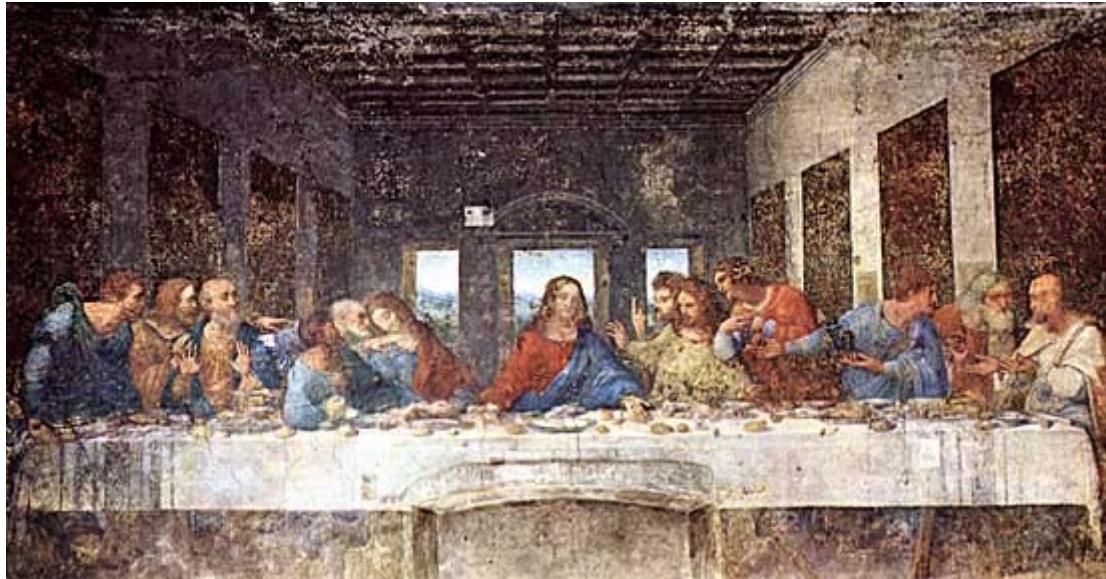


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THE LAST SUPPER & THE LORD'S SUPPER



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Leonardo Da Vinci's The Last Supper

The Last Supper (in Italian, Il Cenacolo or L'Ultima Cena) is a 15th century mural painting in Milan, created by Leonardo da Vinci for his patron Duke Lodovico Sforza. It represents the scene of The Last Supper from the final days of Jesus as depicted in the Bible. Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper is based on John 13:21, where Jesus announced that one of his 12 disciples would betray him. The Last Supper painting is one of the most well known and valued paintings in the world; unlike many other valuable paintings, however, it has never been privately owned because it cannot easily be moved.

Leonardo da Vinci's painting of The Last Supper measures 460 x 880 cm (15 feet x 29 feet) and can be found in the refectory of the convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie in Milan, Italy.

The Last Supper specifically portrays the reaction given by each apostle when Jesus said one of them would betray him. All twelve apostles have different reactions to the news, with various degrees of anger and shock. From left to right:

- *Bartholomew, James the Lesser and Andrew form a group of three, all are surprised. Andrew holds both of his hands up in a "stop!" gesture.*
- *Judas Iscariot, Peter and John form another group of three. Judas is in shadow, looking rather withdrawn and taken aback by the sudden revelation of his plan. He is clutching a small bag of silver, given to him as payment to betray Jesus. Peter looks angry; perhaps foreshadowing Peter's reaction in Gethsemane. Peter is holding a knife, which is pointed away from Christ, also a foreshadowing of Peter's violent protection of Christ in Gethsemane. The youngest apostle, John, appears to swoon.*
- *Thomas, James Major and Philip are the next group of three. Thomas is clearly upset; James the Greater looks stunned, with his arms in the air. Meanwhile, Philip appears to be requesting some explanation.*
- *Matthew, Jude Thaddeus and Simon the Zealot are a part of the final group of three. Both Jude Thaddeus and Matthew are turned toward Simon, perhaps to find out if he has any answer to their initial questions.*

These names are all agreed upon by art historians. In the 19th century, a manuscript (The Notebooks Leonardo Da Vinci pg. 232) was found with their names; before this only Judas, Peter, John and Jesus were positively identified.

Excerpted from <http://www.leonardo-davinci.org/thelastsupper.php>

FOREWORD

Christians since the first century have observed the Lord's Supper. Even though those who claim to follow Christ may have different understandings and practices of the Lord's Supper, it is universally observed. This reflects one common belief: the observance of the Lord's Supper is central to Christian worship.

Undoubtedly the importance placed on the Lord's Supper is based on the widely held view that Jesus himself commanded its observance during the Last Supper. Consequently, the connection between the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper is fundamental to most Christians' understanding of the Lord's Supper.

This study is first and foremost a textual study, beginning with the Last Supper. The plot of the Jewish leaders while the disciples of Jesus prepare for the Last Supper is the beginning of the passion narrative in the Gospels. Thus, the message of the Last Supper must be understood within the context of the suffering and death of our Lord. While we will not be able to study the entire passion story in detail, we will begin with the start of the passion narrative to set the context for Last Supper.

Our study will then shift to the teaching of the apostle Paul in his correspondence with the church at Corinth. A study in the Corinthian church is often a study of what not to do. Their errors can be instructive to us as we reflect upon the apostle's teachings to correct and encourage them.

It is also instructive to see how Christians, especially those in the early church, observed the Lord's Supper. We begin a look at the early Christians practice by considering the relevant passages in Acts, followed by looking at the practice in the second and third centuries.

At the end of our study we will spend time addressing the question as to how we should observe the Lord's Supper today. The cultural context of the 21st century is decidedly different than that of the 1st century, but a fundamental statement of faith is that 21st century Christians can still serve the Lord acceptably. (If that is not true, then why study at all?)

The primary requirement of all Bible study is to approach the text humbly, being willing to let it teach us instead of us bringing to it our views. This is never truer than when we are studying something as familiar to us as the Lord's Supper. Most of us for the longer part of our lives have observed the Lord's Supper each Sunday. Each week we listen to thoughts presented concerning this communal act. It is tempting to think that if we do not understand the Lord's Supper then there is probably nothing that we understand. That may be true, but we cannot simply take it to be true; we must always study afresh.

Equally true, we should not change our understanding simply for the sake of change. Truth is eternal, so it would not be unreasonable to think that much of what we have learned is consistent with revealed truth. Similarly we should not be quick to accept some new teaching as true. If it is truly "new", then it cannot be true.

The text of the scriptures used in these lessons is from the English Standard Version (ESV).

May God bless us in our study.

The Last Supper & The Lord's Supper
Syllabus

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LESSON 1

THE LAST SUPPER: PRELIMINARIES

THE PLOT OF JEWISH LEADERS

Matthew 26:1-5

¹When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples,

²"You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified."

³Then the chief priests and the elders of the people gathered in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, ⁴and plotted together in order to arrest Jesus by stealth and kill him. ⁵But they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar among the people."

Mark 14:1-2

¹It was now two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to arrest him by stealth and kill him,

²for they said, "Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar from the people."

Luke 22:1-2

¹Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover.

²And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death,

for they feared the people.

Comments/Questions

1. The "sayings" Jesus just finished were his teachings on the destruction of Jerusalem and the coming of the kingdom of heaven which was the last of the five discourses recorded by Matthew. [Each discourse concludes with a formula similar to "when Jesus finished these sayings" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1).]
2. The differing reference to the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread in each of the Gospels is interesting. Mark is most exact when he refers to them as separate festivals, whereas Luke seems to make the two festivals one festival which could go by either name (which is exactly how Josephus described it [*Antiquities*, 14.2.1; 17.9.3]). Matthew, quoting Jesus, simply says Passover (by which he probably meant both, cf. Matthew 26:17). By the time of the first century, the two feasts were commonly thought as a single 8-day feast (France, *Matthew*, p.981). These feasts will be studied in greater detail in our next lesson.
3. Although Jesus had earlier foretold of his death on three occasions (Mt.16:21-23//Mk.8:31-33//Lk.9:22; Mt.17:22-23//Mk.9:30-32//Lk.9:43-45; Mt.20:17-19 //Mk.10:32-34//Lk.18:31-34), only once before does a Gospel writer explicitly mention crucifixion as the manner of death (Mt.20:19, but see Jn.12:31-33). However, this is the first time that Jesus has associated his death with the Passover.

The High Priest

The high priest was a descendant of Aaron, through his son Eleazar, grandson Phinehas (Num. 25:10-13) and, in the time of David, through Zadok (2 Sam. 8:17; 1 Chr. 6:8). Moses gave specific instructions concerning his high moral and ritual purity (Lev. 21:10-15), his garments (Ex. 28), and priestly duties, especially on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16).

During the Seleucid empire, Antiochus IV Epiphanes appointed the high priest which in part gave rise to the Maccabean revolt (2nd century BC). Upon securing their independence, the Maccabees assumed the position of high priest although they were not descendants of Aaron.

During the time of Herod and his sons, the high priesthood was an appointed political position, selected from the Sadducean sect. Joseph Caiaphas was the high priest from AD 18-36, the longest rule of any high priest in the first century.

Ref: *Eerdmans Bible Dictionary*.

4. The Sanhedrin was composed of three main groups: chief priests (Sadducees), elders, and scribes (Pharisees). The high priest was president of the Sanhedrin.
5. The Synoptic Gospels agree that the Jewish leaders desired to put Jesus to death, but they were hesitant because of Jesus' popularity with the people (as also earlier Jn.7:1; Mk.11:18//Lk.19:47-48; Mt.21:46//Mk.12:12//Lk.20:19; as Herod Antipas also was in the case of John, Mt.14:5). Matthew and Mark specifically relate that the Jewish leaders had decided not to attempt their plot during the upcoming feast, but Matthew records Jesus' knowledge that he in fact would be delivered to be crucified during the feast.
6. Some believe there is a conflict between the Jewish leaders stated desire to not arrest Jesus "during the feast" and what they actually did by arresting Jesus after the Passover. To avoid this conflict some translate/interpret "during the feast" as "during the festival crowds" (i.e. during the day) [Jeremias; Gundry], but, of course, not all are convinced of the correctness of this translation.

THE ANOINTING OF JESUS

Matthew 26:6-13

⁶Now when Jesus was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,

⁷a woman came up to him with an alabaster flask of very expensive ointment, and she poured it on his head as he reclined at table.

⁸And when the disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, "Why this waste?"

⁹For this could have been sold for a large sum and given to the poor."

¹⁰But Jesus, aware of this, said to them, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me. ¹¹For you always have the poor with you,

Mark 14:3-9

³And while he was at Bethany in the house of Simon the leper,

as he was reclining at table, a woman came with an alabaster flask of ointment of pure nard, very costly, and she broke the flask and poured it over his head.

⁴There were some who said to themselves indignantly, "Why was the ointment wasted like that? ⁵For this ointment could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor." And they scolded her.

⁶But Jesus said, "Leave her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a beautiful thing to me. ⁷For you always have the poor with you, and whenever you want, you can do good for them.

John 12:1-8

¹Six days before the Passover, Jesus therefore came to Bethany, where Lazarus was, whom Jesus had raised from the dead.

²So they gave a dinner for him there. Martha served, and Lazarus was one of those reclining with him at table. ³Mary therefore took a pound of expensive ointment made from pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.

⁴But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was about to betray him), said, ⁵"Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?" ⁶He said this, not because he cared about the poor, but because he was a thief, and having charge of the moneybag he used to help himself to what was put into it.

⁷Jesus said, "Leave her alone, so that she may keep it for the day of my burial.

⁸For the poor you always have with you,

Matthew 26:6-13 (cont.)

but you will not always have me. ¹²In pouring this ointment on my body, she has done it to prepare me for burial. ¹³Truly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will also be told in memory of her."

Mark 14:3-9 (cont.)

But you will not always have me. ⁸She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burial. ⁹And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her."

John 12:1-8 (cont.)

but you do not always have me."

Comments / Questions

7. It is always difficult to correlate the Gospel of John with the Synoptic Gospels and probably no place more so than in the passion narrative. Matthew's and Mark's account gives the impression that this anointing took place within 2 days of the Passover; whereas John's account seems to suggest that it was 6 days before the Passover. Conflict? Or, can the two accounts be harmonized?
8. It appears that Jesus was staying in Bethany during his final week in Jerusalem (Mt. 21:17). That was the home of Mary and Martha and, as this account relates, Simon the leper. Bethany was located about 2 miles southeast of Jerusalem (cf. Jn.11:18).
9. One difference between Matthew's and Mark's account and John's account is that, in Matthew and Mark, Mary anoints the head of Jesus whereas, in John, she anoints his feet. Perhaps a greater difference is where the anointing took place. Matthew and Mark place the occasion in the house of Simon the leper, but John seems to place it at the house of Mary and Martha (and/or Lazarus'). To mitigate this apparent conflict, some have suggested that Simon was the father of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Is this the only way to harmonize the accounts?

Later speculation (starting at Ephrem in the fourth century) identified this Mary with Mary of Magdala [France, Matthew, p.973]. Presumably, Simon was a former leper; otherwise he would not have been socializing in a public fashion.

