

The King Prepares For His Passion

Mark 14:12-25

Introduction: 1) In 1906 Albert Schweitzer published his groundbreaking work *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. He believed Jesus saw Himself as a 1st century eschatological prophet who believed His ministry would usher in the apocalyptic end of history. Sadly and unfortunately He was mistaken, things got out of hand, and he was brutally put to death in the process. It is worth letting Schweitzer speak for himself:

“There is silence all around. The Baptist appears, and cries: “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” Soon after that comes Jesus, and in the knowledge that he is the coming Son of Man lays hold of the wheel of the world to set it moving on that last revolution which is to bring all ordinary history to a close. It refuses to turn, and He throws Himself upon it. Then it does turn; and crushes Him. Instead of bringing in the eschatological conditions, He has destroyed them. The wheel rolls onward, and the mangled body of the one immeasurably great Man, who was strong enough to think of Himself as the spiritual ruler of mankind and to bend history to His purpose, is hanging upon it still. That is his victory and His reign.” (Schweitzer, 370-371, quoted in *The Historical Jesus: Five Views*, 20).

2) This perspective, still popular among some liberal and skeptical scholars, falls on hard times with a fair and honest reading of the Gospels. There we see our Savior in total control down to the last detail as He makes His way to the cross to die for the sins of the world (John 1:29). He will indeed be crushed, but not by the “wheel of the world,” but by the will of His Father (Is. 53:10), a will our Lord both understood and embraced. James Edwards is exactly correct, “Jesus is not a tragic hero caught in events beyond his control. There is no hint of desperation, fear, anger, or futility on his part. Jesus does not cower or retreat as plots are hatched against him. He

displays, as he has throughout the Gospel, a sovereign freedom and authority to follow a course he has freely chosen in accordance with God's plan" (Edwards, 419).

3) Our King knows exactly where He is going and what will happen. Sovereign grace will use even human evil to accomplish its saving purposes. Our Lord will be certain everything goes according to plan.

I. Jesus is in control of the events leading to His death. 14:12-16

- The time for the Passover (4x) has arrived, a celebration that always took place in the spring. It was a time of great joy and remembrance of God delivering the Hebrews out of slavery in Egypt (see Exodus 12). According to Deuteronomy 16:5-8, the Passover had to be observed within the walls of Jerusalem. The influx of worshipping pilgrims would have been massive. The Jewish historian Josephus said 255,600 lambs were slaughtered in the temple in A.D. 66.
- "The first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb" (v. 2), was Thursday. The disciples approach Jesus wanting to know where the location of the memorial meal would take place that they might make preparation.
- In a scene reminiscent of our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-6), Jesus provides precise instructions in vs. 13-16: 1) He sent 2 disciples into the city (Luke 22:8 tells us it was Peter and John); 2) He tells them they will meet a man carrying a jar of water (something quite unusual as this was normally the work women or slaves would perform); 3) Follow him to a specific house (church tradition says it was Mark's home and the owner or master his Father); 4) Tell the master of the house "The Teacher" wants to know where His guest room is that He may eat the Passover with His disciples; 5) "He

will show you a large upper room furnished and ready” (v. 15); 6) There you will make preparation.

- Amazingly but not surprisingly v. 26 records, “the disciples set out and went to the city and found it just as He told them.” It is quite possible Jesus knew the man carrying the water as well as the master of the house, and yet the details transpired more than hint of His divine knowledge of what would happen.
- The 2 disciples did as they were instructed and made preparation for the Passover. They would have set the table with unleavened bread, wine, bitter herbs and sauce. They also would have roasted and prepared the Passover lamb that most clearly marked their deliverance from slavery and redemption out of Egypt. Little did they know that a greater preparation of an even greater Passover was unfolding in their presence as Jesus prepared Himself to be sacrificed as our Passover Lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). John the Baptist had declared when he saw Jesus, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Jesus is indeed this Passover Lamb, and He is in complete control of the events leading to His death. The cross was no surprise that unexpectedly caught Him off guard. No, it was a divine appointment that was scheduled as Peter would write, “before the foundation of the world” (1 Peter 1:20). Jesus knew down to the last detail what was happening and He joyfully embraced it (Heb. 12:2). Such confidence in God’s will should inspire us to trust Him even when the road of life may be difficult, painful, even deadly. Our God is in control!

II. Jesus was not caught by surprise by His betrayal. 14:17-21

- If Jesus was in complete control of all the events leading up to His death, then He was not caught by surprise by His betrayal. Surprised? No. Heartbroken and disappointed?

