

The Last Supper and The Lord's Supper

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[0 : 0 0] Let's turn again to the chapter we read in Luke, Luke chapter 22, and considering the verses from verse 7 to verse 20, but particularly the main emphasis will be on the verses from verse 14 to verse 20. But it is starting at verse 7, then came the day of unleavened bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John saying, go and prepare the Passover for us that we may eat it. And then we find at verse 15, and he said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. And then we find in verse 19, 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. And likewise, a cup after they had eaten, saying, this cup that is poured out for you is a new covenant in my blood. Luke is now taking us on our journey with Jesus into these very final days. We have just about arrived at the end of this particular journey. It was, as we read here, the day of unleavened bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. And it's quite wonderful how everything is tied in together perfectly, because as we know, the Passover lamb was slain. And every year, this was the great annual event in the life of the Jew, where they were remembering, looking back to what God had done all these centuries back, where they had been delivered from Egypt, delivered from slavery. But of course, it was pointing forward to the lamb. And John the Baptist had said of Jesus, behold, the lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. And so tying in exactly with the Passover comes Jesus' trial and death. And of course, the Lord has purposed this, so that the type and everything that had been symbolized prior to this comes to be actually fulfilled to the very day. It's amazing how in God's timing, God's providence, all these things tie together. Now, of course, the wickedness of man was at work. The powers of hell were at work. Jesus said that. He said, this is your hour and the power of darkness. So you see, while God is in absolute control, in order for man and hell to do its work, all God has to do is to remove the restraints, to take away, as it were, the hedge that was around Christ, and to allow the powers of darkness and to allow the wickedness of man to triumph and prevail.

And we must always remember that, that God is the one who can protect us or he can, as happened in the life of Job, allow Satan access to us, can on occasion allow the forces of darkness to hit us.

You remember how Satan complained before God and he said, little wonder that Job honors you and fears you because you built a hedge around him and all that he has. Let me at him. And God had to give permission to Satan. God had, as it were, to pull back that hedge, to open that hedge in order for Satan to get a job. And that's exactly what has happened here as well, where the Lord, God, the Father has for his own holy purposes and end. That's just, he hasn't said to people, right, God hasn't moved the powers of darkness to unleash their forces against Christ. God hasn't moved these wicked men to work. All he has to do is to remove the restraint, to remove the barriers and allow what is evil and natural within people to arise.

Now, of course, as the Passover time came, there would be a massive influx of people into the city because part of the Passover involved you having to actually eat the Passover in Jerusalem. It was, supposing that we have our communion times, supposing it was, the legislation was such that you could only celebrate the Lord's Supper in Stornoway. It would mean that everybody in all the different outlying areas would have to come into Stornoway for the communion. They wouldn't be able to have their communion in their own districts or in their own locality. Well, that obviously doesn't happen, and that's one of the wonderful things about the Lord's Supper. But the eating of the Passover was such that it had to be in Jerusalem. And so there was this massive movement of people towards Jerusalem at this particular time. And so Jesus sent Peter and John ahead so that they would prepare the Passover so that Jesus and the disciples could eat it in Jerusalem. And that simply meant that Peter and John, they had to go away and to get the lamb for the sacrifice. They had to go and get the bitter herbs.

They had to go and get the unleavened bread and get wine. So that's all they were sent off to make this preparation. But we find here really what is amazing is the detailed instruction that Jesus gives them. Because he says, you know, when you go into the city, you will find there a man carrying a jar of water.

[6 : 06] 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? Now, at one level, it was customary at this time for people to open up their homes. Because obviously, with this influx, this massive influx of people wanting a room for the Passover, that's what would be happening.

People would be letting out their rooms all the time. But what we see here is Jesus's incredible knowledge. It's here. He is the one who's over all things, who knows all things. And he gives the absolute detail, just as he spoke before about the Asus cult. Remember how they had to go and they, he gave the precise direction. And that reminds us that there is one who knows our lives, chapter and verse. And more fool us if we don't put our hand in the hand of the one who knows the end from the beginning. If we try and go through life on our own, which sometimes we try and do, we will invariably take wrong turns and get it wrong here and there. What a blessing, what a privilege to put our hand in the hand of the Lord, because he knows the end from the beginning. He alone can direct our paths in not only in the way that is best for us, but in the way that will glorify him.

