

The Mind of Christ

The Memorial of Love

Part One

INTRODUCTION:

- I. In our series entitled “The Mind of Christ,” we’ve been focusing our attention on the final week in the life of Jesus.
 - A. ALL FOUR GOSPEL ACCOUNTS spend more time on the events of THIS week than they do on any other week in the life of Jesus.
 1. Mark and Luke each devote 6 chapters to this week.
 2. Matthew devotes 8 chapters.
 3. John devotes 9 chapters to the final week in the life of Jesus – focusing mostly on the dialogues of Jesus with His disciples.
 - B. The week began on Sunday with Jesus’ triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, and ended with His crucifixion and burial on Friday, and His resurrection from the dead the following Sunday.
 1. Between those two Sundays, our Lord spent 4 days during which He silenced His enemies and their futile attempts to entrap Him in His teaching, and taught some of the most important and most profound lessons He would ever teach.
 2. During this same period of time, Jesus also celebrated His last Passover meal with His disciples.

a. It's the Passover meal and what it symbolized that we now want to focus our attention on.

3. And so, we move to Thursday in the final week of the life of Jesus.

II. Time was running out for Jesus.

A. He knew the cross was only hours away, and so Jesus arranged to spend His final hours in the company of His disciples – the Twelve.

1. It would also be the time when Jesus would share with His disciples the most sacred and solemn religious observance in Judaism – the Passover meal.

2. But what makes THIS Passover meal so important to US, is what came from that meal.

3. Out of the observance of THIS Passover meal came an observance that has become the CENTRAL ACT of the Christian's worship – what we now call The Lord's Supper, or The Communion.

a. Some claim that the Lord's Supper is of no greater importance than any other ACT of worship we engage in, but I disagree.

b. And perhaps, after we've looked at this great MEMORIAL OF LOVE, you too might see it as the most significant act of worship for you and I as Christians.

4. Therefore, in order for us to better understand the significance of the Lord's Supper and all this sacred act of worship represents, we need to go back to the days of Jesus and understand the significance of the Passover and all the observances associated with it.

BODY:

- I. The Passover was the first of the three great festivals among the Hebrew people.
 - A. Its origin goes back to the days of Moses – when the children of Israel (the Hebrew people) were slaves in the land of Egypt. **(Exodus 3 – 14)**
 1. God had commanded Moses to demand that Pharaoh release the children of Israel from their Egyptian bondage.
 2. Pharaoh repeatedly denied Moses' demands, even though God brought plague after plague upon the land of Egypt and its people as punishment.
 3. Finally, Moses announced there would be one final plague that God would bring on Egypt and its people – the death of the firstborn of all man and cattle. **(Exodus 11)**

4. On the night when God would bring this terrible final plague upon Egypt, the children of Israel were given specific commands regarding things they were to do.
5. According to **Exodus 12:1-20**, these are the key elements the children of Israel had to keep to properly observe this first Passover:
 - a. First, they were commanded to slay a lamb without spot or blemish, collect the blood from that lamb and spread the blood on the lintel and door posts of every house occupied by the Hebrews.
 - (1). When God saw the blood, He promised to PASS OVER that house when He brought death to every firstborn in Egypt.
 - b. Second, the children of Israel were to prepare the lamb by roasting it in fire, and all who were in the house were to eat the lamb that night.
 - c. Since the children of Israel were told they should be prepared to immediately leave the land of Egypt, they didn't have time to prepared bread for the meal in a normal manner – bread made with leaven (yeast). Therefore, they ate unleavened bread with the meal that evening.