Certainly yes, especially when we consider that the betrayer was a close and trusted friend.

- Mark provides a more abbreviated account of the Passover meal, the last supper, than the other Gospels. He focuses primarily on 2 events: 1) Our Lord's betrayal (vs. 17-21) and 2) Jesus' institution of what we commonly call "the Lord's Supper" (vs. 22-25).
- It is evening when the Passover meal was eaten (v. 17). Jesus is there with "the twelve," thought it is likely others joined them as well. It was a "large upper room" (v. 15) and Jesus specifies in verse 20 that "it is one of the twelve" who will betray Him.
- While they are reclining at the table and eating (v. 18), the normal posture for having a meal in that day, Jesus utters words that must have shocked all in attendance and sent a cold chill running throughout the room: "Truly (Gr. *amen*, "I tell you the truth" (*NIV*)), I say it to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." How He knew we are never told, but the Scriptures are clear, He knew. Psalm 41:9 says, "Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted his head against me." Was this text, at least in some way, an indicator He drew from?! It is clear He applies this Davidic text to this moment.
- Our Lord's words provoke grief and soul-searching as they should. The disciples were "sorrowful" and one after another they ask Him, "Is it I?"
- Jesus narrows the possible list of betrayers in verse 20 to the 12 disciples, His most intimate and trusted companions. We are, of course, privy to information no one in the upper room had at that time but the Lord. The betrayer is Judas (cf. Mark 3:19; 14:10).

- Jesus then makes in v. 21 one of the most profound and theologically significant statements in all the Bible [read vs. 21]. Several important observations arise from this text.
 - 1) Jesus, as Daniel's "Son of Man" (Dan. 7:13-14), was ordained and predestined to be betrayed and crucified. Once again, though implicit, Jesus weds Daniel's apocalyptic figure to Isaiah's "Suffering Servant of the Lord" (Isa. 52:13-53:12; also Psalm 22).
 - 2) The one betraying the Son of Man, the Lord Jesus, was pitied in spite of his unconscionable deed ("woe to that man"). Jesus loved and cared even for Judas.
 - 3) The future judgment for Judas will be so terrible it would have been better "if he has not been born." Again, we see the truth, "revelation brings responsibility."
 - 4) Even though Judas' betrayal was ordained and according to God's plan, he is morally responsible for his freewill action. Jesus will be betrayed and crucified according to God's predetermined will, but this in no way relieved Judas of his responsibility and guilt. In a divine mystery we will never completely comprehend in this life, we embrace the truth and tension that divine sovereignty never cancels out human freedom and moral responsibility. Both are true. We embrace them both.
- In a painful sense the answer to the question of the betrayer of verse 20, "Is it I?" requires an answer of "yes" from each and every one of us. Yes, Judas betrayed Jesus, but by morning all the disciples would betray Him. Judas betrayed Him for greed (14:10-11), but the rest would betray Him from weakness (14:37-42), fear (14:50-52) and cowardice (14:66-72). But what about you? What about me? James Edwards hits us right between

the eyes when he writes, “Surely not I?” How that protest echoes down the centuries” (p. 424). We are all a Judas because each and every sin against Jesus is an act of betrayal, and a personal one at that. And yet this is where the grace of the gospel shines so bright, clean and pure. Even those who betray this great King and glorious Savior can experience immediate and complete forgiveness through simple repentance and confession of sin (1 John 1:9). Godly repentance will grieve, even weep, over the terrible thing it has done. But then it flees to Jesus who took that very sin on Himself at the cross. In grace God forgives. And, He provides the strength to move forward in the “family of the forgiven.” What a great family that is! If only Judas had turned from his sin.

III. Jesus prepared a last supper that was actually a first supper. 14:22-25

- 1) Thomas à Kempis said, “He who would learn to serve must first learn to think little of himself. This is the highest and most profitable lesson...” (quoted in Bonheoffer, *Life Together*, 1954, 94). Jesus has already served His disciples on their last night together by washing their feet (John 13:1-20). Now He serves them again as He institutes what we call “the Last Supper.”
- 2) This sacred meal is recorded in all 3 synoptic gospels (Matt. 26:26-29; Luke 22:18-20; see also 1 Cor. 10:14-22; 11:17-34) but not the gospel of John. It has been called “the Last Supper,” “the Lord’s Supper,” “the Eucharist” (meaning “thanksgiving”), “Communion” and “the Lord’s Table.” However, we stand on solid theological ground to refer to it also as “the First Supper” as it inaugurates the “New Covenant” (Jer. 31:31-34; Luke 22:20) which God made with us through the Lord Jesus, the true Passover Lamb who had been sacrificed for us (1 Cor. 5:7). His death made possible a new and greater

Exodus (see Luke 9:31) as we are delivered and set free from our bondage and slavery to sin.

