

# The Supper

## Luke 22:7-23

**August 3, 2008**  
**Steve DeWitt**

Our *Journey with Jesus* summer series in Luke brings us this week to Luke 22 and what is known as the Last Supper. The disciples would never have called it that. What we call the Last Supper was to them going to be just another Passover meal. Little did they realize that the symbols and meaning of the Passover meal would be transformed into a simple but profound ceremony known as the Lord's Supper.

### Passover Preparations

*Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.* (Luke 22:7)

The table in front of me is prepared in the traditional setting for a Passover or seder service. We have bread and lamb bone and bitter herbs and other elements all of which have Old Covenant significance.

Some of us might be asking, now what exactly was the Passover meal? The Passover meal was the annual celebration given by God to Israel in celebration of what happened in Egypt the night of the tenth plague. This was the plague which killed every firstborn throughout all Egypt (Exodus 12:3-49). God made special provision for the Jews by telling them to take a lamb, known as the Passover lamb, kill it and take the blood and wipe it on the doorposts of the house. The blood of the lamb allowed the angel of death to "pass over" the home and the family was safe. *The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you...* (Exodus 12:13)

If you know about the Exodus out of Egypt (or ever saw *The 10 Commandments* with Charlton Heston) then you know that the night of the first Passover was the very night they were set free from Egypt and began their journey to the Promised Land.

So God established an annual commemoration known as the Feast of the Passover or the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:14). It is celebrated in Judaism to this day. Luke records in detail the week of the Passover celebration which was also the week of Jesus' death and ultimately, His resurrection.

Last week we studied Jesus and His triumphal entry and His presentation to Israel as Messiah and King. That occurred on Sunday which we call Palm Sunday. Jesus spends all week around the city of Jerusalem; then Thursday comes...

*So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. (Luke 22:8-13)*

We'll not spend much time here other than to note Jesus' covert operations. He only includes Peter and John in the preparations for Passover. They go to Jerusalem not knowing where they are setting up the meal other than that they are looking for a man carrying a water jug. Why would this guy be easy to spot? In the first century, men didn't carry water jugs; that was considered a woman's job. So this would be an easy sign; maybe like us being sent to the mall to find a man with hairy legs wearing a dress. He'd be pretty easy to spot. This jug-carrying man would be their contact and the upper room of his house would be the secret meeting place for the Passover meal. So there is intrigue in the story; what could Jesus be up to? Why would this be cloaked in secrecy?

Verse 3ff. tells us why. Judas has already conspired with the Jewish leaders to betray Jesus into their hands. There is a traitor in Jesus' midst and He knows it. If Jesus announced to everyone where they would be eating Passover, Judas could easily pass that information on to the authorities and the arrest be made.

This meal was too important to risk that. In fact, his time with them in the upper room not only includes the Last Supper but also other very famous events including the institution of the Lord's Supper, the washing of the disciples' feet, the prophecy of Peter's denial, Jesus' High Priestly prayer, the identification of Judas as His betrayer, and key teachings recorded in John chapters 13-17. For Christians, this Passover meal and the events surrounding it are very precious.

So Peter and John find the guy wearing the skirt and he takes them to his home where they prepare the table in the upper room of the home for the Passover meal.

*And when the hour came, he reclined at the table, and the apostles with him. (Luke 22:14)* Let's get this picture in our mind. Da Vinci's famous last supper had them all sitting upright around a fancy table. Good painting, bad history. They *reclined* at the table. The table would have been a short table and the custom was to lean on one arm with pillows there for support.

Meals were a very important part of the culture. There was no such thing as fast food or power lunches. A meal was for fellowship and the last meal of the day, supper, was for family members and guests to relax together. Most people worked in the fields, so not only were they tired, but they were hungry and the prospect of a meal was quite exciting. This meal was particularly special as it was the Passover meal.

*And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide among yourselves. For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. (Luke 22:15-18)*

We are so accustomed to the bread and cup ceremony of Communion that it is often lost on us what Jesus is doing. As they eat the Passover meal, Jesus captures the redemptive symbols of the meal to teach His disciples. This cup in verse 17 is probably the first or second of the four cups. Jesus passes around the cup for them to drink and tells them He would not celebrate the Passover until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. What's that about?

