

WEEK 4: THE LAST SUPPER & THE CRUCIFIXION

Introduction

1. Last Session: we looked at the Passover in the Old Testament and Jewish Tradition
2. This session: we want to focus on the climax of Jesus ministry
3. The Last Supper and the Cross: a “new Passover”! (Holy Thursday and Good Friday)

HOLY THURSDAY

Jesus’ Disciples Prepare the Passover

1. Jesus’ Disciples Prepare the Passover (Luke 22:7-13)

Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the passover for us, that we may eat it.” They said to him, “Where will you have us prepare it?” He 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 which he enters, and tell the householder, ‘The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I am to eat the passover with my disciples?’ And he will show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready.” And they went, and found it as he had told them; and they prepared the passover. -*Luke 22:7-13*

- a. Unleavened Bread: 8 Day Festival, a.k.a. Passover
 - b. Passover lamb: (Gk *pascha*) “had to be sacrificed”
 - c. Disciples: “they prepared the Passover”
2. What did it mean to “prepare the Passover” in 1st century Judaism?
 - a. Passover Seder: some similarities (Meal, *matza* bread, etc.)
 - b. Jerusalem Feast: could only be celebrated in Jerusalem
 - c. Temple Sacrifice: could only be offered in Temple (see Deut 12:26-27)

Josephus: the First-Century Passover

Accordingly, on the occasion of the feast called Passover, at which they sacrifice from the ninth [3 p.m.] to the eleventh hour [5 p.m.], and a little fraternity... gathers around each sacrifice, of not fewer than ten persons... while the companies often include as many as twenty, *the victims were counted and amounted to two hundred and fifty-five thousand six hundred...*

-Josephus, *War* 6:423-24, LCL

Saint Justin Martyr: the “Crucifixion” of the Passover Lambs

The lamb, which is roasted, is roasted and dressed up *in the form of a cross*. For one spit is transfixed right through from the lower parts up to the head, and one across the back, to which are attached the legs of the lamb. -Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, 40

Jewish Tradition: the Four Cups of the Passover Meal

1. 1st Cup: Cup of Sanctification (*kiddush*)—beginning (cf. Mishnah, *Pesachim* 10:1)
2. 2nd Cup: Cup of Proclamation (*haggadah*)—reading of Scripture
3. 3rd Cup: Cup of Blessing (*berakah*)—after the meal (Luke 22:17-18; 1 Cor 10:16)
4. 4th Cup: Cup of Praise (*hallel*)—after singing Hallel Psalms (Ps 113-118)

The Last Supper of Jesus

1. The Words of Institution (Mark 14:22-24)

And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and 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 shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." -*Mark 14:22-25*

- a. "Take, eat, this is *my body*"
- b. "This is *my blood of the covenant*" (cf. Exod 24:8)
- c. "*Poured out for many*" (cf. Deut 12:26-27)

2. Jesus' Mysterious Vow (Mark 14:25-26)

- a. Vow: "I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine"
- b. Departure: "when they had sung *a hymn*, they went out..."

What "Hymn" Did Jesus Sing at the Last Supper?

1. The Hallel Psalms (Ps 113-118)

2. What Did Jesus Sing at the Last Supper? (Ps 116:12-13, 15-17)

What shall I render to the Lord
for all his bounty to me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation
and call on the name of the Lord,
I will pay my vows to the Lord
in the presence of all his people.
Precious in the sight of the Lord
is the death of his saints.

O Lord, I am thy servant;
I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid.
Thou hast loosed my bonds.
I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving
and call on the name of the Lord.
-*Psalms 116:12-17*

- a. Cup of Salvation: "I shall lift up the cup of salvation"
- b. Suffering Servant: "I am your servant"
- c. Mother of the Messiah: "the son of your handmaid"
- d. Thanksgiving Sacrifice: "I will offer the sacrifice of thanksgiving (Heb *todah*)"

The Agony in Gethsemane

1. Jesus' Mysterious Prayer: prays 3x! (Matt 26:36-46)

Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, "Sit here, while I go yonder and pray." And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me." And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt." And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, "So, could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Again, for the second time, he went away and prayed, "My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done." And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. Then he came to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand." -*Matthew 26:36-46*

- a. "My Father, if it be possible, *let this cup pass from me...*"
- b. "My Father, *if this cannot pass unless I drink it*, your will be done."

2. Questions: Why does Jesus speak this way?

- a. If you were about to be crucified, would *you* pray about a "cup"?
- b. Isn't this a strange way to describe a Roman crucifixion?
- c. Answer: the final cup of the Passover!

GOOD FRIDAY

The Crucifixion and Death of Jesus

1. Jesus Refuses to Drink Wine (Mark 15:21-24)

- a. Golgotha: “place of a skull”
- b. “Wine” mixed with “myrrh”: Jesus “did not take it” (cf. Matt 27:33)
- c. Crucifixion: “they crucified him,” casting lots for his garments

2. Jesus’ Final Request: “I thirst” (John 19:25-30)

So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Mag’dalene. When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home. After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), “I thirst.” A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of the vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, “It is finished”; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

-John 19:25-30

- a. Wine for the Dying: “common wine”
- b. Hyssop: “they held it to his mouth” (cf. Exod 12:22)
- c. Consummation: “It is finished” (Latin *consummatum est*)
- d. Why does Jesus say “I thirst”? What does he mean: “It is finished”?

3. The Blood and Water from the Side of Christ (John 19:31-36)

Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining 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. So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe. For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, “Not a bone of him shall be broken.” -John 19:31-36

- a. Friday: “the day of preparation” (for the Sabbath)
- b. Blood and Water: “one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear”
- c. Eyewitness Testimony: “he who saw it has borne witness”
- d. Passover Lamb: “not a bone of him shall be broken” (cf. Exod 12:46)

Jewish Tradition: The Blood and Water from the Temple

At the south-western corner [of the Altar] there were two holes like two narrow nostrils by which *the blood that was poured* over the western base and the southern base *used to run down and mingle in the water-channel and flow out into the brook Kidron.*

-Mishnah, *Middot* 3:2; translation Herbert Danby

The Catechism on the Last Supper and the New Passover

By celebrating the Last Supper with his apostles in the course of the Passover meal, Jesus gave the Jewish Passover its definitive meaning. Jesus’ passing over to his father by his death and Resurrection, the new Passover, is anticipated in the Supper and celebrated in the Eucharist, which fulfills the Jewish Passover and anticipates the final Passover of the Church in the glory of the kingdom. -CCC 1340