

The Last Supper and the Last Day

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Preacher: Chris Trousdale

[0 : 00] Mark writes, 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?

And 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, and 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?

And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. There prepare for us. And the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as he had told them.

And they prepared the Passover. And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. And 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. They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, Is it I? He said to them, It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me.

[1 : 09] For the Son of Man goes as it is written to 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.

And 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. And he took a cup.

And when he had given thanks, he gave it to them. And they all drank of it. And he said to them, This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly 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.

And when they had sung him, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Father, we do ask you now to help us to understand your word and to be changed for it by it.

In Christ's name, amen. Last week we saw a contrast in the first eleven verses of this chapter. A contrast between the Jewish religious leaders of the day who had set in motion and were planning to secretly, by stealth, come and take Jesus because they were afraid of the people so they could not publicly come and arrest him.

[2 : 27] So they put in motion a plan by which they might secretly arrest Jesus. And then on the other hand, in contrast to these religious leaders, we saw a woman in verses three through nine who came to Jesus as they were eating a meal and broke an expensive flask of oil and poured it on his head and anointed him.

And then we saw another contrast, as we saw at the end, mention of Judas who joined in with these religious leaders in agreeing to help them in their plan to take Jesus by stealth because he would come and identify Jesus for them and locate Jesus for them and hand over his Lord.

So there is this contrast between, on the one hand, a woman who gives pure devotion to Christ, who honors Christ above all else, spilling out very, very costly perfume in order to recognize him as the Messiah and God's anointed one.

And then on the other hand, the religious leaders and Judas, the betrayer. Now this morning, we're going to see another contrast, a very similar contrast, but it's not merely a contrast between different groups of people or different individuals.

We're going to see in this contrast, a contrast in ultimate eternal destinies. But to see that, first we have to work our way through this passage so that we can better understand the events that are unfolding and why they unfold in exactly the way that they do, according to Mark.

[4 : 01] So that in verse 12, Mark tells us very plainly that it was the first day of unleavened bread when they sacrificed the Passover lamb. And Jesus' disciples, Mark tells us, asked him a question.

They said to him, where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover? Now this is interesting because according to John's gospel, Jesus was crucified.

He died on the day on which the Passover lambs were sacrificed. And so you kind of have to scratch your head and wonder, why do Matthew and Mark and Luke all have Jesus eating Passover the day before his crucifixion, and yet they, John tells us that the Passover was celebrated and the lambs were sacrificed on Friday on the day upon which Jesus died.

Well, in order to sort of understand that contrast and to understand what Jesus is actually doing in this upper room with his disciples and what he's going to accomplish the next day on the cross, you have to know a little bit about how they used to count days back then.

Now we count days very simply. At midnight, it's a new day. And so sometimes we don't talk that way. Sometimes we might say, man, I was out really late Friday night. I didn't get in until three o'clock in the morning when technically we were out really early on Saturday morning.

[5 : 18] We came in at three o'clock because we divide our days at midnight. Well, there were two different ways in which the Jews would count days back in the first century.

Some of them measured a day from sunrise to sunrise, and others measured a day from sunset to sunset. So you still have a 24-hour period of time, but there's a difference of opinion over when a new day begins and an old day ends.

So I think what's happening here is that the Passover is celebrated on the month of Nisan, on the 15th of Nisan, which was a Friday for them this particular year.

But some of the Jews would have marked the beginning of that day on what we would call Thursday evening when the sun went down. You follow me? Others would have not started counting that day until the next day, until the sun rose on Friday morning.

Now, the rule was that you only ate the Passover meal at night. You had to eat it when it was dark, and you had to be finished with the meal by midnight.

[6 : 24] So if you were a part of those Jews who measured your day starting the day at sundown, then the Passover would have begun on what we call Thursday when the sun went down.

And that's exactly what we see Jesus and his disciples do. They are counting Thursday evening as Friday, so they are counting it as the Passover, and they are celebrating a Passover meal.

And yet many of the Jews would have celebrated the Passover on the following evening. So this is why this is all important. Let me just give you a bunch of information. This is why this is very important. We are going to see as Jesus walks through and tells his disciples the meaning of this meal, we are going to see that Jesus sets himself up and explains to his disciples that he is the ultimate Passover lamb.

