

# A Study of the Christ Text

Matthew Mark Luke John

The Lord's Supper

26:26-30

14:22-26

22:14-20

## Overriding Principles

- God is, commonly, one who develops plans over time, such as the ultimate intent of the Passover principle and the Jewish sacrificial system.
- Grace is far from cheap.
- The Messianic Kingdom was to be the ultimate expression of God's earthly rule (cf. Eph. 3:11, 21).

## Commentary

### The Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-30; Mk. 14:22-26; Lk. 22:14-20)

- The first observance of Passover was while standing (Ex. 12:11), however, after the Exodus the Jews reclined at table as a celebration of freedom (slaves stood at table).
- There was an "Haggadah" (set form) for the Passover celebration that covered the Passover week.
- The Haggadah of Passover became part of the "Seder" (order) and included the liturgy and narration taken from Deuteronomy 26:5-9.
- The meal centered on three foods: unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and the Passover lamb, along with four traditional cups of fruit of the vine.
- In Jesus' time the Jews were looking for a new Moses to deliver them from the Romans, not a new lamb to deliver them from their sins.
- The bread and the cup became the completely unexpected fulfillment of the original Passover by ushering in an atonement—a passing over of sins (cf. I Cor. 5:7).
- Jesus left two visible reminders of His soon to be invisible person.
- The bread and the cup were representative of Jesus, not literally His body and blood.
  - The words spoken over the Passover bread illustrate the point.
  - "This is the bread of affliction our fathers ate when they came from Egypt."
  - Clearly, no Jew thought the bread suddenly became centuries old at the saying of the traditional words.
- The traditional four cups of the fruit of the vine each had special significance.
  - The first was a Kiddush or cup of blessing that introduced all Jewish festivals.

- At every meal a prayer was offered by the head of the house as he raised a loaf of bread over his head.
  - “Praise be You, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who causes bread to come forth from the earth.”
  - When an “amen” was said by those at the table, the host broke off peaces of the loaf to distribute as a blessing to each person.
    - Jesus offered His body as a blessing!
      - After the Haggadah, just before the meal, was the second cup, followed by the singing of Psalm 113-114 (the first part of the Hallel, “praise”).
      - The third cup came after the meal and the giving of thanks.
      - The fourth cup followed the completion of the singing of the Hallel (Ps. 115-118; cf. Matt. 26:30; Mk. 14:26).
- Drinking from another’s cup symbolized, on occasion, a sharing in the destiny of the one who offered the cup (note Matt. 20:22-23; Jn. 4:7-10; Ps. 16:4-5).
- Luke mentions two cups.
  - The first was most likely the first of the four traditional cups as it was a cup of thanksgiving.
  - The second of Luke’s cups was most likely the forth traditional cup since it completed the meal.
- Included in the deeper significance of Passover revealed by Jesus in the Lord’s Supper was the coming fulfillment of the promised New Covenant and its new understanding of forgiveness (Jer. 31:31-34; cf. Isa. 53).
  - Old Testament covenants were ratified by blood (cf. Gen. 15:9-10; Ex. 24:28).
  - The traditional Passover cup was not associated with blood by the Jews as they regarded drinking blood completely revolting (cf. Jn. 6:53-58).
- A fifth traditional cup was present at the Passover meal, known as “the cup of Elijah.”
- The fifth cup was most likely the one Jesus figuratively cited when He said He would not drink of it until the establishment of the Father’s Kingdom.
- The phrase, “not drink again” was used by Jesus as a metaphor for death, with “drink it anew” implying a resurrection (such phrases of abstinence were commonly associated with vows in Jesus’ day).

## **Who is Jesus?**

- He was the fulfillment of all Old Covenant themes.
- He died that we might live.

# Passover in the Time of Jesus

By: Daniel B. Wallace , Th.M., Ph.D.

The following essay is the transcript used in a recent Seder that I conducted with some friends. With a little imagination, you can see how it was implemented.

This evening we will be celebrating the Passover as it was celebrated in the first century A.D. Our records are scanty in some places, but the majority of aspects of the evening are certifiable as authentic at that time. We will not eat gifilta fish, nor have a boiled egg or a bare lamb shank bone on our plates, since this practice does not date back to the time of Jesus.<sup>1</sup> The meal itself will be simple: hors d'oeuvres, lamb, unleavened bread, and wine; the symbolic significance of the meal, however, will be rich and complex. The Passover was a festive occasion—a celebration of the nation's release from Egyptian bondage. We should celebrate it tonight as Jesus' disciples did, for only later did they realize the irony of this joyous occasion that pointed to the death of the Messiah.

