

**Sonoraville Baptist Church**  
**Sunday, July 18, 2010 – 11:00 AM**  
**Rev. Steve Skates, Pastor**

**A Closer Look at the Lord's Supper – Matthew 26:17-30**

**Introduction:** One of the biblical scenes that artists have tried to portray more than any other is the Last Supper scene. Each artist uses his imagination as he paints the scene. In Da Vinci's famous painting, everyone is seated at a table and none of the disciples have their backs to the viewer because he wanted to portray the reaction given by each apostle when Jesus said one of them would betray Him. In other paintings, everyone is shown sitting on the floor around a table in a more casual atmosphere. Some of the more modern artwork has been done using all kinds of materials, including this unique one done in sand.

In the same way each Gospel writer paints the same scene from their own unique perspective. We're going to view the last supper from Matthew's perspective this morning. As we look at what happened that night before Jesus died, I want to make four observations and apply them to our observance of the Lord's Supper this morning. First, let's notice:

**1. The Necessary Preparation (17-18)**

*17 On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" 18 He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.'"* **Matthew 26:17-18 (NIV).**

Matthew said that the Lord's Supper occurred on "*the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.*" This was another name for the feast we call Passover. In Jesus' day, it lasted for eight days and began with the observance of the Passover. Its origin is found in **Leviticus 23:5-8 (NIV)** "*The LORD's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. On the fifteenth day of that month the LORD's Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. For seven days present an offering made to the LORD by fire. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work.*"

Being such an important and special time of commemoration and celebration, there was much preparation that must be done to observe the feast. The disciples asked Jesus where they would observe the feast so that they could begin the preparations. Jesus tells them that there is a certain man in the city that they are to go to and inform him that "*his appointed time was near.*" This man according to the other gospels would be identified as the man carrying a water pitcher. This was probably a disciple of Jesus with whom He had already made these arrangements.

To observe the Passover meal the disciples would have to obtain unleavened bread, spices, fruit, and a lamb. There was a lot of meticulous preparation that went into the observance of the Passover. The borrowed room had to be searched for any trace of yeast. Any crumb of bread had to be removed. Yeast represented the evil influence of Egypt that the Jews had left behind during their Exodus from slavery. Yeast came to be known as the influence of sin.

Just as the disciples had to prepare for the Passover meal, so are we to prepare for the Lord's Supper. According to the Apostle Paul, who is the authority on church order and polity, Christians should never observe the Lord's Supper "*in an unworthy manner.*" (**1 Corinthians 11:27 NIV**). This means we are to come to the table with prepared hearts. The yeast of sin must be removed from our lives. And we do that through confession and repentance. That is why Paul said that "*a man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup,*" (**vs. 28 NIV**). We should never take this sacred time lightly or treat it flippantly. The Lord's Supper requires a necessary preparation. Along these lines, next we see:

**2. The Self Examination (20-25)**

*"When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, 'I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me.' They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, 'Surely not I, Lord?'" Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It*

would be better for him if he had not been born." Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you." **Matthew 26:20-25 (NIV)**

Jesus interrupted the meal with a surprising statement. He told His disciples, "...one of you will betray me." Now Jesus had told them before that He would be "*betrayed into the hands of men,*" and killed as a result (**Matthew 17:22-23 NIV**), but before now, He hadn't told them that it would be one of them. When they heard this news, they disciples were stunned and saddened. The Greek words indicate that they were deeply sorrowful, violently shaken by this news. It cut them to the heart so that each one of them began to question himself - their own genuineness and their commitment to Christ.

Jesus knew who would betray Him, but He wanted the other disciples to see just how frail their sinful natures were, and what they all were capable of. I believe He wanted this news to sink in so that it would drive them to become more devoted to Him and to have a deeper trust in Him and not themselves.

Here we see the difference between self-doubt and true conviction. Eleven disciples were there who doubted, or questioned, or dreaded the possibility of it being so. But one was there who knew he was not real.

I believe real conviction that comes from the Lord leaves no room for doubt or question. It is precise and the convicted one knows that the Lord knows all about the sin that is in his or her heart. You may deny it but deep down, you know it. You may try to brush it aside, but it keeps coming back. Evidently, this had been the case with Judas, but now that Jesus had exposed him, there was no denying it.