In fact, the Apostle Paul refers to Christ as our Passover lamb in 1 Corinthians chapter 5. Jesus is going to tell his disciples that he is offering up his own body and blood as a sacrifice to God.

And yet Jesus wants to celebrate the final Passover meal that he has with his disciples before he goes to the cross. And so he uses this Passover meal time to explain to his disciples what he's going to do on the next day.

[7 : 38] So celebrating the Passover on Thursday evening allows Jesus to have this meal and to have this time of teaching with his disciples before he goes to the cross.

And in fact, if you read in the chapter in the book of John, you get three full chapters of teaching that Jesus gave to his disciples on this evening. Mark doesn't give us all of that.

Mark just sort of summarizes things for us. But Jesus had a lot of things that he wanted to tell his disciples before he went to the cross. And that's why they celebrated Passover on Thursday evening.

On the other hand, the vast majority of the Jews in Jerusalem would have been celebrating Passover on Friday so that as Jesus was being sacrificed to his father upon the cross as the final, ultimate Passover lamb, just over his shoulder, in the background, you would have been able to see the temple where lambs were being sacrificed for Passover.

So that in every way, by God's timing, in every way, the meal here, the sacrifice of Christ on Friday, in all those ways, Jesus is signaling to us what he has come to do.

[8 : 46] He is teaching his disciples what he has come to accomplish. He has come to be the ultimate, final Passover lamb to bear the penalty for sins for all of his people.

So that's why Mark opens by telling us that this was the first day of unleavened bread when they sacrificed the Passover lamb. That is, those who would start their day at sundown rather than sunrise would sacrifice their Passover lamb on this day so that Jesus' disciples, knowing that that's the custom that they follow, are asking Jesus, where are we going to eat the Passover meal?

And then something interesting happens. A sort of strange series of events begins to unfold. It says in verse 13 that Jesus sent two of his disciples into the city of Jerusalem and he says to them, go into the city, find a man carrying the water of joy, he'll meet you, follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the master of the house, the teacher says, where's my guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?

He will show you a large upper room furnished and ready, there prepare for us. So Jesus and his disciples are outside the city, probably at Bethany again where they had been spending most of their evenings.

And instead of them all going into the city because you had to eat the Passover meal inside the city limits, that's where you eat it, you eat it in Jerusalem, not outside.

[10:08] So they've got to go into the city to eat the Passover meal and yet they don't all immediately go into the city to find a place to celebrate. Jesus sends only two of the disciples ahead and it's strange, it reminds us of when he sent the disciples to find the little donkey that he was going to ride into the city.

Go and you'll find a donkey tied up and you'll untie it and they ask you about the donkey, say the master needs it, they'll let you have the donkey. It's very similar to that. You have to ask yourself the question, why does Jesus do things this way?

Why does he send two disciples rather than they all, why don't they all go together to the city and find a place where they can celebrate the Passover? Why do it this way? You do it this way when you have one of the members of your group who's trying to find an easy occasion to hand you over to the religious authorities because they're going to be alone in a room in the middle of the night eating a meal.

What easier time could there be for Judas to betray Jesus? So Jesus arranges it so that Jesus and the other disciples don't have knowledge of where they're going to eat the Passover.

And since two disciples told it was John and Peter in another gospel in Luke, he sends two disciples into the city and they're going to see a man carrying a water pot.

[11:29] That's odd. That's going to stand out because typically women were the ones who fetched the water. So it would be very unusual to see a man carrying water through the city. So Jesus says when you see this unusual thing, when you see a man carrying water, you just follow him back to his house and the owner of that house will understand what you mean when you say we need a place to eat the Passover meal.

So by doing it in all this sort of way, Jesus prevents Judas from knowing where they're going to be. So that they can't, there will be no Roman guards waiting there to arrest them when they get there. Judas has no idea where the meal is going to be celebrated. Very, very important. Jesus is intent on having this meal with his disciples before he allows himself to be handed over to the authorities. Very important that Jesus is doing this. So verse 16 says that the disciples set out and went to the city. They found everything as it had been told them and they prepared for the Passover.

