

“Christ’s Final Passover, Part 2” Matthew 26:17-29, Sermon Notes
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Saving Grace Bible Church
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“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.”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.”²⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you;²⁸ for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.”²⁹ “But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.” (Matt. 26:20-29 NAS)

Introduction

This truly is a difficult season demanding wisdom, patience, courage, and conviction

Even as the number of virus cases are spiking up in Florida, we are still pressing forward to have the Lord’s table

- We do this trusting God in His providence
- We do this as an act of obedience to Him
- We do this not to flaunt our liberties or to ignore concerns but because in God’s directing, we are in this text this morning and we are going to respond to God’s Word whatever it might cost us
- And it is good to train our hearts to trust God and honor Him even in the face of our fears and uncertainties

It is our joy to come together on this Lord’s day to remember the death of Jesus Christ

- More specifically to celebrate the death of our Lord
- Such sentiment seems strange. But when we remember what was accomplished at the cross, we have great reason to rejoice

We get the opportunity this morning to come back together and partake of the Lord’s table

- This is a difficult time and season to take of the Lord’s table
- As the Covid virus persists, and in many areas it is increasing, we have sought to be careful on how and when we would return to our practice of taking of the Lord’s Supper
- We have been looking at the details and watching what was taking place trying to make careful and informed decisions to protect the body
- As you will see we are moving forward in a way that will protect and honor the cautious and vulnerable and yet allow us to keep functioning and carrying out the work of the ministry

- I will explain more when it comes time to passing the elements

We move forward then not carelessly but dependently as we respond to God's providence

As we learned last week the Lord has a purpose in all things. As He works all things together for good

"And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to become* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;" (Rom. 8:28-29 NAS)

- Even as He worked in establishing his earthly ministry in Galilee so that the traditions of the Galileans would allow for Him to take the sacrifice with his disciples and be the sacrifice in Jerusalem the next afternoon
- God works in all the details to accomplish His perfect will and we have the joy of seeing His good hand at work even this morning. As we get to partake of the Lord's table together in the first time in many months

As we have seen our Lord is in control of all the details which are taking place at this point

- He has told His disciples about His pending death
- He has kept the meeting place for the Passover secret from everyone
- Only to reveal the details as they arrive
- He sent His two most trusted disciples to arrange the details
- He was directing all things to this point where He could partake of Passover with His disciples for one last time

Body

Preparation for the Lord's Table – Matt 26:20-25

"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."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*."

Now it is Thursday night of the Passover week. Jesus and His disciples are eating the Passover meal

What is remarkable in this whole account is how few details are recorded in the gospels over an ordinance which the Church has held in high esteem

- Over the years people have been very particular about their traditions around the Lord's table

Listen to this list of questions brought out by Kent Hughes: pg 779-80

- Should we have the Lord's Supper, as it is here, during the middle of a seemingly substantial meal?

- Should Jesus alone be allowed to break the bread and distribute it? If so, who represents Jesus to do that work today?
- Should only men be allowed to partake as there were only men at this meal?
- Should only 12 men be allowed to partake? Should it only be the leadership?
- Should we have this meal in a home rather than the Church?
- Should we use wine?
- Should we pray before the elements or after the elements?
- Do we take it sitting down, lying down, or standing up?
- Is communion closed to just members of the Church?
- Is it open to be taken by any who profess faith in Christ?
- Should the leadership of the Church, or the ushers or deacons in the Church, restrict the serving of the communion elements?
 - If so, what are the restrictions?
- Should we have one loaf by which all the bread is taken from or can we have multiple loafs?
- Do the elements represent Christ or do they become Christ?

