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

Mark 14:12, 13 15 16m 22-24, 26

“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).

12 And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover?

*“On the first day of unleavened bread —*Being Thursday, the fourteenth day of the first month, [Exodus 12:6](http://biblehub.com/exodus/12-6.htm); [Exodus 12:15](http://biblehub.com/exodus/12-15.htm). *The disciples came, saying, Where wilt thou that we prepare the passover?*— They meant at what house” ([www.biblehub/commentaries/matthew/26)](http://www.biblehub/commentaries/matthew/26)).

“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).

13 And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

*And he said, Go into the city to such a man*— This implies that Jesus named the person to whom they were sent, though the evangelists have not thought it of importance to mention his name. He told them further, that on their entrance into the city they should find one of the man’s servants in the street, bearing a pitcher of water. This person he ordered them to follow, without saying anything to him, because as he was carrying the water home he would lead them straight to his master’s house, with which, it seems, the disciples were not acquainted” ([www.biblehub/commentaries/matthew/26)](http://www.biblehub/commentaries/matthew/26)).

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?

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).

15 And he will shew you a large upper room furnished *and* prepared: there make ready for us.

17 And in the evening he cometh 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).

“Picturing the scene to ourselves, we may think of our Lord as reclining—not sitting—in the centre of the middle table, St. John next to Him, and leaning on His bosom ([John 13:23](http://biblehub.com/john/13-23.htm)), St. Peter probably on the other side, and the others sitting in an order corresponding, more or less closely, with the three-fold division of the Twelve into groups of four. Upon the washing of the feet followed the teaching of [John 13:12-20](http://biblehub.com/context/john/13-12.htm), and then came the “blessing” or “thanksgiving” which opened the meal” <http://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/26-20.htm>, Ellicott’s Commentary)

22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake *it,* and gave to them, 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).

“Jesus took bread; which lay by him, either on the table, or in a dish. Though this supper is distinct from the "passover", and different from any ordinary meal, yet there are allusions to both in it, and to the customs of the Jews used in either; as in this first circumstance, of "taking" the bread: for he that asked a blessing upon bread, used to take it into his hands; and it is a rule (l), that "a man does not bless, "until he takes the bread into his hand", that all may see that he blesses over it.

Thus Christ took the bread and held it up, that his disciples might observe it: and blessed it; or asked a blessing over it, and upon it, or rather blessed and gave thanks to his Father or it, and for what was signified by it; and prayed that his disciples, whilst eating it, might be led to him, the bread of life, and feed upon him in a spiritual sense; whose body was going to be broken for them, as the bread was to be, in order to obtain eternal redemption for them: so it was common with the Jews, to ask a blessing on their bread” (<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/26-26.htm>, Gill’s Exposition).

23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave *it* to them: and they all drank 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,”

is Truth. Our cup is the cross. Our wine the inspira-

tion of Love, the draught our Master drank and com-

mended to his followers.

24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.

26And 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)

“And when they had sung a hymn - The Passover was observed by the Jews by singing or "chanting" [Psalm 113-118](http://biblehub.com/psalms/113.htm). These they divided into two parts. They sung[Psalm 113-114](http://biblehub.com/psalms/113.htm) during the observance of the Passover, and the others at the close. There can be no doubt that our Saviour, and the apostles also, used the same psalms in their observance of the Passover” (<http://biblehub.com/commentaries/matthew/26-30.htm>, Barnes Notes).

Resources:

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*The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelein et al. Vol. 8.

Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984.

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Walker, Peter. *In The Steps of Jesus*. Oxford: Lion Hudson, 2007.