

Journey to the Cross “Final Hours”

Today is Thursday of Passion Week and is also called “Maundy Thursday.” Maundy Thursday commemorates the Last Supper when Jesus shared the Passover meal with His disciples.

The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) suggest that the Last Supper was a Passover meal. However, John does not record the Last Supper but does record Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Holy Thursday traditions are derived from all four gospels.

The word “Maundy” comes from the Latin word for commandment meaning mandatum. Jesus commanded them to “Love one another as I have loved you” (John 13:34). This would literally be the last supper with His apostles prior to His betrayal, trial and crucifixion. This was in no way going to be an ordinary Passover supper.

Every action, every word spoken would carry significant kingdom purposes. It was a very sensitive time Jesus spent with His disciples in the Upper Room. He knew exactly what would soon befall Him physically and mentally. He knew every stroke, every thorn in the crown He would wear, every labored breath He would try to take while hanging on the Cross. Even in the midst of this, Jesus humbled Himself to wash the feet of His apostles prior to the traditional Passover meal, or Seder.

Jesus poured water into a bowl and then knelt in front of each of the twelve disciples, washing their feet and drying them with His towel. Jesus told them “Now that I, your Lord, have washed your feet, you should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example, that you may learn that all of you are equal, that the master is not greater than his servant, and kindly toward each other.”

After this, Jesus and His disciples were reclining at their Passover meal. Jesus blessed the matzoh bread and broke it, saying to them “this is My body... this is My blood.” His words seemed to connect to something spoken on the shores in Galilee - “I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry, and he who believes in Me will never be thirsty... whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:35, 54).

God's bread is not food for the body but everlasting eternal life for the world. The emphasis shifts from bread on earth to heaven's bread coming from the only eternal God. Jesus was showing them that the needs of man extend far beyond the natural.

This was Jesus final instruction to His Disciples that the Bread was His body and the wine was His blood of the new covenant, shed for the remission of our sins. Jesus says, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (Luke 22:19). In the intimacy of the Upper Room it is the heartbeat of Jesus that overflows with love for mankind as He encourages His disciples to maintain love and faith.

After supper, He went outside the Old City of Jerusalem, crossed the Kidron Valley, and came to the Garden of Gethsemane, a place whose name means “the place where olives are pressed” and olives still grow there to this day.

Much symbolism can be learned here. At an olive press, olives were put into coarse sacks and then stacked one on top of another. A beam was lowered onto the stack, and the weight increased until the beam produced enough pressure to push oil from the olives. The more pressure, the more oil.

This is not a coincidence that Jesus went to pray here before His ordeal on the Cross of Calvary. Jesus demonstrated His humanity as He faced the painful death ahead of Him. He knew what was about to happen. He was troubled and overwhelmed with sorrow. Three times Jesus prayed that if it were possible, the cup of suffering would be taken from Him, but that above all, the will of the Father would be done.

Here is the deep distress that caused Christ to pray, "If it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me" and "If it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

Jesus was under severe pressure in the Garden of Gethsemane, struggling in prayer, surrendering His burden to the Father's will. Jesus' actions in the garden were not only about the surrendering of His will, but also the surrendering of His flesh. Jesus exhibited a willingness to allow God to continue with the plan that He die. Redemption was accomplished by the obedient human will's deliberate submission to the divine will.

The Lord's passion for us is seamless and unending. Jesus became obedient unto death (Phil. 2:8) so that the eternal purposes of redemption would be fulfilled as the Scripture had declared it!

The final hours of Jesus

Thursday <i>After sundown</i>	Last supper Prayer in garden Betrayal and arrest
Thursday-Friday <i>Nighttime</i>	Custody Hearing before Annas Trial before Caiaphas Peter's denial

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