

# THE FINAL PASSOVER: THE FAITHFUL SERVANT

SERIES: JESUS, SAVIOR OF THE LOST

by Ron Ritchie

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Whenever I hear the term "Passover," I am reminded of an evening several years ago when Kathy and Ed Woodhall and Anne Marie and I were invited to the home of a Jewish friend to celebrate the Passover meal. We were seated with his immediate family, which included his wife, a young son, and his mother. During the meal this man began to tell the Passover story, but it soon became apparent that he really did not know it well. Finally in a moment of silence I asked whether I could share how Christians look at the Passover and its spiritual symbolism. The family all agreed to this, so for the next half-hour, with the help of my wife and the Woodhalls, I shared the wonderful news of the Passover.

We shared that not only was the Passover the story of how God redeemed Israel out of bondage in Egypt, but the Passover lamb foreshadowed God's final Passover Lamb and suffering Servant God whom he would one day send to this world, as prophesied in Isaiah 53, to be sacrificed so that his blood could be used to cover the sin of humanity. All who placed their faith in him would be saved not from the bondage of Egypt but from the bondage of sin and guilt, and delivered into the kingdom of God--a kingdom of life, joy, peace, and love. I told this Jewish family that one of their own prophets, John the Baptist, said of Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29), proclaiming him the Messiah. There was another silence. Then our friend's mother looked at me and said loudly, "So why aren't you our Rabbi?" She was saying that although this Jewish family had much tradition, they had little truth.

As we open God's word to Luke 22:1-38, we want to grow in the knowledge of the truth that is revealed in God's final Passover Lamb and faithful Servant. Then we want to ask God to apply that truth to our daily lives so we reflect our appreciation for our Lord's death, and so we have his servant's heart among the people we associate with in this world.

## Satan's plot to kill the "Lamb of God"

Now, back in Luke 21:37-38 we are given a summary of our Lord's last three days in the temple area, from Palm Sunday through Wednesday:

**Now during the day He was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet. And all the people would get up early in the morning to come to Him in the temple to listen to Him.**

In Matthew 26:2, Jesus had said to his disciples on the last Tuesday of his life on earth: "You know that after two days the Passover is coming, and the Son of Man is to be delivered up for crucifixion." The great Roman peace had enabled the Jews throughout the whole empire to come to Jerusalem each year to celebrate the Passover, followed by the seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread. Jesus and his disciples joined 2,700,000 other Jews and began to make preparation for the celebration of the Passover on Thursday.

Let's consider for a moment the history of the Passover as recorded in Exodus 5-12. The Passover had its beginning around 1450 B.C. when God asked Moses to deliver his covenant people from four hundred years of Egyptian bondage. Moses came face-to-face with a hard-hearted Pharaoh whose heart became even harder as God delivered one after another of nine plagues on Egypt.

Finally the Lord told Moses that the tenth plague would move Pharaoh's heart to set the Jews free. In Exodus 11:4 the Lord said, "About midnight I am going out into the midst of Egypt, and all the first-born in the land of Egypt

shall die..." In Exodus 12, the Lord instructed the people of Israel to take a one-year-old unblemished lamb for each household, and after they killed it, they were to take some of its blood and put it on the two door posts and on the lintel of the house. Then without breaking any bones (foreshadowing how none of Jesus' bones would be broken when he was slain; see John 19:31-33), they were to eat all of the flesh that same night with unleavened bread, which was a symbol of life without sin.

An innocent, unblemished lamb died so that the first-born child of each Jewish family could live. Yet the slaying of the Passover lamb was only symbolic and preparatory as the nation awaited the final "Lamb of God who [would take] away the sin of the world" (John 1:29; see also Isaiah 53:7).

Now let's look at Luke 22:1-6, where we immediately see evil lurking behind the curtains of history. Satan had a plot to kill the Lamb of God:

**Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called the Passover, was approaching. And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might put Him to death; for they were afraid of the people.**

**And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve. And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. And he consented, and began seeking a good opportunity to betray Him to them apart from the multitude.**

This is the third time in the account of just two days' events that Luke tells us the religious community was determined to kill Jesus. Among many charges they wanted to bring against him was blaspheming God in claiming to be the Messiah (see Luke 19:47; 20:19; 22:2).