I believe in this scene we see the graciousness of our Lord. Jesus is offering Judas a chance to repent of his evil. Why else would He make these statements?

Jesus appeals to Judas first from the perspective of love and friendship. The Passover meal was to be observed by families. This band of disciples had become a family with their Lord as the head. Each one had dipped his hand in the bowl including Judas as they observed this family feast. The Psalmist described this awful betrayal in **Psalms 41:9 (NIV)** "*Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.*" That is why Jesus identified the betrayer as one who shared bread with Him. He was appealing to Judas out of love and friendship. He was giving him another chance to repent.

Then He appealed to Judas by warning of the consequences of his actions. He said "*But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.*" (vs. 24). He tells him that if he goes through with this, he would be demonstrating his lack of having a true relationship with him. And the consequences would be so bad, it would have been better if he had never existed than to face such a fate.

Finally there is direct identification of Judas by Christ as Judas asks in pretense like the other disciples "*Surely not I, Rabbi?*" Jesus said, "*Yes, it is you.*" Here, we see Judas' problem. Rather than call Him Lord as the other disciples, he calls him Rabbi, or teacher. He didn't see Him as his Lord.

By His statement, Jesus caused each disciple to examine the nature of their commitment to Him. And in the remainder of the conversation, He showed his willingness to allow even the worst of sinners the space to repent. At this point, Judas left the table and went out to do his evil deed.

So, during this time of self-examination, ask yourself today, "*Where do I stand with the Lord? Do I really have a relationship with Him, or am I just pretending? Am I a believer or a betrayer?*" Next, we see:

### **3. A Fitting Representation (26-28)**

**Matthew 26:26-28 (NIV)** "*While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."*

Jesus again interrupts the Passover meal. This time, He's going to transform it into the Lord's Supper. He takes the bread and tells His disciples that the bread now represents His body. The bread is a symbol of sustenance. Jesus says my body, my life that I have lived, and that I will give is being offered so that you might live.

He takes the cup and says it now represents "*my blood which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*" (vs. 28) Forgiveness means release. The shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross was so that His disciples might experience forgiveness and release from the penalty of sin. His bleeding and dying purchased our forgiveness.

Jesus was offering all of them His bread of life and His cup of forgiveness. All they had to do was receive it. As they symbolically received the bread, which represented the body of Christ, and received the cup, which represented the blood, they were receiving His life and His forgiveness.

This represents the wonderful truth that we may have life and forgiveness and release from the power of sin simply by trusting in what Jesus did on the cross in shedding His blood and giving His life and receiving Christ as our Savior and Lord. That is our faith believing that what Christ did was on our behalf. This is the New Covenant that we remember and celebrate today. This is the strength that we must continue to feed upon, Christ's life and His blood. Finally there was:

#### **4. A Joyful Anticipation (29-30)**

*"I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom. When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives."* **Matthew 26:29-30 (NIV)**

What was Jesus saying here? He was saying that He would observe this meal with His disciples again in the Father's Kingdom. He was saying that their fellowship would continue. Of course, He was referring to His resurrection, after which their fellowship would be restored. They would all essentially deny Him in one way or another, but because He would live again, He would forgive them.

In our own ways, we all too have denied Christ. I believe He's telling us that we too can be forgiven. We too can be restored even if we sin after we become believers. Because Jesus was resurrected so shall we be feasting with Jesus at the Marriage supper of the Lamb. The angel of the Lord told John to write this down because *"These are the true words of God."* God said, *"Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb."* **Revelation 19:9 (NIV)**. We observe the Supper this morning in anticipation of that day in which Christ returns for His bride to fellowship with her forever!

**Conclusion:** There is a church in Milan, Italy that was bombed during WWII. All of the walls of the church fell down except one - the wall upon which was painted Da Vinci's *"Last Supper"* scene. I believe that is symbolic of this fellowship meal will survive the change of this world to be celebrated again with Jesus at His return. Will you be in that number?

Before we prepare to receive from the Lord's Table this morning, I want to give you the opportunity to come to Jesus and give your life to Him. This supper won't mean a thing to you unless you are a believer in Christ. Before you can partake of this supper, you must come to Him as a sinner in need of a Savior. You must confess your sins, ask for His forgiveness, and believe in your heart that Christ died for you and that's enough to make you fit for heaven. Trust Him today, and you won't regret it.