As we replicate what the Jews of Palestine did at the time of Jesus, try to reflect on what may have been going through the disciples' minds as well as our Lord's, as we partake of that last Passover before his death. At certain points we will punctuate the ceremony with references to that Thursday evening of April 2, A. D. 33.<sup>2</sup>

\* \* \*

## Preliminaries:

- **Nisan 10—Selection of a lamb:** A one-year-old unblemished male lamb is chosen for the Passover by a member of the household. (In A. D. 33, Nisan 10 fell on 'Palm Monday,' the day Jesus made his untriumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is evident that he was presenting himself as the unblemished sacrifice for the nation on that day.) The slaughter of the lambs would not take place until Nisan 14, the day Jesus was crucified (Friday, April 3, A. D. 33).<sup>3</sup>
- **Nisan 13—Searching for leaven:** Usually the evening before the Passover meal was eaten, the *paterfamilias* led his family through the house by candlelight, looking in nooks and crannies for any leaven in the house. No leaven was supposed to be in the home at that time. (Not infrequently, Jews would sell their leaven to their Gentile neighbors and buy it back after the eight days of unleavened bread!)

At the end of the search the father says, "All leaven that is in my possession, that which I have seen and that which I have not seen, be it null, be it accounted as the dust of the earth."<sup>4</sup>

- **Nisan 14—Footwashing:** As guests and family members entered the home to celebrate Passover, a servant or slave would often be there to wash their feet. This was the task of the lowest class of people. (That Jesus did this in John 13, even though he was the *paterfamilias* or head of the family, both symbolizes what he would later do for his disciples [cf. Mark 10: 45—"The Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give my life as a ransom for many"] and embodies his principle that "If anyone wants to be **first**, he shall be **last** of all, and servant of all" [Mark 9: 35; cf. also John 13: 15].)<sup>5</sup>
- **Non-ritual wine:** Before we partake of the ritual wine, we are permitted to drink wine that has no religious significance. This non-ritual wine is also allowed between the first and second cups of ritual wine, and between the second and third cups.
- **First hand-washing:** Once all the guests arrive, we will perform the ritual hand-washing that Jews, from antiquity, have done before every meal.<sup>6</sup>
- **Table setting:** in front of each seat—four glasses for ritual wine, labeled as such (the non-ritual wine glass should not be on the table, but should be given to guests after they arrive and after their feet are washed); one plate, cutlery, napkin. Several candles on the table. Seating labels in place. *Charoseth*, unleavened bread, vegetables, and vinegar (*karpas*) should all be on the table. As well, representative bottles of wine should be there too, all labeled.

- **Reclining at table:** The ancient near eastern custom of total relaxation was not too far from our modern “couch potato with remote control” motif. They would relax around a low table (about 18” off the ground), sprawled out on pillows, being served by the help. So, take your shoes off, and prepare to have a good time!

**Seating** at Passover is **assigned**: beginning with the head of the family at one end, the guests are to wrap around the table either from the oldest to youngest, or the most important to the least important. Some of you have place names for where you should sit; the rest may sit where they please.

- **First cup:** Four ritual cups of wine are used for the Passover. The Mishnah says that even the poorest man in Israel must drink the four ritual cups, even if it means selling all his possessions! The wine used was red and warm, a custom we are continuing this evening. A prayer is uttered over each cup, and the four verbs of Exodus 6:6-7 are recited, one over each cup.

After we are seated casually, the first prayer (the *kiddush*, or prayer of sanctification) is uttered by the *paterfamilias*.

... npgh yrp arwb ml uh i l m wnyh l a yy hta i wrb

“Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who has created the fruit of the vine. . . . And you, O Lord our God, have given us festival days for joy, this feast of the unleavened bread, the time of our deliverance in remembrance of the departure from Egypt. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to enjoy this season.”

The *kiddush*: “Blessed are you, O Lord our God, . . . who has created the fruit of the vine. . . . Blessed are you, O Lord our God, who has kept us alive, sustained us, and enabled us to enjoy this season.”

Then the first cup of ritual wine is poured and the first verb of Exodus 6:6-7 is recited by the father:

myrxm tlbs tj tm mkta ytaxwhw hwby yna

“I am the LORD, and I **will bring you** out from under the yoke of the Egyptians.”

