

May 2, 2007

Supper. While Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples He again predicted one eating with Him would betray Him.. The disciples had no clue it was Judas. Some rather serious discussions have revolved around the question of whether Judas partook of the bread and cup Jesus blessed when He told them to remember Him. Clearly he was there when Jesus offered him the sop, a choice morsel customarily reserved for a favorite at a meal. Judas was Jesus' special friend even though the Lord knew he would betray Him. The sop was another (last?) appeal to that man's soul before he went past the point of no return. Jesus' action should have broken Judas' heart but it only hardened it further. Jesus again appealed to Judas when He told him to do what he was doing quickly. And finally in the garden when Judas, leading the mob, covered Jesus with kisses. Jesus asked, betrayest the Son of Man with a kiss? Jesus confronted those seeking to arrest Him repelling them backward to the ground at His feet with a word. I AM. Jehovah, the I AM, had introduced Himself to Moses from the burning bush centuries before. Even that didn't deter them. If Judas had indeed partaken of the emblematic bread and wine the disciples were the only ones fooled. Some people mistakenly point to Judas partaking of the emblems that night as justification for an "open table." They ignore the Lord's clear instructions to guard His Table, Matthew 18:17, 1Corinthians 5:13, 1Timothy 1:20, 2Timothy 2:19. The Lord knew what Judas was even if the disciples didn't yet. He warned the disciples there was a traitor in the midst. He instituted the most holy exercise believers can practice today without exposing the unsaved one in their midst. Judas' heart was not exposed to the senses of the disciples so they were only responsible to do some self examination. "Is it me?" As soon as Judas' true colors were evident the disciples had nothing more to do with him, condemning his acts and character in their preaching and writings. So today each individual is personally responsible to judge himself before the Lord before he partakes of the Lord's Supper. But the assembly is responsible to guard the Lord's Table from known unrighteousness. This means godly care and caution in receiving and loving watchful care over one another in the local assembly. This principle is embodied in the Apostle Paul's clear call to holiness, 2Timothy 2:19. We are responsible for what we become aware of and dependant upon the Lord in our midst to reveal to us what we don't know. And expose He will if we truly wish to honor Him in our midst.

Note that the Lord saw fit to have His institution of this remembrance supper documented in three gospels and then again through a separate supernatural revelation to the Apostle Paul some years later. Not only do we have

more than two witnesses to the actual event but two separate revelations of it. Why is something so near to the heart of the One who loved us and gave Himself for us so neglected today? Why does so much of what is done with the emblems in services today bear so little resemblance to what He instituted? Why have His instructions been modified? Why has His stated intent been so distorted? Why has superstitious mysticism taken over? Why has the saving value of His blood, **shed once for all**, been compromised by distorting His simple remembrance request into a ritual somehow ensuring salvation? Satan has used man's fleshly intellectual reasoning or superstitious imagination to becloud the Lord's original desire for His own disciples regularly, unitedly calling Him to mind. These emblems were clearly just symbols for His physical body and blood were there on the table that night. The bread and wine obviously were not His actual body and blood. But what a touching witness to them and to us of the suffering, bloodshed and death that awaited Him before the next evening.

The blood of the New Testament which is shed for many. From the earliest days of the Bible serious covenants between men were sealed by the shedding of the blood of a sacrifice. An example of this is documented for a covenant God made with Abraham, Genesis 15. The New Covenant (New Testament) Jesus introduced replaced God's covenant with Abraham. Actually it was the basis for all of God's previous promises to man. Jesus was speaking to His Jewish disciples there with Him in the upper room. This New Covenant was specifically for the Jews and the ultimate blessing of God's chosen people though the sacrifice of His Son. Through the blessing of Israel all the nations of the earth would be (will be) blessed. But after that sacrifice was completed and accepted by God the flood gates of God's infinite Love were broken open. The eternal and worldwide consequences of Jesus' infinite sacrifice were revealed to the Apostles and later to Paul. The Gentile nations will benefit from future blessings on the earth under the Messiah when He returns to reign. But far more than that. In the meantime, (now) both Jews and Gentiles would be saved personally by grace thorough faith in Jesus' death on the cross for sinners. And the two would be made one. One body. No national or class distinctions but one collectively under the ascended Jesus the Head. The fact that the Lord specifies "many" does not make anyone ineligible for salvation. It states a solemn fact that not all will avail themselves of the free gift offered them at infinite cost to God. That is not a new thought. It is as old as the story of Cain and Abel. And Jesus clearly stated it while preaching:

Matthew 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the

gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

(Over)

