

59. The Last Supper

Luke 22:7-34

Luke: A Walk Through the Life of Jesus

To break the hold of Satan's enslavement of the human race, a substitutionary sacrifice was required. The sentence for rebellion against the moral law of God is that of death (Ezekiel 18:4), i.e. separation from God. In His love for all men, God planned before the foundation of the world that He Himself would come as a substitute and pay the price to buy us back by His blood, i.e. a life for a life. Without the shedding of blood, there is no redemption (Hebrews 9:22). When Peter the Apostle preached on the Day of Pentecost before thousands of people, he told them: **"This man was handed over to you by God's deliberate plan and foreknowledge; and you, with the help of wicked men, put him to death by nailing him to the cross"** (Acts 2:23). The cross of Christ was not a mistake for God. He does not make mistakes. The plans of evil men against Jesus were allowed to take place in order to bring about the plan of redemption to all who will place their trust in Christ. This was clear to all the early believers: **²⁷"Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen"** (Acts 4:27-28).

Satan and evil men conspired against the Messiah and were culpable (deserving punishment) for their act, but behind it all, it was all part of God's plan for a substitute to pay the price of deliverance. Jesus said, **"No one can take my life from me. I sacrifice it voluntarily. For I have the authority to lay it down when I want to and also to take it up again. For this is what my Father has commanded"** (John 10:18). God had foreshadowed this substitutionary sacrifice in delivering the children of Israel from Egypt. Twelve hundred years prior to the crucifixion, God foreshadowed what He would do at the cross by delivering the children of Israel from Egypt. We call the event which commemorates the deliverance of the children of Israel *the Passover*, i.e. the beginning day of a seven-day celebration called the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This takes us to our passage starting with Luke 22:7.

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

What is the Passover Celebration?

It will help us in our understanding of the Last Supper passage if we can get a picture of what it was like to be a Jew and living in Egypt in the days of Moses. The descendants of Jacob, renamed Israel, had been living in Egypt for four hundred years when a new Pharaoh came to power in that land and forced the children of Israel into cruel bondage and slavery. When the Israelites began to cry out to God under their heavy workloads, God raised up for them a deliverer, Moses. When Pharaoh would not allow the Israelites to leave Egypt, God displayed His power through Moses by executing judgment on Egypt's false gods. The Egyptians worshiped the river Nile as the sustainer of life, so God turned the waters into blood. Over the sun god Ra, He darkened the sky. Plague after plague broke out against the Egyptians, but God's protection was over the Israelites in Goshen, the area of Egypt where they lived. As the plagues got increasingly worse, God told Moses that there would be one more plague, and after that Pharaoh would command them to leave:

²²Then say to Pharaoh, “This is what the LORD says: ‘Israel is my firstborn son, ²³and I told you, Let my son go, so he may worship me. But you refused to let him go; so I will kill your firstborn son’ ” (Exodus 4:22-23).

The last plague that God sent was to put to death all the first-born children in all of Egypt. God told Moses that He would protect the Israelites if they would slaughter a lamb as a substitute and put the blood of the lamb upon the lintel and sides of the door frames of their houses. The blood would be the sign of a substitute lamb instead of the first-born of the families of Israel.

¹²On that same night I will pass through Egypt and strike down every firstborn—both men and animals—and I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. ¹³The **blood will be a sign for you** on the houses where you are; and when I see the blood, **I will pass over you**. No destructive plague will touch you when I strike Egypt (Exodus 12:12-13).

Question 1) Why would the Israelites need a sign on their houses? Couldn't God tell an Israelite from an Egyptian? He could tell the second born from the first born.

