

Episode #930 Matthew 26 Part 3-The Passover Supper

I. The purpose of the gospel of Matthew is to present Jesus as the Christ, the King of Israel. It is another grand treatise like John to prove to Israel Who Jesus really is. It is the book of being “in Israel,” in contrast to believers today who are “in Christ.”

II. The Lord had spoken of His coming death, and Judas apparently decided He was losing it and it was time to get out. He had gone to the chief priests and asked for money to betray Him.

III. Preparing for the Passover. Matthew 26:17-20.

A. Verse 17. The “first” day is *protos*, the chief day of unleavened bread.

1. Compare with verse two, and we can see that this was the day before Passover, not the first day of unleavened bread, which came the day after Passover. The Old Testament makes a sharp distinction between these two feasts, though they come back-to-back, and never calls the one by the name of the other. The New Testament is not so particular, however, and here the whole festival season is called “Unleavened Bread,” though in reality that did not begin until the day after Passover. We have similar sloppiness in our references to holidays. How many people say, “It is Christmas,” when in fact Christmas is still days or even weeks away? So they would call one feast by the name of the other, as is clearly done here. Yet they marked it out as Passover by calling it the first or chief day of Unleavened Bread, and Passover when the lamb was killed was indeed the most important day, far above the feast that followed it. It was on the 14th of Nisan. They were preparing on the 13th, the day before.
2. “Bread” is implied here, “the chief of unleavened.”
3. “Came” is *proserchomai*, “approached,” as to a King.
4. “Want” is *thelo*, where do you desire or wish?
5. Every indication is that they actually did eat the Passover. In seeking to support the modern Christian ritual that comes from this but is separate from the Passover, many try to deny that this meal He shared with His disciples was actually the Passover. Yet every indication of the passage is that it was. Not only so, but the passage acts like it was obviously so, and no one should think any differently than that this was the Passover. Those who try to make out differently do so with an axe to grind, and often do not base their arguments on the Word of God, but on their own preferences. This is true, even though they were apparently doing it a day early, John 18:28. The Old Testament gave permission for those who could not keep Passover on the proper day to do it a month later, Numbers 9:9-11. Could not the One Who was the Lord of the Sabbath, Matthew 12:8, and Who is also Lord of the Passover decide to keep it a day early?
6. “Passover” is the Greek *pascha*, meaning the Passover. The spring Christian festival is called Pascha or “Passover” in most languages in the Christian community. Only in English and German have we jettisoned this word for “Easter.” Yet what the Lord was celebrating was no Christian holiday, but the ancient Passover of the Jews, which no Gentile has any right or place to celebrate, believer in Christ or not.

- B. Verse 18. “A certain man” is used in places where one cannot recall a name, or where the name is not important. This is much like when Boaz approaches the nearer kinsman and calls him by name, but our record makes it “such a one.” The name is left out on purpose. Perhaps here, it is so that none can try to “find” this man’s house and claim that a bread and wine ritual kept there is more meaningful than one kept anywhere else. In Luke 22:10, we learn that their finding of this man was Divinely guided by following a man bearing a pitcher of water. “Teacher” is the *didaskalos*, the Master-Teacher who has disciples. “Time” means proper time or season. “At hand” is not the word John used when he said that the kingdom of God is at hand, but a different word. This word means near or imminent. “Passover” is *pascha* again, the second time in this passage. They were clearly indicating to him that that is what they wanted to prepare for, not just a common supper. This passage marks out most clearly that this was indeed Passover. No word for “house,” could be “at your place.”
- C. Verse 19. They followed His plan, as good and obedient disciples always ought to do. “Passover” again is *pascha*. The Scripture record could not make it clearer. They made ready the Passover. Then when they came and sat down, what did they sit down to eat? The Passover, of course! The only reason to deny this is lack of faith, due to having an axe to grind. The record is as clear as could be.
- D. Verse 20. “Evening” is *opsios*, meaning either the fourth watch of the day, or the time (in spring and summer) between 6:00 and sunset. Basically, they came before sunset, in order to celebrate the Passover after sunset. “Sat down” is our way of putting it, and our way of doing it. Better would be that He lay down with them, or reclined at table, since they lay down to eat. Bullinger tries to make out that this means it could not have been the Passover, since that was to be eaten standing, referring to Exodus 12:11. Yet that says to have your loins girded (as for hard work), your shoes on (ready to leave), and your staff in your hand (ready for travel). Yet one can do all these things sitting or reclining, just as well as standing. Notice that they are called “the twelve” a second time, rather than “the twelve disciples.”