10. Although Luke does not record this anointing, he does record an earlier anointing that Jesus received in the house of the Pharisee Simon (Luke 7:36-50). Although some have suggested that these are two accounts of the same story, most see these as two differing stories. Simon was a common name in the first century, probably due to the popularity of Simon the son of Mattathias, the Maccabean hero. There are 10 Simons in the New Testament [Witherington, Mark, p.22].
11. John records the quantity of ointment used by Mary as a "pound". The term used was a Latin loan word (*libra*), hence reference is made to the 'Roman pound' which was 12 ounces (Morris, John, p.576). Mark records the value of the ointment at 300 denarii. A denarii was the standard daily wage of a laborer. Alabaster was an ancient material (calcium carbonate or calcium sulfate) that was used in the making of flasks, but it has also been suggested that it had become a common name for perfume flasks even if they were made of a different material [France, Mark, p.551]. Mark's comment that she "broke the flask" shows Mary's commitment to give all she had [Cranfield, p.415] (although it has also been suggested that the expression means that the 'seal' of the flask was broken, not the flask itself [Art. "Alabaster", Eerdmans Bible Dictionary]).

THE COMPLICITY OF JUDAS

Matthew 26:14-16

¹⁴Then one of the twelve, whose name was Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests ¹⁵and said, "What will you give me if I deliver him over to you?"

And they paid him thirty pieces of silver.

¹⁶And from that moment he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Mark 14:10-11

¹⁰Then Judas Iscariot, who was one of the twelve, went to the chief priests in order to betray him to them.

¹¹And when they heard it, they were glad and promised to give him money.

And he sought an opportunity to betray him.

Luke 22:3-6

³Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. ⁴He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them.

⁵And they were glad, and agreed to give him money.

⁶So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

Comments / Questions

12. Luke is quite clear in implicating Satan in Judas' betrayal (see also Jn.13:2,27). Earlier John had recorded a statement of Jesus where he revealed the true character of Judas ("one of you is a devil", Jn.6:70). Satan was involved in all aspects of Jesus' suffering and death (Lk.22:31,53).
13. In addition to the chief priests, Luke includes "officers" who negotiated with Judas. This may refer to leaders of the temple guards – the ones who would arrest Jesus [Bock, Luke, p.1705].
14. Matthew tells us the betrayal price that Judas accepted: 30 pieces of silver, the price of slave (Ex.21:32). There were at least two silver coins in first century Jerusalem. A "piece of silver" could be the Roman denarius [so France, Matthew, p.979]. But there was also the Tyrian silver shekel that was used for payment of the temple tax which was worth 4 denarii [so Turner, p.621].
15. We are not told why Judas betrayed Jesus. Was he simply greedy (cf. Jn.12:6)? He does ask the chief priests what they would give him he betrayed Jesus. Or, was he a "zealot" as some suggest and he was just disillusioned with Jesus (cf. Jn.6:66-71)? The text does not say. The meaning of "Iscariot" is uncertain, but it is commonly accepted to mean "man from Kerioth" (cf. Eerdmans Bible Dictionary, p.607). To make matters worse, the location of Kerioth is also uncertain; it could be in Judea (Joshua 15:25) or Moab (Amos 2:2; but it is unlikely that a Jew would come from Moab). In either case, Judas would have been the only non-Galilean among Jesus' disciples.

The Gospel of Judas

In 2006, the National Geographic Society (NGS) announced the publication of a translation of a Coptic manuscript found in the late 1970's and radiocarbon dated by them to the 3rd or 4th Century. This manuscript is believed to be the work that Irenaeus called the Gospel of Judas but which he also described as a "fictitious history" (*Against Heresies* I.31.1, c. AD 180).

The document is interesting in that (according to the translation of the NGS) Judas is not a betrayer, but a helper to Jesus and that Jesus revealed truths to Judas that he did not tell the other apostles.

Scholars are almost unanimous that this work is the result of Gnostic followers of Jesus and that it contains nothing of historical value to understanding Jesus or Judas.

Nonetheless, there are those who place as much value on Gnostic sources as they do the Biblical Gospels.

LESSON 2

THE LAST SUPPER: PREPARATIONS

PREPARING FOR THE PASSOVER MEAL

Matthew 26:17-19

¹⁷Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying,

"Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?"

¹⁸He said,

"Go into the city

to a certain man and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.' "

¹⁹And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.

Mark 14:12-16

¹²And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?"

¹³And he sent two of his disciples and said to them,

"Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you.

Follow him, ¹⁴and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?'

¹⁵And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us."

¹⁶And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Luke 22:7-13

⁷Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.

⁸So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." ⁹They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?"

¹⁰He 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 ¹¹and 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?'

¹²And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there."

¹³And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Comments / Questions

1. The "first day of unleavened bread" would be the Passover day itself (Nisan 14) as evidenced by Mark's and Luke's comment that this was the day that the Passover lambs were sacrificed. Why wouldn't Matthew make a similar comment? Mark specifically mentions that "they" sacrificed the Passover lamb. Who are "they"?
2. The Law required the Passover to be eaten in Jerusalem (Dt.16:2, "the place that the Lord will choose"), hence the need to "go into the city".
3. Mark does not identify the two disciples, but Luke tells us that they were Peter and John. It is not uncommon for Mark to not name Peter when other Gospel writers do. This is taken by some as evidence that the tradition that Mark wrote his Gospel under Peter's tutorage is correct.
4. This story is reminiscent of the Jesus' earlier entry into Jerusalem (Mk.11:1f) when Jesus told his disciples to go into the city where they would find a colt. In this instance, two of his disciples are told that they will find a man carrying a jar (which was typically the work of a woman). The question in both instances is whether Jesus knew what they

would find by divine foreknowledge or due to a prearrangement that he had made. Anything within the text to indicate which may be correct?

Many commentators take the view that Jesus prearranged the sequence of events and that these measures were taken to maintain secrecy from the Jewish authorities and Judas. Any merit in this view?

5. Consider Matthew's account. Note the things we would not know if we only had Matthew's Gospel. Generally, when Matthew and Mark relate the same event, Matthew's account will be briefer.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A BETRAYER

Matthew 26:20-25

²⁰When it was evening, he reclined at table with the twelve. ²¹And as they were eating, he said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me."

²²And they were very sorrowful and began to say to him one after another, "Is it I, Lord?"

²³He answered, "He who has dipped his hand in the dish with me will betray me. ²⁴The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

²⁵Judas, who would betray him, answered, "Is it I, Rabbi?" He said to him, "You have said so."

Mark 14:17-21

¹⁷And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me."

¹⁹They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?"

²⁰He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread^a into the dish with me. ²¹For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

Luke 22:14, 21-23

¹⁴And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him.

...
²¹But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. ²²For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!"

²³And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

Notes

a "bread" is not in the Greek text; ASV "he that dippeth with me in the dish"

Comments / Questions

6. The Passover meal was typically observed with one's immediate family. Thus, the incongruity of a close companion betraying Jesus is clearly portrayed.
7. The ESV (and many other translations) say that the disciples "reclined" at the table. The Greek word used could be translated more broadly in the sense of taking one's place at table (so NRSV; cf. Nolland, p.1049), but it is known (see the Mishnah passage below) that in the first century Jews did recline at festive meals. Reclining was the universal

practice in Greek and Roman society and was an indication of one's standing as a "free person"; women, children, and slaves would sit, not recline (D. Smith, p.11, 14-18). It is not known if the Jews borrowed this practice from the Greeks and Romans, or if they independently developed the practice.

8. When told that one of them would betray Jesus, the apostles begin to ask "Is it I?". Some translations frame the question with a sense of disbelief: "Surely not I?" (NRSV, NIV, TNIV). Luke places this questioning of the disciples after the meal. Only Matthew records the dialogue between Jesus and Judas.

THE PASSOVER AND THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

The Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were instituted by God on the night he executed judgment on Egypt by killing all their firstborn.

Exodus 12:1-28

¹The LORD said to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, ²"This month shall be for you the beginning of months. It shall be the first month of the year for you. ³Tell all the congregation of Israel that on the tenth day of this month every man shall take a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household. ⁴And if the household is too small for a lamb, then he and his nearest neighbor shall take according to the number of persons; according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb. ⁵Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male a year old. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats, ⁶and you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month, when the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill their lambs at twilight.

⁷"Then they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. ⁸They shall eat the flesh that night, roasted on the fire; with unleavened bread and bitter herbs they shall eat it. ⁹Do not eat any of it raw or boiled in water, but roasted, its head with its legs and its inner parts. ¹⁰And you shall let none of it remain until the morning; anything that remains until the morning you shall burn. ¹¹In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover. ¹²For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and on all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments: I am the LORD. ¹³The blood shall be a sign for you, on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you, when I strike the land of Egypt.

¹⁴"This day shall be for you a memorial day, and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute

forever, you shall keep it as a feast. ¹⁵Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven out of your houses, for if anyone eats what is leavened, from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. ¹⁶On the first day you shall hold a holy assembly, and on the seventh day a holy assembly. No work shall be done on those days. But what everyone needs to eat, that alone may be prepared by you. ¹⁷And you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this very day I brought your hosts out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day, throughout your generations, as a statute forever. ¹⁸In the first month, from the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. ¹⁹For seven days no leaven is to be found in your houses. If anyone eats what is leavened, that person will be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a sojourner or a native of the land. ²⁰You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwelling places you shall eat unleavened bread."

²¹Then Moses called all the elders of Israel and said to them, "Go and select lambs for yourselves according to your clans, and kill the Passover lamb. ²²Take a bunch of hyssop and dip it in the blood that is in the basin, and touch the lintel and the two doorposts with the blood that is in the basin. None of you shall go out of the door of his house until the morning. ²³For the LORD will pass through to strike the Egyptians, and when he sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the LORD will pass over the door and will not allow the destroyer to enter your houses to strike you. ²⁴You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. ²⁵And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. ²⁶And when your children say to you, 'What do you mean by this service?' ²⁷you shall

say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" And the people bowed their

heads and worshiped.

²⁸Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did.

TRADITIONAL JEWISH OBSERVANCE OF THE PASSOVER

The Mishnah is a topical collection of Jewish rabbinic teachings that was compiled about AD 200. It is not certain, but it is generally believed, that these teachings reflect the practice in the first century. Among these teachings are the traditions that the Jews held in observing the Passover (see next page).

It is apparent by comparing the Mishnah with Exodus 12 that several practices evolved in the observance of the Passover. Note the following:

1. The Mishnah notes that one reclined while eating the Passover, whereas the Exodus passage implies that one stood while eating (i.e. belt fastened, sandals on feet, etc.).
2. The Mishnah mentions four cups drunk during the course of the meal; no cup is mentioned in Exodus.
3. The Mishnah mentions multiple prayers (benedictions) that are not noted in Exodus.
4. The Mishnah mentions other foods besides the lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs, although these three are given special prominence.
5. Most interesting is the order that Jewish tradition established in observing the Passover. Whereas the Law simply told them what to eat and do, Jewish tradition passed down a precise order as to when each thing was to be performed. In fact, this section of the Mishnah is called the *Sedar* which is the Hebrew word for "order".

In even this short passage from the Mishnah, one is able to understand better the people's astonishment at the teaching of Jesus "for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Mt.7:29). Note the constant referral to the teaching of some Rabbi.

Marshall summarizes the order of the Passover meal as given by the Mishnah as follows (Last Supper, Table 1):

1. Preliminary Course: Blessing of festival day (Kiddush) spoken over first cup of wine.
First Cup of Wine.
Dish of green herbs, bitter herbs and fruit sauce.
Serving of meal and mixing of second cup of wine.
2. Passover Liturgy: The Passover narrative (*haggadah*)
Singing of Psalm 113 (the little *hallel*)
Second Cup of Wine.
3. Main Meal: Grace spoken over bread.
Meal of lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs.
Grace spoken over third cup of wine.
Third Cup of Wine (Cup of Blessing).
4. Conclusion: Singing of Psalms 114-118 (the great *hallel*).
Grace spoken over fourth cup of wine.
Fourth Cup of Wine.

We will compare this practice with the Gospel accounts in our next lesson.

