

Luke 22:1-38: Biblical Reading and Reflections

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[0 : 0 0] Luke chapter 22 verses 1 to 38. Then came the day of unleavened bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.

So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it. They said to him, Where will you have us prepare it? He said to them, Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you.

Follow him into the house that he enters, and tell the master of the house, The teacher says to you, Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will show you a large upper room furnished. Prepare it there.

And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

For I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves.

[1 : 3 1] For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes. And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and gave it to them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.

For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined. But woe to that man by whom he is betrayed. And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

A dispute also arose among them, as to which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. And he said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors.

But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table, or one who serves?

[2 : 3 2] Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves. You are those who have stayed with me in my trials. And I assign to you, as my father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you, that he might sift you like wheat. But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned again, strengthen your brothers.

Peter said to him, Lord, I am ready to go with you both to prison and to death. Jesus said, I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me.

And he said to them, When I sent you out with no money bag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything? They said, Nothing. And he said to them, But now let the one who has a money bag take it, and likewise a knapsack, and let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one.

For I tell you that this scripture must be fulfilled in me. And he was numbered with the transgressors. For what is written about me has its fulfillment. And they said, Look, Lord, here are two swords.

[3 : 43] And he said to them, It is enough. Luke chapter 22 opens by telling us that the Feast of Unleavened Bread is coming. The timing here is important. The Passover was the 14th of the month, and followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread.

This recalls the deliverance from Egypt, the Passover lamb, the death of the firstborn, and all these other events that were so important within Israel's history. It's important to consider that this was one of the pilgrim feasts.

In a few days' time, Jerusalem would be packed with pilgrims coming up for it, perhaps even a couple of hundred thousand. All of Israel's attention would be drawn towards Jerusalem for this week.

And Jesus' death and resurrection then were occurring at a key time, when the attention of Israel and the gathering of Israel converged upon its capital. The chief priests and the scribes were seeking to arrest Jesus and kill him.

Jesus is clearly, by this point, a genuine threat to their power and their influence. He has a lot of support in the crowd, and he outwits them at every turn. They don't want to capture and kill him during the feast, precisely because it would draw so much attention.

[4 : 48] At this point, Satan enters into Judas. I believe this is the only time we read of Satan himself entering into anyone. In Acts 5, we're told that Satan has filled Ananias to sin against the Holy Spirit, but Judas seems to give a greater example of satanic possession.

Satan's reappearance after a long absence is significant. Luke 4, verse 13 tells us that Satan departed until an opportune time. And Judas, or Judah, is one of the twelve who sells Jesus into the hands of his enemies.

Judah was one of the twelve sons of Jacob, who sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites, also motivated by a desire for money. The role of money in the transaction between Judas and the high priest should also remind us of all that Jesus has taught about money.

The chief priests need to get Jesus away from the multitude. The multitudes have a kind of herd-like quality. They act as a unit, and they protect Jesus from assault. If we connect the description of the man with the water pitcher with the previous description of the triumphal entry and the finding of the cult, I think we can see that there is a connection.

They are both described in a similar way. Disciples are sent on a mission, an errand to a particular location. They are told what will befall them, who they will meet, and what the reaction will be. In 1 Samuel chapter 9, two men, Saul and his servant, go looking for donkeys.

[6 : 08] They then encounter women, presumably with pitchers, going out to draw water. The women direct them to the site of a meal with the prophet in the high place. When Saul eats with the prophet Samuel in the high place, the kingdom is entrusted into his hands.

Maybe there is something similar taking place here. Indeed, in chapter 10 of 1 Samuel, there are three signs given to Saul. There is a sign where he meets men that tell him that the donkeys have been found.

There is a sign where he meets men with goats, a skin of wine, and bread. And then there is a sign when he meets the prophets, and the spirit comes upon him and he becomes a new man. Arguably, all three of these signs are found at the end of the book of Luke.

The first one, the finding of the donkeys, is fulfilled in the errand before the triumphal entry. The second one, meeting the men with the goats, the skin of wine, and the bread, is fulfilled in the man bearing the water pitcher.

