

The Last Supper

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Preacher: Phil Meulman

[0 : 00] This is the AM service on March 8, 1998. The preacher is Phil Muleman.

His sermon is entitled The Last Supper and is from Matthew 26, verses 17-30. Heavenly Father, we thank you that we have many ways to hear your word expounded.

And we pray now that you would help us to focus our hearts and minds on what it has to say to us. And may it bear much fruit in our lives for your sake. Amen.

Well, last week we read about the plot to kill Jesus and learnt that one of Jesus' disciples would bring about the betrayal of Jesus for a mere 30 pieces of silver.

And we also saw the indifference displayed toward Jesus by the disciples, as it seems they are unaware of the suffering that Jesus is about to endure at the hands of people.

[1 : 03] And the indifference of the disciples was seen in contrast to the devotion of the woman who anointed Jesus. And she anointed Jesus with this expensive ointment, an ointment which is used for burial.

Perhaps she understood the nature of Jesus and his mission. Well, today we read and we saw on the video that the disciples are again in familiar territory as they prepare for the Passover meal. I think it must be a kind of a relief for them to be able to go and do something that they are familiar with. The Passover was something that they were very familiar with. And it seems that they also know what the Passover meal entails.

And we also discover that Jesus is again in control in a number of ways. He gives directions about where the Passover meal will take place.

And he predicts his own betrayal by Judas Iscariot. And then we also saw he institutes the Lord's Supper. And then finally, he also gives a promise of a future that will be in his Father's kingdom.

[2 : 19] So today we're looking at the preparation for the Passover meal. And look at the prediction of Jesus' betrayal, how Jesus predicts that. And look at the institution of the Lord's Supper.

And finally, the promise of a future in his Father's kingdom. You may like to look up Matthew chapter 26. I actually don't have the Pew Bibles.

I think it's 808 to follow along with me. Let me read to you the first few verses. Verses 17 to 19.

On the first day of unleavened bread, the disciples came to Jesus saying, Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover? Jesus said, Go into the city to a certain man and say to him, The teacher says my time is near.

I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples. So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them. And they prepared the Passover meal. So here we see the preparations for the Passover meal being made.

[3 : 28] And as I said a moment ago, the disciples are very familiar with it. And prepare for it just as we would prepare for a Christmas lunch. Now the actual Passover meal took place on one night.

But here we also talk about the Feast of Unleavened Bread which was celebrated around the same time. But it continued for a week. And during the Feast of the Unleavened Bread, all yeast is taken out of the homes in commemoration of their ancestors' exodus from Egypt when they didn't have time to let the bread dough rise.

Well Jesus is again seen to be in control of this entire situation. He is the one who gives the instructions as to where the Passover meal will take place.

He tells the disciples where to go and so on. And the disciples willingly obey his instructions. and they make their preparations for the Passover. Now the Passover meal was an elaborate meal.

It was an elaborate ritual full of symbolism and full of redemptive history and so on. And it was a meal to remind the participants that it is the sovereign God who freed people from slavery in Egypt.

[4 : 48] Now Christmas dinner at our house has always been has always had a tradition which has been celebrated for years on end. We have bonbons and the hats that go on your head which rip as soon as you put them on and they have silly pathetic jokes and hopeless little toys in them.

We have a main meal which is always hot which is pathetic as well because it's always hot on Christmas Day. And after we've eaten that hot meal we're really full but then out comes the steamed pudding and out comes ice cream and custard is poured onto it and we're really full. But this steamed pudding has coins in it so we're really keen to eat it because we want to get the money. And it's served from eldest to youngest as well.

It's a tradition and a ritual which goes on in our household. And then after we've eaten our Christmas dinner we're really stuffed. So we have to have rest. And so part of the tradition is that we feel unwell and we have a nap.

And we sleep it off for the afternoon and then comes the evening when we're ready for our annual cricket match. And we're all experts at cricket at Christmas time.

[6 : 06] But anyway that's our Christmas dinner. And it's a ritual. But there isn't much meaning ever attached to it is there. It's just something that happens. Well the Passover meal had lots of meaning attached to it.

And the meal consisted mainly of six elements. And I'm going to put an overhead up. We're going to be interactive today. There's the Passover elements. Firstly in the Passover meal there was the Passover lamb.