The Passover Seder ("Order"), Mishnah

- 1) On the eve of Passover, close to *minhah*, one does not eat until it gets dark. And even a poor man in Israel does not eat until he reclines. And they do not give him less than four cups of wine, and even [if it must come] from the charity plate.
- 2) They mix for him the first cup. The School of Shammai say, one recites the benediction over the day, and after that, one recites the benediction over the wine. But the School of Hillel say, one recites the benediction over the wine, and after that, one recites the benediction over the day.
- 3) They bring before him. He dips with the lettuce until he reaches the course of bread. They bring before him unleavened bread, lettuce, fruit puree, and two cooked dishes, even though the fruit puree is not a commandment. Rabbi Eleazar bar Zadok says, "It is a commandment." And in [the days of the] Temple, they used to bring before him the carcass of the paschal lamb.
- 4) They mix for him the second cup. And here the son questions his father. But if the son has not [enough] knowledge, his father instructs him. "Why is this night different from all [other] nights? For on all [other] nights we eat [either] leavened or unleavened bread; tonight, only unleavened. For on all [other] nights we eat various kinds of herbs; tonight, bitter herbs. For on all [other] nights we eat flesh roasted, stewed, or boiled; tonight, only roasted. For on all [other] nights we dip once; tonight, twice." And according to the understanding of the son, his father instructs him, beginning with disgrace and concluding with praise. And he expounds from "A wandering Aramaean was my father" [Deut 26:5] until he finishes the entire section.
- 5) Rabban Gamliel used to say, "Anyone who has not said these three things on Passover has not fulfilled his obligation. And these are: paschal lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs." "Passover" because the Place passed over the houses of our fathers in Egypt. "Unleavened bread" because our fathers were redeemed from Egypt. "Bitter herbs" because the Egyptians made bitter the lives of our fathers in Egypt. In each and every generation one is obligated to see himself as if he went out of Egypt, as it is said, "And you shall tell your son on that day saying, 'Because of what the Lord did for me in my exodus from Egypt'" [Exod 13:8]. Therefore we are obligated to thank, to praise, to laud, to glorify, to exalt, to honor, to bless, to extol, and to adore him who has done for our fathers and for us all these signs, bringing us from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to rejoicing, from mourning to a feast day, from darkness to great light, from servitude to redemption. And [therefore] let us say before him, Praise ye the Lord!
- 6) How far does one recite? The School of Shammai say, "Up to, '...the joyous mother of children'" [Ps 113:9]. But the School of Hillel say, "Up to '...flint into a spring of water'" [Ps 114:8]. And one concludes with Redemption. Rabbi Tarphon says, "...who redeemed us and redeemed our fathers from Egypt." But he did not add a conclusion. Rabbi Akiba says, "Therefore, may the Lord, our God and the God of our fathers, bring us in peace to the other feasts and pilgrim festivals which are coming to meet us, while we rejoice in the building of your city and are glad in your service [worship]. And may we eat there from the sacrifices and from the paschal lamb etc. ... " until "Blessed are you, O Lord, redeemer of Israel."
- 7) They mix for him the third cup. He says a benediction over his meal. [They mix for him] the fourth [cup]. He completes the Hallel over it and also says the benediction for the song over it. Between these cups, if one wishes to drink, let him drink. Between the third and the fourth he must not drink.
- 8) They may not conclude after the paschal lamb with dessert. If some of them fell asleep, they may [continue to] eat. If all [fall asleep], they may not [continue to] eat. Rabbi Jose says, "If they take a nap, they may [continue to] eat. If they fall into a deep sleep, they may not [continue to] eat."
- 9) The paschal lamb makes the hands unclean after midnight. The *piggul* and the Remnant make the hands unclean. "If one recites the benediction for the paschal lamb, it exempts [him from] the one for the festal offering. If one recites the one for the festal offering, it does not exempt [him from] the one for the paschal lamb." These are the words of Rabbi Ishmael. Rabbi Akiba says, "That one does not exempt this one, and this one does not exempt that one." [D.Smith, From Symposium to Eucharist, p.147-149]

LESSON 3

THE LAST SUPPER: THE MEAL

THE PASSOVER MEAL

Matthew 26:26-29

Mark 14:22-25

Luke 22:15-20

²⁶Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it^a broke it^a and gave it^a to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."

²²And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it^a broke it^a and gave it^a to them, and said, "Take; this is my body."

¹⁵And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." ¹⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. ¹⁸For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

¹⁹And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it^a and gave it^a to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

²⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out^b for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

²³And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out^b for many. ²⁵Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

²⁰And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

³⁰And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

²⁶And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Notes

a "it" is not in the Greek text.

b NAB "to be poured out" (see Broughton)

Comments / Questions

1. As a first exercise, compare the above accounts. Matthew and Mark are clearly closer to each other than either one is to Luke. John does not record the Last Supper meal.
 - a. Nonetheless, Matthew and Mark do have some differences. What are they?

 - b. What are the most important differences in Luke as compared to Matthew and Mark?

2. In Luke 22: 15-16, Jesus tells of his desire to eat this Passover with his disciples and that he will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. To eat the "Passover" can mean either (1) to eat the Passover *meal*, or (2) to eat the Passover *lamb* (Marshall, Luke, p.795). Note that this statement of Jesus takes place at the beginning of the Passover meal (and thus could have been included with Lesson 2).
 - a. Some understand this as saying that Jesus ate this Passover with the disciples, and that he would not eat the Passover "again" until it was fulfilled in the kingdom of God ("again" occurs in a few manuscripts, thus included by the NASU, NIV). Others think that although Jesus desired to eat the Passover, he did not eat it with them since he was not going to eat it until it was fulfilled in the kingdom of God (some, but not all, hold this view because they believe the Passover wasn't until the next day– to be discussed later in Lesson 5). Which do you think? Did Jesus eat this meal or not?
 - b. In any case, what does it mean when Jesus spoke of "it" (i.e, the Passover) being "fulfilled" in the kingdom of God? Any connection to what Jesus said in Mt.5: 17?
 - c. And, what does the "kingdom of God" refer? The current age in the church or after the return of Jesus in heaven?
3. Presuming this is a traditional Passover meal as described in the Mishnah (see Lesson 2), it may be helpful to place Jesus' remarks concerning the bread and fruit of the vine within the course of that meal. (Of course, not all will agree – R.C. Foster thinks the bread and cup sayings occurred after the conclusion of the Passover meal.)
 - a. The bread was blessed and eaten in the main part of the meal following the drinking of the second cup. Other items (such as bitter herbs) would already have been eaten by this point in the meal, hence notice the language of Matthew and Mark, "as they were eating, Jesus took bread". Note also that the Passover narrative where the significance of the Passover observance was recalled would have already been delivered and reflected upon by the time the bread was eaten.
 - b. After distributing the bread, Jesus took a cup. Two cups remained in the traditional Passover meal – the third and fourth cups. Which of these was the one designated by Jesus to be his blood? (Try and answer this before proceeding.)
 - c. It is (unanimously?) agreed that it is the third cup (called the "cup of blessing"; cf Paul's reference in 1 Cor.10: 16) that Jesus designates as his blood. If so, what would have transpired between the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup?

And the third cup concluded the meal. Thus, note the consistency with language of Luke's account in verse 20: "after they had eaten".

- d. Matthew and Mark follow the words of Jesus concerning the cup with the observation that they "sung a hymn" and then departed to the Mount of Olives. It was the traditional practice to sing the great hallel (Psalms 114 [115?]-118) after drinking the third cup and before drinking the fourth cup. None of the Synoptics mention the fourth cup being drunk. Was it?

- e. One unique feature of Luke's account is that he records Jesus taking a cup prior to taking the bread (v.17-18). If the cup after the bread was the third cup, which cup was this one before the bread? Consider carefully.
4. After saying that the bread was "his body", Luke uniquely records "which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." This extension in Luke does not occur in some manuscripts, but most textual critics (and hence most translations, except notably the NEB, REB) accept the 'longer' text as the original. But this extension provides the basis of most Christians understanding of the Lord's Supper.
 - a. To say that Jesus' body is "given" for his disciples is consistent with the view that Jesus' death was a sacrifice. If so, this is consistent with other NT teachings: Rom.5:6-8; 1 Cor.5:7; Titus 2:14. Any other NT passages come to mind?
 - b. The words "do this in remembrance of me" contain both a command and the reason for command. It highlights that the Lord's Supper is at its core a memorial and, given the context, a memorial of Jesus' sacrifice.
 5. All three synoptic Gospels speak of Jesus breaking the bread. Since the bread represents the body of Jesus, many understand the breaking as referring to the suffering of Jesus and ultimately his death, i.e. his 'broken body' (so Chumbley, p.461). Apparently, this was the way one scribe understood it who copied the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:24 ("This is my body which is for you") but added the word broken ("This is my body which is broken for you" KJV, NKJV). If significance is to be found in the act of breaking the bread, it more likely represents the sharing that takes place by dividing (i.e. breaking) the bread and distributing it. Thus it becomes a symbol of the fellowship we each have with Christ (1 Cor.10:16b: "The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ"). Besides, the amazing thing about Jesus' death was that his bones were *not* broken, Jn.19:31-36.
 6. All three Synoptics identify the fruit of the vine with Jesus' shed blood.
 - a. All three note that his blood was "poured out for many" (Matthew and Mark) or "poured out for you" (Luke). Just as Jesus' body was "given" so his blood was "poured out". This is the language of a sacrifice.
 - b. Matthew uniquely adds the reason it was poured out: "for forgiveness of sins". This clearly identifies Jesus act as a sacrifice for sins.
 - c. Jesus' blood is called the "blood of the covenant" (Matthew and Mark) or "the new covenant in my blood" (Luke). This is reminiscent of the use of blood to ratify the first covenant (Ex.24:3-8; Heb.9:18-22). The expression "new covenant" recalls Jer.31:31-34 which speaks of forgiveness of iniquities.

7. The Elements.

- a. The term used for bread in these accounts (Gk. *artos*) can refer to either leaven or unleavened bread. There was another word (Gk. *azumos*) which only referred to unleavened bread.
- b. The expression "fruit of the vine" used by Matthew and Mark was the standard formula to refer to the wine used during Passover at the time of Jesus (Jeremias, p.183). Further, although red, white, and black wines were available in Palestine, red wine was used during Passover (Jeremias, p.53). It was customary (as testified by Jewish sources and copied by early Christians) to mix wine with water, thus suggesting that the wine was fermented. Arguments that the wine used *must* be unfermented (e.g. fermented wine would be 'leavened' and hence banned – which really does not make sense; or the common Greek word for wine (*oinos*) is not used in any of the accounts of the Last Supper or the Lord's Supper which somehow suggests this is unfermented wine) or, on the other hand, that it *must* be fermented (presumably because it is purer) surely miss the point.
- c. Luke does not use the expression "fruit of the vine" and only speaks of the "cup". Clearly, he means the contents of the cup when he says "this cup is poured out for you"; the contents are poured, not the cup itself.

8. The Greek verb for "giving thanks" used throughout these accounts is *eucharisteo* from which the noun Eucharist is derived. The term Eucharist was the most common word used in the second century and later to refer to the Lord's Supper (Ferguson, "Eucharist", p.320).

LESSON 4

THE LAST SUPPER: POSTSCRIPT

The Gospels collectively tells us of several events that take place during the Last Supper or immediately afterward. Besides those that we have already studied, Luke tells us the dispute among the disciples, John tells us of Jesus washing the disciples feet, the Synoptics tell us of Jesus' prediction that all the disciples will fall away, and all the Gospels specifically tell of Jesus' statement to Peter that he will deny Jesus three times. We will look at each of these in this Lesson.

The following gives a list of the major events at the Last Supper as told by each writer.

Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Betrayer Foretold	Betrayer Foretold	Cup	Jesus Washes Feet
Bread	Bread	Bread	Betrayer Foretold
Cup	Cup	Cup	Exchange with Judas – Leaves
Hymn	Hymn	Betrayer Foretold	New Commandment – Love
To Mt. of Olives	To Mt. of Olives	Disciples Dispute	Peter Will Deny 3x
"All will fall away"	"All will fall away"	Peter Will Deny 3x	Extended Discourse
Peter Will Deny 3x	Peter Will Deny 3x	"Transgressor Saying"	Prayer-High Priestly
To Gethsemane	To Gethsemane	To Mt. of Olives	To Garden

For those obsessed with chronology, it is unfortunate that it is impossible to know the precise order of each event (e.g. did Jesus' foretelling of a betrayer occur before the bread and cup were taken [Matthew/Mark] or after [Luke]). Apparently, the Gospel writers were not overly concerned with chronological matters (as is also evident in other portions of the Gospels), but were more interested in conveying the significance and meaning of the events (unless, of course, the order itself was significant).

Nonetheless, if only to play to our curiosity, the following is a *possible* order of events:

Disciples Dispute	<i>Over seating arrangements?; Luke's order incorrect</i>
Cup	
Jesus Washes Feet of Disciples	
Betrayer Foretold	<i>Assumes Matthew/Mark's order is correct; not Luke's</i>
Bread	
Cup	
Exchange with Judas – Judas Leaves	<i>Or did this happen before the Bread and Cup?</i>
New Commandment – Love	
"All will fall away"	
Peter Will Deny 3 Times	
"Transgressor Saying"	
Extended Discourse	
Jesus' High Priestly Prayer	
Hymn	<i>Hymn was concluding act in traditional Passover meal</i>
All Depart to Gethsemane	

Challenge this order! The exercise itself will promote familiarity with the text.

THE DISPUTE AMONG THE APOSTLES

Luke 22:24-30

²⁴A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. ²⁵And he said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. ²⁶But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. ²⁷For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.

²⁸"You are those who have stayed with me in my trials, ²⁹and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, ³⁰that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Comments / Questions

1. If this did take place as the disciples were gathering for the meal, it appropriately sets the stage for the lessons Jesus will teach. Pride and self centeredness are exactly the opposite the servant mindset that grows out of love for others.
2. It has been suggested that this particular dispute arose out of their desire to secure a more favorable seat at the table. Although we cannot be certain about this, it is consistent with the importance we know that ancient societies ascribed to where one sat (cf. James 2:2-3).
3. Even though the disciples have their faults, Jesus notes their previous loyalty. Consequently, all of them will have a place at his kingly table. Given the context, the point may be that it is not important where you sit at the table, but simply that you are at the table.

JESUS WASHES THE DISCIPLES FEET

John 13:1-38

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. ²During^a supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot^b, Simon's son, to betray him, ³Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God, ⁴rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist. ⁵Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him. ⁶He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?" ⁷Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand." ⁸Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." ⁹Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!" ¹⁰Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you." ¹¹For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean." ¹²When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you? ¹³You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am. ¹⁴If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. ¹⁵For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you. ¹⁶Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. ¹⁷If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. ¹⁸I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' ¹⁹I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take

place you may believe that I am he. ²⁰Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever receives the one I send receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me."

²¹After saying these things, Jesus was troubled in his spirit, and testified, "Truly, truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me." ²²The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he spoke. ²³One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table close to Jesus, ²⁴so Simon Peter motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, said to him, "Lord, who is it?" ²⁶Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I will give this morsel of bread when I have dipped it." So when he had dipped the morsel, he gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. ²⁷Then after he had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." ²⁸Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰So, after receiving the morsel of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

³¹When he had gone out, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in him. ³²If God is glorified in him, God will also glorify him in himself, and glorify him at once. ³³Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You will seek me, and just as I said to the Jews, so now I also say to you, 'Where I am going you cannot come.' ³⁴A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. ³⁵By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Notes

- a* Some manuscripts have "after" (Morris, p.615, n.9), but in 13:30 the supper is still in progress.
- b* So ASV, RSV, NASU, REB, NJB, but Bruce, Barnett think it is Satan's heart.