On and on the questions go. And over the years Churches have taken strong stands on these questions even leading to condemnation as heresy and then men put to death because of their disagreements

What is remarkably obvious when you read through these details few if any of these questions are answered. In actuality there is very little said

- *In fact, you do not have a prescriptive account here. Instead you have a descriptive account of what has taken place*

So I have no intention to add more to the scriptures than what is here. We will address here what is said and go as far as the text goes. In the end we will find that the Lord lays down for us these three principles

- The Purity Practiced Before Partaking of the Lord's Table
- The Prayer Given During the Lord's Table
- The Purpose of the Lord's Table

So from this text we will see the Purity, Prayer, and Purpose around the Lord's Table

And BTW last week we looked at the Preparation of the Lord's Table

- I just couldn't tell you last week we were only going to cover 1 point

Let us start by looking at The Purity Practiced Before Partaking of the Lord's Table

Now in Matthew's account he picks up his account of the Passover during the middle of the feast

- The meal has already begun at this point

Matt 26:20-21

"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)

- The meal had already started

- Jesus and the disciples are at the table having reclined and they were partaking of the meal
- Here it was in the evening

Matthew jumps right in and picks up where Jesus is about to confront Judas and expose him as the traitor

- Chapter 26 is about the hostility towards Christ
- That hostility from the religious leaders, that hostility from Judas, and even the unbelief manifested in one of the true disciples
- We will see all of this by the time we conclude this chapter

Now I want to set the picture for you of what is happening here:

- Jesus and his disciples are in the city limits of Jerusalem
- They are at the house of a man that Peter and John met earlier in the day
- They are using his upper room for the Passover meal
 - Likely this was a room prepared for a Galilean to rent for the Passover

Now John 13:1ff describes the whole meal starting with Jesus John 13:5-11

“Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.⁶ And so He came to Simon Peter. He said to Him, "Lord, do You wash my feet?"⁷ Jesus answered and said to him, "What I do you do not realize now, but you shall understand hereafter."⁸ Peter said to Him, "Never shall You wash my feet!" Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me."⁹ Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."¹⁰ Jesus said to him, "He who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all *of you*."¹¹ For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, "Not all of you are clean." (Jn. 13:5-11 NAS)

- The meal started with a ceremonial washing
- They were out in the world and needed to be cleaned. But they did not need to be entirely washed as they were already cleaned but needed simply to have their feet washed
- The idea is that Peter you are saved, and when you come in to be cleansed you do not need to be resaved. You are already a child of God. You need to repent of your sin and have your feet cleansed but you are already pure
- So the believer coming to the Lord's table is to confess sin. To be ready to partake of the Lord's table
- So that meal started with a ceremonial cleansing of all parties who attended

Matthew skips this account and goes right into the meal and highlights another cleansing of the group. He highlights the exposing of Judas and thus removing the unbeliever from their midst

By this point in Matthew's account, they had already started into the formality of the Passover Seder. There is not much recorded in the scriptures about this

- The First Cup, known as the cup of blessing was partaken of and passed around
 - This first cup of wine would be taken together by the group
 - During this time there would be praise directed towards God and thanksgiving would be given
- Cleansing and purity

- Eating of the Bitter Herbs. Bread would be broken and passed and they would dip the bread into the bitter herbs and remember the tears and bitterness of Israel under the slavery to Egypt
- Then a second cup of wine would be given and the father would explain the meaning of the Passover and the meaning of the meal and the meaning of each of the elements which are partaken of during the meal
- Then they would sing a song. Most of the time it would be from the Hallel Psalms which are from Psalm 113-118. They would sing one or two of these Psalms as a hymn
- They would then partake of the Passover lamb

It is likely that we are at this point in the Passover Seder. The main part of the meal is being partaken of

- Soon, Jesus is going to take some bread and wine and draw attention to the significance of these elements before His disciples

But before Jesus does that, He needs to purify the group by confronting the unbeliever who will betray Him. The one who had purposed to betray Him. This is where we pick up in Matt 26:21-25

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

“And being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, "Surely not I, Lord?"