- d. Along with the unleavened bread and the lamb, the Israelites were to also eat bitter herbs – later, the bitter herbs would remind them of the bitterness of their slavery in Egypt.
 - e. Because they were planning for a hasty departure from Egypt, they were to eat the meal in haste, with their loins girded, shoes on their feet, and a staff in their hand.
 - f. Any remaining uneaten portions of the Passover lamb were to be completely consumed with fire.
 - g. And finally, from the day of the Passover celebration through the next week, the children of Israel were commanded to eat only unleavened bread with their meals – in fact, all leaven had to be completely removed from the house.
 - (1). Because of the requirement to eat only unleavened bread with their meals, the week that began with Passover was also called The Feast of Unleavened Bread.
6. On the evening when the children of Israel were required to keep these ordinances, God brought the tenth and final plague on the land of Egypt – striking down the firstborn of all in the land who were not in the homes marked by the blood of the sacrificial lamb.
7. Among those who died that night was the firstborn son of Pharaoh.

- a. In a moment of deep grief, and still reeling from the death of his own son, Pharaoh commanded that the children of Israel be allowed to leave.
 8. That night marked the most celebrated event in the history of the nation of Israel – their freedom from Egyptian captivity, and the first stage of their journey to the land of Canaan – a land they would eventually conquer, and which would become the homeland of the nation of Israel.
- II. The Law, which God gave the children of Israel through Moses, made the annual observance of Passover an integral part of Jewish worship.
- A. From that time forward, the Passover was observed every year on the 14th day of the first month of the Hebrew calendar – the month of Abib (later called Nissan), with the service beginning in the evening.
(Leviticus 23:5-7)
 1. In addition to being called the First Day of Passover, the 14th of Abib (or Nissan) was also called The Day of Preparation, since preparations for the Passover were carried out until sunset.
 2. Every Jew was required to journey to the city of Jerusalem and appear before the Lord with his own offering – unless he was physically unable to make the trip to Jerusalem, had been

declared ceremonially unclean, or lived more than 15 miles from the city. **(Exodus 23:15; Deuteronomy 16:16-17)**

- B. One month before Passover, work was done to prepare the region for the thousands of devout Jews that would come to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover.
1. Bridges and roads were repaired, and any dead animal carcasses were buried where they were found so that those coming to Jerusalem might not accidentally come in contact with a carcass and be declared "unclean" and unable to partake of Passover.
 2. The priests also ordered all the tombs and graves to be freshly painted with whitewash so they could be easily seen, and avoided. Like coming in contact with a dead animal, accidentally coming in contact with a tomb or grave would also render the person "unclean" and unable to partake of Passover.
 - a. If you remember, it was during Passover week that Jesus compared the hypocritical Pharisees to *"whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness."* **(Matthew 23:27)**
 - b. Since all the tombs and graves around Jerusalem had been whitewashed a month earlier, Jesus used this familiar practice to condemn the "spiritual uncleanness" of the Pharisees.

3. Two weeks before the Passover, flocks and herds were tithed, and *"many went from the country up to Jerusalem before the Passover, to purify themselves."* (**John 11:55**)

a. Albert Barnes, in his commentary, says, "This purifying consisted in preparing themselves for the proper observation of the Passover, according to the commands of the law. If any were defiled in any manner by contact with the dead or by any other ceremonial uncleanness, they were required to take the prescribed measures for purification, Lev 22:1-6. . . . Different periods [of waiting times] were necessary in order to be cleansed from ceremonial pollution. For example, one who had been polluted by the touch of a dead body, of a sepulcher, or by the bones of the dead, was sprinkled on the third and seventh days, by a clean person, with hyssop dipped in water mixed in the ashes of the red heifer. After washing his body and clothes he was then clean. These persons who went up before the Passover were doubtless those who had in some manner been ceremonially polluted."

(from Barnes' Notes)

III. When the Day of Passover finally arrived, there were a number of very significant acts that were performed throughout the day – some of which

were in keeping with the Law of Moses, while others were merely traditions handed down over the generations.

- A. The Passover began earlier in the day with the sacrifice of the Passover lamb.
1. Each family was required to sacrifice a lamb that was free from all blemish. The lamb could be no less than eight days old, nor more than one year old.
 2. When the time came to begin making the sacrifices, the Levitical priests open the gates of the Temple courtyard to allow three groups of no fewer than 10 men each, along with their sacrificial lambs, to enter the Temple courtyard. The massive gates were then immediately closed behind them.
 3. All across the courtyard, up to the altar of burnt offering, priests stood in two rows. One row of priests held golden bowls, and the other row held silver bowls.
 4. Each Israelite man was required to slit the throat of his own lamb, while the priests caught the blood in the bowls – some blood in the golden bowl and some in the silver bowl. As the lambs were slain, other priests blew three blasts from their silver trumpets to announce to all that the blood of sacrificial lambs was flowing in the Temple courtyard.