IV. Revelation of the Traitor. Matthew 26:21-25.

- A. Verse 21. As they were eating what? Clearly, the Passover, as we have had it time and again in the passage. Passover was eaten starting at sunset, which for them was the dividing line between the 14th and the 15th of Nisan. Christ celebrated the Passover with a lamb (or kid) in the evening, and then the next day He died as the ultimate Passover sacrifice Himself. “Assuredly” is again His solemn affirmation, *amen* I say unto you. He had revealed before that He would be betrayed, but had not said by whom. In a very real way, He was betrayed by the leaders of His nation, who ought to have given Him justice. That alone would have satisfied His prediction that He was to be betrayed. Yet here He reveals to them that the betrayal will hit much closer than that, and that one of them will deliver Him up!
- B. Verse 22. These men had lived together, worked together, learned together, and grown together for three years. Eleven of them had grown to love their Lord better and better over those years, and they had not suspected that a twelfth had only been pretending. The thought that this was the case quite naturally caused them great sorrow. This was a rather pathetic question, showing they utterly believed Him. It is good that, rather than anger and indignation, their first reaction was sorrow and self-introspection. In Greek they say, “Perchance I is it, Lord?”

- C. Verse 23. “Dipped” is *embapto*, related to the word for baptism, here clearly meaning “to dip in.” The original meaning of the bapt family of words was “to dip.”
1. Apparently, this was said at the very time they were doing it, to mark Judas out. No doubt they all had been dipping in the dish, if they had only one. If they had more than one dish for dipping, then surely those near the Lord, including John and Judas, were using the same dish He was. This may have narrowed it down, but it only identified who it was if they both dipped at the same time. Unless the Lord just meant it in a generic sense, emphasizing that one of those closest to Him, using the same dish as He was at that moment, was a traitor, and not as an identifier of Judas specifically.
 2. The Passover meal was to be eaten with bitters, probably not bitter herbs, as some translations make it, but a bitter liquid, either vinegar or wine steeped with wormwood. This made a kind of unpleasant au jus that they would dip the lamb and the bread in. This would not make a very enjoyable meal, but it was not supposed to be enjoyable, but rather a commemoration of the bitterness of their slavery in Egypt which the Lord had rescued them from.
- D. Verse 24. His ministry ends as it was written it would end long before. There was nothing random or unexpected about this. This is how it had to end.
1. Woe is *ouai*, also meaning to beware. This warning was targeted at Judas, as an attempt to generate guilt and Godly sorrow in his heart, leading to submission. Alas, He hardened his heart against all appeals.
 2. “Born” is *gennao*, meaning generated or, in this case, born. We come on people who believe in universal salvation, reconciliation, or restoration. Yet here we read that it would have been good for Judas if he had not been born. As long as this is true, we cannot believe in any salvation of Judas, and if one person is not saved, then there can be no universal salvation or reconciliation.

V. Conclusion: The Lord makes it very clear: whether or not He was celebrating a day early, what He and His disciples were eating was the Passover. Only stubborn unbelief can insist any differently. He told His twelve for the first time that one of them would betray Him. They were all sad at the thought, but of course the Lord knew it was Judas. The Lord’s statement about Judas shows most clearly that there is no Bible doctrine of universalism. Let us never act in such a terrible way as Judas did!