God was requiring faith in the blood of the Passover lamb. Without faith, it is impossible to please Him (Hebrews 11:6). The Israelites were to take a bunch of hyssop plant and dip the hyssop in a bowl of some of the blood from the sacrificed lamb. The bowl containing the blood was placed at the door step, and the hyssop was dipped into the blood, and the lintel and each side of the door frame was struck with the blood, forming an image of a cross over the door. There is more to this than first meets the eye. It is easy for us to get a picture of God's going by the household of those who had faith in the shed blood of an innocent sacrificial lamb, but this is not the case. God describes what is happening in Isaiah 31:5:

Like birds hovering overhead, the LORD Almighty will shield Jerusalem; he will shield it and deliver it, he will **'pass over'** it and will rescue it" (Isaiah 31:5).

The context of this passage is one of protection to the city of Jerusalem. In this prophetic word, the Lord describes Himself as hovering over the city and shielding them from harm. Ceil and Moishe Rosen, in their book *Christ in the Passover*, has this to say about the Hebrew word that is translated into English as “pass over”:

The verb “pass over” has a deeper meaning here than the idea of stepping or leaping over something to avoid contact. It is not the common Hebrew verb, *a-bhar*, or *ga-bhar*, which is frequently used in that sense. The word used here is *pasah*, from which comes the noun *pasha*, which is translated *Passover*. These words have no connection with any other Hebrew word, but they do resemble the Egyptian word *pesh*, which means “to spread wings over” in order to protect.¹

The picture is that of the Lord protecting us from harm. It brings new light to the passage where Jesus was grieving over the city of Jerusalem when He said: “**Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill**

¹ Ceil and Moishe Rosen, *Christ in the Passover*, Printed by Moody Press, Chicago, 1978. Page 22.

the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing” (Luke 13:34). The God we have come to know and love yearns to bring us close to His heart and to wrap His arms around us to protect us as a hen would gather her chicks under her wings. The blood of the substitute lamb brought the presence of the Lord to protect those who believed God’s Word:

When the LORD goes through the land to strike down the Egyptians, he will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway, and **he will not permit the destroyer to enter your houses** and strike you down (Exodus 12:23).

“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). As a destroying angel went through the land, God’s presence was over the household whose faith was in the blood of the substitute lamb. The blood showed that they were under covenant with God, and the destroyer could not touch that household. There had to be obedience to what God had said. All the first-born of those disobedient to the message of salvation were destroyed. The Lord came close, wrapping His arms around His people and protecting them, not permitting the destroyer to enter the houses of those who had faith in the blood of the substitute lamb’s blood. This is what the Passover celebration meal was all about that Jesus was now about to eat with His disciples. It was to remind them of the deliverance of God from bondage and slavery.

What happened in the book of Exodus was just a picture of what God wanted to do through Jesus’ becoming our Passover Lamb, i.e. the substitute in whom we are to place our faith. Pharaoh is a picture of Satan, who has had us under cruel slavery in our sins. Egypt is a picture of the world system in which we live, and Moses foreshadowed our deliverer, Jesus. Not only is Jesus our deliverer, but He is also our sacrificial lamb Who Himself would lay down His life to deliver us if we will place faith in His shed blood applied to the door of our hearts. God wants “to presence” Himself over the home of our hearts and to live with us for eternity. Paul the Apostle wrote, “**For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed**” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Question 2) Do you remember a time when you were protected from harm or escaped a dangerous incident? Did you feel that God was watching over you? Briefly share what happened.

The Passover Supper of Jesus

The Jews of Galilee had a different time-keeping system to the Jews in the south. The Galilean Jews counted the day as starting at the time when the sun came up; whereas, the Jews of Judah and Jerusalem counted a new day as starting as soon as three stars could be seen in the sky. This was beneficial when it came to the sacrifices going on in the temple. Jesus could eat the Passover on a Thursday night and deliver Himself in Jerusalem as the Passover Lamb slain before the foundation of the world on the Friday we remember as “Good Friday.”