5. The priests who had captured the blood of the lamb in their bowls would quickly hand their bowls to the next priest in line, who would then pass the bowls to the next priests.
6. When the bowls reached the priests standing at the alter of burnt offering, the priests would cast the blood on the base of the alter, and immediately return the bowls to the front of the line for the next sacrifice.
 - a. The whole process appeared to be two huge assembly lines of priests catching the blood of the sacrificed lamb, and passing their bowls up the line until they reached the priests at the alter.
 - b. As soon as one lamb was slain and the blood captured, the next man immediately stepped forward to slit the throat of his lamb, followed immediately by the next, and so on. The process never stopped and never slowed down.
7. While the lambs were being sacrificed, the Levites also sang a solemn hymn of praise known as "The Hallel" – the words were those of Psalms 113 through 118. The singing continued, and if necessary was repeated, until all the lambs from the first group were sacrificed.
8. The sacrificed lambs were then hung on hooks, flayed open, and the entrails removed and cleansed. The priests would also collect

fat from the inside of the lamb, put it in a dish, salt it, and then hand the dish to other priests who placed the fat on the fire of the alter of burnt offering.

9. As soon as the first group was finished sacrificing their lambs, they left the Temple courtyard, and the next group was admitted and the whole process continued non-stop until every sacrifice of every family in Jerusalem was completed. One survey taken during the time of Christ revealed that more than 256,500 lambs were slain during one Passover alone.

B. The preparation of the lamb for the Passover meal also followed strict guidelines – some of which were according to the Law, while others were traditions.

1. According to Jewish ordinance, the lamb was roasted on a spit of pomegranate wood. Any part of the lamb that touched the oven while being roasted had to be cut away – the lamb could not be defiled in any way by coming into contact with anything that might be considered unclean.
2. And most interesting, not ONE BONE of the lamb was to be broken.

C. The Passover meal itself also followed strict guidelines – and some of these were done in keeping with the Law of Moses, while others developed over time as traditions.

1. As everyone gathered around the table for the Passover meal, they were dressed in their best garments.
2. The traditional method of eating at least part of the meal was to do so in a reclining position – the left elbow would be placed on the table with the head resting on the hand. The guests were spaced far enough apart so they could eat freely with their right hand.
 - a. According to both Luke and John’s account of the Passover meal Jesus observed with His disciples, John was reclining in such a way that he was able to lean back into the breast of Jesus and speak to Him privately. **(Luke 22:14; John 13:23,25)**
3. The Passover ceremony began with the father, or the guest of honor, pronouncing a blessing over the first cup of wine, that had also been diluted with water, and which was then passed around for each person to drink. Following the first cup of wine, a basin of water and a towel were handed around to each guest to wash their hands, after which another blessing was pronounced.
4. Next, the Passover meal itself was served. The person presiding over the meal first took some of the bitter herbs (wild lettuces, endive, chicory, or nettles, all Egyptian food [*Pesachim* 2:6]), dipped the herbs in a pasty sauce (Heb. “*Charoseth*” – ha-ROW-*seth*), ate some, and then passed to the others at the meal.

- a. Later, we'll see that Jesus also observed this practice during the Passover meal He celebrated with His disciples.