He is referring to a future supper which Revelation calls the marriage supper of the Lamb. *And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage*

*supper of the Lamb.*" (Revelation 19:9) This future, heavenly banquet will celebrate the uniting of Jesus and His church. He knows He is about to die.

In one way you could summarize redemptive history as the story of three suppers. The *Last Supper* celebrated here in the upper room becomes the *Lord's Supper* instituted in the upper room by Jesus (and celebrated for now 2000 years by the Church), which becomes the *Lamb's Supper* that is yet to come and signifies the consummation of redemptive history. *Last Supper. Lord's Supper. Lamb's Supper.*

Now come the words Christians are so familiar with: *And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.* (Luke 22:19)

Part of the Passover meal was eating the unleavened bread. The bread was to be unleavened because Israel ate in a hurry and the bread didn't have to rise. Jesus takes the bread and offers a prayer of thanksgiving for it. Notice what He does with the bread; He breaks it. Why did He break it? Because the bread itself is the symbol of what He wants them to realize.

***This is my body which is given for you.*** There is great controversy about what this means, *this is my body*. Some miss that Jesus did here what He did all the time; He uses a metaphor to teach a principle. For example, Jesus said, *I am the door* or more importantly, *I am the bread of life...* (John 6:35). Was Jesus physically a door? Was He actually a loaf of bread? No. The bread didn't become His actual physical body when He said this. Jesus is using the metaphor to teach a spiritual principle. In this case, the bread was broken. What is bread-breaking a picture of?

It's Thursday night. Jesus' body was hours from being beaten over and over, spit upon, flogged to near death, and then crucified on a Roman Cross where, after His death, His side would be pierced by a spear as well. Bread tearing is a fitting picture, don't you think? His body would be broken; shredded. [Pastor Steve demonstrates the breaking of the bread with actual bread]. Simple but profound.

The next phrase shows the significance of this. This is my body *which is given for you*.

What makes this bread special is what it represents to us. The breaking of His body was done *for us*. He died *for us*. This is the doctrine of substitutionary atonement that Jesus died in our place and gave His life to pay the moral price our sins required to a holy God.

*He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.* (1 Peter 2:24)

The breaking of the bread symbolizes the physical sufferings of Christ, and they were significant.

I would suppose that all of us who saw the recent movie *The Passion of the Christ* were struck by the portrayal of what was done to the body of Jesus. My only comfort in watching it was knowing that it was filmed somehow where it only appeared that the actor's body was shredded. Ever do that? You see something disturbing in a movie and you say to yourself, *It's not real. It's only a movie.*

To watch an actual human being go through a Roman flogging and being nailed to a Roman Cross to die slowly of suffocation would be horrific. I wonder what Jesus thought to Himself

as He watched the bread tear in His hands. *This is my body which is given for you.* This is a picture of what is going to happen to my body in just a few hours and when you see that happening, my disciples, I want you to realize that, like the bread, I am now giving to you for your nourishment, I am giving up my life for your salvation.

*And likewise the cup after they had eaten saying, **This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.*** (Luke 22:20)

The text says, *after they had eaten.* So this is much later than the bread just mentioned. They have eaten the meal including the lamb. Remember the original meaning of the Passover. It was about blood being shed and put on the doorposts for salvation.

Now Jesus' draws on that imagery and says the wine in the cup symbolizes a new covenant in His blood. Again, let me say that He is not saying the wine became His blood. No Jew would drink blood; there were Old Testament commands against that (Leviticus 3:17). He is using a metaphor to teach a spiritual truth. If the Old Testament teaches us anything, it's that reconciliation with God always required the shedding of blood (bulls, goats, and lambs). Jesus' blood was about to be shed on the cross. His death would establish and make possible a new kind of relationship between God and man.

*Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant.* (Hebrews 9:15)

New Covenant means there is a new way! I don't want to sound whiny, but I am already tired of 109<sup>th</sup> street being closed. They (whoever they are) decided 109<sup>th</sup> avenue east of here needed a new bridge. The old one wasn't good enough. So for those of us who travel east from here, all we have to do is simply go down 101<sup>st</sup> instead, right? Wrong. They (whoever they is) decided it would be the perfect time to close 101<sup>st</sup> also. If you are going from here east, there are no good ways anymore. The old bridge is out and the alternate route is closed too.