The Lord was aware of Judas’ betrayal. It would have been easy for Judas to give directions to the religious leaders if he had known where Jesus would be eating the Passover with His disciples. Jesus’ enemies could have arrived during the meal. Jesus gave a cryptic message as to how to find the room He had prearranged beforehand. It was very rare to see a man carrying water, so Peter and John would notice and follow him to the place Jesus had arranged. Judas had

to wait until Jesus and the other disciples met up with John and Peter after they had made their preparation.

⁸Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover." ⁹"Where do you want us to prepare for it?" they asked. ¹⁰He replied, "As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, ¹¹and say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' ¹²He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there." ¹³They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover (Luke 22:8-13).

As they arrived at the upper room that Thursday night, the lamb was already roasting on the spit and the table was already laid by John and Peter. We are told that they reclined around the table. The table, called a *triclinium*, consisted of three tables set twelve to eighteen inches off the floor and shaped in the form of a large U. The disciples lay on cushions or low couches on the floor around the table with Jesus at the head. They rested their weight on their left elbow and side, reaching onto the table with their right hand to get food. On the table were flat pieces of unleavened bread to remind them that they left Egypt in haste. There were bowls of bitter herbs to remind them of the bitter slavery that they endured in Egypt. Also on the table was the *charoseth*, a savory mix of chutney made of apples and nuts, to remind them of the mixture they used to make bricks as well as salt water to remind them of the tears that they shed at the time.

The traditional Passover meal followed a set pattern:

- 1) A prayer of thanksgiving by the head of the house and drinking the first cup of (diluted) wine.
- 2) The eating of bitter herbs.
- 3) The son's inquiry, "Why is this night distinguished from all other nights?" and the father's appropriate reply, either narrated or read.
- 4) The singing of the first part of the *Hallel* (Psalms 113, 114) and the washing of hands. The second cup.
- 5) The carving and eating of the lamb, together with unleavened bread.
- 6) Continuation of the meal, each eating as much as he liked, until the last of the lamb was finished. The third cup was then drunk.
- 7) Singing of the last part of the *Hallel* (Psalms 115-118). Then the fourth cup.²

The disciples took their places around the table before Jesus said the blessing and thanksgiving (v. 17) over the first cup of wine that began Passover.

¹⁴When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." ¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this

² William Hendricksen, *Exposition of the Gospel according to Luke* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1978) pp. 959-60.

in remembrance of me." ²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:14-20).

Jesus said that He eagerly desired to eat this Passover with His friends and loved ones. Companionship is one of the greatest gifts of God when one is about to go through something painful. The Lord knew that, within a few hours, He would be crucified and the disciples would all fall away due to the pressure of the moment. This evening meal would be an opportunity to teach the disciples some of the things close to His heart that they should understand. A small group is the church in microcosm. Never underestimate the power of being in relationship with others when hard times come. We need one another. God never designed for us to live apart from friends and family. He said, "**It is not good for the man to be alone**" (Genesis 2:18). It is part of our DNA to have others around us and to be in true relationship to share our burdens and trials.

The Lord also said something very radical to the disciples. He told them that His body was given to them. I note that He did not say that it was broken for them because the bones of the Passover lamb were not to be broken (Exodus 12:46; Psalm 34:20). The other two that were crucified with Christ had their bones broken to hasten death before evening, but the bones of Jesus were not broken on the cross. Then, He talked about His blood being the blood of the New Covenant that would deliver them from the bondage of Satan and deliver them from the curse of sin and the world system. Solemn covenants were sealed by blood. With the New Covenant, it would not be the blood of a substitute animal, but the blood of God made flesh.

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you (Luke 22:20).

The New Covenant

For more than five hundred years, the Israelites had waited for what the prophet Jeremiah had spoken concerning a new covenant that God would initiate with His people:

³¹"The days are coming," declares the Lord, "when **I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah.** ³²It will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. ³³"This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time," declares the Lord. "**I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts.** I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest," declares the Lord. "**For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more**" (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

A covenant is a formal agreement of legal validity solemnly binding on the parties that enter into agreement with one another. The Old Covenant between God and the Israelites was made at the foot of Mount Sinai, and it was not made without blood (Exodus 24:6-8). This covenant that we enter into with God promises that the Lord will walk with us and that His presence will "Passover" us. When we say "yes" to Jesus Christ, we are entering a formal covenant with Him.