And so we find this marvelous direction given and the instruction given to Peter and John. But I'm leaving this aside and moving on to the actual institution of the Lord's Supper.

And here we have one of the most famous moments in the whole ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. We come to a moment that artists, some of the great artists in the world have tried to paint, because there are certain scenes in life where people try and imagine it. Many people try and imagine it. And some of the great artists try to imagine this particular scene. Of course, it is a scene which is at the very heartbeat of the Christian faith. And it's interesting that again here that it's round a meal that Jesus gives his great teaching. In fact, if we had really studied that, that in itself would be a nice wee series to do in the Gospel of Luke, because there are seven meal scenes, scenes round a meal in the Gospel of Luke. That in itself would be interesting, because each time Jesus uses these occasions as occasions of teaching and instruction.

Sometimes very intimate times, other times maybe not so intimate, but Jesus teaches great truths. And I think it's important for us when we go through the Gospels to see the emphasis of the social side of Jesus. Sometimes we underestimate these things.

[9 : 11] Jesus was always meeting with people. Yes, we find Jesus going away on his own. Times he went to pray on his own. Times he needed the isolation. Times he needed to get alone with his Father. And so do we. But we also find that Jesus interacted with people.

And he enjoyed people's company. And he went to the meals. And he went to these times where he interacted with people. And he involved himself in the social setting. And our meal time is a great, something we still do to this day. And it's right. It's proper. Because through these things, fellowships and friendships are forged and developed. And so we find it's very interesting when you go through the Gospels. But that's something, by the way, the importance and how often we find Jesus at a meal. Well, there are seven different occasions in the Gospel of Luke. So again, as I say, that could be a wee series in its own. Now, the disciples and Jesus, as they share this meal, it is what has been, has been come to, has come to be known as the Last Supper. But in that Last Supper, we find Jesus instituting what we now know as the Lord's Supper. And this occasion, of course, was Jesus's, what again is termed his Last Testament. And the Greeks would, of course, call this a symposium. And a symposium was very simply where a person of great wisdom would be sharing their thoughts. And they would stand there or sit there and they would give out or teach or explain some of the deep thoughts and wisdom that they had. So from a Greek point of view, that's what Jesus is doing in this upper room. But from a Jewish point of view, it's his farewell speech as well. Because when we go to John's Gospel, and we run through really from chapter 13 right through these chapter 14, 15 and 16, we find some of that teaching and how rich it is, how powerful it is.

Jesus's farewell speech. Have you ever been with somebody who's got a foot in eternity? And they're speaking to you against the backdrop of eternity? They're dying. Or they're only, they're not far from death. Sometimes you know it. Sometimes you don't. And sometimes you have to go back in your mind. And you know, you don't forget it. Because this is reality. This is real.

Here is somebody who is, as it were, on the threshold of eternity. Somebody who is moving out from the scene of time into eternity. And what they say, there's something really profound about it. Something moving. Something that lingers and lasts with you. And that is what we have here.

Jesus is speaking to them. Here he is. In fact, it's one of the things that so often we find here. It's a link almost between time and eternity. And certainly here Jesus is speaking aware that this is the final night that he's going to be with the disciples. And so Jesus then tells them that he is desiring, earnestly desires to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. And while the disciples were incredibly privileged, unfortunately they weren't laying hold upon the privilege that they were just having. Now when Jesus says that he earnestly desires to eat the Passover, it's expressing great emotion. Jesus is actually really, it's like really emotional at this moment in the sense that there is deep emotion expressed in the way that he's saying this. It's that this is just something I just so desperately want to do. And you know, I never read these words about how Jesus desperately wanted to eat with his disciples and to share with his disciples this meal. I cannot read of that without thinking. As Jesus changed in his desire to fellowship with his people. As his people continue to remember what he instituted that night, every time we come to the Lord's table, we should remember these words of Jesus where he says, I have earnestly desired. Yes, it was the Passover. He earnestly desired.

[14 : 08] Because of course everything was tying in. But we mustn't lose sight of just how important, how meaningful, how precious this was to our Lord. Because sometimes we get so caught up with viewing things just from our side that we tend to forget that it's also being viewed by heaven. As we come to the Lord's table, everything is being viewed by heaven. Heaven is involved with what we are doing. We're not just doing something for the sake of doing it. We're doing it with a real link to what is past, what is present, and what is in the future. So here was this wonderful moment in the history of the disciples.