And it had to be roasted over a fire. And it had to be all eaten on the same night. Nothing could be saved. And the lamb reminded the participants of the first Passover in which the angel of death was kept from visiting the firstborn of Israel because they were protected by the blood of the lamb.

Let me read to you two verses from Exodus which describes this sort of incident. Exodus 12 verse 7 and verse 13. They will take some of the blood of the lamb and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it.

And then in verse 13 it says the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live. When I see the blood I will pass over you and no plague shall destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.

[7 : 33] So the first element is the Passover lamb. The second element is the unleavened bread. Now the unleavened bread reminded the people of the swiftness of God's deliverance for them from Egypt.

And his deliverance was so swift that they did not have time to bake bread. They couldn't put the yeast in it to make it rise and so on. Our third element is the bowl of salt water and this reminded them of the tears shed in their captivity and the crossing of the Red Sea.

And fourthly we have the bitter herbs which recalled the bitterness of their slavery. They were in captivity in Egypt and all these things are things to remind them of what has happened in the past. And fifthly there's a fruit called Charosheth I don't know how to say it Charosheth or Charosheth and it reminded them of the clay which they used to make bricks in their captivity.

When Israel was in captivity in Egypt they were slaves and this is one of the things which they had to do. And then finally there were four cups of wine and the four cups of wine reminded them of the promises that God made to his people.

[9 : 03] And Exodus 6 verses 6 and 7 tell us of these promises. Let me read them to you. Say therefore to the Israelites I am the Lord and I will free you from the burdens of the Egyptians and deliver you from slavery to them.

I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with mighty acts of judgment. I will take you as my people and I will be your God.

You shall know that I am the Lord your God who has freed you from the burdens of the Egyptians. I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham Isaac and Jacob.

I will give it to you for a possession. I am the Lord. The cups of wine are a reminder of God's promises. Well these elements thanks Joanne of the lamb the bread the salt water the bitter herbs the cherished and the wines the disciples had to go and get ready for the Passover meal and it was important that they do it well and in advance.

So the disciples go and get the meal ready in the place where Jesus had told them to do so and we read in verse 20 that Jesus comes into the scene and he takes his place with the twelve and in verse 21 Jesus says truly I tell you the formula this is a formula that Jesus used when he has something important to say truly I tell you listen up everybody truly I tell you one of you will betray

me now if I was tucking into my Christmas lunch and someone at the table there with us all gathered in our close sort of friendships and family relationships someone there said to me one of you will betray me I would be very upset so usually you eat your Christmas lunch or whatever with those closest to you and I hope that you would never expect to hear those kind of things and if it was

[11:18] I think it would be a very distressing thing to hear and it would be hard to hear those sorts of things said you know one of you will betray me at such an important occasion well verse 22 says here that they the disciples were greatly distressed or sorrowful and one after another they began to say to Jesus surely not I Lord surely not I Lord well Jesus answered to them in verse 23 the one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me it's not necessarily saying that the one who dips his hand into the bowl with me is the betrayer it is more likely that all of those present with Jesus at the meal had dipped into this bowl which we saw on the video and that was the eating styles of Jesus day it's a bit like eating biscuits and dip at a party we might have different biscuits but we all dip our biscuits into the same dip bowl don't we if there's only one dip bowl and Jesus point is that the betrayer the one who's going to betray him is a friend someone sharing the common dish thus heightening the enormity of this betrayal that's about to come about well in verse 24 it brings about the whole paradox of the life of

Jesus we see here that Jesus says the son of man goes as it is written of him and the son of man is a title which Jesus uses of himself to speak of his divinity and his humanity as well and we've seen how Jesus in previous weeks in previous readings foretells about his coming death and resurrection he's predicted on a number of occasions that he will be handed over to be crucified and so on that's his divine nature he knows what is going to happen and despite the fact that scripture tells us about the nature of the Messiah and that these things must happen as it is written of him it doesn't excuse the act of deliberate betrayal about to become of him by Judas God is sovereign and he plans for salvation to come about in the way that it has but there is also the responsibility of human beings seen as well on one hand we see

