas was going to pay alms to the poor

“And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Jesus therefore said to him, “What you do, do quickly.” (Jn. 13:27 NAS)

“Now no one of those reclining *at the table* knew for what purpose He had said this to him.” (Jn. 13:28 NAS)

“For some were supposing, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus was saying to him, “Buy the things we have need of for the feast”; or else, that he should give something to the poor.” (Jn. 13:29 NAS)

Since this was the Passover meal this made sense to them as they would be giving something to the poor during the Passover

8. The disciples sang a Hymn at the end of the meal. This was in keeping of the tradition of Passover where a song would be sung

9. When Jesus broke the bread and passed it and when he took the cup and passed it Jesus explained the significance of the item he was passing. This is what took place during the Passover. Each item of the Passover meal would be brought out and explained and the theological and redemptive significance would be explained

- The father of the family would explain the significance of each element for the family

The point is obvious. Jesus took the Passover meal with his disciples

Conclusion

Christ was sovereign and in control over every step

- He told Judas what was going to happen before it happened
- He kept the religious leaders at bay
- He kept Judas guessing until he released Judas to carry out his evil desires
- He followed the traditions that allowed himself to be with His disciples on Passover and institute the Lord's table
- He gave himself over to the religious leaders to be the sacrifice for sin
- He laid down His life

In every way God demonstrated his perfect control. Friends when life feels out of control turn to the one who works all things after His perfect plan