Comments / Questions

4. This section begins with the time reference "Before the Feast of the Passover" which would suggest that the supper subsequently reported was not the Last Supper since the Synoptic Gospels clearly portray the Last Supper as being the Passover meal. But due to the events recorded, scholars are virtually unanimous that John 13 does record events during the Last Supper. How they reconcile John's chronology with that of the Synoptics will be the focus of Lesson 5.
5. Sometime "during supper" (v.2) Jesus rose to wash the feet of his disciples.
 - a. Exactly when this occurred during the supper is difficult to determine. John places the foot washing before Jesus' announcement of a betrayer which Matthew and Mark place before the partaking of the bread and cup but Luke places after. It would be reasonable to think that it occurred after the disciple's dispute.
 - b. Peter objected, but recanted after Jesus said that "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me." Note the language used. Jesus equated his washing with the disciples *sharing* (i.e. communion, fellowship) with him. But, in the Synoptic accounts, Jesus told his disciples to share the bread and cup ("Take, eat"; "Drink of it"). Thus, both having Jesus perform the act of a servant (foot washing) and the taking of the bread and the cup (which embody his sacrifice – another act of service) results in us sharing with Jesus.
6. John's account of Jesus' announcement of a betrayer includes the interesting role of Peter and John (assuming it was John "whom Jesus loved"). The natural reading of the text seems to suggest that Jesus told John that Judas was the betrayer, but verse 28 causes some doubt. Judas, at least, seems to understand that Jesus knows of his intent (as also indicated by Matthew [26:25]).

7. The "new commandment" of Jesus to love one another is not totally new. After all, the "second" commandment was to "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mk.12:31). So, why is this called a 'new' commandment?
8. Following these events, John uniquely records an extended discourse (Jn.14-16) and a prayer of Jesus (commonly called the High Priestly prayer since he is interceding on behalf of his disciples; Jn.17) before departing for Gethsemane (Jn.18:1).

JESUS TELLS OF THE DISCIPLES FALLING AWAY

Matthew 26:31-35	Mark 14:27-31	Luke 22:31-34	John 13:36-38
<p>³¹Then Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away because of me this night. For it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' ³²But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."</p>	<p>²⁷And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.' ²⁸But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee."</p>	<p>³¹"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat, ³²but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." ³³Peter said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death." ³⁴Jesus said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me."</p>	<p>³⁶Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow me now, but you will follow afterward." ³⁷Peter said to him, "Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." ³⁸Jesus answered, "Will you lay down your life for me? Truly, truly, I say to you, the rooster will not crow till you have denied me three times."</p>
<p>³³Peter answered him, "Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away." ³⁴Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." ³⁵Peter said to him, "Even if I must die with you, I will not deny you!"</p>	<p>²⁹Peter said to him, "Even though they all fall away, I will not." ³⁰And Jesus said to him, "Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times." ³¹But he said emphatically, "If I must die with you, I will not deny you."</p>		
<p>And all the disciples said the same.</p>	<p>And they all said the same.</p>		

Comments / Questions

9. Matthew and Mark "frame" the institution of the Lord's Supper with the announcement of a betrayer before the supper and the announcement that all the apostles will fall away after the supper.

The Last Supper and the Lord's Supper

10. The prophecy of Zechariah (13:7) foretells of the disciples falling away, but Jesus quickly foretells their restoration following his resurrection.
11. Satan was not satisfied with Judas only, he wanted Peter also. But Jesus interceded on Peter's behalf. Peter appears unfazed by Satan's designs and has the audacity to contradict both Jesus and Scripture by proclaiming his unfaltering loyalty.
12. Romans divided the night into four watches. The third of the four watches (midnight to 3:00 am) was called the 'crow of the cocks' (Bock, Luke, p.1744). Whether this is what Jesus had in mind is unknown.

LESSON 5

THE LAST SUPPER: CHRONOLOGY

THE NIGHT JESUS HAD THE LAST SUPPER

All the Gospels agree that Jesus died on Friday [Mt. 27:62; Mk.15:42; Lk.23:54-56; Jn.19:31,42]. They uniformly say that he died on the "day of Preparation" which Luke and John make clear was Friday – the day before the Sabbath [cf. Josephus (*Ant.* 16.163)].¹

If Jesus died on Friday, then it was the previous night (Thursday night) that Jesus observed the Last Supper with his disciples. Again, all the Gospels present a compact sequence of events starting with his arrest in Gethsemane and ending with his death the following afternoon (which is too compact for some who think it best to move the date back, e.g. Nolland, p.1025). But remember that the Jewish day began at sunset, so what we call Thursday night was really the night belonging to the Jewish Friday.

WAS THE LAST SUPPER A PASSOVER MEAL?

The texts in the Synoptic Gospels we have studied clearly present the Last Supper as a Passover meal. The natural reading of these texts would never have been questioned except that the natural reading of some passages in John suggests that the Passover was not held until the next evening – after the death of Jesus. This difference gives rise to "perhaps the most disputed calendric question in the NT" (Brown, p.555).

To see the force of the question, we must first review the relevant passages.

The Synoptic Gospels: The Last Supper was the Passover Meal

Mark 14:12 (//Mt.26:17//Lk.22:7-8) And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?"

Mark 14:16 (//Mt.26:19//Lk.22:13) And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Luke 22:15 And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

The Gospel of John: The Last Supper was not the Passover Meal

John 13:1-2 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. During supper, ...

John 18:28 Then they led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the governor's headquarters. It was early morning. They themselves did not enter the governor's headquarters, so that they would not be defiled, but could eat the Passover.

¹There are a few who are not convinced that Jesus died on Friday. They understand Matthew 12:40 ("so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth") to require that Jesus had died no later than Thursday afternoon so that he was in the grave at least three nights. This view requires that the referent of the "day of Preparation" in the noted passages is Passover and not the Sabbath and that the term Sabbath in those same passages also refers to Passover and not the weekly Sabbath. Suffice it at this point to note that "three days and three nights" was an idiom that is equivalent to the expression "on the third day". Thus, it was not meant to be literally understood as a full three days and nights.

John 19:14-16 Now it was the day of Preparation of the Passover. It was about the sixth hour. ... ¹⁶So he delivered him over to them to be crucified. ...

John 19:31 Since it was the day of Preparation, and so that the bodies would not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken and that they might be taken away. ...

John 19:42 So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, since the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

SOLUTIONS

Any possible solution that maintains the integrity of the Biblical text must of necessity fall within one of the following categories:

1. The Synoptics are correct and the passages in John can be understood in a way that is consistent with the Synoptics.
2. John is correct and the passages in the Synoptics can be understood in a way that is consistent with John.
3. Both the Synoptics and John are correct. This can only be true if the Passover was observed on two subsequent days.

Of course, there are those scholars who are not hesitant to simply say that either the Synoptics or John were mistaken. Their views will not be considered in our evaluation.

Solution 1: The Synoptics are Correct

In this view, the Last Supper was a Passover meal. Thus, the passages in John are to be understood as follows (e.g. Carson; Pope):

John 13:1-2 The expression "before the Passover" only refers to Jesus' knowledge of his departure (v.1) and not to the "supper" (v.2). Thus, there is a period of time that elapses between verse 1 and 2.

John 18:28 The term "Passover" can be understood to refer to both the Passover lamb and to the paschal sacrifices eaten during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (B.Smith; Lane, p.498; cf.Lk.22:1, but even some supporters of the Synoptic view admit that this is not the most natural reading). So, the Jews did not defile themselves so they could eat one of the festive meals of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

John 19:14 The term "day of Preparation of the Passover" does not have to refer to the day before the Passover, but simply to the "day of Preparation" (Friday) that occurred during the Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread week.

Jeremias [Eucharistic Words, p.41-61] champions this view and provides the following arguments to demonstrate that the Last Supper was a Passover meal:

1. The Last Supper was held in Jerusalem which was required of the Passover meal.
2. Jesus was able to acquire a room without much effort which is consistent with the Jewish practice of providing rooms during Passover with no financial remuneration.
3. The Last Supper was eaten at night, but ordinary Jewish meals were eaten during the day. The Passover had to be eaten at night.
4. It seems from the Gospel accounts that Jesus often had meals with considerable company. On this occasion the meal is limited to the Twelve (plus possibly some

- women, although they would not have 'reclined' at the table) which meets the minimum Passover requirement of at least 10 sharing a lamb.
5. The fact that Jesus and his disciples are said to "recline" at table argues that this is a festive occasion and not an ordinary meal.
 6. John 13:10 can be taken to mean that Jesus and disciples ate the meal in a state of levitical purity, which was required for eating the Passover.
 7. Ordinary meals began with the breaking of bread, but Matthew and Mark note that it was "as they were eating" (Mt.26:27; Mk.14:22) when Jesus broke the bread. This was true only of the Passover meal.
 8. Wine was not part of an ordinary meal, but was only a part of special meals. It was required to be drunk as part of the Passover ritual.
 9. It is presumed that Jesus and his disciples had red wine at the Last Supper because of the comparison made between the wine and blood. In Palestine, there were red, white, and black wines available, but red wine was specified for a Passover meal.
 10. The disciples' misunderstood Jesus' words to Judas ("What you are going to do, do quickly") to mean that Jesus told Judas to buy something for the feast. If this was the night before Passover, then why the urgency? Judas could easily buy what was needed on the day of Passover. It makes more sense if this was the evening of Passover, because, according to the convention at that time, it was not until the next morning that the restrictions associated with the Feast of Unleavened Bread began.
 11. Or, the disciples thought that Jesus told Judas to "give something to the poor". Why would this thought come to the disciples? It seems to have been the custom to give to the poor on Passover night.
 12. The Last Supper ending with a hymn is consistent with the known practice of a Passover meal, but not that of an ordinary meal.
 13. After the meal, Jesus did not return to Bethany as he had on previous nights, but rather went to the Mount of Olives. According to Jewish tradition, Passover night had to be spent in Jerusalem. Because of the large number of visitors to the city, the limits of the city were enlarged to accommodate the visitors. The enlarged district included the Mount of Olives, but not Bethany.
 14. In the traditional Jewish observance of the Passover, great care was taken by the father of the house to explain the significance of the elements of the meal. Such a context makes the most sense why Jesus choose this meal to explain the significance of the bread and the wine.

Even if each of these arguments is inconclusive by itself, the combined weight of all these arguments is impressive (Nolland, p.1024, 1026). Cranfield (p.420-422) concludes that the Last Supper was a Passover meal on the basis of similar arguments.

Solution 2: The Gospel of John is Correct

In this view, Jesus died on day of Passover and before the Passover meal was eaten that night. Thus, the Last Supper was held the night before the Passover.

1. The strength of this view is the theological significance of having Jesus die at the very same time that the Passover lambs were being slain. [Some who accept the Synoptic chronology think John simply changed the chronological sequence to make this theological point; Jeremias; Keener, Matthew, p.622-623; Barrett, p.39-42.]
2. If so, then Paul analogy in 1 Corinthians 5:7 ("For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed") is straightforward and powerful. [But would not this analogy still make sense even if Jesus died the day following Passover?]
3. If Jesus was arrested and crucified before the Passover feast, then the Jewish leaders stuck to their plan not to take Jesus during the feast (Mt.26:3-5; Mk.14:1-2). [But, at the time the Jewish leaders made their plan, they did not know that they would

- have a disciple of Jesus as a willing accomplice who could give access to Jesus beyond the crowds.]
4. Supporters of this view tend to take the statement of the disciples' misunderstanding ("Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag, Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast"... Jn.13:29) as referring to the feast of Passover.
 5. Some (e.g. Meier, p.396) believe that it is difficult for the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus to all occur on a festival day, but more likely if it was the day before the Passover. The related view that it was not legal to execute criminals on a feast day has been shown not to be correct (Jeremias, p.76-79; Meier agrees, p.395).
 6. Finegan notes support from two later sources: "The apocryphal *Gospel according to Peter* (verse 3) states that Jesus was delivered to the people 'on the day before the unleavened bread, their feast.' The tractate Sanhedrin in the Babylonian Talmud records, doubtless with reference to the Founder of Christianity: 'On the eve of Passover, Yeshua was hanged'" (Finegan:1988, p.355). [The reliability of the Gospel of Peter is certainly to be questioned, and even though Finegan thinks it "doubtless" that the reference in the Babylonian Talmud is to Jesus, Jeremias thinks it clearly doesn't.]

But since it is very difficult to reinterpret the words of the Synoptic Gospels, most who take this view simply say that either the Last Supper was intended by Jesus to be a Passover meal (so Witherington, *Mark*, p.371), perhaps on his own authority, and thus mimicked a Passover meal in its details, or that it was a solemn farewell meal that took on the character of a festival meal since Jesus knew he would not be able to observe the Passover meal itself (e.g. Meier, p.399). This latter suggestion takes Jesus statement in Luke 22:15 ("I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer") to mean that although he desired to eat the Passover, his desire would be unfulfilled. But more importantly, this latter view does not explain why the Synoptics portray it as a Passover meal.

Solution 3: Both the Synoptics and John are Correct

In this view, the Passover was observed on two subsequent nights, but why this is the case varies between different proponents. The two primary views are that (1) Jesus and his disciples used a different calendar than the Jewish leaders (Sadducees) in Jerusalem, and (2) Jesus and his disciples used a different way of reckoning days.