- 3) This Passover was the proper occasion for the Lord's Supper to be instituted. Tim Keller notes, "The Passover meal has to be prepared in a certain way and had a distinct form. It included four points at which the presider, holding a glass of wine, got up and explained the Feast's meaning. The four cups of wine represented the four promises made by God in Exodus 6:6-7. These promises were for rescue from Egypt, for freedom from slavery, for redemption by God's power, and for a renewed relationship with God. The third cup came at a point when the meal was almost completely eaten" (*King's Cross*, 164-65). This 3rd cup, I believe, is the one alluded to by Mark in verse 25-26. There is great significance in this as we shall see.
- 4) Verse 22 indicates that the Passover is proceeding as usual when suddenly Jesus departs from the normal script in a most shocking manner. What He says are the words of a madman unless He is the Son of God and the true Passover Lamb. Breaking the bread and blessing it He says, "Take; this is my body." Then in verse 23 He took the cup (the 3rd), blesses it and "they all drank of it." Then He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (v. 24). These words inform us that the new covenant, like the old covenant, is a "blood covenant." That it is "poured out for many" informs us that the new covenant, promised in Jeremiah 31:31-34, is made possible by the death of Isaiah's "Suffering Servant of the Lord" who "bore the sins of many and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12). Hebrews 8:1-13 speaks of the New Covenant in greater detail.

- 5) Luke 22:19 and 1 Corinthians 11:24 inform us that Jesus told His disciples that each time they gathered in the future to celebrate this meal they were to do it “in remembrance of Me.” Once again it is almost impossible to overstate how shocking these words are. I think pastor Sam Storms helps us grasp the massive significance of what Jesus said:

What Jesus requested, indeed commanded, His followers and friends to do subsequent to His death is nothing short of shocking! It’s one thing to desire that your memory be preserved by your loved ones and that they continue to honor and esteem you throughout the remainder of their lives. You see this all the time at cemeteries where people have their photographs somehow embedded into their headstones or some other piece of memorabilia permanently affixed to the gravesite.

But it is altogether something else to command that your friends, family, and followers gather together regularly at a meal not only in your name but with you as the sole and exclusive focus. We all want to be remembered, we’d all like to leave behind something of a legacy, but Jesus commanded His followers, every time they broke bread together, to make Him the central point of their celebration and to recall and re-tell His life and death.

Were anyone to make this request of me prior to their death, I would probably conclude that the proximity of their demise had afflicted them with delusions of grandeur and megalomania. Yet, this is precisely what Jesus commanded that each of His followers do in memory of Him! In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul recites the very words of Jesus that He spoke on the night of His betrayal: “Do this in remembrance of Me!” (vv. 24-25). (Sermon Summary #43 on Mark)

- 6) In v. 25 Jesus brought things to a close by refusing to drink the 4th and final cup (read v. 25). Why? Because it is the cup of consummation and life in the promised land of God. For that cup He would wait. First, He must drink to the last drop the cup of God’s wrath and justice. Apart from it, no cup of blessing would be possible.

Conclusion

In 1991 Christian songwriter and vocalist Twila Paris penned a song to accompany the observance of the Lord’s Supper by the Lord’s people. It has a simple title, “How Beautiful.” It has, however, powerful words for reflection, meditation and celebration as we consider the King, His Supper and His Passion.

“How Beautiful”

How beautiful the hands that served
 The wine and the bread and the sons of the earth
 How beautiful the feet that walked
 The long dusty roads and the hill to the cross

How beautiful, how beautiful
 How beautiful is the body of Christ

How beautiful the heart that bled
 That took all my sin and bore it instead
 How beautiful the tender eyes
 That chose to forgive and never despise

How beautiful, how beautiful
 How beautiful is the body of Christ

And as He laid down His life
 We offer this sacrifice
 That we will live just as he died
 Willing to pay the price
 Willing to pay the price

How beautiful the radiant bride
 Who waits for her groom with His light in her eyes
 How beautiful when humble hearts give
 The fruit of pure lives so that others may live

How beautiful, how beautiful
 How beautiful is the body of Christ

How beautiful the feet that bring
 The sound of good news and the love of the King
 How beautiful the hands that serve
 The wine and the bread and the sons of the earth

How beautiful, how beautiful
 How beautiful is the body of Christ

Twila Paris