But it was not just the religious leaders who wanted to kill Jesus, for as we can see, behind this murderous attitude in them was the one Jesus spoke of to the Pharisees in John 8:44: "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies." As Satan tempted Eve to doubt God, Cain to murder his brother, Job to lose his faith, Israel to go into idolatry, King Saul to seek after mediums, and Jesus to worship him, so he now moved in on our Lord's disciples and eventually was able to pick off Judas.

How was Satan able to do that? Well, Judas was ready for him. Our hearts were created to be ruled, and if they are not ruled by God they will be ruled by something or someone else. The gospels show us that this man's heart was ruled first by the world. He had hungered for a political kingdom and had followed Jesus until those dreams were shattered on Palm Sunday. Sometime in the following three days he had gone to the chief priests and betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (see Matthew 26:14-16). Then he was ruled by the flesh. He was selfish, coveted money, and eventually became a thief (John 12:6). And finally he became ruled by the devil.

Jesus had understood the heart and motives of Judas when he told his disciples on an earlier occasion: "Did I myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" (John 6:70.) Judas, having freely allowed the world and the flesh to rule his life, thus placed himself in a position where he was willing to deny Jesus as his Messiah, and so his heart was open to be ruled by another: "...and Satan entered into Judas."

If we allow ourselves to be ruled by the world and the flesh, then we are open to being ruled by the devil as well. All of us must come to a place where we decide who will rule our hearts: the world, the flesh, the devil, all three--or the Lord Jesus Christ. Any of the former will result only in death. But allowing Jesus Christ to rule our hearts will result in life.

So behind the curtains of history stood Satan using evil men from the Jewish religious community and Judas from the ranks of Jesus' own disciples to have God's Passover Lamb killed. But God was leading his beloved Lamb toward a death on a cross in order to counter Satan's plot, open the door of redemption to all who would

place their faith in him as their Messiah, and establish his kingdom on earth.

### **God's plan to sacrifice His Passover Lamb**

Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." And they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?" And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters. And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'" And he will show you a large, furnished, upper room; prepare it there." And they departed and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover. (Luke 22:7-13)

Just as God had an exact time for the slaying of the Passover Lamb in the wilderness, so he had an exact time for the slaying of his final Passover Lamb. In Matthew 26:18 Jesus said, "My time is at hand; I am to keep the Passover...." Peter would write to the Christians in Turkey some thirty years later that God's unblemished Lamb had planned to be sacrificed for the sin of the world before its foundation (see 1 Peter 1:18-20).

It is clear that Jesus had made some arrangements for the upper room several days earlier, just as he had with the donkey colt on Palm Sunday. He did this privately, knowing the human and spiritual forces out to destroy him. When the timing was perfect, the Lord sent Peter and John to the temple to get the Passover Lamb, where it was slain between 3:00 and 5:00 PM and its blood given to the priest to be placed on the great altar as an offering to God. Jesus had given them one clue to help them find the upper room as they carried the lamb between them on a pole through the city streets, among the hundreds of thousands of other tourists in the city doing the same thing. They were told to look for a man--not a woman--carrying a pitcher of water on his head, which would have been a very unusual sight. Then they were to follow him to the house with the upper room. They were to say, "The Teacher says, 'My time is at hand: I am to keep the Passover at your house with My disciples'" (Matthew 26:18). "And they...found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover" (Luke 22:13).

Once they arrived they would have built a fire and arranged to roast the lamb before twilight. They would have set the table, then along with every Jewish household in Jerusalem, they would have waited for sunset and the sound of the silver trumpets from the temple as a signal to begin the Passover.