Different Calendars (see Meier, p.390-391 for a good summary of these views)

1. Since the Jews used a lunar calendar, the start of a new month was based on observing the new light of the moon following the new moon (when the moon is invisible). It is supposed that Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed by one day as to when the month of Nisan started, so they compromised by having the Passover on two consecutive nights. Thus, Jesus and his disciples are said to have followed the preference of Pharisees (as reported by the Synoptics) while John uses the official dating as determined by the Sadducees. This view is widely held and has been most notably defended by Strack and Billerbeck. The critical problem with this view is that there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that such a thing ever happened, besides happening in this particular year.
2. In a similar vein, some make the same argument but suggest that it was Galileans and Judeans (e.g. Dockx) [or, some suggest Palestinian Jews and Dispore Jews (e.g. Shepherd)] who disagreed on the start of the month. This view has the same critical problem – no evidence.
3. There is some evidence that the Essenes used a different calendar altogether – a solar calendar where each day of the year always fell on the same day of the week. According to this calendar, Nisan 14 (Passover) always fell on a Tuesday. Even

though this appears to be at great odds against the Synoptic timetable, Jaubert nevertheless proposes that Jesus and his disciples followed this calendar in observing the Passover, but still was crucified on Friday. There are so many problems with this view, that it has received limited support (but Ellis, p.249, and even Bruce, NT Documents, p.56-67 accepts).

Morris (John, App. H) and Marshall (Last Supper, p.57-75) both by the process of elimination believe that different calendars lie at the root of the issue, but do not seem to specifically say how.

Different Reckoning of a Day

Finegan suggests the possibility that not all Jews in the first century reckoned the start of a new day in the same way. He contends that Jews originally reckoned the start of a day at sunrise, but by the first century it had changed to start at sunset. Thus, he suggests that Jesus and his disciples (and perhaps all Galileans) continued to use the old standard. If so, Nisan 14 could have started Thursday morning for them and thus they would have sacrificed the lamb that afternoon for their meal that evening. But if the official start of Nisan 14 was not until Thursday evening, then the lambs in the temple would have been slain on Friday afternoon as recorded by John. But, alas, again there is no evidence for such a difference. [Finegan in the first edition of his book calls this the "simplest and therefore the most convincing solution" (p.452), but in his second edition he groups this view with others that he concludes are "relatively unconvincing" and accepts the "farewell meal" view of Meier (see above). Hoehner accepts this view (p.90) and Hodges discusses it favorably.]

THE YEAR OF JESUS' DEATH

It is not possible on the basis of comparative history to determine the year of Jesus' death. Considering the reign of Tiberius (AD 14-37) and the period of rule for Pilate (AD 26-36) and Caiaphas (AD 18-36), the best one can estimate is that Jesus probably died between AD 29 and 34 [any earlier and it is hard to account for the statement that John the Baptist was called in the "fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar" (Lk.3:1); any later and it is difficult to fit the chronology of the apostle Paul]. Several attempts have been made to use astronomical calculations to determine the year of Jesus' death. During those years, Jeremias (also Finegan) summarize the contributions of astronomy on which days Nisan 14 could possibly had fallen.

Year 29	Monday
Year 30	unlikely Thursday, probably Friday
Year 31	Wednesday, possibly Thursday (if leap year and sighting of new light delayed by 1 day)
Year 32	Monday
Year 33	probably Friday, possibly Saturday (if sighting of new light delayed by 1 day)
Year 34	Tuesday or Thursday (if leap month)

First note that the years 29 and 32 are not astronomically possible – under no scenario does Jesus hold the Passover on a Monday. Year 30 and 33 both could correspond to John's chronology, i.e. Nisan 14 occurring on Friday. Year 31 and 34 (and possibly, though unlikely, Year 30) could correspond to the Synoptic chronology. However, in the end, many have cautioned about the inexactness of astronomical calculations due to the placement of leap days, leap years, etc. All one can say is that astronomical calculations do not disqualify either view.

LESSON 6

THE LORD'S SUPPER: 1 CORINTHIANS 11 (I)

It is generally agreed that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians around AD 55, whereas most believe the Gospels were not written any earlier than the mid-60's. If so, Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper is the first record we have of its institution and practice (unless Paul is referring to the Lord's Supper in his earlier (?) letter to the Galatians (2:12)). This lesson focuses upon the nature of the problem at Corinth. The next lesson will consider Paul's instructions to correct the problem.

1 Corinthians 11:17-22

¹⁷But in the following^a instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse^b. ¹⁸For, in the first place^c, when you come together as a church^d, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ¹⁹for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. ²⁰When you come together, it is not the Lord's^e supper^f that you eat. ²¹For in eating, each one goes ahead^g with his own meal^h. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²²What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

Notes

- a* This rendering is not the most natural translation of the Greek (but also NRSV). The term used would normally refer to that which preceded. Probably a transition is being made between his previous instructions and the following instructions thus ASV "But in giving you this charge I praise you not,..." (NASU sim), or, perhaps better REB "In giving you these instructions I come to something I cannot commend..." (NJB sim).
- b* TNIV "for your meetings do more harm than good" (NJB sim)
- c* Paul does not follow within this passage an "in the second place". Thus, the NRSV softens it by translating "For, to begin with."
- d* also NRSV, NIV; KJV, ASV "in the church" but the definite article is not present in the better manuscripts; perhaps better REB "as a congregation", or NJB "in your assembly"
- e* The adjective "Lord's" is used twice in the NT; here and Revelation 1:10 ("Lord's day"). In 10:21 ["the Lord's table" (KJV)] and 11:26 ["the Lord's death"], Lord is a noun in the Greek.
- f* Lowercase for supper also used by KJV, ASV, NRSV; but REB, NASU, NJB, TNIV capitalize "Supper".
- g* "goes ahead" could be translated "devour".
- h* Most translations say "supper" (which is better than "meal" in that it makes the contrast with the Lord's "supper" clearer)

Comments / Questions

1. In 11:2, Paul praises the Corinthians for keeping the traditions that he delivered to them. The term "tradition" refers to things taught (i.e. doctrine) and not simply man-devised practices (compare 2 Thessalonians 2:15). A tradition is first "received" and then "delivered"; note the use of these terms in 11:23 below. Similar language will be used later in 15:1.

Whether Paul is referring to the matter of the covering that he discusses in 11:2-16 is uncertain (since the Corinthians seemed to be having some problems in that area; see *Note a* above), but clearly Paul turns in verse 17 to an area where he cannot praise them. Presumably, the Corinthians were not following Paul's earlier teaching when he was with them (see v.23 below).

2. When the Corinthians assembled they did "more harm than good" (TNIV).
 - a. In general, what was their problem? (v.18)

- b. How did Paul learn of these divisions? (cf. 1:11; 5:1)
 - c. Paul had begun this letter referring to the various divisions among the Corinthians ("I follow Paul", "I follow Peter", etc.; 1:10-12). How is the division different in this instance? Or is it?
3. Paul tells the Corinthians that in their meetings "it is not the Lord's Supper that you eat". This phrase is variously translated.
- a. What is the emphasis in each of the following translations?
 - 1) "it is not to eat the Lord's Supper" (NKJV, NASU)
 - 2) "it is not really to eat the Lord's supper" (NRSV)
 - 3) "it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper" (ASV)
 - 4) "it is not the Lord's Supper you eat" (REB, TNIV, NJB sim, ESV sim)
 - b. As seen above, some translations capitalize "Supper" and others do not. Capitalization is a feature of English, not Greek. Which is to be preferred?
4. The particular problem among the Corinthians is described in v.21: "For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk."
- a. Which of the following best describe the problem? Why?
 - 1) Emphasis is to be placed upon the phrase "*each one goes ahead*". Some of the Corinthians gathered earlier than the others and went ahead and had supper without waiting (cf.v.33).
 - 2) Emphasis is to be placed upon the phrase "*his own meal*". Some Corinthians brought their own provisions for supper and did not share with others.
 - 3) Both of the above is involved.
 - b. Was this a case of class distinctions, i.e. wealthier members vs. poorer members? (cf. v.22; see discussion of *Ancient Banquets* at the end of this Lesson) [There were some wealthy Christians at Corinth: Gaius (Rom.16:23; recall Romans was written from Corinth); Paul's observation "not many of you were wise..., not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth" (1:26) implies that some were.]

- c. A more difficult question is whether the supper being spoken of is
- 1) a common meal taken separately than the Lord's Supper,
 - 2) the Lord's Supper, or
 - 3) the Lord's Supper which was observed during a common meal?

What is the evidence for or against each of these three views? (Include in your consideration v.33 below.)

1 Corinthians 11:23-34

²³For I received from the Lord what I also delivered^a to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks^b, he broke it, and said,^c "This is my body which is^d for you. Do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner^e will be guilty concerning^f the body and ^gblood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks^h without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have diedⁱ. ³¹But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. ³²But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

³³So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— ³⁴if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

Notes

- a* NRSV "handed on" fits better with the notion of a tradition. NJB more explicit "For the tradition I received from the Lord and also handed on to you..."
- b* "Given thanks" is the translation of the Gk. *eucharistesas* from which is derived our word Eucharist.
- c* KJV, NKJV includes "Take, eat" but is omitted in early manuscripts.
- d* KJV, NKJV includes "broken" but is omitted in early manuscripts.
- e* KJV, NAB, NJB, REB "unworthily"
- f* "concerning" not in Greek text; ASV "of"; RSV "of profaning"; NRSV, NJB "is answerable for"; NAB "sins against"; REB "of offending against"; TNIV "of sinning against".
- g* Greek text includes the article "the blood" (ASV, NASU)
- h* KJV sim, NKJV insert "in an unworthy manner"
KJV, NKJV insert "Lord's"
- i* also NRSV, NJB sim, but literally "and many sleep" (KJV, ASV sim, TNIV "number of you have fallen asleep")

Comments / Questions

5. Paul makes it clear that the tradition he had passed on to them was "from the Lord." What is not clear is whether this means that he directly received it from the Lord, or if the tradition simply originated from the Lord and Paul received it from someone else, perhaps an apostle. Any thoughts?

Ancient Banquets

Archeological excavations, especially in the vicinity of Rome and Corinth, have increased our knowledge of Roman houses, particularly those belonging to wealthy residents. The dining room (triclinium) was a central part of the house and was used extensively for entertaining guests. Usually at least 9 diners could recline for a formal meal, but more could be accommodated in larger homes. Typically, the couches were arranged in a U-shape with one couch on each side that could accommodate three diners (or, in Greek society, three individual couches for each side). The opened fourth side allowed entrance to triclinium. [As evidence of the Hellenistic influence among Jews, even in Judea, we are told that Jesus and his disciples reclined at the Last Supper.]

On the basis of ancient documents, it is understood how important the evening meal (Gk. *deipnon* – translated 'supper' or 'meal' in 1 Corinthians 11) was regarded in Greek and Roman society. Formal invitations would be given (orally or in writing) in advance; only the most brash (or drunken) would attend uninvited. To sit at table with another created a special bond. It was the conversation that was especially coveted; larger gatherings were not highly regarded since not all could participate in the same conversation.

Guests would be seated according to how they were ranked by the host. Occasionally, the quality and quantity of food provided would also depend on one's rank. For larger gatherings that exceeded the size of the triclinium, lesser esteemed guests would eat sitting (not reclining) in the adjoining atrium area.

Most formal meals had some religious significance (at a minimum, thanksgiving would be given to the pagan deities). Even temples could have several tricliniums which suggest that religious observances included meals (as one would deduce from Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 8 & 10). Interestingly, at Corinth dining rooms in the Asclepius Sanctuary have been excavated that still has stone couches intact [Smith, p.165].

Following the main meal (*deipnon*), the next course was called the *symposium* (Gk.; Latin *convivium*) which basically was a drinking party with entertainment. At the conclusion, a dessert course of fruits and nuts would be common.

Whether the custom of ancient banquets was at the root of the problem in Corinth is debatable, but many believe the rich-poor meal distinctions in Corinth were the natural consequence of this cultural influence.

References Dennis E. Smith, *From Symposium to Eucharist*; Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity*.

LESSON 7

THE LORD'S SUPPER: 1 CORINTHIANS 11 (II)

This lesson continues a study of 1 Corinthians 11 (see Lesson 6 for the text).

The Problem Divisions in the Corinthian assemblies were evident in the taking of the Lord's Supper (1:18). The divisions no doubt were more extensive, but self-serving divisions (11:21) in the taking of the Lord's Supper, a time that recalls the sacrifice of the Lord (11:24-25), were particularly condemnable (11:22).

The Solution Paul's goal in all his letters is to help his readers mature in the faith, that is, "to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:13). Thus, he does not even teach fundamental truths (doctrine) for the sake of the teaching itself, but always with a view to how that truth impacts us. In this case, Paul rehearses the Lord's institution of His Supper not for the purpose of telling its history, but to convey its meaning. Inherent within the Lord's Supper is the recalling of the Lord's self sacrifice. The clear lesson for us to put the interest of others ahead of ourselves – the very thing that some Corinthians were not doing!

Comments / Questions

1. After telling of their divisions, what does Paul first remind them of? (v.23-25)
2. Compare the wording of Paul's account of the Lord's institution of his Supper with the Gospel accounts.

Matthew 26:26-29

²⁶Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."

²⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Mark 14:22-25

²²And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body."

²³And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Luke 22:19-20

¹⁹And 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."

²⁰And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

1 Cor. 11:23b-25

...he...took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

²⁵In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The Last Supper and the Lord's Supper

- a. Which Gospel account is closest in wording with Paul's?
- b. Note the similar items.

- c. Note the dissimilar items.

3. What are the two purposes that Paul highlights in the observing of the Lord's Supper? (v.24-26)
 - 1)
 - 2)

4. Paul says that the proper observance of the Lord's Supper "proclaim(s) the Lord's death until he comes."
 - a. What does it mean to "proclaim the Lord's death"?