The wine may now be drunk. (After this cup, you may now drink non-ritual wine until the second cup is served. The non-ritual wine may be any of the previously mentioned non-ritual wines, or it may be the wine used for the first cup.)

- **The Karpas (bitter herbs and the first dipping):** The head of the house dips bitter herbs (traditionally lettuce or celery) into salt water or vinegar. He dips the bitter herb together with the chief guest of honor (the person on his right), and then the bitter herbs are passed on down the table.
- After all partake of the *karpas*, **all food** is removed from the table. This heightens the interest of the evening, prompting the questions from the youngest son.
- **Second Cup:** poured, but not yet drunk.
- **Questions from the youngest son/least significant person:**

Why is this night different from all other nights? On all other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread, but this night only unleavened bread.

On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs, but this night only bitter herbs. Why do we dip the herbs twice?

On all other nights we eat meat roasted, stewed, or boiled, but on this night why only roasted meat?

- **Answer by the father** (recounting the history of Israel from Abraham till Moses and the giving of the Law)<sup>2</sup>:

Acts 7:2-38 (with some lacunae) is read. It is interesting that Stephen's speech so closely parallels the kinds of things that the *paterfamilias* would say at the Passover (though with some interesting twists to it) that one wonders if this was indeed the message that Stephen, as head of his own home, would recite at Passover (for at 7:39 Stephen goes beyond what was to be recited and begins to pronounce his indictment against the religious leaders).

- All food and wine is returned to the table, including the lamb.
- Father now explains the significance of the lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread.
- **Singing of the first half of the Hallel Psalms:** Psalms 113-114.

Done in one of two ways: father singing the lines with the family saying "Hallelujah" after each verse, or all singing the psalms together. We will do the latter. [NIV]

Psa. 113:1 Praise the LORD. Praise, O servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.

Psa. 113:2 Let the name of the LORD be praised, both now and forevermore.

Psa. 113:3 From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the LORD is to be praised.

Psa. 113:4 The LORD is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens.

Psa. 113:5 Who is like the LORD our God, the One who sits enthroned on high,

Psa. 113:6 who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth?

Psa. 113:7 He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap;

Psa. 113:8 he seats them with princes, with the princes of their people.

Psa. 113:9 He settles the barren woman in her home as a happy mother of children. Praise the LORD.

Psa. 114:1 When Israel came out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of foreign tongue,

Psa. 114:2 Judah became God's sanctuary, Israel his dominion.

Psa. 114:3 The sea looked and fled, the Jordan turned back;

Psa. 114:4 the mountains skipped like rams, the hills like lambs.

Psa. 114:5 Why was it, O sea, that you fled, O Jordan, that you turned back,

Psa. 114:6 you mountains, that you skipped like rams, you hills, like lambs?

Psa. 114:7 Tremble, O earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob,

Psa. 114:8 who turned the rock into a pool, the hard rock into springs of water.

- **Prayer over the Second Cup:**

npgh yrp arwb mlwuh i l m wnyhl a yy hta i wrb

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who has created the fruit of the vine. . . .

**Exodus 6:6b:** "I will deliver you from their bondage"

mtdbum mkta ytl xhw

- **Second hand-washing:** This hand-washing is done out of respect for the unleavened bread that is about to be eaten.
- **The Paschal Lamb, charoseth with vegetables, and two of the unleavened bread wafers are served.**
- **Prayer over the bread** (by the father):

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments, and commanded us to eat unleavened bread."

- **Breaking of the bread:**

The host breaks the guest of honor's bread and they dip it together in the *charoseth* and bitter herbs. The guest in turn breaks his neighbor's bread and they dip it together, and so on down the line.

- **The meal may now be eaten.**

After drinking the second cup of wine, any wine that has already been drunk may now be drunk non-ritually.

- **The Third Cup: Prayer and consumption**

*After* the meal, the third cup is poured. The last of the unleavened bread wafers is blessed, broken, and eaten:

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth. Blessed are you, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with your commandments, and commanded us to eat unleavened bread."

**All participants** recite the post-meal grace together, and then the prayer over the wine.

"The name of the Lord be blessed from now until eternity. Let us bless him of whose gifts we have partaken: Blessed be our God of whose gifts we have partaken, and by whose goodness we exist."

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who has created the fruit of the vine. . . .