Each of the disciples are in shock at this point as they are eating together. They cannot imagine which one of them would betray Christ

- And each of them begins by asking if they were the one who was going to do it

You need to understand this was a traumatizing event for the disciples. It produced a robust discussion around the table

- Some might even call it “intense fellowship”
- Let us just say they were no longer willing to greet each other with a holy kiss
- They started to debate amongst themselves about their contributions and importance to the Kingdom

In light of Judas being exposed, Luke 22 records that the disciples started to debate amongst themselves which one was the greatest

- SO while Judas is being exposed, the rest of the disciples are engaged in proving to one another why they could not be the betrayer because they are so important to the Kingdom of God

“And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing” (Lk. 22:23 NAS)

“And there arose also a dispute among them *as to* which one of them was regarded to be greatest” (Lk. 22:24 NAS)

As the chaos ensued our Lord was asked by John who was the one who was going to betray him

- This is where Matthew's account picks up:

"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*." (Matt. 26:22-25 NAS)

- Judas picks up on the social cues at this point and says the same thing as the rest of the disciples
- Surely it is not I Lord
- At this point his heart is filled with hypocrisy
- Even if he truly could not see the evil intentions and desires of his heart, he was still filled with hypocrisy

He knows that he has betrayed Christ to the religious leaders. He knows that he has the money in hand already. He knows he is simply looking for opportunity

But when he says "surely it is not I lord" *I don't think Judas is aware of the depths of his wicked heart*

- I think Judas actually believed this. I don't think he was pretending here. I believe he had been carried along by sin and was in the grips of sinful desire and he could not see clearly how far sin had taken him
 - Why could he not see it? Because he had not yet crossed the line
- He does not become aware of it until after the arrest, trial, and condemnation of Christ

"Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, ⁴saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See *to that yourself!*" (Matt. 27:3-4 NAS)

I suspect at this point that Judas did not see what was happening in his heart

- I suspect that he did not know what was taking place
- He could not see the subtle decline in his actions
- He could not see how he was opening himself up to great sin
- Clearly, he knew what steps he had taken to that point. Clearly, he could have seen the anger he had at the woman on Saturday for her wasteful actions
 - But he was blinded by greed and self-righteousness

He had not yet actually betrayed Christ so his actions were not that bad

- And after all he was justified because Jesus was not paying attention to the financial resources which were being given to the ministry or which could be used in other ways
- And he was still in control

Judas did not see that every step along the way he was making himself more and more vulnerable to satanic influence or control. He was making decisions which would expose him to greater satanic deception

- By this point he was too far in. *He had already made a series of decisions and believed a series of ideas that had pitted himself against the son of God*
- Now all he had to do was act

Judas is like the man who gives into adultery

- First he sees a woman he is attracted to and smiles at her and she smiles back
- He then has a conversation with her and it goes well
- They exchange phone numbers they talk more

The whole time the man is saying, I am loyal to my wife. I have no problem here. There is nothing going on. We are just friends and there is nothing wrong with our relationship

- The man setups up another meeting with the lady
- They bump into each other and have another good time
- During the conversation they both start sharing more personal information. Maybe even marriage struggles, fears, and burdens. They both express their sympathy for the other's plight
- *He starts to think, this gal gets me. She knows my struggles. She laughs at my jokes. She listens to me. She really cares for me. She is more attractive than my wife. She is more caring than my wife. She is more loving than my wife. She is better than my wife*

And if anyone ever confronted the man at this point, he would deny anything was happening and there is no way he would violate his relationship with his wife. He would present the relationship as a plutonic relationship between two friends who are sharing their burdens about life

But all along the man does not see how his heart is slipping into greater sin

This reminds me of a Steve Green Song – Guard your Hearts

What appears to be harmless glance?
Can turn to romance and homes are divided
Feelings that should never have been awakened within
Tearing the heart in two, listen, I beg of you

Guard your heart, guard your heart
Don't trade it for treasure, don't give it away
Guard your heart, guard your heart
As a payment for pleasure, it's high price to pay