 - b. What is the impact of the modifying clause "until he comes."

5. Paul makes it clear that it is possible to partake of the Lord's Supper "in an unworthy manner" (v.27).
 - a. This refers to the *manner* of observance, not the *worthiness* of the one partaking. The KJV (followed by REB, NAB, NJB) uses the term "unworthily" which is perfectly correct. But it is important to note that it is an adverb and not an adjective ('unworthy') as some have incorrectly interpreted.

 - b. What does it mean to "be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord"?

Instead of "guilty concerning" some translations use "guilty of profaning" (RSV), "guilty of" (NASU), "answerable for" (NRSV, NJB), or "sins against" (NAB, TNIV sim.). Like any of these any better?

 - c. Paul starts this verse with "therefore" suggesting that the eating in an unworthy manner in some way ties back to v.26, or possibly to v.23-26, or possibly earlier. So what type of "manner" do you think that Paul considers "unworthy"?

6. To prevent observing in an unworthy manner, Paul says "Let a person examine himself, then, so eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (v.28). Does this help in correctly answering 5c above?

7. Paul further clarifies in stating "For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself" (v.29).
 - a. At least one way one can eat in an unworthy manner would be to do so "without discerning the body". Should we understand that this is the only way?

 - b. What does it mean to not "discern the body"? To answer that question one must first decide which "body" Paul means. There are two possibilities [Wright thinks both are involved]:
 - 1) The body of Jesus. If this is the case, Paul thought duplicates the thought of v.27 and is consistent with the command to remember the body of the Lord in the eating of the bread. This view is seen to be more consistent with the term "discern" which basic meaning is to "distinguish". [Barrett, Marshall, Conzelmann, Willis, Thiselton, Grosheide, Garland]
 - 2) The church, the "body" (metaphorically) of Jesus. In this instance, Paul would be instructing the Corinthians to cease their divisions by properly considering one another when they came together to partake of the Lord's Supper. [Bruce, Fee, Soards, Hays, Kodell, Witherington]

Which do you think?

- c. Is the reference to "eats and drinks judgment on himself" the same thing as, or the result of, being "guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord"?

8. Apparently, there were those at Corinth who was partaking in an unworthy manner since Paul observes "That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (v.30).
 - a. The word "died" is actually the word "sleep" in the Greek (cf. KJV, ASV, NASU, 'fallen asleep' TNIV). But the term "sleep" is often used to refer to 'death' (cf. 15:6, 20), hence many modern translations use the word "died" (NRSV, REB, NAB sim., NJB).

 - b. The natural interpretation of verse 30 is in reference to physical sickness and death. Is this the case, or should we "spiritualize" the passage to refer to "spiritual sickness and death"?

LESSON 8

THE LORD'S SUPPER: 1 CORINTHIANS 10

1 Corinthians 10:1-7

I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, ²and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, ³and all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. ⁵Nevertheless, with most^a of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

⁶Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did.

⁷Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written^b, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."

Notes

a KJV "many"

b Exodus 32:6

Comments / Questions

1. Elsewhere Paul made the general point that "whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction" (Romans 15:4). Consequently, Paul is comfortable in using Old Testament examples to make a point to New Testament Christians. What is particularly interesting about this passage is that Paul injects "New Testament" language into the Old Testament account – "baptize", "spiritual food,...drink,...Rock" – thus making the parallel, and the lesson, stronger.
 - a. What events is Paul alluding to when he speaks of their fathers "all under the cloud", that "all passed through the sea", that "all ate the same spiritual food", and that "all drank the same spiritual drink"?
 - b. It seems clear that the Israelites being "baptized into Moses" is similar to the Corinthians being 'baptized into Christ'.
 - c. In what way were the Corinthians similar to the Israelites who "ate...spiritual food"?
2. What is the significance of the Israelites ("all" of them) being "baptized" and eating "spiritual food"?

Yet, what happened?

So, what is Paul's point to the Corinthians?

3. We will study the development of sacramental theology later, but Paul's point disputes the view that the partaking of "sacraments" is efficacious in themselves. Thus, Paul's comment: "Therefore, let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall" (v.12).

1 Corinthians 10:14-22

Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵I speak as to sensible people^a; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing that we bless^b, is it not a participation^c in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation^c in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants^d in the altar? ¹⁹What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans^e sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants^f with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²²Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Notes

a KJV, ASV, NASU "wise men"

b TNIV "cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks"

c KJV, ASV "communion"; NASU, NRSV "sharing"

d KJV "partakers of"; ASV "communion with"; NASU "sharers"; NRSV "partners in"

e KJV, ASV, NASU "Gentiles"

f KJV "fellowship"; ASV "communion"; NASU "sharers"; NRSV "partners"

Comments / Questions

4. Paul's mention of the "cup of blessing" and "bread" is a clear reference to the Lord's Supper.
 - a. The expression "cup of blessing" was the common Jewish term for the cup of wine at the close of a meal and was thus called because a blessing was spoken over it (Bruce).
 - b. In particular, the expression was used for the third of the four cups drunk during Passover (see Lesson 2; which was the cup that concluded the meal proper) and thus points to the Passover context of the Lord's Supper.
 - c. The cup does not provide a blessing, nor is the blessing directed to the cup, but the blessing is to God who provides the cup, i.e. blessing = thanksgiving.
5. But Paul's point in this passage is not to teach the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper, but to encourage them to flee all forms of idolatry (read 10:7-14). The particular issue that engages Paul's attention in this letter is the eating of meats that were sacrificed to idols. Paul's basic premise is that since an "idol has no real existence" (8:4), then "we are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do" (8:8). However, a Christian must be concerned about his influence and, thus, cannot eat meat offered to idols if so doing would jeopardize the conscience of a weaker Christian (8:9-13), or if an unbeliever can reasonably infer that our eating in some way gives homage to the idol (10:27-29). The overriding concern is that a Christian "give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God" (10:32).
6. Paul insists the Corinthians understand that "what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons" (v.20) and thus they are 'participants with demons'. To reinforce this truth, Paul gives two illustrations:
 - 1) Christians participate with Christ in the partaking of the Lord's Supper, and
 - 2) The Israelites were participants with the "altar" when they ate the sacrifices.Consequently, even 'strong' Christians should not trivialize the eating of idolatrous meat.

7. Paul says that the cup and the bread are a "participation" in the "blood" and "body" of Christ (the same Greek word *koinonia* is used in Paul's introductory comments to this letter, 1:9). Other translations use the word "communion" or "sharing".
 - a. What does it mean to "share" in the body and blood of Christ?
 - b. Paul equates this sharing with the sharing that took place between the Israelites and the 'altar'. Apparently, Paul means by 'altar' the sacrifice (animal) that was offered upon the altar (or, does Paul refer to the Lord). How does this analogy help us understand how we share in the body and blood of Christ?
 - c. Is the participation that Paul speaks of here equivalent to the words of Jesus: "Take, eat, this is my body (Mt. 26:26)?"
8. Verse 17 is interesting at several levels.
 - a. Paul concludes from the fact that all partake of one bread (the "body of Christ") that all are "one body". Paul makes a play on the dual meaning of body: the physical body of Christ and the metaphorical body of Christ, i.e. the church - an analogy which Paul will make stronger in 1 Corinthians 12. [Not all even think Paul is talking about the physical body of Christ in v.16, e.g. Higgins, p.69.]
 - b. Is this the "climax" (Fitzmyer) of Paul's argument? In other words, is Paul's main point to teach about the oneness of the body as reflected in the partaking of the Lord's Supper? Or, is this simply a parenthetical thought Paul shares while making his main point: Christians participate with Christ in the partaking of the Lord's Supper and thus must not participate with idols. Think carefully about this.

LESSON 9 **THE LORD'S SUPPER: EARLY PRACTICE – ACTS AND BEYOND**

Acts 2:42-47

⁴²And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

Comments / Questions

1. The first Christians, having believed and obeyed the message of the apostles, remained in Jerusalem and formed a community centered on the apostles. What is the primary impression about the disciples given by the above passage? Note especially the repetition of "all", "every", "any".

2. In verse 42, what are the four things the disciples devoted themselves to?
 - 1)
 - 2)
 - 3)
 - 4)
 - a. Many have suggested that this list of items represent a typical worship session of the early Christians. In support of this view, Luke uses the definite article to refer to each of the four acts: "and they were continuing stedfastly in the teaching of the apostles, and the fellowship, and the breaking of the bread, and the prayers" (Young's Literal Translation).
 - b. The expression "fellowship" is a fairly broad term and can encompass many things. It is though the same term used in 1 Corinthians 10:16 that is usually translated "communion", "participation", or "sharing". Since many believe that the Corinthians had in some way combined the Lord's Supper with a common meal, it is often suggested that the "fellowship" spoken of in this passage is "table" fellowship, i.e. a common meal. Any thoughts?

3. The expression "breaking of bread" was a common idiom used to describe a meal. In a typical Jewish meal, the bread was "broken" (since Jews baked their bread in thin cakes that lends to being 'broke' instead of 'cut') at the beginning of the meal, thus this act came to stand for the entire meal. Of course, the major question for this study is whether the expression "breaking of bread" refers to the Lord's Supper. There are four basic options:

<u>v.42</u>	<u>v.46</u>
Common Meal	Common Meal
Common Meal	Lord's Supper
Lord's Supper	Common Meal
Lord's Supper	Lord's Supper

The first two are rarely (if ever) taken. Some scholars take the third view, but most tend to take the fourth view.

- a. The particular term used for breaking in v.42 (*klasis*) is only used by Luke in the NT; here and Lk. 24:35 (in reference to Jesus eating with the two disciples at Emmaus). The term used in v.46 (*klao*) is the more common term used in NT.
- b. Many think that the inclusion of the definite article in v.42 ("the breaking of the bread") points to the Lord's Supper (Stott, Williams).
- c. In verse 46, the phrase "they received their food" perhaps suggests that the 'breaking of bread' in this verse points to a common meal. Others think it simply means that the Lord's Supper was taken in conjunction with (or, at least, in the same timeframe as) a common meal.

Acts 20:1-13

¹After the uproar ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. ²When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece. ³There he spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia. ⁴Sopater the Berean, son of Pyrrhus, accompanied him; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy; and the Asians, Tychicus and Trophimus. ⁵These went on ahead and were waiting for us at Troas, ⁶but we sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas, where we stayed for seven days. ⁷On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight. ⁸There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered. ⁹And a young man named Eutychus, sitting at the window, sank into a deep sleep as Paul talked still longer. And being overcome by sleep, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead. ¹⁰But Paul went down and bent over him, and taking him in his arms, said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." ¹¹And when Paul had gone up and had broken bread and eaten, he conversed with them a long while, until daybreak, and so departed. ¹²And they took the youth away alive, and were not a little comforted. ¹³But going ahead to the ship, we set sail for Assos, intending to take Paul aboard there, for so he had arranged, intending himself to go by land.

Comments / Questions

4. This is the earliest explicit record of Christians meeting on the first day of the week to worship, although Paul's earlier instructions in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 probably imply a gathering on the first day of the week.
5. Presumably the disciples met in the evening (otherwise Paul was extremely long-winded!). But, it is often questioned whether Luke was using the Jewish or Roman way of reckoning a day (sunset-to-sunset or midnight-to-midnight, respectively). In other words, did the disciples meet on what we would call Saturday night or on Sunday night?
 - a. Does anything within the passage help us make a determination?
 - b. Some who argue for a Jewish reckoning use this as a justification to meet on Saturday night to observe the Lord's Supper. But even if Paul was using a Jewish reckoning (which he is not), it was still the first day of the week (Sunday) to those disciples. Thus, there is no justification for us (non-Jews) to meet on the seventh day.

6. The text says "when we were gathered together to break bread...". It is a fair observation that, at least on this occasion, a purpose to their gathering was to 'break bread'. Is it a fair conclusion to extend this to say that the breaking of bread is the "main" reason for Christians to assemble on Sunday?
7. Using "apostolic authority", churches of Christ have traditionally argued that this example of the brethren at Troas limits the taking of the Lord's Supper to Sunday. Any thoughts?

[Interestingly, Bruce argues that reference to breaking bread in v.11 is to the Lord's Supper since the definite article is used ("had broken the bread" ASV) thus referring back to the bread of v.7. If so, this observance of the Lord's Supper took place on Monday.]

Jude 4-13

⁴For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. ...

⁸Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. ...

¹⁰But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively. ...

¹²These are hidden reefs^a at your love feasts^b, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; ¹³wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

Notes

a KJV "spots"; NRSV "blemishes"

b KJV "feasts of charity"

Comments / Questions

8. Whatever the love feasts (v.12) were, Jude's indictment of 'certain ungodly people' demonstrates how they did not belong at the love feasts. Apparently love feasts, by their very nature, were intended for those of a common pure faith.
9. But were the "love feasts" observances of the Lord's Supper? This question is impossible to answer on the basis of the New Testament since this is the only occurrence of the expression 'love feast' (some Greek manuscripts have 'love feasts' in 2 Peter 2:13 – a parallel passage to Jude 12) and there is nothing in this context to suggest the Lord's Supper is intended. However, love feasts are mentioned in Christian writings of the second and third centuries. Everett makes the point (see the discussion of the love feasts on the following page) that although it may be that the Lord Supper was initially taken in association with a common meal, there is nothing to suggest that they were not "distinct in ... observance and meaning". Overtime, the abuses of the love feast led to a complete separation with the Lord's Supper.