The Garden. Jesus' words and actions that evening are more fully recorded in the gospel of John. They then went out in the dark to the garden at the foot of the Mount of Olives. They, including Judas, had often gone there with Him. He warns Peter, to his vehement protests, he will deny Him. He tells them, quoting a prophecy (Zechariah 13:7), they will be scattered as sheep scatter when the shepherd is struck down. He instructs them to meet Him in Galilee when He is risen. Then He moves apart from the three and passes through an awful agony while praying to God, His Father. He had just prayed confidently, intimately optimistically to His Father after supper. Now, what was this? He must have been exhausted, as were His disciples. They couldn't stay awake, even though He repeatedly asked them to watch with Him. **They** had no idea what awaited Him and them. **He did!** Did He really have a choice.? Was He voluntarily going to the cross? "He became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Philippians 2:8. "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt." Was the cross before Him something to shrink from? Yes! Injustice, physical pain, mocking and railing and death all awaited Him. But what He shank from was the cup that would be given Him by God. A cup no other could take. No one but the sinless One, for it was the cup of the wrath of God to be poured upon His Son bearing our sins. God's total abandonment of the Sin Bearer. That He shank from. He had been God's totally dependant Servant. He had walked in God's fellowship all the way. Now He was to become the Sin Offering. Being the Son of Man didn't mean He would not feel it. Being assured of resurrection did not take away the horror of being made sin, of bearing sins, of three hours cut off from His God. That was the Horror that lay before Him. The anticipation made Him sweat as it were great drops of blood though we don't read of that in Mark. He was not the Son of God if He had not shrunk from what lay before Him. It was real. More real to Him than it could be to any of us.

After the third prayer He is ready. Paul prayed three times for removal of a thorn in the flesh, 2Corinthians 12:7-10. These two examples are instructive as to our faith and receptiveness to God's answers to our prayers. Nevertheless not my will but thine be done. May we have the grace and faith to pray this way even when we feel pressed. Always give the Father His way out. His best answer may sometimes be "no," or "not now." Praying this way is not a cop-out, as though our faith is too weak to believe God is able and desirous of blessing us. It simply and humbly gives our loving Father space to bless us in ways beyond our thoughts. His way, without taking

away our liberty to ask what we will in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Not my will but thine!

Betrayal. Mark does not give as much detail about the betrayal in the garden as other gospels, but he includes what is probably his own escape from the clutches of the Jewish rabble that took Jesus. Peter followed afar off so observed what happened before the High Priest

The High Priest. There turned out to be several phases of Jesus' trial before men. Apparently none of this was planned in advance and certainly not scheduled for Passover. God's schedule prevailed. Caught unprepared in planning yet fully prepared in heart to dispose of this thorn in their side they proceeded vigorously to do just that now that they had Him. The High Priest hastily convened the Council (Sanhedrin). The chief priests and the elders and the scribes were there. A tumultuous "trial" continued though the night. The defendant, a quiet cooperative Man was roughed up, cursed, vilified before He was even "convicted." He was falsely charged with testimony that could not meet even this totally prejudiced group's sense of propriety. Attempts to make the testimony of these recruited "witnesses" agree were fruitless. Jesus wouldn't even give them the satisfaction of denying their false claims. He was under no obligation to because they weren't properly substantiated by two or more witnesses. What a spectacle! Religious rulers of the Nation priding itself as God's chosen nation rigidly adhering to their proper legal procedures while attempting to bring about the greatest injustice of all time. This against the Man who is their Creator, Christ and Judge. Against this backdrop of a tiring, frustrating, all-night session the High Priest finally resorted to the obvious. He asked their captive who He was. Did He claim to be "the Christ the Son of the Blessed?" Of course Jesus answered with the truth and added a faithful gracious warning. They would see Him, **"I am:** and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." Oops! This was more than they had looked for. He says they would see Him, their Christ come from heaven to judge. More than enough to convict Him, if He were lying. In triumph the High Priest ripped His sacred garments defiling them. But he had already defiled his Office by his unjust, illegal conduct. His successors, still future to us, will see this Man he unjustly condemned, coming in glory to judge. And he personally will stand before the Great White Throne, before this Jesus his final judge. HOW SAD. They promptly condemn Him to death, then they unleash the pent up hatred of their very human sinful hearts. He lets them spit upon Him, mock Him, hit Him. Display what is in our hearts as well, ready to erupt. But for the new nature granted us who believe. But for the Holy Spirit who moves and empowers our new nature to worship our Lord and Saviour and to reckon ourselves dead to sin, Romans 6; crucified with Christ, Galatians 2:20. We are His own, not our own. We are bought with a price, 1Corinthians 6:19-20.

By Ron Canner, May 2, 2007.