Everything is being done in a somewhat secretive manner so that they can have this meal. But before they get to the meal, one more important event takes place.

[12:41] In verse 17, we're told that Jesus came with the twelve and that as they were reclining at the table and eating in verse 18, Jesus said, Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me.

Now this is unbelievable. This is unbelievable in a culture for whom hospitality is everything. It's not that. It's not as big a deal for us. In fact, we don't even, all that often, most people don't even have people to their homes anymore all that often because it's just, it's just easier to meet someone at a restaurant and have the food served and you can sit and visit while people wait on you and all those sorts of things.

But occasionally, we still have people over for dinner at our homes and so it's a wonderful way to get together with people and get to know people and really invite them into your life and so we still do that occasionally but we don't do it to the degree that they did in this world.

There were no restaurants in which they met. Hospitality was very high on their list of virtues and they had all sorts of cultural rules in place for how you treated a host, how you treated a person who was serving you a meal and in this setup, although they're in a stranger's home, Jesus is clearly the host of the meal.

Jesus is the one who is inviting them to join him in a meal. So for Jesus as the host of this meal to say to them that one of you whom I have extended my hospitality, whom I have served this meal,

one of you is going to betray me is not only shocking because they're his disciples, it's shocking because the thought that you would turn around and do something this awful to someone who has just showed you such hospitality, it's unthinkable in their culture and so the disciples are shocked for many reasons, not least of which is this issue of hospitality and so in verse 19 we're told that they began to be sorrowful.

[14:41] They said to him one after another, is it I? You can picture him going around the room, is it me, Jesus? Is it going to be me? Surely, surely it's not me and then Jesus presses it further.

It is one of the twelve, he says, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. Now, I always had this sort of mental image of these events because we've heard this story, we hear these things when we get close to Easter time and we hear the whole story of the Passion Week told over and over and so I always had this sort of mental picture in my mind of Jesus is saying that right as he and Judas were reaching kind of in the bowl together.

Is that the image that you ever had? That Jesus was sort of identifying Judas for the disciples in that moment? Aha! It's the one reaching in the bowl and now they all know it's Judas but that's not at all what's happening here.

My mental image, maybe you didn't have that, but my mental image was completely wrong on what's happening here because they're all eating out of the same bowl. They're all sharing out of the same central bowl and so Jesus' point here is that it's one of you who's so close to me, who's so dear to me that you are right now sharing a meal with me.

Right now you are sharing bread with me and we're sharing the same dish. We know that this didn't identify Judas because in the Gospel of John the disciples, even when Jesus says to Judas, go, do what you have to do and Judas leaves the meal early, the other disciples, the other 11 disciples, they have no clue what Judas is going to do.

[16:12] John tells us that they assume that Judas is going to take care of some of the money issues because he was the treasurer for the group. They have no idea what's happening here. So Jesus never identifies the betrayer for the other 11 disciples.

He never does that. But he says something that is very, very important for us to hear about the betrayer. He says this in verse 21. The Son of Man goes as it is written with Him.

In other words, Jesus is telling us that Jesus, who is the Son of Man, Jesus has a course that He must follow. All of these things that are unfolding are according to the plan of God and Jesus is fully aware of that.

Jesus has already predicted His own death and resurrection multiple times in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus knows where He's going. He knows that the divine plan is unfolding. He knows that.

That's fine, Jesus says. The Son of Man is going to go where He must. But, He says, woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed.

[17:20] It would have been better for that man if he had not been born. In other words, there is something so terrible, there is something so awful awaiting the man who's going to betray Jesus that he would have been better off to have never existed at all.

Jesus is telling His disciples that the one who betrays Him faces eternal punishment in hell. Now, I know that we don't like to talk about issues of eternal punishment.

I know that most people today no longer believe in hell. Certainly not as a literal place of punishment, most would say. In fact, I was having a conversation just the other day with a friend of mine and we were discussing, we were talking about what does it mean to be created in the image of God and what does it mean to be responsible as a human being and all these sorts of things. And then we started to talk about Genesis chapter 3. We started to talk about the fall. And I just sort of casually mentioned, you know, and I said, well, you've got to remember that we're made in the image of God but we're all sinners.