God's sovereignty resulting in salvation for all who turn to Jesus Christ and on the other hand we see Judas betrayal of Jesus highlights the evil heart that is within human beings and unless we turn to Jesus then we too are heading for eternal ruin it sounds strong but Jesus says here of the one who betrays him that it would be better for that person not to have been born well we know that Judas is the one who betrays Jesus he says surely not I Rabbi so that others perhaps might not suspect him and Jesus response to Judas is you have said so that means more or less yes it is you which we saw in the video yes it is you

Judas here has just betrayed Jesus to his face and earlier last week we saw how Judas betrayed him to his back also for 30 pieces of silver and sometimes we think that we can betray Jesus without him knowing we think that we can get away with it perhaps by talking inappropriately by gossiping about someone and prayer meetings are sometimes a great opportunity for us to spread gossip around because we think we're doing it in a great way perhaps we can betray Jesus by coveting coveting someone's job coveting someone's car something along those lines well Jesus is no fool and he's able to know our inward actions as well as our external ones and to think that we can get away with anything we want is sinful and indeed is an act of betrayal against Jesus if we think we can get away with some things we put

Jesus in a box and we we put Jesus in a box we think we can get away with some deceitful actions and only take to him the things that we feel necessary well friends if that's what we think we can do we're only fooling ourselves if that's the case Jesus is no fool and nor is he about to begin to be fooled by anyone well so far we've seen the preparations for the Passover meal being put in place by the disciples and Jesus giving instructions and we've also just talked about the prediction that Jesus has surely one of you will betray me and so on and next in the next few verses verses 26 to 29 we bring about the institution of the Lord's Supper and it's important to see this meal in the context of the Passover meals that the disciples are enjoying with Jesus and no doubt the familiar ritual which had been celebrated for hundreds of years will have been followed at this meal as well and there's lots of information which goes with that lots of words and so on but Matthew doesn't insert all this information because it would have been familiar to the original hearers of this gospel but what he does insert are the words that were unfamiliar which Jesus added and have since as a result shaped and formed the basis for the

[17 : 40] Christian meal what we would call here holy communion which took the place and takes the place of the old Passover meal you see the Passover ritual had its own words of explanation for the food and drink and so on relating to the events of deliverance of the deliverance from Egypt but now Jesus gives a new interpretation in terms of a new and greater deliverance and the words that we look at are found here in verses 26 27 and 28 while they were eating bread Jesus took a loaf of bread and after blessing it he broke it gave it to his disciples and said take eat this is my body these are the new words and in verse 27 he says drink from it all of you for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins when the Passover meal is celebrated it's a meal which recalls

God's saving work in the past and Jesus as the host of this Passover meal has probably just used some familiar words to give thanks for the unleavened bread the words he uses are probably blessed art thou O Lord our God keeper of the universe who bring us forth bread from the earth he then breaks the bread as we saw in the video distributes it and says take eat eat this is my body and these are the new words and in the context of the Passover meal this new rite has links with the saving work that God has done in the past though they may not have been understood by the disciples at this particular point in time they would have been better understood after his resurrection and as this bread has just been broken so will Jesus' body be broken and just as the people of

Israel associated the deliverance from Egypt with eating the Passover meal as a divine ordinance so also God's people are to associate Jesus' redemptive death with eating this bread by Jesus' authority in verse 28 Jesus says this is my blood of the covenant this is my blood of the covenant now in Luke's gospel and Paul's letter correspondence to the Corinthian Christians in the same sorts of words he has also put the words in this is my blood of the new covenant and this whole verse here in Matthew's gospel is full of Old Testament allusions and there is not enough time to even begin to do justice to it but what I want to do is work out how does Jesus' blood relate to the new covenant well people under the old covenant those who lived in the times before Jesus could approach

God only through a priest and an animal sacrifice and that's the way they approached God and this somehow through this sacrifice and through the mediation of the priest made them right with God and this work was hard to do and it would have been really messy if you had to go up and sort of cut an animal and kill it in the right way there would have been lots of blood and guts everywhere and so on well in the Old Testament the prophet Jeremiah looks forward to a new covenant where God will write the law on their hearts and he says I will be their God the prophet writes I will be their God and they shall be my people and in chapter 31 verse 34 looks forward to the time when God will forgive their iniquity when God will forgive their sins and remember it no more remember their sin no more the prophet