Our part of the covenant is to walk in faithful obedience to Him. God's part is to walk with us and to always be our God. He has given many conditional promises that go along with this covenant. We are just to ask Him.

The Lord then spoke about the one who would betray Him:

²¹But the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. ²²The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him." ²³They began to question among themselves which of them it might be who would do this (Luke 22:14-23).

It is John who gives us more information on this part of the conversation:

²¹After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, "I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me." ²²His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. ²³One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. ²⁴Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." ²⁵Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon (John 13:21-26).

Each of them were bewildered as to who it was. None of them were suspicious of Judas until Jesus revealed it to John at the table. We are told that John was reclining at Jesus' right, with his head leaning against Jesus' chest (John 13:25). This was not the place of highest honor; the person to the left of Jesus was granted that seat, he toward whom Jesus had His back turned. It is doubtful that Peter was in the place of honor since Peter could only whisper to John to ask Jesus who the betrayer was (John 13:24). It is likely that Judas was seated in the place of highest honor at the table to the left and back of Christ. It would have been difficult for Christ to reach any other part of the table if He was reclining on His left elbow and side. With His left elbow on the mattress, Jesus reached onto the table and dipped His bread into the dish and gave it to Judas. This explains why Judas, out of earshot of the others, could say to Christ, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered "Yes, it is you" (Matthew 26:25). Judas had managed to seat himself at the position of honor to the left of Christ. I wonder how Peter felt about Judas being in the place of honor to the left of Jesus.

God will often put His servants through the test of Promotion. If you have ever wanted to be used of God in a way that brings life to others, you will be tested by others getting promoted over you. They will be noticed and thrust forward, seemingly leaving you behind. How you respond to this test reveals a lot about your character. Can you trust God when others are being promoted ahead of you? Do you promote and push yourself forward? Promotion comes from the Lord. "A man's gift makes room for him, and brings him before great men" (Proverbs 18:16). This test is one of the most difficult to experience for one whose passionate desire is to be used of God. The servant of God is often left on the shelf as a test of his character. The arrow that God wants to use in ministry runs straighter when it is left longest in the quiver (Isaiah 49:2-3).

Luke then tells us about a dispute that went on around the table.

The Dispute as to Who Was Greatest

²⁴Also a dispute arose among them as to which of them was considered to be greatest. ²⁵Jesus said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. ²⁶But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. ²⁷For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves. ²⁸You are those who have stood by me in my trials. ²⁹And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, ³⁰so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Luke 22:24-30).

I am amazed that, in Jesus' last hours, the disciples were bickering over their positions in the Kingdom of God. In the book by Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*,³ Edersheim seats Jesus in the middle of the end, with John and Judas at the places of honor alongside Him to one end of the U-Shaped triclinium table. Could the reason for a dispute be because Peter was not seated in the other place of honor to the left of Jesus? (Verse 24). We are not told who instigated the dispute, but one wonders if it was Peter. It is possible that Jesus allowed or initiated the seating arrangement to reveal something to Peter as to his desire to be the greatest. It could also have been that Jesus wanted Judas close and did not want him slipping off too early in the evening. With the dispute going on, it could have been the same time that John tells us that Jesus got up from the table and modeled true servanthood to the disciples by washing their feet (John 13:1-17). The Lord still gave opportunity for Judas to back out of what he had planned to do. How humbly the Lord Jesus washed the feet of Judas.