The man at this point has given in to his hearts desires but he is trying to hold on to a form of godliness. He is not guarding his heart. He is thinking poorly. He is taking many steps away from the truth. With each step he moves further away from the truth. The whole time believing he is still upright

This eventually comes tumbling down. The man arranges a meeting or has a discussion with the woman and one thing leads to another and the man who would never commit adultery is now an adulterer

- For weeks, months, or years he thought I would never do that but with a series of small, seemingly insignificant steps, he opens himself to greater evil and gives into the temptation
- The devil is patient
- He has no problem dangling little temptations out in front of us to get us to creep further towards him

The hard heart will not see the subtle drift into evil until it was too late

This is what happens to Judas

- He had a series of events which pulled him away from faith in Christ
- I even suspect it began with Jesus telling the disciples He was going to die and Judas realizing his opportunity for glory was fading away
- By the time Mary is honoring Jesus in Simon the leper's house Judas has enough with the display of opulent worship
- His heart filled with greed is ripe to betray Christ
- He takes one more step and agrees to a price and plan to have Christ arrested
- John 13:27

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

- I would suspect up to that point Judas did not think he would actually carry out the evil
- He thought he was still in control of his heart
- But he did not see that the decisions he had made, had made him vulnerable to Satan's influence
 - He was walking in regular unbelief
 - He did not believe the message about Christ
 - He was stealing from the money box
 - He had made arrangements with the money changers
 - His life was filled with unbelief and ungodliness and neither he or the other disciples around could see it
 - The other disciples could not see it because they did not know until later what was going on. The details were hidden. *Judas could not see it because He did not think he had yet done anything wrong*

Satan comes in and takes the natural godless behaviors of Judas and lights them up. If each one of Judas' thoughts and actions to this point were like fuel mist in the air, Satan is the one who brought the match to ignite him to carry out the evil in his heart

- Judas likely left filled with pride – who is this guy to make me look bad in front of everyone. If he knew I was going to betray him then why didn't he confront me in private?
- Filled with self-love – I will show him
- Filled with greed – I will get what I deserve

Satan filling all these carnal channels of self-significance carries Judas along

“But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust” (Jas. 1:14 NAS)

So the Lord purified the group before he partook of the Lord's Table

- Friends, by implication the Lord's table is for believers
- Judas is removed at this point

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

When we come to the Lord's table those who partake it are those who believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ. They have confessed their sins and they believe that He is the Son of God

- They have placed their trust and confidence in Him
- Those who take of the table must be believers

Also by implication we understand that they come prepared. They have confessed sin and sought to repent of any known sin in their lives

Prayer During the Lord's Table

Matt 26:26-27

“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." ²⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;”

Now at this point Jesus does something never seen before in the Passover

- He changes the tradition
- No male father in all of history had the authority to do what He is about to do

The father would explain what was happening

- The father would introduce the elements and guide the meal through each stage
- The father would lead the meal, lead the discussions, lead the music
- But the father must stick to the traditions

Here Jesus changes the traditions

- Before he takes the elements, He prays
- Someone might say at this point “see we are to pray first and then take the elements”
- There is no command here. This is descriptive of what took place not prescriptive
- What we see is that Jesus prayed over each element
- BTW that is what we do as well
- There is no command to pray first then partake. There is a pattern. You would not be wrong to pray first nor would you be more right to pray first
- On the other hand, you would not be wrong to pray after
- The reason is that there is no command here. There is only an example of what our Lord did

With that Jesus takes the elements, the bread and the cup and He prepares them and prays over them and then explains their significance

- *This is where Jesus takes the Lord's table and replaces the Jewish Seder*
- He takes the Passover meal and replaces it with the Lord's table

Now get this, when you recognize this, you have only one of two responses towards Christ. Either you love Him and honor Him in faith and yield to His authority. Or you get angry and reject him and turn away. You are going to fall into one of these two camps

Partaking of the Lord's Table

"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."²⁷ And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;²⁸ for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.²⁹ "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:26-29 NAS)

Now by this time when Jesus takes the bread we are coming to the third cup of wine which was the cup of blessing

- Jesus starts by breaking bread and passing it to His disciples and He says "Take, eat; this is My body."

