

## Research on “The Feast of the Passover and the Last Supper”

### **Matt. 26: 17-20, 26-27, 30**

“Jesus intended this evening to be etched deeply on the memories of his followers. Every word and action was important. It was an unrushed few hours before the gathering storm” (Walker 159).

‘00 15:8

The Passover, spiritually discerned, is a wonderful passage over a tear-filled sea of repentance — which of all human experience is the most divine; and after this Passover cometh victory, faith, and good works.

My 156:11-24

When Jesus directed his disciples to prepare for the material Passover which spiritually speaking is the pass-over from sense to Soul, he bade them say to the good-man of the house: “The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? and he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.”

In obedience to this command may these communicants come with the upper chambers of thought prepared for the reception of Truth — with hope, faith, and love ready to partake of the bread that cometh down from heaven, and to “drink of his blood” — to receive into their affections and lives the inspiration which giveth victory over sin, disease, and death.

### **Matt. 26: 17-20, 26-27, 30**

**17 Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?**

“The disciples were asking Jesus for guidance as to the procedures to be followed for the next day...” (*AYB Matthew* 319).

“According to the Fourth Gospel, Jesus’ crucifixion took place at the very time when the paschal lambs were being slain. Most scholars now hold that John’s dating is correct, even though the fact that it fits so well with the theological idea that ‘Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us’ (I Cor. 5:7) is bound to raise a question” (*IB* 6.572).

18 And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.

Jesus is fully aware that the time of his mission is in its final moments. He wanted to celebrate this last meal with his disciples. Scholars have always argued over when the Last Supper actually took place. Was it on the Passover night and was it a Passover meal? Or was it on the night before?

### *Two views of the Last Supper and Passover*

### **SYNOPTIC GOSPELS (MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE)**

Passover = Thursday

Last Supper = Thursday

Reason for this view: Jesus says, “I will eat the Passover...”

Reason against this view: A trial would not be held on Passover night

### **JOHN**

Passover = Friday

Last Supper = Thursday

Reason for this view: Jesus is characterized in the New Testament as the “Lamb of God” and on Friday would have been slain at same time as the Passover lamb

NOTE: Mary Baker Eddy says in *Science and Health with Key to the Scriptures* that the Last Supper **was** the Passover meal the night before his crucifixion. This is different from John’s Gospel.

32:28

The Passover, which Jesus ate with his disciples in the month Nisan on the night before his crucifixion, was a mournful occasion, a sad supper taken at the close of day, in the twilight of a glorious career . . .

“This element of necessary caution and secrecy can be sensed in the way Jesus made the preparations for his ‘Last Supper’ with his disciples. It was customary, if at all possible, for Jews to celebrate the annual Passover meal within the walls of the city. So Jesus needed a location

somewhere inside the city. Yet, because the religious authorities were now looking for an opportunity to arrest him (Luke 19:47), the location needed to be secure and secret. So Jesus gave his disciples some rather coded instructions. The result, however, was that they encountered a discreet owner who provided them with a ‘large upper room’—probably somewhere on the slopes of the city’s more wealthy western hill” (Walker 155).

“The disciple would doubtless be surprised at the proposal of Jesus to keep the Passover a day before the legal time. The apostles were therefore instructed to give the reason: ‘My time is at hand,’ i.e., My death will happen before the legal time of the Passover arrives” (Dummelow 709).

19 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.

20 Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.

“The Passover meal could not be eaten till after sundown; and for those living within Palestine, it had to be eaten inside Jerusalem or not at all. That is why we find Jesus reclining at a table in a room in the city ‘when evening came’” (*EBC* 9.534).

“Few meals can ever have received as much subsequent attention as has Jesus’ Last Supper with his disciples. The Synoptic Gospels describe it fairly succinctly but John’s Gospel devotes five whole chapters to this one meal” (Walker 155).

26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

“A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible grace” (IB 7.575).

“Few clauses of four words have evoked more debate than the last one. But three things must be said.

1. The words ‘this is my body’ had no place in the Passover ritual; and as an innovation, they must have had stunning effect, an effect that would grow with the increased understanding gained after Easter.
2. Both the breaking and the distributing are probably significant: the bread (body) is broken, and all must partake of it.
3. The new rite Jesus institutes has links with redemption history. As the bread has just been broken, so will Jesus’ body be broken; and just as the people of Israel associated their deliverance from Egypt with eating the paschal meal prescribed as a divine

ordinance, so also Messiah's people are to associate Jesus' redemptive death with eating this bread by Jesus' authority" (*EBC* 8.536).

"That is, the unleavened bread which they used at the celebration of the Passover, made into thin cakes, easily broken and distributed" (Barnes 127).

**27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;**

The cup represented the persecutions that were going to take place in the near future. They were to drink all of it, dedicating themselves to this new covenant of selfless love.

Mrs. Eddy makes the following statements about the Last Supper and the communion it symbolized.

35:19

Our Eucharist is spiritual communion with the one God. Our bread, "which cometh down from heaven," 27 is Truth. Our cup is the cross. Our wine the inspiration of Love, the draught our Master drank and commended to his followers.

33:1-16

...this supper closed forever Jesus' ritualism or concessions to matter.

His followers, sorrowful and silent, anticipating the hour of their Master's betrayal, partook of the heavenly manna, which of old had fed in the wilderness the Heavenly persecuted followers of Truth. Their bread supplies indeed came down from heaven. It was the great truth of spiritual being, healing the sick and casting out error.

Their Master had explained it all before, and now this bread was feeding and sustaining them. They had borne this bread from house to house, breaking (explaining) it to others, and now it comforted themselves.

For this truth of spiritual being, their Master was about to suffer violence and drain to the dregs his cup of sorrow. He must leave them. With the great glory of an everlasting victory overshadowing him, he gave thanks and said, Drink ye all of it.

30 And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.

“The ‘hymn’ normally sung was the last part of the *Hallel* (Ps. 114-18 or 115-18). It was sung antiphonally: Jesus as the leader would sing the lines, and his followers would respond with ‘Hallelujah!’ Parts of it must have been deeply moving to the disciples when after the Resurrection they remembered that Jesus sang words pledging that he would keep his vows, ultimately triumph despite rejection, and call all nations to praise Yahweh and his covenant love” (EBC 8.539)

Resources:

Barnes, Albert. *Barnes' Notes on the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1962.

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*The Interpreter's Bible*. Ed. George Arthur Buttrick et al. 12 vols. New York: Abingdon, 1953.

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