The Lord upended the values of this world to His disciples by teaching them that greatness by heaven's standards is to take the lowliest stations in serving each other. He said the greatest among us should be like the youngest. We are to serve each other by taking on the jobs that others do not want to do. There is nothing small that is ever done in service for our Lord Jesus Christ. C.H. Spurgeon, the great English preacher, once said: "The meanest work for Jesus is a grander thing than the dignity of an emperor." Look at every opportunity for menial service as a test of God to see if you will live as the youngest. Jesus modeled this to them as He lovingly washed the dirt and dust off their feet. Their sandals had been left at the doorway.

Jesus then gave a prophetic word to Simon, also called Peter:

³¹"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. ³²But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers." ³³But he replied, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death." ³⁴Jesus answered, "I tell you, Peter, before the rooster crows today, you will deny three times that you know me" (Luke 22:31-34).

³ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*, Published by Hendrickson Publishers, Page 815.

Question 3) Why do you think Jesus called Peter by his old name here, i.e. “Simon, Simon?” What is meant by the words “Satan has asked to sift you as wheat”?

The usage of the name Simon suggests that Peter was behaving like he used to behave before he met Jesus, had his name changed, and began walking with Him. In those days, a word or phrase was spoken twice when something was to be emphasized.

Now that Jesus was leaving to be with the Father, the Lord needed Peter to be a rock and strength to the others. However, there was one more lesson or test that Peter had to experience, i.e. a lesson designed to break him as the potter breaks the pot to remold it again on the wheel (Jeremiah 18:4). Peter had to go through the experience of being broken for God to shape him into a vessel of honor that God could use to preach powerfully the Good News on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus said that Satan wanted to sift Peter.

What does it mean to be sifted? The word picture is of harvested wheat being shaken on a sieve. In those days, the sheaves of wheat were taken from the harvest fields to a threshing floor usually situated on a hill, where a threshing instrument, a large wooden trolley pulled by oxen, was dragged over it, separating most of the wheat kernels from the stalks. When a strong enough breeze was blowing, the whole mess was thrown in the air with a pitchfork. The wind blew most of the chaff away while the kernels, which were heavier, fell into the middle of the pile. Then, the sifting process began with a good shaking in the sieve. What was wheat fell through, but the stones, chaff and that which was not wheat stayed in the sieve. The shaking in the sieve, perhaps, was indicative of Peter’s being challenged three times as to whether he was a disciple of Christ and three times his responding that he was not.

It is not evident from the text about what Satan was asking for permission to challenge Peter. I suspect, though, that it was his pride. His pride had to be broken before He could be greatly used. Satan hoped Peter would be rejected as unwanted chaff. The Lord told him that He had prayed for him so that his faith may not fail.

Question 4) Have there been times in your life when your faith has been shaken? What kind of events have proven to be the most challenging to your faith?

How does this relate to us? There are times in our lives when God allows a situation uniquely designed to shake our faith and separate the chaff, that which is useless, from our character. I don’t think that it was coincidence that three people would recognize Peter while he stood around the fire outside the chief priest’s house after Christ was arrested. Perhaps, the situation was designed by God to break Peter’s heart. Peter thought that he was strong enough and that he had what it took to lead the Apostles. Hadn’t Jesus said to Peter that upon this rock He would build His church? What about you? What situations are you going through that are a challenge to your character or faith? Are you being shaken? Are you being challenged as to your character?

It might be good for us to close our meditation by remembering what it cost our Lord to make this covenant with us. It cost Him His blood, a life for a life, i.e. the Passover lamb for the door of our hearts. As He took the bread and the cup, He wanted us to remember what it cost Him and, in this sacrament, to draw near to Him and He will draw near to us. Maybe, you would like

to draw near to Him today by taking bread and wine or juice, perhaps with others, and as you eat and drink together, remember the Lord Jesus and the price that He paid to be able to protect you and be your Passover Lamb.

¹⁹And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁰In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the *new covenant* in my blood, which is poured out for you (Luke 22:19-20).

Prayer: Father, thank You for the new covenant in the blood of Your Son, the blood shed on a cross for me. As we draw near in simple and obedient faith, would You come and grant us healing as Your presence is on upon us? Amen.

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