

“24 HOURS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD”

“Part 1 - the Last Supper”

Mark 14:12-15, 22-25

March 1, 2009

It was time to celebrate the Passover. Passover is the oldest festival celebrated in Israel. It must be, because the festival of Passover was Israel's Independence Day. It didn't come easily. The children of Jacob had lived in Egypt for 400 years. They had become the slaves of the most powerful nation on the face of the earth. After 400 years the world might have forgotten them, but the Lord, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had not. For centuries the Lord had planned to liberate His chosen people. Abraham had been told that his descendants would be in Egypt for 400 years, but that they would come out with great possessions. Moses was called to bring the people out of Egypt, but the Lord knew that it wouldn't be easy. The Lord said, *"But I know that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless a mighty hand compels him. So I will stretch out my hand and strike the Egyptians with all the wonders that I will perform among them. After that, he will let you go."* (Exodus 3:19-20) Now came the time for that prophecy to be fulfilled.

On that fateful night, the Angel of Death was sent throughout the land with instructions to kill every first born male. The Israelites were told that they would be exempt from this plague of death if they gathered in their homes, sacrificed a perfect lamb, and spread the blood over the top and sides of the doorframes. When the angel sees the blood of the lamb, he will pass over that home. But without the blood of the lamb, that home will know death. This final plague would be the final straw, and Pharaoh would let God's people go. So whenever the children of Israel celebrated the Passover, there two very different aspects - first death and then liberation.

When Jesus and his disciples came together for this Passover, they came from very different directions. The disciples were all ready for the celebration. They knew that they were living in historic times. They were changing the religious landscape, and maybe even the political landscape. They were changing the world. Well, actually Jesus was changing the world, but they were right there beside him. They were personally, intentionally chosen by Jesus. And no one seemed to be able to stop them. The religious leaders tried to shut him up and shut him down, but they couldn't. The disciples believed that they were undefeated and undefeatable.

The disciples were in a mood to celebrate, but Jesus looked at this Passover very differently. He knew that this would be the last festival he could experience as a human. He saw his own death coming in the next 24 hours. A death that would change the world. And so for him, this was a most solemn occasion, not a time for celebration. And he had the task of preparing the disciples to be ready for all that was to come; an experience that was far beyond any of their expectations. At supper he tried to tell them. He said, *"In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."* (John 16:16) He was telling them that he would no longer be with them as he had been for the last 3 years. But they could not hear. Nor did they want to hear that Jesus was about to die a most gruesome death.

Jesus was not looking forward to the next 24 hours, but he knew what was to come because he knew the prophecy. It had been there for all the world to see, but we often turn away from that sort of unpleasantness. But Jesus could not. It was all about him. Isaiah wrote about him when he said, *"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."* (Isaiah 53:4-5)

The disciples did not know the scriptures like Jesus did, but they did know their personal experience. And their experience told them that they were on a roll. They remembered the time in Nazareth when a mob wanted to throw Jesus over the cliff, but Jesus just walked through them all, without even a scratch. (Luke 4:24-30) They remembered when they came into Jerusalem in the midst of cheering crowds, how the temple leaders were so angry, but they could do nothing. They saw those same leaders design trap after trap, but Jesus handled it all so easily.

Jesus might talk about pain and suffering now and then. Not long ago he asked who they thought he really was, and Peter declared that Jesus is the Christ. Then Jesus taught them this same doom and gloom. In Mark it is written that *"He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."* (Mark 8:31-32) The disciples would not believe it then, and they would not believe it now. How could Jesus get through to them? How could Jesus make them understand?

On the cross Jesus began to recite the 22nd Psalm. Certainly it came to mind on this night. Particularly the 14th verse where it says, *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me.”* Remembering that prophecy and looking at the Passover table before him, Jesus knew what he needed to do. He told them that we connect ourselves to the experience of the past when we sit at the Passover table. When we eat the bread of the Passover, when we drink the wine, it fills us and becomes a part of us. And in the process, we become one with those who were there that very first night. Their experience becomes our experience because we are one through the bread and the wine.

Tonight we experience a new Passover. We enter into a new covenant. Like the bread, my body is going to be torn apart for you and because of you. Take the bread and eat that I might be a part of you. Like the wine, my blood is going to be spilled. Drink it and remember this night. Remember me. For my life is about to be poured out for you and for many. Invite me into your heart. Invite me into your life. Let me fill your life. Let me be a part of you. *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”* (John 15:4-5) Jesus said to his disciples, let us be one.

When the supper was over, the disciples had no greater understanding than when they first came. Even though they were there, part of that first Lord’s Supper, they could not comprehend what it was all about; they could not understand what Jesus was talking about. Their mind set was that this was all fun and games, and everything would be as it always had been. Somehow they forgot that there can be no celebration, there can be no liberation without the death and sacrifice of the Lamb. And so they could not conceive of the events, of the changes that would take place over the next 24 hours. They were not ready to invite the torn, spilled, poured out life of Jesus into their life. Are you ready?

On the cross, Jesus said to a thief, *“...I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”* (Luke 23:43) That offer, that invitation is given to you today. Are you ready to be one with Christ? Will you open yourself that Jesus might pour His life into you? Not only for Him to come into some part of you, but to come into all of you. That He might be with you not just on Sunday morning but every minute of every day throughout the week. Not only allow Him to come into your life, but into your heart and your mind; to come into your arms and legs, your ears and eyes and mouth, that

Christ might have complete control. Will you allow Him to change you from who you have been to who He wants you to be; affecting the way you live and act; the way you walk and talk; transforming the way you reach out to others; transforming the way you treat your children, your grandchildren and your spouse; your boss, your teachers, and your co-workers, your neighbor and even how you treat yourself? Are you ready to sit at the table with the Lord Jesus, and allow Him to make a difference in you, that we might become more like Him? Are you ready to allow Jesus to pour His life into you? Are you ready to let Jesus come and rescue even you? Are you ready to cover the doorposts of your life with the blood of the perfect lamb who was sacrificed that we might live? Are you ready to surround your life with the presence of our Lord? Let us come before the Lord in prayer.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

O Lord, all you have taught us we have forgotten or ignored. You have called us to sacrifice and service, but we have chosen to go our own direction. And now we find that we can accomplish nothing of significance apart from You. You are the Vine that nourishes and strengthens us. You are the only Vine to offer us life and grace. We need to connect with You again. Forgive our narrow vision and our short sightedness. Help us to lift up our eyes and our hearts that we might see and understand why You have poured out Your life for us. May we be committed to pour out our life for You and into You, that we might be connected to You; that we might have true life. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON

God has called us to righteousness and delivers us from our shame. We see the amazing love of Christ at the table and on the cross. We can find in Jesus our hope and our healing, liberating us from sin and death. Go forth to live in the life He brings.