We're all fallen because of what Adam did in Genesis chapter 3. And I said something about Satan. And he said, well, I don't really believe in Satan. I said, really? What do you mean?

[18:39] He said, well, I believe in evil but I don't really believe in Satan or hell or anything like that. And I think that that's probably what most people today believe.

I think that most people today are willing to say that evil exists in the world and that people who do evil things ought to be punished but most people don't believe in Satan and they certainly don't believe in a literal place of eternal torment that we call hell.

And my response to my friends was just really simple not to argue with them because I don't want to argue with them. My response was I said, well, I do believe in Satan and hell because Jesus says that they're real.

I mean, I don't know what else to tell you. Jesus himself says that these are realities with which we have to grapple. In fact, if you want to hold your place in Mark, I'll just show you a couple of things that Jesus has to say.

Turn over to the Gospel of Matthew if you want to. In Matthew chapter 10, Jesus is giving instructions to his disciples and he says to them in verse 28 that they are not to fear those who kill the body.

[20 : 02] Matthew chapter 10 verse 28. Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, he says, fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

It's a real place according to Jesus. We've been walking through the Gospel of Mark now for over a year and so we've covered a lot of ground that some of you have missed but if you remember in Mark chapter 9, Jesus speaks clearly and openly to his disciples warning them about the dangers of sin.

He says in chapter 9 verse 42 that whoever causes one of these little ones who believes in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

And then he says if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It's better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell to what Jesus calls the unquenchable fire.

And then he mentions it two more times. It's better to pluck out your eye than to be thrown into hell. Jesus is clear that hell is a real place that really, really exists.

[21 : 16] In fact, let me give you one more reference to this kind of punishment. In the Gospel of John chapter 5, Jesus says that the Father will raise everyone from the dead.

And he says that he will raise the righteous to everlasting life. And he says but the unrighteous to everlasting judgment.

He says that, he says, truly I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who has sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment but is passed from death to life. But I say to you an hour is coming and now is here when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live.

For as the Father has life in himself so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself and has given authority to him to execute judgment because he is the Son of Man. He says, do not marvel at this.

The hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out. Those who have done good to the resurrection of life, those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment. So for Jesus, this is real stuff.

[22 : 27] For Jesus, there are two possible outcomes. And he says it about the betrayer, woe to him, woe to him, it would have been better if he had never been born.

You know, there are a number of theologians who will admit that they do not believe that people who reject Christ get to go to heaven. They'll say that. They will say, well, only those who trust in Christ get eternal life and go to heaven.

But those who don't, they don't go to hell. They just, they just cease to exist. They're just, they're not around anymore. But according to Jesus, it would be better not to exist than to experience what awaits the betrayer.

It would have been better for him if he had not even been born. So that's the first of this contrast that I want you to see here. There is, on the one hand, the possibility and the certainty for some of everlasting torment.

It is real. But Jesus goes on to paint for his disciples another picture in the following verses. Take a look at verse 22. Now we know from the Gospel of John that by this point Judas has left the room.

[23 : 43] Mark leaves out that detail, but by this point in time Judas is no longer in the room. So now Jesus speaks to the other eleven. And it says in verse 22 that as they were eating he took bread and after blessing it he broke it and gave it to them and said, take, this is my body.

And he took the cup, Mark tells us. And when he had given thanks he gave it to them and they all drank of it. And he said to them, this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many.

Truly 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. So Jesus says, my body I'm offering up for you.

It's broken for you. My blood I'm spilling out for you. And making a covenant. A new covenant Paul tells us.

Christ through his, the sacrifice of his body through the spilling of his blood makes a new covenant on behalf of all those who believe in him. And he says that for those he will share again in the fruit of the vine but not until the day when he drinks it new in the kingdom of God.

[25 : 02] You realize that the Bible does not say very much about heaven. I mean, you can test me on this. You can go home and look on your computer and look up every time heaven is mentioned in the Bible.

It's not that many verses. Heaven is just not a, it's not a major topic in the Bible let alone the New Testament. It's just not found there very often. There's not a great emphasis on heaven.