**Then the father** recites the third verb from Exodus 6:6:

"**I will redeem** you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments."

myl dg myf n uwrzb mkta ytl agw

Then the wine is drunk.

\*No non-ritual wine may be drunk between the third and the fourth cup.

- **The Fourth Cup and the final Hallel Psalms:**

The fourth cup of wine is poured and blessed by all:

"Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who has created the fruit of the vine. . . .

**Then the father** recites the fourth verb from Exodus 6:6-7:

"Then **I will take** you as my people, and I will be your God; and you shall know that I am the Lord your God, who brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians."

**Psalms 115-118 are now sung** as a closing hymn [NIV, slightly modified]

Psa. 115:1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.

Psa. 115:2 Why do the nations say, "Where is their God?"

Psa. 115:3 Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him.

Psa. 115:4 But their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men.  
Psa. 115:5 They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see;  
Psa. 115:6 they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell;  
Psa. 115:7 they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats.  
Psa. 115:8 Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them.  
Psa. 115:9 O house of Israel, trust in the LORD — he is their help and shield.  
Psa. 115:10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD — he is their help and shield.  
Psa. 115:11 You who fear him, trust in the LORD — he is their help and shield.  
Psa. 115:12 The LORD remembers us and will bless us: He will bless the house of Israel, he will bless the house of Aaron,  
Psa. 115:13 he will bless those who fear the LORD — small and great alike.  
Psa. 115:14 May the LORD make you increase, both you and your children.  
Psa. 115:15 May you be blessed by the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.  
Psa. 115:16 The highest heavens belong to the LORD, but the earth he has given to man.  
Psa. 115:17 It is not the dead who praise the LORD, those who go down to silence;  
Psa. 115:18 it is we who extol the LORD, both now and forevermore. Praise the LORD.

Psa. 116:1 I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.  
Psa. 116:2 Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.  
Psa. 116:3 The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came upon me; I was overcome by trouble and sorrow.  
Psa. 116:4 Then I called on the name of the LORD: "O LORD, save me!"  
Psa. 116:5 The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.  
Psa. 116:6 The LORD protects the simplehearted; when I was in great need, he saved me.  
Psa. 116:7 Be at rest once more, O my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.  
Psa. 116:8 For you, O LORD, have delivered my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling,  
Psa. 116:9 that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.  
Psa. 116:10 I believed; therefore I said, "I am greatly afflicted."  
Psa. 116:11 And in my dismay I said, "All men are liars."  
Psa. 116:12 How can I repay the LORD for all his goodness to me?  
Psa. 116:13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.  
Psa. 116:14 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people.  
Psa. 116:15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.  
Psa. 116:16 O LORD, truly I am your servant; I am your servant, the son of your maidservant; you have freed me from my chains.  
Psa. 116:17 I will sacrifice a thank offering to you and call on the name of the LORD.  
Psa. 116:18 I will fulfill my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people,  
Psa. 116:19 in the courts of the house of the LORD — in your midst, O Jerusalem. Praise the LORD.

Psa. 117:1 Praise the LORD, all you nations; extol him, all you peoples.  
Psa. 117:2 For great is his love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD.

Psa. 118:1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.  
Psa. 118:2 Let Israel say: "His love endures forever."  
Psa. 118:3 Let the house of Aaron say: "His love endures forever."  
Psa. 118:4 Let those who fear the LORD say: "His love endures forever."  
Psa. 118:5 In my anguish I cried to the LORD, and he answered by setting me free.  
Psa. 118:6 The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?  
Psa. 118:7 The LORD is with me; he is my helper. I will look in triumph on my enemies.  
Psa. 118:8 It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in man.  
Psa. 118:9 It is better to take refuge in the LORD than to trust in princes.  
Psa. 118:10 All the nations surrounded me, but in the name of the LORD I cut them off.  
Psa. 118:11 They surrounded me on every side, but in the name of the LORD I cut them off.  
Psa. 118:12 They swarmed around me like bees, but they died out as quickly as burning thorns; in the name of the LORD I cut them off.  
Psa. 118:13 I was pushed back and about to fall, but the LORD helped me.