And yet, how do we find the disciples? Well, you know, it's quite remarkable. In verse 24, I'm not going to look at that just now. But we find that a dispute arose among them as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. I'm sure that as time went on, and as I looked back on this event, there was many a time there was a real shame in their heart. Here is Jesus saying, I am so desperately wanting to have this Passover meal with you. And then he goes on to institute the Lord's Supper in light of his death.

And what are they doing? They're having a dispute. Which one of them is the greatest? Which one of them was to be regarded as the greatest? It was extraordinary. And I'm sure there was many a day along the way where John and Peter would have asked forgiveness for that attitude and that spirit.

And you know, when we look at it, we say to ourselves, oh, it wasn't that awful. But you know, I wonder, before we become too hard and too heavy on the disciples, what is our attitude? Let's think back. What have we been like when we've been at the Lord's table? I would love to think that all of us would have the attitude of humility, of thankfulness, seeking fellowship and communion with the Lord.

I hope that's how it's been. We have to ask ourselves, have we ever sat at the table and we've been sitting in judgment upon others, looking with a critical eye upon other people? Have we ever sat there engaging our minds in pride? Engaging our minds in things that are completely wrong? If so, the same spirit and the same attitude that was shown in the disciples is still in our hearts.

[17:10] Do we look down on other people as we sit at the table? Do we envy the position of other people as we are at the table? If so, we are guilty of the exact same attitude as the disciples. And it's so easy sometimes to look at the characters in the Bible and say, and give a kind of a tut tut.

But I believe that all these things that are shown to us in the scripture are there partly because we are so prone to be exactly like them, so likely to be influenced in the same way.

Anyway, as they're taking this Passover meal, which involved the bread, it involved wine, it involved the bitter herbs and so on. Jesus states that he wants, that he won't taste of the, of the vine again to the consummation of the kingdom. And it's there that we have this really powerful, powerful scene.

Because after the cup of wine, there were various cups that went with the Passover meal. And Jesus then takes the bread. And this is what is really fascinating. That Jesus builds a whole new order out of the old order. Out of the bread that already existed for the Passover meal.

Jesus takes that bread and he breaks it. And he begins a new order. And using the same wine that was used in the Passover meal, Jesus brings and takes and starts a new order. And the disciples right at that point were at the very center of the old and the new. In the same city, they were at one moment celebrating the Passover. And at the next moment, they were moving in to the institution of the Lord's Supper. You know, it's really quite amazing. And at that moment, in a sense, almost the types were giving way into, into new symbols, although he's still using the same thing. The broken bread, of course, was symbolizing the broken body of Jesus. And the wine was symbolizing his shed blood.

[19:35] The disciples, these disciples did something in the first Lord's Supper that nobody has ever done since. The disciples, the disciples in that first Lord's Supper were taking the Lord's Supper in a way that you and I will never take it.

And what was the difference? Well, the difference is very simple. They took the Lord's Supper looking to Christ's coming death.

Nobody else has ever done that since. Their sitting, taking the meal was perspective. Because they were taking something in anticipation of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ as being the Savior of the world.

Nobody else has ever been able to do that. Since then, everything has been retrospective. Always, always, we've been looking back to what the Lord Jesus Christ did on the cross.

So that's that one difference. These disciples were, that sitting was unique. Because they were, as it were, caught up between the old and the new. They took that supper looking ahead. And even although they did so, they maybe weren't understanding all that they were doing.

[20 : 55] And yet, when we come to the Lord's Supper, we also look back. They were looking back and they were looking forward. They were looking back to the Passover meal. They were looking forward to what Jesus was going to do on the cross.

When we come to the supper, we also look back, but we look back to what Jesus has done. But we're looking forward to his coming again. And in a sense, as we said, it's like where eternity touches time.

The great events of salvation are joined together. And so there's this time of communion, time of fellowship, time of togetherness, time of oneness.

And when Jesus shared with the disciples, and he's talking here of not eating and drinking again, you'll notice that he didn't say, not never again.

But he said, until. There was an until, until. And in other words, what Jesus is saying here is there's going to be a parting. But it's only a temporary parting.

[22 : 01] There's going to be a new order. Things are going to be different. Even my relationship with you, although it is going to be the same, it's going to be different in many ways.