Now verses 14-23 show us the willingness of the Lamb of God to be sacrificed:

**And when the hour had come He reclined at the 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 say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." And when He had taken some bread and 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 in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood. But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table. For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing.**

The Lord and his disciples entered the house on Thursday evening after sundown, went upstairs, and reclined on couches around the table. Outside the upper room were our Lord's enemies plotting to kill him. Inside the upper room were apostles who would within hours respectively betray, deny, and forsake him. He had told his disciples on many occasions that he would have to suffer for the sins of humanity, and yet with a heart of love he could look at his honored guest on his left, Judas, and these other eleven men and say, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer...." His mother Mary had related to him how Simeon the high priest had prophesied over him on the eighth day of his life, "Behold, this Child is appointed for the fall and rise of many in

Israel, and for a sign to be opposed..." (Luke 2:34). He had known from the prophet Isaiah that he would be "like a lamb that is led to slaughter" (53:7) and that he would become the suffering Servant who would justify many (53:11). He knew that unless his enemies as well as his disciples were placed under the blood of the slain Lamb, they would never be redeemed from their bondage to sin.

Jesus then went on to say, "...I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Our Lord was not just looking at the cross. He also knew that all who placed their faith in him as their Savior would not only experience the joy of having him set up his kingdom in their hearts, but would actually dine with him in his earthly kingdom one day.

Then, according to John 13:4-5, the Messiah became the servant of all who were present, including Judas. Our Lord "...rose from supper, and laid aside His garments, and taking a towel, He girded himself about. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet..." This was a hygienic and social necessity in those times, but Jesus used it as a symbol of daily cleansing from sin. Now, in the Middle East the traditional roles of master and servant are well-defined; for a master to serve his own servants was unheard of. Yet Jesus enacted this dramatic reversal in washing the feet of his servants as an example for all future disciples with servant's hearts to follow in washing one another's feet daily. That is, he wanted his disciples to love one another in the same way he loved them, to serve one another in gently and consistently, "forgiving each other just as God in Christ also has forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:32). Jesus also gave us a vivid picture of the reality: "...although He existed in the form of God, [He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:6-8.)

The final Passover meal became the first Lord's Supper. In a traditional Passover meal, once everyone was in place around the table on couches, the host would lift the first cup of wine, the Wine of Sanctification (*Kiddush*), setting this Passover meal apart from all other meals. He would offer a prayer of thanksgiving, and all would drink the wine. As another prayer was offered, each person would wash their hands. Then each would take some parsley and dip it in salt water. The parsley stood for the hyssop the Jews used to put the blood on the door posts, and the salt water symbolized the bitter tears of the Jews while they were in Egypt. Then the roasted lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs would be placed on the table. The host would take the unleavened bread and break it, handing some to each person to remind the family of God's daily provision.

The host would lift the second cup of wine, the Cup of Explaining or Proclaiming (*Haggadah*). Everyone would wash their hands again and then sing the praise Psalms 113-114, followed by another benediction. The host would offer a sop of lamb and unleavened bread dipped in bitter herbs to each person in turn. Then all would eat freely and once again wash their hands.

It was in this part of the supper that the betrayal of Judas fits best (according to John 13), rather than after the supper as recorded in Luke 22:21-23. Jesus said out of a heart of love and warning in the presence of Judas, "I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me'" (John 13:18; Psalm 41:9). Then Jesus said, "For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" The disciples wanted to know who it was, so Jesus said, "'That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.' So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas" (John 13:26). "And Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, 'Surely it is not I, Rabbi?' He said to him, 'You have said it yourself.'" (Matthew 26:25.) "Satan entered into him...Jesus therefore said to him, 'What you do, do quickly'...And so after receiving the morsel he went out immediately; and it was night" (John 13:27, 30). But Judas' sin of betrayal would only serve the plan of God, which would defeat the power of Satan over humanity.

At this point, in the Passover meal, Jesus changed the meaning of the bread. Earlier in his ministry he had told his disciples, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh" (John 6:51). And now "... [having]

taken some bread and 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." (Luke 22:19.) In this setting, our Lord brought new meaning to the unleavened bread. He said that the unleavened bread, which originally symbolized the absence of sin, was a symbol of his sinless life that was about to be broken on their behalf as spoken of in Isaiah 53:5: "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities...and by His scourging we are healed."