He leads them to the site where they will celebrate the Passover, which will be celebrated with a lamb or a goat, and where Christ gives them bread and wine. And then finally, they are told to wait in Jerusalem until they are clothed with power from on high.

[7 : 16] That will be the spirit coming upon them, so that they become new men, so that like Saul, they will be equipped to rule. Why is it a man carrying a water pitcher? First of all, this would stand out. It's not typical. A man would be carrying a water pitcher.

It's interesting that this is not the first occasion in scripture where there is a sign given involving someone carrying a water pitcher. This is the sign given to the servant of Abraham when he meets Rebekah.

The relationship between the king and his people was often described as a sort of marriage, and perhaps meeting a man with a water pitcher, presumably going out to the well, plays upon these themes.

Remember again that the story of Saul in 1 Samuel chapter 9 began with him meeting women bearing water pitchers. However, whereas Saul was like the bridegroom meeting the bride for the first time, the disciples are like the bride meeting the bridegroom.

The man bearing the water pitcher will lead them to the place where they will celebrate the meal with the one who is the true bridegroom of Israel. Perhaps we should think here that Jesus is the new royal husband of Israel, and the Last Supper has subtle wedding feast overtones.

[8 : 22] There's a rising tension in this chapter. The feast drew near, in verse 1. Then came the day, in verse 7. And when the hour had come, in verse 14. It's a rising tension.

And the Passover meal with the disciples is connected with the exodus. In chapter 9, verse 31, Jesus had already spoken of his act in Jerusalem as his exodus.

Jesus is about to accomplish an exodus, and he is about to establish a covenant, as a covenant was established at Sinai. Jesus and his disciples are eating a Passover meal, or at least a Passover-associated meal.

It is essential that we notice that Jesus isn't just taking up physical food and drink, just regular bread and wine. He's taking elements that already bear great meaning. The meal is freighted with meaning and symbolism already, and Jesus takes up that pre-existing symbolism and relates it to himself.

In this case, that symbolism is that of the unleavened bread associated with the Messiah. It's a broken and distributed and participated body. It's a self-communication in symbol.

[9 : 25] It's interesting that the description of the meal here has two shared cups. We see one in verses 17 to 18, and then another in verse 20. There would have been four cups for the Passover meal.

And Jesus expresses an abstinence from eating the Passover and drinking the wine until they are fulfilled. The wine anticipates the kingdom, and maybe he's making some sort of Nazarite vow of abstinence here.

The description of the wine as the new covenant in Christ's blood recalls the story of Exodus chapter 24, where the Sinai covenant had its blood of the covenant. In verse 8 of that chapter, Whereas Moses threw the blood upon the people, Jesus communicates the blood through a different symbol, which is the drinking of wine.

He instructs them to do this in remembrance of him, or we could say, as his memorial. The purpose of a memorial like this is not primarily to remind us, but to present to God, to bring to his mind, as it were, the sacrifice of Jesus, to declare his death.

[10:43] So Christ is instituting an ongoing practice here. Just as Old Testament deliverances were always accompanied with memorials to recall them in feast, in celebration, in signs, or in some other way, so Jesus associates his death with an explanatory symbol.

The twelve will sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel, in verse 30. This might make us think back to the judgment upon the wicked vinedressers. They will be replaced by the faithful servants, the twelve apostles.

And the disciples question who it is. But it's not long before they start talking about which of them will be greatest. The kingdom that Jesus is giving to his disciples, however, operates quite differently from those of the Gentiles.

Jesus' reference to being among his disciples as one who serves, as distinct from being one who sits at the table, might imply his washing of their feet in this scene. Incidentally, Jesus serving his disciples by washing their feet, not explicitly mentioned here, but implied, casts light back upon the washing of his own feet, in chapter 7, verse 36 and following.

Yet Jesus prays for him, and he will be restored. There is a contrast between Judas and Peter here. Judas utterly apostatizes, but Peter is going to be restored.

[13:02] They will face a hostile reception. They can no longer rely upon hospitality being extended to them, and they won't have assurance of their safety. This need not be read as a statement that they had to buy actual swords at this point.

What are some of the details of Luke's account of the Last Supper that stand out from the other Gospels?