

#### **THE PASSION #4 - THE LAST SUPPER:**

We're in a series on the last week of the life of Jesus. The week that culminated in his death, burial and resurrection. Throughout history, it has become known as Holy Week. A time to focus on the passion or suffering of Jesus, which is why we're calling this series "The Passion." In that week, Jesus had a last night. He knew it was going to be his last one. So, what did he do?

**<sup>12</sup> On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"<sup>13</sup> So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. <sup>14</sup> Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' <sup>15</sup> He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there."**

**<sup>16</sup> The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So, they prepared the Passover. <sup>17</sup> When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. <sup>18</sup> While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."<sup>19</sup> They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?"<sup>20</sup> "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. <sup>21</sup> The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." <sup>22</sup> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."<sup>23</sup> Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.<sup>24</sup> "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. <sup>25</sup> "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."<sup>26</sup> When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.**

**<sup>27</sup> "You will all fall away," Jesus told them, "for it is written:" 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' <sup>28</sup> But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."<sup>29</sup> Peter declared, "Even if all fall away, I will not."<sup>30</sup> "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "today—yes, tonight—before the rooster crows twice you yourself will disown me three times."<sup>31</sup> But Peter insisted emphatically, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the others said the same. Mark 14: 12-31.**

Mark notes here that the disciples are anxious to prepare for the Passover meal. In verse thirteen, Jesus gives his disciples some kind of secret instructions. A man carrying a water jar would have been an unusual spectacle since women normally fetched water. Finding the room is like finding the donkey when Jesus comes to Jerusalem. The room appears, as Jesus knows everything in advance and is in control of what is happening.

**So, they prepared the Passover. "Owners of homes in Jerusalem were obligate to provide space for pilgrims to eat their Passover lamb in the city". David E Garland NIV Application Commentary, Mark.**

The most popular painting of the Last Supper depicted the disciples sitting serenely around a table. Judas is often identifiable as dark and shifty eyed. Marks depiction of this meal differs significantly from these portraits. The most appropriate portrait of the Last Supper would paint each disciple's face with a look of horror. They eat and drink with a terrible question hanging over their heads. The central question preoccupying their minds is not the fate of their master Jesus, but who might betray him.

Jesus reminds his disciples how bad this act will be, <sup>21</sup> **The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." Mark 14: 21.**

Table fellowship had more significance for Jews than just a social gathering. Eating bread with someone barred one from hostile acts against that person. Eating together was evidence of peace, trust, forgiveness and brotherhood. To betray the one who had given you bread was a horrendous act. <sup>9</sup> **Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me. Psalm 41:9.**

The head of a Jewish family took the bread eaten at every meal, lifted it up, and said, "Praise be Thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe who causes bread to come forth from the earth." Makes our few words of thanks for a meal seem a little small. Then the bread was broken and distributed, mediating a blessing to each one who ate. Jesus gives the traditional blessing of the bread a new twist by saying, "this is my body." In other words, he gives himself. When Jesus breaks the bread and distributes it to his disciples, it means what has happened to this bread will happen to him.

What is so significant is that Jesus uses an article of food so simple and so universal that the disciples can never take bread, bless it, and break it, without thinking of the last night they were together with their Lord. Just as our memories are triggered by something that reminds us of the last moments we spent with a loved one, these disciples can never eat another meal without thinking about what Jesus did for them on the cross. Fast forward to our time and this is what should occupy our minds and spirits when taking communion. Remembering what Jesus did for us on the cross.

The Passover was not intended to be a gratifying, chest pumping memento of God's deliverance of Israel. The celebration was meant to place each generation in touch with that event and make it a present reality. It celebrates what the Lord did for me. <sup>8</sup> **On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.'** <sup>9</sup> **This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that this law of the Lord is to be on your lips. For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. Exodus 13: 8-9.**

In the same way, the Lord's supper reminds us of what the Lord has done for us and makes his death and his presence a living reality. I like how Hunter points this out for us, he says that "remembering is not to entertain a pallid idea of a past event in one's mind, but to make the event present so that it controls the will and becomes potent in our lives for good". A. M. Hunter, Jesus, Lord and Saviour.