Love Feasts

Jesus instituted the memorial of himself at the last supper in the context of a meal. It seems that a meal provided the most convenient context in which the Lord's supper was observed by early Christians. At least this was the case at Corinth and provided the occasion for the abuses which developed there. The *Didache* also sets the eucharist in the context of a common religious meal. The Roman governor Pliny places the Christian gathering for a common meal at a separate time from their "stated" religious assembly. By this time in Bithynia, it would seem, the Lord's supper was separated from the meal. Even where an ordinary meal provided the setting for the Lord's supper, there is no reason to think the latter was not distinct in its observance and meaning.

The Greek word for love, *agape*, was used by Christians in reference to certain of their religious meals together. Thus one specialized meaning for *agape* was "love feast," the shared meal which was an expression of and proof of brotherly feeling and mutual concern.

...

A close connection is indicated between the Lord's supper and the *agape* by an apparent interchange of the terms. Ignatius mentions *agape* immediately following a parallel reference to the eucharist. The importance he gives to the bishop's presence of an *agape* as well as for a baptism suggests that he has an important religious gathering of the community in mind. The term *agape* appears to have been used for, or at least to include, the Lord's supper. On the other hand, Hippolytus uses "Lord's supper" to refer to the *agape*. Apparently *agape* was used for the meal, and eucharist for the memorial of the Lord. As they were separated in time, and perhaps in location, the love feast continued to be an important social and religious function of the Christian community. ...

The love feasts were clearly church activities, hence the importance placed on the presence of the bishop or another member of the clergy. ... As gatherings of small groups out of the community they were an important potential source of divisiveness and means for the spread of false teachings. It was important that these gatherings be tied to the whole church and integrated into its total life. A definite religious atmosphere and deportment characterizes the surviving accounts.

The love feast served functions of fellowship and charity for the early Christians. It was the social, convivial aspect which perhaps especially attracted many persons. The sharing of food by the wealthier with the poorer was an important means of charity. ... Widows, the sick, or any of the poorer and needy members of the church might be invited. Any church-sponsored gathering would have been an occasion for sharing in which in the nature of the case the better off would have contributed more. This benevolent function of the *agape* was what came to predominate, and it was with this purpose that vestiges of the *agape* continued in the later centuries of the church.

The concerns in our sources about proper conduct are an indication that the social aspect was what counted for most of the participants in the second century. Moral disorders at the love feasts of some Gnostic groups were a source of slander against Christians. Tertullian himself, after leaving the great church for the Montanist sect, implies moral laxity at some orthodox love feasts. The language of Clement suggests too much attention by some on the material side of the love feast at the expense of the spiritual side. The prescriptions of Hippolytus would not have been necessary unless there was a need for tight regulation. It is only at the end of the second century that we get detailed descriptions of what was done at a Christian love feast. It occurred in the late afternoon or early evening, the time of the principal meal in the day. Tertullian, rebutting pagan slanders, lays stress on the sober religious character of the gathering. It is an *agape* because it benefits the needy; special consideration is shown for the lowly. There is prayer before all take their places at the table. The eating and drinking is moderate. After the meal hands are washed and the lights are lit, according to custom. Hymns provide the evening's entertainment. The company is dismissed with prayer. ...

The agreements of Tertullian and Hippolytus give us a good description of what the love feast was, or was intended to be, at the end of the second century. A clearer picture of its relation to the Lord's supper in earlier times is dependent on the discovery of new sources.

Everett Ferguson, Early Christians Speak, p. 131-135.

LESSON 10

THE LORD'S SUPPER: A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

EARLY CHRISTIANITY – SECOND AND THIRD CENTURIES

One of the earliest Christian references to the Lord's Supper is from the *Didache* which has the form of a teaching manual. It is an anonymous work, but appears to have been written by Jewish Christians. Most scholars would date it between AD 80 and 120, but the text that has survived may have later influences. The following selections are from Chapter 9, 10, and 14 of the *Didache*. (All the references in this section are from Ferguson, Early Christians Speak.)

[9] Concerning the eucharist, give thanks in this way: First concerning the cup, "We give thanks to you, our Father, for the holy vine of David, your Servant, which you made known to us through Jesus your Servant. To you be the glory forever." Concerning the broken bread, "We give thanks to you, our Father, for the life and knowledge which you made known to us through Jesus your Servant. To you be the glory forever. As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one loaf, so may your church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into your kingdom. Because the glory and the power are yours through Jesus Christ forever." No one is to eat or drink of your eucharist except those who have been baptized in the name of the Lord. For also concerning this the Lord has said, "Do not give that which is holy to the dogs."

[10] After you are filled, give thanks in this way: "We give thanks to you, Holy Father, for your holy name which you made to dwell in our hearts and for the knowledge, faith, and immortality which you made known to us through Jesus your Servant. To you be the glory forever. You, Lord Almighty, created all things on account of your name, and you gave food and drink to men for their refreshment, in order that they might give thanks to you, but you graciously bestowed on us spiritual food and drink and life eternal through your Servant. Above all we give thanks to you, because you are mighty. To you be the glory forever. Remember, Lord, your church to deliver her from every evil and to perfect her in your love, and gather her which you have sanctified from the four winds into your kingdom which you prepared for her. Because the power and the glory are yours forever. Let grace come and this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David. If any is holy, let him come. If any one is not, let him repent. Maranatha. Amen." But allow the prophets to give thanks as they wish.

[14] Having earlier confessed your sins so that your sacrifice may be pure, come together each Lord's day of the Lord, break bread, and give thanks. No one who has a quarrel with his fellow is to meet with you until they are reconciled, in order that your sacrifice may not be defiled. For this is what was spoken by the Lord, "In every place and time offer to me a pure sacrifice, because I am a great king, says the Lord, and my name is marvelous among the nations." (p.93-94)

Comments / Questions

1. Note the order in which the elements were taken: cup and then bread.
2. Note the emphasis upon the giving of thanks. Specifically, what are the things for which thanks is given.
3. Note the restriction that only the baptized could take the Lord's supper; "closed communion" was the common practice among early Christians.
4. Note the reference to the Lord's Supper as a "sacrifice"; the quotation is from Malachi 1:11,14 – "the favorite Old Testament text in reference to the Lord's supper" (Ferguson, p.121). It was not uncommon among the early Christian writers to speak of Christians as 'priests' who offered the sacrifice of the bread and the cup. Often this language was used as a contrast to the Jewish sacrifices. Is there any legitimate sense in which the Lord's Supper should be considered a sacrifice?

There are many references to the Lord's Supper in the writings of second and third century Christians. The most prolific early writer was Justin – a converted philosopher who became a tireless apologist for Christianity. He was martyred in Rome around 165. The following selection is from his first Apology (Apology I, 67), written to the Emperor.

We are always together with one another. And for all the things with which we are supplied we bless the Maker of all through his Son Jesus Christ and through his Holy Spirit. And on the day called Sunday there is a gathering together in the same place of all who live in a city or a rural district. The memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits. Then when the reader ceases, the president in a discourse admonishes and urges the imitation of these good things. Next we all rise together and send up prayers. And, as I said before, when we cease from our prayer, bread is presented and wine and water. The president in the same manner sends up prayers and thanksgivings according to his ability, and the people sing out their assent saying the "Amen." A distribution and participation of the elements for which thanks have been given is made to each person, and to those who are not present it is sent by the deacons. Those who have means are willing, each according to his own choice, gives what he wills, and what is collected is deposited with the president. He provides for the orphans and widows, those who are in want on account of sickness or some other cause, those who are in bonds and strangers who are sojourning, and in a word he becomes the protector of all who are in need. (p.81-82).

Comments / Questions

5. Note the various acts of worship: reading, discourse, prayers, Lord's Supper, and giving (the reference to 'singing' is foreign to our concept). Compare with Acts 2: 42.
6. Note the deacons taking the Lord's Supper to those not present.

Everett Ferguson, a historian of the early Christianity, makes the following observations in considering all the writings of the early Christians.

- A. "The evidence for the early Christian's day of worship is clear and unmistakable. They did not observe the seventh day, the Sabbath, as the Jews, but they assembled on the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection of Christ. A rest day and a day for the worship assembly of the whole congregation were united in Judaism and in much modern Christian practice, but the two are distinct matters and were distinct in the early church. Christians kept no day as a rest day, neither Saturday nor Sunday, until the civil legislation of Constantine in the fourth century made Sunday a legal holiday for many occupations." (p. 70)
- B. "The prevailing theory of the early history of the Christian liturgy is that the Christian order of worship was built up from the Jewish synagogue service with the addition of the distinctively Christian rite of the Lord's supper." (p.86)
- C. "The designation eucharist was already applied in the second century not simply to the prayer but also to the act as a whole and to the elements over which the thanks were said. ... This terminology is an instance of a part standing for the whole. But it is notable what part of the ceremony stood for the whole – the thanksgiving. The church's basic act of prayer and worship was to give thanks. ... But preeminently the eucharist was centered on the spiritual blessings which came through Jesus Christ." (p.96)
- D. "The Lord's supper was a constant feature of the Sunday service. There is no second-century evidence for the celebration of a daily eucharist." (p.96)

SACRAMENTS [Quotations in this section come from McGrath, Christian Theology.]

Theology ought to proceed practice (i.e. truth should dictate practice), but all too often practice proceeds theology (i.e. practice becomes our 'truth'). This phenomenon can be seen in the development of sacramental theology.

The Latin term *sacramentum* (sacrament) was used to translate the New Testament Greek word *mysterion* (mystery). But whereas the New Testament uses the term 'mystery' to refer to the plan of God to offer the gospel to all men, early Christians (and especially those later in the Middle Ages) expanded the term to refer to acts or rites that reflected God's saving work, especially baptism and the Lord's supper. Thus, Tertullian spoke of sacraments in the plural.

Augustine was the first to try and define a sacrament, but the definition finally accepted (at least until the Reformation) was given later by Peter Lombard (c.1150):

A sacrament bears a likeness to the thing of which it is a sign. "For if sacraments did not have a likeness of the things whose sacraments they are, they would not properly be called sacraments" (Augustine). ... Something can properly be called a sacrament if it is a sign of the grace of God and a form of invisible grace, so that it bears its image and exists as its cause. Sacraments were therefore instituted for the sake of sanctifying, as well as signifying. ... Those things which were instituted for the purpose of signifying alone are nothing more than signs, and are not sacraments, as in the case the physical sacrifices and ceremonial observances of the Old Law, which were never able to make those who offered them righteous. (p.512).

Well before this definition was formulated, it was generally agreed that there were seven sacraments: baptism, confirmation, the Eucharist, penance, marriage, ordination, and anointing of the sick (extreme unction) – the same seven sacraments acknowledged by modern Roman Catholics (Catechism, 1113).

The controversial part of Lombard's definition concerns the "sanctifying" role of the sacraments. Catholicism has uniformly held that the sacrament "confer" grace. Thus, they were seen as necessary preconditions of grace (i.e. salvation). How far back this view goes is uncertain, but some point to Ignatius (c.105) who said that the eucharist was "the medicine of immortality and the antidote that we should not die, but live forever in Jesus Christ" (p.516).

The Donatist controversy of the early fourth century centered on whether those Christians who rejected Christ in the face of persecution could later be restored to the position of bishop and thus validly administer the sacraments. The Donatists said no – the sacraments are efficacious *ex opera operantis* ("on account of the work of the one who works"), whereas Catholics (then and now) said yes – the sacraments are efficacious *ex opera operato* ("on account of the work which is done").

The Reformers rejected five of the seven sacraments keeping only baptism and the Lord's supper (the term they preferred). They also refused to assign any "sanctifying" role in the sacraments. In general, they simply spoke of the baptism and the Lord's supper as signs that were given in addition to the promises within the word of God. Luther makes this point in *The Blessed Sacrament of the Holy and True Body of Christ* (1519):

To receive this sacrament in bread and wine, then, is nothing else than to receive a sure sign of this fellowship and union with Christ and all the saints. It is as if citizens were given a sign, a document, or some other token, to assure them that they are indeed citizens of a city, and members of that particular community. ... In this sacrament, therefore, we are given a sure sign from God that we are united with Christ and the saints, and have all things in common with them, and that Christ's suffering and life are our own. (p.519)

Comments / Questions

7. Are there any sacraments (using the definition of Lombard above)? Do you view baptism as a sacrament in any sense?
8. Is it appropriate (i.e. Biblical) to think of the Lord's Supper as a sign – in the sense Luther does above? Why or why not?

THE PRESENCE OF JESUS IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

What did Jesus mean when he said over the bread "This is my body" and over the cup "This is my blood"? One of the first contexts in which Christians struggled over the meaning of these sayings was in the controversy with Docetics and the Gnostics. Both of these groups denied that Jesus came in the flesh. Thus, Christians charged them with being inconsistent if they observed the Eucharist, but denied that Jesus had a body. For example, Tertullian observed in *Against Marcion*: "Taking bread and distributing it to his disciples he made it his own body by saying, 'This is my body,' that is a 'figure of my body.' On the other hand, there would not have been a figure unless there was a true body." (Ferguson, p.108)

The question of the real presence of Jesus came to the foreground during the Reformation. Catholicism taught (then as now) that the *substance* of the bread and the wine truly changed into the body and blood of Jesus upon being consecrated, even though their appearance remained unchanged (making use of Aristotle's distinction between the *substance* and the *accidents*). This is the doctrine known as *transubstantiation*. Luther thought that both the substance of bread and wine was present along with the substance of Jesus' body and blood. This view is known as *consubstantiation*. Both Catholics and Luther argued for a real presence of Jesus in the elements, they just differed on the how. Zwingli differed with both Catholicism and Luther and denied the presence of Jesus in the elements. Zwingli said that Jesus simply used a metaphor, thus, the eucharist is to be understood as a memorial of Jesus suffering. Calvin agreed with Zwingli.