You're no longer going to see me with a natural eye. I'll be with you. And I'll continue to be with me, with you. But you're not going to see me. You're not going to be able to interact. You're not going to be able to touch me.

Yes, in the 40 days after the resurrection, Jesus appeared and reappeared. And you could touch him. But there was a difference. And you know the wonderful thing is that this fellowship that is born here on earth will continue throughout glory.

You know, there's something beautiful going to the Lord's table. When you're at the Lord's table, you know, everything really is just a beginning.

It's like the first fruit of what will be yet to come. There's going to be a world of glory, a world of triumph, a world of victory, where everything is going to take on a reality.

[23 : 09] You know, the disciples, the disciples, I believe, as they took the bread and the wine, they weren't properly understanding. They hadn't even grasped what Jesus was going to have to suffer.

They hadn't grasped his death. Yes, they were believing in him. They were trusting him. But they hadn't grasped. As time went on, then everything came together.

And they understood the Passover in a way they had never understood it before. And after, when they would have their Lord's Supper, they would be saying, in time to come, maybe two years down the line, they'd be saying, You know, all these years I took the Passover and engaged in the Passover.

And yes, I was steeped in Jewish history and religious history. And I, from my mother's knee, I learned all about the Passover. I never understood it properly till Jesus died and rose again.

And it's all come into place. And it all means so much to me now. And you know, that's often how it goes on in our life as well. Sometimes at the beginning of our Christian life, things are hazy and foggy.

[24 : 17] But we go by faith. But you know, there's going to come a day because, irrespective of how clear things are for you, there's still a kind of a haze and a fog about it.

We're still walking by faith, not by sight. But one day, we'll be ushered into the kingdom where there will never again be a parting, where we will be forever and ever in communion and fellowship with our Lord.

We will never have to arise, as it were, from the table, in a sense, these are just special times. They're a means of grace to help us along the way. And I always feel sorry for people who love the Lord Jesus Christ and have never, in this world, come to sit at the Lord's table.

Do you know they're missing something? They're missing Jesus. You know, when you're at the table, at the Lord's table, and it's a special time.

It is something that the Lord has set for His people, given us specially to encourage us along the way. And while we may not experience great blessing at the table, we will experience blessing in being obedient to the Lord.

[25 : 36] But often, as we are at the Lord's table, there is a sense of what Jesus has done for us. And do you know what the church says? Even so, come, Lord Jesus, because one day He's going to come back.

When we're at the table, we're making a witness and a testimony to the world. Jesus says, Every time you eat this bread and drink this wine, you show forth the Lord's death.

That's one of the things we're doing. We're witnessing that Jesus has died. But we're also witnessing that He's risen again and He's coming back. You do show forth the Lord's death till He come.

Do we have that sense of His return as we're there? I often think, wouldn't it be wonderful if He actually returned when we're at the table?

It may be that that'll happen for some people, that He will return. Could you ever think of a better place to be than round His table?

[26 : 40] And let us remember how precious, how precious His people are to Himself. All that He did here, He wasn't doing for Himself. He was doing it for us, for you, for me.

That was His love. Let's not underestimate it. These disciples, they were foggy in their mind. They were certainly with a wrong spirit and a wrong attitude at the table.

Peter was only a step away from the most serious, heartbreaking denials. And yet Jesus loved them. He loved them. He loved them so much, He was desperate to sit with them and to share with them.

And my friend, He hasn't changed. He hasn't changed. His heart is still the same to and for His people. Despite all our failures and all our mistakes and all that we are, these disciples were a complex crew.

And there must have been many times that I believe Jesus would have, you would have almost seen Him shaking His head. But He still loved them. And He loved them all the way to the cross.

[27 : 57] And that's how He loves you, my believing friend. Let's pray. Amen. Lord, our God, we give thanks for Thy grace and goodness to us, for Thy patience and love, and for what Thou hast set out for us to build us up and to strengthen us in the faith.

Give us that enjoyment of the gospel. Give us to enjoy our God, our Savior. Give us, Lord, to know the power of God in our heart and life.

Deliver us from sloth. Deliver us, O Lord, from the influence and the lure and the power of the world. Give us a vibrance of soul and mind. May the things of God be important and precious to us.

Bless us and keep us and guide us and take us all home safely, we pray. In Jesus' name we ask all. Amen.