Now it has been concluded by some that Jesus was teaching that the bread was actually His body. They would teach that each time we partake of the Lord's table we are actually eating the body of Jesus Christ

- That in a mystical sense the elements actually become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ
- It may taste a lot like Matza and Grape Juice but it is actually the body and blood of Jesus

And those who want to spurn us for holding to a Historical Grammatical Hermeneutic. A hermeneutic which emphasizes the normal and literal use of language. *They love to say if we are consistent with our hermeneutic then we must believe the bread is the actual body of Jesus*

But not so fast. We take the normal use of language. And we understand the context. Clearly when Jesus broke bread in front of the disciples and he said this is my body, He was speaking of the bread representing his body. Any 5-year-old would see that

- Jesus did not break off a finger and pass it around
- He broke bread and passed it
- He did not say he was making that bread into His body
- The bread represented His body and if you were sitting there at that meal that would have been your understanding

Clearly there is no magic or mysticism to this. The Bread represents the Lord Jesus Christ

- It represents His perfect life
- His perfect life of obedience to the father
- His perfect life under the law of God
- His willingly laying down His life for us
- His perfect love in submission
- His perfect righteousness

By taking the Bread we are reminded of our vital union with Christ

- We are dependent upon Him for all things
- We are able to stand in Him and through Him
- We are covered by Him and stand in the safety He supplies
 - While in some moments our earthly comforts and joys may be in flux and at risk of loss, our eternal destiny is unshaken in Jesus Christ

I don't think there is any significance in that the bread is broken. Other than each one was to partake of a piece. The significance is in the bread not in how the bread was distributed

What is most important is the reminder of our relationship to Jesus Christ

- He is the one who is most important
- He is central to our faith
- He is the one we believe upon

The second element is the cup

- He takes the cup and gives thanks and passes it

"And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you;²⁸ for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."

- The cup reminds us of the shedding of blood for the remissions of sin
- The Passover would be a stark reminder of the shedding of blood
- As gallons upon gallons of blood trickled down the side of the mountain the blood would remind people of death
- It would remind them of the price of sin
- As the Lambs blood was spread on the door post, which acted as a covering for sin, so now the cup reminds us of the same truth
- Death is a shocking display of payment for sin
- The blood trickling down the side of the mountain running away from the temple would be a stark reminder of death for sin
- Here when we take the cup we are reminded of this

What does it mean to be the blood of the covenant?

“So Moses took the blood and sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words." (Exod. 24:8 NAS)

- Under the first covenant God promised life to those who obeyed it. If you keep my Words you will live, if you disobey you will die
- Israel received the law and the covenant thinking they would obey it
- The new covenant is greater. If you will turn to Christ and believe you will have a new heart and be covered in the righteousness of Christ and have your sins forgiven
- Just as in the first covenant blood was shed for the ratification of the covenant, so too in the new covenant. Blood was shed to ratify the new covenant
- BTW the Old is not nullified, rather it is fulfilled. And BTW the new is not different it is just realized
 - THE OT saint is saved in the same way – By faith alone
 - The Old Covenant was not a covenant to gain eternal salvation but rather on how to live a fruitful and prosperous life
 - BTW a fruitful and prosperous life that would only come out of one who believed in God

Let me show you Moses explanation of the Old Covenant – Let us read Deuteronomy 30 together

- Jesus here reminds us of the covenant made as we partake of the Lord’s Table. Those who believe upon him take of the cup remembering the death of Christ for the remission of sins

He says here it is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins

- Now it is important to note here the particular work of our Lord on the cross

Lev 17:11-14

'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.' (Lev. 17:11 NAS)

Conclusion

Let us prepare our hearts to take of the Lord’s table this morning

- We begin with confession and seeking to purify our hearts before we begin