It reminds us of who we are, what our story is, what our values are and who claims us as his own. Amazingly, the Lord's Supper activates all five of our physical senses. We see, hear, taste, smell and touch what it meant for Jesus to die for us. It also binds the past, present and future together. We look back to Jesus' Last Supper and experience the beginning of the new covenant with God. We experience Jesus' death for us and the power of our sins being forgiven in the present.

We also look forward to the future celebration in God's Kingdom, when all will acknowledge Jesus as Lord. When Jesus distributes the wine to his disciples, he solemnly assures that he will be vindicated by God and drink anew in the Kingdom of God. His words contain an implicit promise that those who shared his table in the time of his obscurity would also share it in the time of His Glory.

If Judas participated with the other disciples in the meal and there is no evidence in the text that he did not, then eating the bread and drinking the cup must be internalised for it to remember Jesus. The new covenant must be written on the hearts of God's People. <sup>31</sup> **"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. <sup>32</sup> It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them, declares the Lord. <sup>33</sup> "This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. Jeremiah 31:31-33.**

The young church at Corinth got this all wrong. They thought that by participating in the Lord's Supper, it made them immune from suffering and from God's judgement. <sup>26</sup> **For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 1 Corinthians 11: 26.** The Apostle Paul had to remind them that when they ate his bread and drank his cup, they proclaimed the Lord's death until he returned. They were reminded that participating in the death of Christ meant that life would not necessarily be easy and would still require them to make sacrifices. The Lord's Supper is not a get out of jail card.

Today we must each ask ourselves as the disciples did, "could I betray Christ"? This idea of self-examination is preserved in Paul's comments on the Lord's Supper in Corinthians. <sup>27</sup> **So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. <sup>29</sup> For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. 1 Corinthians 11: 27-29.**

So, what happened next? The final act, of Jesus' last night. Jesus went to one of his favourite places. A place he went to often, to withdraw, to think, to rest, and most of all, to pray. It was called Gethsemane. Gethsemane was a garden or orchard on the lower slope of the Mount of Olives overlooking the city. The name Gethsemane is Hebrew and means "oil press," which refers to it as a place for squeezing oil from olives. It's still there to this day. It was his last night on earth, and that's where he wanted to go.

The scene is recorded in detail in the Bible. Again, let's read from Matthew's biography:

**<sup>36</sup> Then Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." <sup>37</sup> He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and he began to be sorrowful and troubled. <sup>38</sup> Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me." <sup>39</sup> Going a little farther, he fell with his face to the ground and prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." Matthew 26:36-39**

In Luke's description of the scene, there is a detail added to Matthew's account. **<sup>44</sup> And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. Luke 22:44.** That was not figurative language. Jesus was sweating blood. There's a medical name for what was happening with Jesus. It's called "hematohidrosis." It's a very rare condition. It can happen when someone is suffering extreme levels of stress.

According to the Christian faith, the death of Jesus wasn't just a death. It was a representative death. A substitutionary death. The death of Jesus would involve the taking of the sin of all humanity upon himself. He sweats drops of blood and then went to the cross. And then, the last night of Jesus ended. He rose from that prayer, and into the garden came a mob of soldiers led by Judas. It was time. That is where we will start the clock next week. The trial and execution of the Son of God.

It will come upon you, and you won't even know that it's your last one. The only way your last night can be about Jesus is if you make it about Jesus now. Before that last night. He's prepared a place. He's washed your feet. He's offered you forgiveness. He's paid the price for your sins. He's gone to the cross. All for you.

Now the question is whether you are going to make it all about him. You can. A prayer that if you want to pray it, it will bring Jesus into your last night in a way that will change your life. Do with it as you will. But if it's never been a prayer you've prayed before, I hope you will pray it today. Dear Jesus: I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died for my sins. I want to turn from the way I've been living. I now invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust you as my forgiver and follow you as my leader.