The Catholics' understanding of the real presence of Jesus in the elements is connected with their understanding of the Eucharistic celebration as a sacrifice where the body and blood of Jesus is offered to God. In essence, it is a reenactment of Christ's sacrifice. Consequently, those who eat the elements (provided they are in a "state of grace" – mortal sins must have been absolved by penance) will receive forgiveness of venial sins.

Comments / Questions

9. Catholics point to the teaching of John 6 as giving a scriptural basis for their view. Read John 6:22-59. Is there a connection between Jesus' teaching in that passage and a proper understanding of the Lord's Supper? In other words, when Jesus says "Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life" (v.54) is he envisioning the observance of the Lord's Supper?

LESSON 11

THE LORD'S SUPPER: QUESTIONS (I)

Christians of every generation since the first century have observed the Lord's Supper in accordance with their understanding of the Supper's meaning and significance. Unfortunately, Christians have assigned differing meanings to the Lord's Supper which results in differing practices. So instead of uniformity there is diversity. Of course, there are many differences that are not significant, but some go to the core of the Lord's Supper.

What is key thought at heart of the Lord's Supper? The following chart briefly summarizes four ways of envisioning the Lord's Supper.

Memorial	Sacrifice	Celebration	Eschatology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on What Jesus Did/ Accomplished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on Reenactment of What Jesus Did 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on What Jesus Accomplished 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Focus on Future Messianic Banquet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communion with Christ Primary ▪ Model: Last Supper, 1 Cor. 11 ▪ Mood: Solemn 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Communion with Christians Primary ▪ Model: OT Religious Meals, Meals During Jesus Ministry, Acts 2:46 ▪ Mood: Joyful 	

The debates during the Reformation between Catholics and Protestants provide the context for the practice of most modern Christians. Catholics, seeing the real presence of the Jesus in the elements, understand the Lord's Supper in terms of sacrifice – a reenactment of the sacrifice of Jesus and a responding sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving on the part of the Christian. Protestants, at least those influenced by Zwingli and Calvin, understand the Lord's Supper in terms of a memorial – a remembrance of what Jesus did in giving himself for us. Common to both understandings, the Lord's Supper is seen as a solemn observance where Christians commune with the Lord.

In the early 20th century, H. Lietzmann argued that the New Testament gives evidence of two primitive types of observances that were distinct and independent of each other. The first type is reflected in Acts 2:26 (joyful fellowship) and that Paul, at a later date, introduced the second type (solemn remembrance) based on the events at the Last Supper. Lietzmann thought the first type was reflected in the Didache (see Lesson 10) where no mention of Christ's death is made. Oscar Cullman accepted Lietzmann's distinction, but whereas Lietzmann did not think there was any scriptural antecedent for the first type, Cullman believed that the meals Jesus had after his resurrection (Mk.16:14; Lk.24:30-32, 42; Jn.21:12-13) formed the basis of the first type of meal reflected in Acts 2.

Although it does not seem that many scholars today accept Lietzmann's argument (for the simple reason that there is not enough evidence to support the distinctions he made), many do accept the contention that the basic form of the Lord's Supper was one of celebration. Invariably with this approach, the words of Jesus at the institution are minimized and greater emphasis is placed on the meal setting of the observance. The meals of Jesus during his earthly ministry are given special attention as being examples of the fellowship that Christians are to have with each other in the Lord's Supper. Using a similar approach,

some put the emphasis upon the future Messianic banquet (see e.g. Is.25:6-9; 55:1-3; 65:13).

Comments / Questions

1. Consider the following statement: "The Lord's Supper is an act of Holy Communion – with Christ and with one another. Both are equally significant dimensions of what it means to participate in this sacred meal" (Gordon Smith, p.47).
 - a. Cite scripture in support of the position that the Christians commune (i.e. have fellowship) with Christ in the Lord's Supper.
 - b. Cite scripture in support of the position that Christians commune with other Christians.
 - c. So do you agree with the above statement – that "both are *equally* significant"?

2. Some Christians, believing the communal aspect with other Christians to be an *essential* component of the Lord's Supper observance, conclude that some, or all, of the following practices to be inappropriate:
 - 1) Observing the Lord's Supper by oneself (say while traveling in areas where no other Christians live).
 - 2) Observing the Lord's Supper on Sunday evening (because of being absent on Sunday morning) in a congregation where most (or, perhaps all) of the other Christians are not taking the Supper.
 - 3) Taking the Lord's Supper to the home of the sick or elderly.
 - a. Even if one believes the Scriptures teach that Christians are in communion with each other while observing the Lord's Supper (see 1b above) in a congregational context, does that necessarily mean that this joint fellowship is *essential* to the proper observance of the Lord's Supper? To say it is "essential" means that one cannot commune with (or remember) Christ unless one communes with fellow Christians in the observance.
 - b. In general, if there are multiple purposes in doing a particular act must all the purposes be fulfilled each and every time the act is performed? Examples:
 - i) Paul told Timothy to "convince, rebuke, and encourage" (2 Tim.4:2) in his teaching. Could Timothy use an occasion of teaching to simply "encourage" and not "convince" and "rebuke"?
 - ii) Consider Paul's instructions concerning singing: "addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart..." (Eph.5:19). Thus singing addresses two purposes: (1) "addressing one another" and (2) "making melody to the Lord". But would anyone contend that one could not sing in solitude to the Lord?

- iii) Perhaps the most relevant illustration comes from Numbers 9:6-14. Several Israelites who were unable to observe the Passover at the appointed time (because they were unclean at the time) asked Moses if they could nevertheless observe the Passover. The Lord told Moses that any unclean person or one who was away on a far journey could observe the Passover one month later than the appointed time provided they observed the Passover according to all its rules. However, it does not seem that other family members who were able to observe the Passover at the appropriate time were to observe the Passover again. Thus, the "family context" of the Passover was apparently put aside for these individuals. It is also of interest to note that this month-later provision was not to be invoked by anyone who could observe at the appointed time.
3. Understanding the Lord's Supper as a celebratory meal has many consequences. John Mark Hicks, a professor at Lipscomb University, has written extensively arguing this view. The following statements come from his book, *Come to the Table*:
- 1) "The table is a communal experience. It is not a private, individualistic moment. On the contrary the sacrificial table in the Old Testament was shared with family and community. If the table is a meal, then it is interactive because meals are interactive. Tables are filled with conversation. The table is a place where people share their lives with each other. ... Believers should experience the table as a time for sharing, prayer, and conversation about what God has done for us. ... The table should not be silent. Rather, it should call us to engage each other – to bear witness, to give thanks, to rehearse God's mighty acts, to pray" (p.187-188).
 - 2) "The Lord's supper is a table event; a meal which the community of faith shares. The community invites all to share the meal with them as a witness to the truth and meaning of the gospel. All are invited; none but the rebellious are barred. ... Jesus ate with all kinds of people – the tax collector as well as the Pharisee, women as well as men, the poor as well as the rich" (p.192).
 - 3) "The supper was originally experienced in the context of a meal. Neither guests nor children would have been excluded from that meal. ... Children are invited to the table because they are part of the community of faith; they belong to the kingdom. They are kingdom people. ... The supper testifies to the faithfulness and love of God, and when children eat, they experience that faithfulness and love at the table. ... They experience the gospel through the eating and drinking" (p.192-193).
- a. Note that these conclusions are based simply upon Hicks' view of what must be true of a meal; no scripture support is given. Hicks assumes that since meals can be social occasions, and the original format of the Lord's Supper was a meal, then the Lord's Supper must be a social occasion with all the normal associations.
 - b. But, even granting that the Lord's Supper was originally observed in a meal context, must we necessarily assume that all the social trappings of common meals are to be considered important in observing the Lord's Supper?

Note that Jesus gave importance to the elements of the meal; consider John 6 again.

LESSON 12

THE LORD'S SUPPER: QUESTIONS (II)

We may wish there was more information in the New Testament concerning the Lord's Supper to answer all the questions that we have. Yet, if we trust that the Lord has given us all the information we need, then we must be content to let our questions remain unanswered. Presumably, they are not as important as we might feel. Further, we must be cautious in "over interpreting" the information we do have. Certainty is sometimes illusive when information is limited. Thus, this lesson intends to review the New Testament texts we have studied to see what we can gain from them in our practice today.

THE LAST SUPPER

1. According to the Gospel records, Jesus performed two acts in association with the meal: (1) giving thanks and (2) distributing the bread and fruit of the vine (or three acts, if "broke" and "gave" are seen as independent acts).
 - a. Giving thanks was part of the typical Jewish meal. What is the Christian to give thanks for in observing the Lord's Supper?
 - b. Jesus distributed both the bread and the cup to his disciples. Any significance in this act to the Christian today?
2. Jesus gave two commands during the Last Supper: (1) "Take, eat...drink" and (2) "Do this in remembrance of me."
 - a. What is symbolized in the Christian eating the "body" of the Lord and drinking his "blood"?
 - b. What is to be remembered about Jesus? His Life? His death – the cruelty and sacrificial nature? His kingship?
3. Jesus made three statements in the course of the Last Supper: (1) "This is my body, which is given for you", (2) "This is the my blood of the (new) covenant which is poured out for many", and (3) "I will not drink it again of this fruit of the vine until that day I drink it new in my Father's kingdom."
 - a. What are we to understand by the expressions "given for you" and "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins"?
 - b. Some have concluded from the reference to the "covenant" that the Lord's Supper is a "covenant meal" (e.g. Edwin Crozier, "The Lord's Supper: Four Meals in One", [Beneath the Cross](#), p.33f). Covenants were sometimes, but not always, ratified with a meal (Gen.31:44-54; Ex.24:9-11). But why would it be unlikely that the Lord's Supper should be considered a 'covenant meal'?

1 CORINTHIANS 11

4. Assuming we understand that to eat the Lord's Supper "unworthily" refers to the manner of eating and not our personal worthiness, is the Lord's Supper nevertheless a time for introspection? That is, while observing the Lord's Supper should one reflect upon one's shortcomings and to make the determination to be better?

5. As discussed in Lesson 7, to "discern the Lord's body" could refer either to the physical body of the Lord or, metaphorically, to the church.
 - a. If Paul is speaking of the Lord's physical body, how are we to "discern" his body? What does that entail? Is it the same thing as "remembering" the body and blood of Jesus?

 - b. On the other hand, if Paul is speaking of the church, how are we to "discern" one another? In the case of the Corinthians, it would involve "waiting" on one another. Anything else?

1 CORINTHIANS 10

6. Paul argument to the Corinthians presumes that they understood that to eat the Lord's Supper was to fellowship (participate in) the body and blood of Jesus.
 - a. What does this fellowship or communion involve? (Refer to Lesson 8, Question 7).

 - b. Some think the image of Jesus hosting the Lord's Supper is implied (e.g. Gordon Smith, p.55). What do you think?

ACTS

7. Presuming the expression "breaking of bread" refers to the Lord's Supper (at least in Acts 2:42 and 20:7), what can we learn about the Lord's Supper?

LESSON 13

THE LORD'S SUPPER: QUESTIONS (III)

A central question to consider is how much the Passover tradition should influence our practice. Granting that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during a Passover observance, how much weight should be given to the particulars of the Passover meal and occasion in determining how we observed the Lord's Supper? This lesson will deal with that question.

Comments / Questions

1. One brother in Christ (Reagan Allen McClenny, "Communing in Memory of Him", Beneath the Cross, p.43) has said "The Communion is the New Testament equivalent to the Jewish Passover..."
 - a. What do you think the Passover and the Lord's Supper has in common that would lead to the above comment?
 - b. Would you agree that this is a helpful way of considering the Lord's Supper?

2. The Passover was a yearly observance. Consequently, Roman Catholics are required to take the Lord's Supper (Eucharist) yearly, preferably at Easter, although they are encouraged to take of it weekly, even daily (Catechism, 1389).
 - a. Do you think frequency of the Passover has any bearing on the frequency of observance for the Lord's Supper?
 - b. Some think 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 suggests a yearly observance of the Lord's Supper was held. Consider carefully. What is the "festival" that Paul is speaking of in v.8?

3. The Passover was required to be observed in the evening (twilight). Interestingly, it seems in Acts 20:7 that the Lord's Supper was being observed in the evening (which is the only reference to the time of day that we have – Acts 2 and 1 Corinthians 11 do not say, although, in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul's word for "supper" was the common Greek word for the evening meal). Should evening observance be normative for us?

4. The Passover observance consisted of a family meal at home. It was not a gathering of the entire Jewish community (either nationally or locally). Should this have any bearing on our observance (even if one considers the entire local congregation a "family")? Many who argue that the Lord's Supper should be a full meal use this as their basic argument.

The Last Supper and the Lord's Supper

5. During the Last Supper, Jesus gave special significance to the bread and fruit of the vine.
 - a. Since Jews had to use unleavened bread during the Passover, brethren have also used unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper. Is that necessary? (Recall that the word used by Jesus and Paul referred to any type of bread – leavened or unleavened.) Catholics go one step further and say that it must be unleavened *wheat* bread (Catechism, 1412).
 - b. Is there any significance to the Christian that the bread is unleavened? To Jews, it represented the haste in which they had to leave Egypt.
 - c. Jews of the first century drank (red) wine during the Passover, although the OT requirements for the Passover did not include wine. Although some argue that Jesus would not have drunk fermented wine (a fact that cannot be proved – at most one can show that preserving unfermented juice was possible in the first century), it is clear that fermented wine was traditional in the Passover observance (why else then was water used to dilute the wine?). So, should we be using (diluted) wine in our observance? Catholics do, and some brethren have argued the same.

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