Next the host would lift the third cup of wine, the Cup of Redemption (*Padah*). (According to Exodus 6:6-7, God had said to Moses, "...I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from their bondage, I will also redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great judgments." God had done this by the blood of the Passover lamb, which the believers placed by faith on the door posts of their homes.) They would sing Psalm 115-118 and eat all the lamb.

With this cup of wine they were supposed to thank God for redeeming them from Egypt, but here the Lord also changed the meaning of the wine: "...in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.'" It was the shedding of his blood that would provide personal salvation for everyone who believed in him. And Jesus opened up the Scriptures by bringing in the new covenant. Every Jew knew that the new covenant was a promise of God to Israel as recorded in Jeremiah 31:31, 33-34: "'Behold, days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,' declares the LORD, 'I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the LORD, 'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'" Our Lord was telling his disciples that the promises of the new covenant that had been offered to Israel would indeed be fulfilled one day when his kingdom came to earth. But he was also telling them that even as Israel rejected him as their Messiah at that time, the promises of the new covenant were at that moment spiritually fulfilled for all Jews and Gentiles alike who accepted him as their Lord and Redeemer--the members of his new church. It was a covenant in which salvation was offered to all based on faith and not works. This new covenant, better in quality than the old covenant written on stone (see Hebrews 8), was not new in time but renewed.

However, without the shedding of the blood of Jesus on the cross for the sin of mankind, we could never experience the blessings of this new covenant. By the shedding of the Messiah's blood, he would provide personal redemption for those in the bondage of sin and darkness and deliver them into the kingdom of life and love, if they but placed their faith in him, the Lamb of God. Jesus had said earlier in his ministry, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life...He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me; and I in him" (John 6:53-56).

David Roper wrote in his book *The New Covenant in the Old Testament*:

*"The new covenant...was...a restatement of the basic eternal arrangement for maintaining a living, loving relationship between God and man...As we cast our lot with him and lay hold of his life, he will increasingly bestow on us his power for obedience and his forgiveness for weakness and failure."*

Finally, the host would lift the fourth cup. They would take this cup of wine as they sang Psalm 136, thanking God for his goodness to Israel in smiting the Egyptians in their first-born and redeeming Israel out of their midst. Now, in the context of Luke 22, Israel was once again in bondage, this time to Rome, and they were looking forward to the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom and the defeat of Rome. This fourth cup may be the one the Lord refused to drink until the restoration of the kingdom of God. "And [having taken] a cup [it may have been either the first or the fourth cup] and given thanks, he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes."

So now Jesus, the final Passover Lamb, was making preparation to lay down his life as a ransom for many. He was the Lamb spoken of in Isaiah 53:7:

**Like a lamb that is led to slaughter,  
And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers,  
So He did not open His mouth.**

Satan's plot to kill the Lamb of God would fail, while God's plan of salvation would succeed because the innocent Lamb was willing to be sacrificed on our behalf. But before the Lamb of God endured the cross, having become an example of a servant, he prepared his apostles for ministry. Look at Luke 22:24-30:

**And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. For who is greater, the one who reclines at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at the table? But I am among you as the one who serves. And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."**

He reminded his apostles of the call to servant leadership. The issue of who was greatest among them was a theme that seemed to crop up from time to time, whenever the disciples were talking about the future kingdom. But in Mark 9:35 our Lord said, "If anyone wants to be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all." In Luke 9:47-48, our Lord then placed a child in front of them and said, "Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for he who is least among you, this is the one who is great." And in Mark 10:35-45 James and John came to Jesus just a few weeks before the cross and asked him if they could sit at his right and his left when he set up his kingdom. Then Jesus told his disciples, "...even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Jesus warned the disciples that they were acting like the kings of the Gentiles, who, though called Benefactors, were cruel and demanding masters. He went on to point out that the key to true greatness is servanthood toward all, servant leadership as demonstrated in his lifestyle and then in his example of washing their feet. (Our new deacons are learning this valuable lesson, and it is a joy to watch their servant's hearts praying and seeking to serve so many of you in the name and power of our risen Lord.)

