

Exegetical Notes, Matthew 26:17-30

“The Last Meal”

Prepared by Charles H. Jensen, Pastor, Cornerstone Fellowship
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610-384-1375
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- Covenant is a very important Biblical concept. It is the way that God defines his relationship with his holy people. Throughout the Bible God establishes contract, covenants, with his people that determine how they will relate to each other. God is always faithful to these agreements. He never fails to honor his part of the deal. However, it is never so with his people. They always break the contract!
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- In Jeremiah 31, the Prophet speaks of the day when God will offer his people a new covenant that will not be like the others. It will be a covenant that they will embrace with both their minds and their hearts. Jeremiah says that this new covenant will be different than the others because it will be based entirely upon the grace of God as he "forgives sin and remembers it no more."
- This promise of a new covenant based upon God's grace is repeated in Hebrew 8 and 9. There, it is explained that this new covenant becomes available to us through the offering of this one great sacrifice, Jesus Christ.
- Therefore, the blood of Jesus, his poured out life, becomes the symbol of the granting of this new covenant of grace. Only possible through Jesus Christ. It is important to understand that the Bible specifically denies any other covenant. There is, therefore, no other way to enter life saving relationship with God except through Jesus Christ.
- Again, notice that Jesus offers thanksgiving before offering the cup to his disciples.

- Jesus then promises that he will not drink wine with them again until he does so in the Millennial Kingdom of God. This is both a promise to be with them again and a reminder of the truth he spoke to them earlier about his impending death.

Verse 30

When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives

- Traditionally, the Passover meal is ended with the singing of some of the great praise Psalms, specifically Psalms 115-118. This is apparently how Jesus and his disciples ended the Passover meal.
- Following that they adjourned to the Mount of Olives.

(These exegetical notes are the foundational study for the sermon entitled *The Last Meal*. They have been prepared by the Reverend Doctor Charles H. Jensen, Senior Pastor at Cornerstone Fellowship, Coatesville Pennsylvania. All rights are reserved by Dr. Jensen and *Cornerstone Fellowship*.)

Exegetical Notes, Matthew 26:17-30

“The Last Meal”

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Matthew 26:17-30

(“There is no more concrete symbol than body and blood.” ---Dallas Willard.)

Verse 17-19

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?” He replied, “Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.’” So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

- The first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread is the 14th day of the Hebrew month of Nisan. The Passover meal is traditionally eaten on this day. However, since the Passover meal is not eaten until after sunset on that day, according to Hebrew counting, as the new day begins at sunset and not sunrise, the Passover is eaten on the 15th day of Nisan.
- Preparations for the Passover meal are elaborate. Thus the disciples were concerned about having proper time to prepare.
- Jesus’ instructions indicate that he had prearranged the place where the meal would be eaten with the owner of the room. His words of instruction to the disciples, “My appointed time is near...” are spoken to remind the disciples, not the owner of the room, of the significance of this particular Passover (see Matthew 26:1-5). However, their reaction to his instructions still indicates their failure to understand that anything unusual is afoot.

Verse 20-24

When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, “I tell you the truth, one of you will betray

me.” They were sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely not I, Lord?” Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 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.”

- This must have been a truly upsetting event for the disciples. To this day, in Middle Eastern cultures, to eat a meal with someone is an act of friendship. To a Jew, now as then, eating the Passover meal was a sacred event. These words coming at this time would have been very shocking. Thus, in turn, the disciples began to declare their loyalty to Jesus.
- However, Judas had already set the act of betrayal in motion. See Matthew 26:14-16. He must have wondered how Jesus knew what he had done. Or maybe, to this point, he thought Jesus was just bluffing.
- The dipping of bread or meat into a bowl which normally contained a fruit sauce and handing it to another at the table to eat is still a Middle Eastern custom that indicates special regard and deep friendship. Apparently Jesus did this, handing the bread to Judas as he did.

Verse 25

Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely, not I Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “Yes, it is you.”

- Having received the bread dipped in the bowl from Jesus’ hand, Judas is compelled to say what all the other disciples have already been saying. However, what he says has a significant difference. All the others call Jesus ‘Lord.’ Judas calls him respectfully, ‘Rabbi,’ teacher. This implies a considerable difference in their understanding of exactly who Jesus is.
- Jesus then indicates, perhaps privately to Judas alone, that he knows for certain that Judas is the one who will betray him. The Greek reading of Jesus’ response is less certain than the English translation given here. However, it was spoken to tell Judas that Jesus knew what he was going to do.

Verse 26

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

- All of the Gospels, and the writings of Paul, record Jesus' use of this symbol. The bread represents his body which would be sacrificed for his disciples in every age.
- In each of the Gospels, and in Paul's writings, Jesus prays a prayer of thanksgiving over the bread. The Greek word for thanksgiving is Eucharist. Thus, the Lord's Supper is sometimes called the Eucharist.
- In each of the Gospels, and in Paul's writings, the disciples are told to eat the bread representing the body of Christ as an act of accepting the truth found in the symbol; that his body was given in sacrifice for them.

Verse 27-29

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

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