Psa. 118:14 The LORD is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation.  
Psa. 118:15 Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: "The LORD's right hand has done mighty things!  
Psa. 118:16 The LORD's right hand is lifted high; the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!"  
Psa. 118:17 I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done.  
Psa. 118:18 The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.  
Psa. 118:19 Open for me the gates of righteousness; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.  
Psa. 118:20 This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.  
Psa. 118:21 I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.  
Psa. 118:22 The stone the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone;  
Psa. 118:23 the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.  
Psa. 118:24 This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.  
Psa. 118:25 O LORD, save us; O LORD, grant us success.  
Psa. 118:26 Blessed is he who comes in the name of the LORD. From the house of the LORD we bless you.  
Psa. 118:27 The LORD is God, and he has made his light shine upon us. With boughs in hand, join in the festal procession up to the horns of the altar.  
Psa. 118:28 You are my God, and I will give you thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you.  
Psa. 118:29 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

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1 The basic source for the ancient Passover ceremony is the tractate *Pesachim* (from which the Greek word *pascha* is derived and which is translated as 'paschal' in the RSV of 1 Cor 5:7, 'passover' in most other modern translations) in the Mishnah, a document that was written down in c. A. D. 200 by Rabbi Judah ha-Nassi. Judah had received it via oral tradition dating back to the great Rabbi Hillel, who lived in the century before Christ.

2 The date I follow has been argued for by Harold Hoehner in his *Chronological Aspects of the Life of Christ*.

3 Passover lambs were slain between noon and 3 p.m. on Nisan 14 (recall that there were three hours of darkness, from approximately noon to 3 p.m., when Jesus was on the cross [Mark 15:33]. When Jesus died, the temple curtain was torn in two, from top to bottom [Mark 15:38]—right when the last of the lambs would be on the altar in front of the sanctuary!). In A. D. 70, the last year that the temple was still standing, 270,000 lambs were slain.

When the lambs were slain, the Levites would chant the Hallel Psalms (Psalms 113-118) repeatedly.

4 This practice apparently stems from a rabbinic interpretation of Zephaniah 1:12—"I will search Jerusalem with lamps and punish those who are complacent." Since leaven often represents sin, Paul makes the tie between the leaven of the Passover and our commitment to Christ in 1 Cor 5:7 ("Get rid of the old leaven that you may be a new batch without leaven—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.")

5 The footwashing was not a part of the Passover per se, but was the custom in Palestine when one entered a home to eat a meal.

6 There is some dispute about when the first handwashing was performed. In modern times, it is done prior to the meal and before sitting down. In ancient times it may have been done once all reclined at table and after the first cup of wine was poured.

Cf. Matt 15:1-20 (Jesus refutes this tradition as merely "the precepts of the men," noting that the Pharisees and scribes had abandoned the commandments of God for such traditions.)

7 The command to recount Israel's history is recorded in Exod 10:2; 12:26-27; and 13:8.



# The Lord's Supper

## Matthew 26:26-29

### Introduction

1. The central element of the Christian faith is the death, burial, and resurrection of the Christ (I Cor. 15:1-4).
2. The heart of Christian worship is the Lord's Supper, the memorial of His death until He comes again—the remembrance of Jesus' death on the day of His resurrection.
3. As we prepare to partake, let us remember *why*...

### The Beginnings of the Supper

1. Emerging from the Passover (Ex. 11-13).
  - a. The deliverance of Israel from the Egyptians by a lamb's blood.
  - b. Physical deliverance.
2. Pointing to the Cross (Matt. 26:26-29).
  - a. The deliverance of sinners from the consequences of their sins by the Lamb's blood (Rom. 1:18-3:18; Jn. 1:29, 36).
  - b. Spiritual deliverance.

### The Keeping of the Supper

1. The unity of the church in loyalty to Christ (I Cor. 10:14-22; 11:17-22).
  - a. As Israel should have been united in having but one altar, so the church is to be one in the loaf and in the cup.
  - b. Our loyalty to Jesus is not to be shared, even as Israel could not share their loyalty to God with idols.
2. Renewing the instructions of Jesus (I Cor. 11:23-34).
  - a. Christians are a people of the Christ (Lk. 6:46).
  - b. We are to be a people of oneness (Eph. 4:4-6).

### The Promise of the Supper

1. He will return (Jn. 14:1-6; I Thess. 4:13-18).
2. In that moment, that twinkling of an eye, will the time of change be the time of our change (I Cor. 15:35-58)?

### Conclusion

1. The Supper is about emblems, timing, brotherhood, and loyalty—but it is *all* about Jesus.
2. As often as we eat the Supper, let Him be remembered.