Jesus also gave his servants hope for the future. "And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials; and just as My Father has granted Me a kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." As our Lord looked beyond the cross and his death, burial, resurrection, Ascension, and return to earth immediately after the great tribulation, he saw himself setting up his long-promised kingdom on earth, from which he would rule the world and Israel in perfect righteousness and justice. And because his Father had granted him that kingdom, he was free to offer his faithful eleven disciples fellowship as well as authority over the restored nation of Israel (see also Matthew 19:28). So he wanted them to stop arguing about who was going to be the greatest, because it was foolishness; everyone would have their proper place at the proper time.

In verses 31-34, Jesus warned his servants about spiritual warfare and its benefits:

**"Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers." And he said to Him, "Lord, with You I am ready to go both to prison and to death!" And He said, "I say to you, Peter, the cock will not crow today until you have denied three times that you know Me."**

In John 13:33-36, our Lord told the disciples that where he was going the disciples could not come. But he said,

"A new commandment I give to you [in light of your dispute], that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (13:34-35). It was at this point that Peter told Jesus that he was willing to follow Jesus wherever he was going, even to the point of laying down his life for Jesus.

Jesus then drew back the curtain of spiritual reality and shared with Peter and all the disciples that Satan, who had already entered Judas, had appeared before him and demanded that he have the right to attack them all. Jesus refused to allow the evil one to destroy them, but without asking the disciples he did give Satan permission to shake them up with the hope that their pride would be turned to humility. Peter didn't know how weak his flesh was. He needed to be sifted like wheat so the Lord could get rid of his pride and replace it with humility. (When you read 1 and 2 Peter, written thirty years later, you find a humble shepherd and servant. It just took thirty years!) The Lord had already prayed to his heavenly Father that they would be protected, that their faith would not fail during the difficult days ahead, and that they would even be able to use their experiences of denying and forsaking Jesus to encourage and strengthen their brothers.

Finally, he prepared his disciples' hearts for a future as criminals in verses 35-38:

**And He said to them, "When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" And they said, "No, nothing." And He said to them, "But now, let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one. For I tell you, that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And He was numbered with transgressors'; for that which refers to Me has its fulfillment." And they said, "Lord, look, here are two swords." And He said to them, "It is enough."**

Our Lord then reminded his disciples that in the past when they had ministered with him and for him he had said, "Take nothing for your journey, neither a staff, nor a bag, nor bread, nor money, and do not even have two tunics [coats] apiece" (Luke 9:3). When the Lord had sent out the seventy disciples to preach the kingdom of God, he had told them the same thing (see Luke 10:4). But now that he was about to leave them, he said, "Make sure you have all of the above plus a sword. For I tell you that this which is written must be fulfilled in Me, 'And he was classed among criminals'" (Isaiah 53:12). He would be crucified between two criminals because he was considered a criminal himself by the Jewish and Roman authorities, and all who followed him would be considered criminals, too. They would be chased all over the face of the earth, and some would even die. So they would need those provisions so that they could travel about easily as they kept one step ahead of the police.

"And they said, 'Lord, look, here are two swords.'" These were the ceremonial swords they had used to cut up the Passover lamb. "And he said to them, 'It is enough,'" 'I don't want you to become a small army to depend on me or yourselves, but only to understand that you will need to begin to live your lives again like ordinary people in a fallen world.'

As we look back over this passage, our hearts should be filled with joy and thankfulness that God sent his beloved Son to this earth. The final Passover Lamb and faithful Servant was willing to have his body broken and his blood shed on the cross for our sin, so that all who believed in him would be given eternal life. Not only are we then given a new Lord, a new life, and a new covenant; but we are also given a new calling to be his servants and follow his leading into a fallen world in our generation so that others might hear the good news that our risen Lord and Savior "has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

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