What do we need? We need a new bridge and we need it now. I don't know about you, but I want a new bridge that is better than the old one and I was thinking the other day how happy I am going to be when the new bridge is available. The first time over it I am going to experience great joy. I might even think to myself, *I am so glad for the new bridge; the old one is gone and the better one is here.* And if you happen to be watching, I will have a big smile on my face.

Now I hope you know what I am getting at here. The Old Covenant and its sacrifices were never able to get us from here to God. The very fact that they had to be repeated each year showed how inadequate they were. In a way, they built a new bridge every year. But now there is a New Covenant through the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. There is a new way and it's so much better than the old. The new way is by faith in what Jesus did on the cross by dying in our place. That is what Jesus is referring to and what the cup was to represent. The bread symbolized His body. The cup symbolized His blood. Bread and cup. Body and blood. Do you get it? It's symbolic, but powerful.

Now let's talk about **"Do this in remembrance of me."**

Luke only has the phrase once. Paul's account of this in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25 has Jesus repeating the phrase after both the bread and the cup. Clearly it's a command, but what are we to do with it? Jesus is instituting one of two ordinances in the church; the other being

baptism. The Lord's Supper is a gift to Christians which nourishes the church on the redemptive truths that the ceremony celebrates.

## **How to Eat the Lord's Supper**

### ***I must not forget what Jesus did for me***

We all suffer from spiritual amnesia; we easily forget what is really important. Our country knows this and that's why we build memorials. Memorials help us remember really important things and people. Why? We get into the day-to-day of living and forget what's really important.

The same is true spiritually. We forget. We get distracted. We get cold-hearted. We start thinking other things are really important. Spiritual amnesia; anyone suffering from it today?

The Lord's Supper confronts our amnesia with powerful symbolic remembrance, and if we actually think about it when we partake, it reorients us back to what is most important – wonder and worship in how God saved us.

### ***I am eating and drinking spiritual truth***

Think of it a moment – what are we doing when we eat or drink? I am taking something and making it very personal. I am receiving it into myself in a way I can taste and feel and be nourished by.

This is the brilliance of the Lord's Supper. I can't eat it for you. You can't drink it for me. When we partake, it is intensely personal. I am eating and I am drinking. What? Not Jesus, as some teach. I am eating symbolic truth that saves. His body was given for me. His blood established a new bridge to God. All the truth needed for salvation is symbolized in the bread and the cup and I am embracing the truth once again every time I partake of it.

### ***I am in Communion with the risen Christ***

The Lord's Supper is sometimes called Communion. As I eat and drink, Christ is present through the symbol and in the fellowship with the others partaking. I can't see Him. I can't touch Him. But I can see and taste the bread and the cup and they physically say to me what is spiritually true, Jesus is with His people and Jesus is with me.

### ***This is only the appetizer***

My family had a Sunday ritual. Nearly every Sunday we would have pot roast for lunch. I remember walking in after church and the house was filled with the aroma of perfectly prepared beef. One of the fatherly duties was for my dad to cut the meat. We kids would prance around the table and if dad wasn't looking, we would sneak a little piece of roast off the plate. When you're hungry, those little pieces taste so good and they get the juices flowing for what is to come.

The Lord's Supper isn't really *The Supper*, it's merely the appetizer. What it should do is get the spiritual juices flowing for what is promised in the future.

Some day Jesus is returning. Someday we will experience full and complete fellowship with Jesus. We will see Him and physically be with Him. Scripture says He will be close enough to

us to wipe away the tears. And we will feast with Him at the great marriage supper of the Lamb. Can you imagine how great that is going to be? Not the food. Him. No more symbols and pictures. The real thing, Christ.

If you're hungry for that day, the appetizer of the Lord's Supper tastes really great and only increases our longings to get past the symbols and pictures and to see Him face to face.

Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

© Steve DeWitt. You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute this material in any format provided that: (1) you credit the author, (2) any modifications are clearly marked, (3) you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, (4) you include Bethel's web site address (<http://www.bethelweb.org/>) on the copied resource.