The emphasis in the Bible is instead on something called the new heaven and new earth. Where we will go, those who trust in Christ will go to spend eternity with Christ in real glorified physical bodies.

Most of us have gotten our views about heaven and hell from the old Tom and Jerry cartoons. You remember those? Where Tom dies because an anvil or something fell on his head or Jerry blew him up.

I never understood when on the previous episode of Tom and Jerry Tom was sliced into about a dozen pieces and he falls off a cliff and everything else and he's fun. He just kind of comes back together but then something happens to him and he's dead.

[26 : 09] I don't know how that works but you always see Tom and in one episode he'll kind of float up into the clouds and he has a little halo on and he's there in the clouds in heaven and many of us have our view of heaven kind of like that that we just kind of there and we're just kind of floating and we're just in the clouds and that's not a picture that we get from the Bible at all.

The Bible emphasizes that there will come a time when Christ returns and he raises us from the dead and those who've trusted in him will live in perfect glorified bodies on a perfect earth forever. Ever increasing joy in Christ in real bodies so we don't have to sit and wonder gee I wonder what it's going to be like to just float around without a body forever I wonder if that'll be fun because that's not our ultimate destiny.

There's a time in between death and resurrection in which we don't have a body that's true but ultimately ultimately the goal is to be with Christ in real physical bodies just as he's in a real physical body on a real earth that is devoid of sickness and disease and death and sadness and is only filled with ever increasing love for Christ and joy in Christ.

That's the goal. That's where we're headed and that's what Jesus means when he speaks of drinking the fruit of the vine new in the kingdom of God. That's the reality to which Jesus is pointing.

[27 : 34] He's saying there will be a day when I will take the wine and I will drink it with you again and it'll be a great wedding feast it's described for us at the end of the book of Revelation and that will be a day for celebration.

Jesus says that day is coming but it's only coming for those who participate in his body and blood now.

And not through a ritual that we call communion or the Lord's Supper that's very important not through that but through faith in Jesus. When we do come and we once a month in our members meetings we have communion and we celebrate the Lord's Supper in those meetings and when we come to the table and when we take the bread and when we take the wine we're not in any way saying that we think that those things contribute to our salvation but what we are saying is that these things remind us and point us to the sacrifice of Christ because we know that through his blood and through his broken body on the cross and through his laying down of himself as the Passover lamb we have the hope that we will one day celebrate in the kingdom of God with him and there are really no other options than the two that Jesus lays out there is either something so horrible that you will wish that you had never existed at all or there is something so wonderful and so full of joy that there are not really the words to fully describe it and the difference between those two is do you trust in Christ and do you cling to Christ or do you walk away in unbelief for a long time we said last week as we looked at this contrast between Judas and the woman we saw that as this woman poured the oil on Jesus' head and showed her devotion to Christ that there around her stood the disciples all of them complaining to themselves that she was wasting this expensive oil

that could have been used for the sake of the poor and among the complainers was Judas who was actually bold enough to voice the complaint or the others just thought the complaint or mumbled it to one another and what we said last week as we looked at Judas as he stood in that room with that woman is that it would have been nearly impossible for you to tell the difference between Judas and those other disciples in that moment it would have been you would have had a hard time deciding which one is the betrayer so difficult is it that even as Jesus tells them at the table that one of them is going to betray him these disciples who knew each other who knew each other better than anybody else they spent time together they walked along dusty roads for miles and miles together they talked they spent so much time even these men did not know who it would be it would have been very difficult to tell the difference between Judas and the eleven but there is a key difference because ultimately

Judas walks away and the other eleven even though for a time they flee even though for a time they are afraid ultimately they come back ultimately they cling to Christ in faith and that is the difference that is the difference between eternal torment and everlasting joy faith in Jesus that never lets go it's real it's vibrant and it's lasting and the only question that we need to ask ourselves is do we have that kind of faith in Christ do we really believe in him what do we say we believe and we put on a show outwardly so that we are not easily distinguished from the genuine followers of Jesus when we know that in our hearts we don't hold any final ultimate loyalty to him do we really really wholeheartedly trust in him so that we can look toward that day when we drink and hear with Jesus in the kingdom of God and celebrate his presence among us let's pray