Jeremiah is looking forward to a time when there is forgiveness of sins well Jesus is that new covenant and now with the institution of this new covenant made here by him people can come directly to God through faith because Jesus death has made us acceptable in God's eyes I want to read to you from Romans the book of Romans Paul's letter to the Romans from a paraphrased version of the Bible Romans 3 verse 21 to 24 and this speaks about God's way of accepting people now we see how God does make us acceptable to him the law and the prophets tell us how we become acceptable and it isn't by obeying the law of Moses God treats everyone alike he accepts people only because they have faith in

[23 : 00] Jesus Christ all of us have sinned and fallen short of God's glory but God treats us much better than we deserve and because of Christ Jesus he freely accepts us and sets us free from our sin the old covenant was a shadow of the new covenant and pointed forward to the day when Jesus himself would be the final and ultimate sacrifice for sin and rather than an unblemished lamb sacrificed on the altar the perfect lamb of God Jesus Christ was slain on the cross Jesus Christ a sinless sacrifice so that our sins could be forgiven once and for all and friends for all those who believe in Christ they receive that forgiveness so with the

Passover meal we are able to see the parallels that it has with the Last Supper and it's a little table here to help us work it out we have the Passover and the Last Supper you just move it down one in the Passover meal God remembered his covenant and in the Last Supper or the Lord's Supper a new covenant is enacted in the Passover meal we read about a people freed from slavery in Egypt and in the Last Supper Jesus is talking about freedom from the slavery to sin and in the Passover

meal there is deliverance from Egypt God rescues and brings them out of Egypt we know the story very well and in the Last Supper Matthew 26 verses 28 verse 28 talks about the forgiveness of sins in the

Passover meal it's the blood of the Passover lamb it's the Passover lamb which is used and it's the blood which is spilt and in the Last Supper the blood of Christ who becomes our Passover lamb and in the Passover there are the interpretation of the elements those things which I talked about the cup the bitter herbs the Passover lamb and so on and in the Last Supper there is also the interpretation of elements Jesus breaks the bread and says this is my body and he distributes the cup and says this is my blood which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins and finally in the Passover meal there is the call for continual celebration in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy we're told to continue celebrating the Passover meal and in the Last Supper there is a call for continual celebration to celebrate this enactment and Paul writes about that in the letter to the Corinthians while the disciples may not have understood these parallels at the time of the Last Supper it's quite clear that they understood them after his death and Paul also writes about the Lord's Supper in the correspondence which we read from the Corinthians letter this morning well up to this point you may notice that Jesus words over the bread and the cup have focused on death and it can in fact sound a little bit depressing but verse 29 of Matthew's gospel chapter 26 says tells us that there is something beyond death death there is many people glorify death thinking it's the end well death is the beginning and Jesus is telling his disciples here that beyond death lies life in my father's kingdom and the first Passover looks forward to not only the deliverance of God's people from Egypt but also to settlement in the land which the Lord will lead them to and here in the Lord's supper it looks forward to deliverance and life in God's kingdom and Jesus also says here in verse 29 that he never again will drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew with you in my father's kingdom Jesus has gone the way of the cross he has been sacrificed on the cross so that we may obtain forgiveness of our sins and we are to continue celebrating the Lord's supper in 1 Corinthians 11 verse 26 for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes how wonderful it is to think that Jesus waits for us so that he can drink with us in his father's kingdom have you ever really thought about that

[28 : 40] Jesus waits for us so that he can drink with us in his father's kingdom it's an exciting prospect so on this side of the cross when we celebrate the Lord's supper it looks both to the past and to the future both to Jesus sacrifice on the cross calvary and to a glorious future which awaits those who enter into his kingdom death is a scary thing for many people because they just don't know what is on the other side of it is death just a wooden box or an urn of ashes many people would like to think that it is but the Bible tells us that death is not final and I believe that Jesus answers the big questions that we all have about death and for those who turn to him there is a heavenly banquet waiting for us in fact we enter into it now and while we wait while we wait to have this full on banquet we are able to participate in a perpetual memory which

Jesus has instituted for us by his death and resurrection until his coming again well friends as we celebrate the Lord's Supper this morning let us look back with thanks for all that God has done and let us also look forward with a joyful anticipation to the day when we can sit with him to share in the heavenly banquet that he has prepared for us Amen un ■■ Lord's God Lord's Legends arteries so can we can you tease US into a deep areanovar continues to uh I nose

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