(Matthew 26:23; John 13:26)

5. Immediately after this, all the dishes were removed from the table, and the second cup of diluted wine was filled and set on the table. The oldest son, would then ask his father: "Why is this night different from all other nights? For on all other nights we eat leavened or unleavened bread, but on this night only unleavened bread? On all other nights we eat any kind of herbs, but on this night only bitter herbs? On all other nights we eat meat roasted, stewed, or boiled but on this night only roasted? On all other nights we dip [the herbs] only once, but on this night twice?"
6. The head of the house, or the honored guest, would then tell the whole history of Israel, beginning with Terah, the father of Abraham, and then move on to Israel's deliverance from Egypt, and the giving of the Law through Moses on Mount Sinai.
7. When the story was completed, the dishes were returned to the table, and the person presiding would pick up the dish with the Passover lamb, explain its significance, then do the same with the dish of bitter herbs and the unleavened bread.
8. Next, the first part of the Hallel was sung (consisting of Psalm 113 and 114), and concluded with a prayer of thanksgiving to Jehovah:

"Blessed are You, Jehovah our God, King of the universe, who has redeemed us, and redeemed our fathers from Egypt."

9. The second cup of wine was then drunk by all, and hands were washed a second time.
10. One of the two loaves of unleavened bread was then broken, and a prayer of thanksgiving was given. The person presiding would break off pieces of the unleavened bread, sandwich "bitter herbs" between them, dip them in the pasty sauce called the "charoseth" (ha-ROW-seth), and hand one to each person at the meal.
 - a. In all probability, this was the "dipped morsel" that Jesus handed to Judas in answer to John's question about a betrayer in their midst. **(John 13:25-30; cf. Mark 14:22; Luke 22:21)**
11. The meal itself consisted of the unleavened bread, with bitter herbs, and the sacrificed lamb. Once the meal was finished, nothing more was eaten so that the flesh of the sacrificed lamb would be the last meat partaken of.
12. Hands were washed once again, the third cup was filled and passed around to all, followed by another prayer of thanksgiving.
13. The Passover meal was concluded with the drinking of a fourth cup of wine while the second portion of the Hallel was sung (consisting of Psalm 115-118).

- IV. With this background about the Passover and its significance, let's turn our attention to the gospel accounts.
- A. More specifically, we want to look at the portion of the gospel accounts that tell us of the Passover Jesus celebrated with His disciples just hours before He would be arrested and crucified.
1. Portions of the events that took place during this Passover are recorded in all four gospel accounts.
 2. As we look at these events, we will attempt to put them in chronological order so we can see them as they actually occurred.
- B. Although the gospel of John mentions many other events not recorded in the synoptic gospels, we want to specifically focus on the Passover meal, the institution of the Lord's Supper, and the revelation by Jesus of His betrayer.
1. **Luke 22:7-13** – *Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." So they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare?" 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 which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room where I may eat*

the Passover with My disciples?" Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready." So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover.

2. **Matthew 26:20-25** – *When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve. Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?" He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."*
3. **Luke 22:15-23** – *Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of*

Me." Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you. But behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table. And truly the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!" Then they began to question among themselves, which of them it was who would do this thing.

a. **Matthew 26:26-30** – *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."*

b. **Mark 14:18-25** – *Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me." And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, "Is it I?" And another said, "Is it I?" He answered and said to them, "It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had*

never been born." And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

4. **John 13:18-30** – *"I do not speak concerning all of you. I know whom I have chosen; but that the Scripture may be fulfilled, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me.' Now I tell you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe that I am He. Most assuredly, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me." When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is he to whom I shall give a*

piece of bread when I have dipped it." And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, "What you do, do quickly." But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, "Buy those things we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor. Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night.

5. **Matthew 26:30** – *And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.*

CONCLUSION:

- I. And so, the stage is set.
 - A. In a matter of just a few hours Jesus will be:
 1. Arrested in the quiet of the Garden of Gethsemane. . .
 2. Dragged from one mock trial to another. . .
 3. Unmercifully beaten and scourged. . .
 4. Condemned by the Roman Governor Pilate. . .
 5. And crucified on a cross

6. Ironically, the enemies of Jesus, in sending Him to the cross, will actually be sacrificing the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world.

B. However, between the time when Jesus met with His disciples to observe this Passover, and the time when He will be arrested and eventually crucified, the Scriptures record some of the most profound teachings of Jesus. And we don't want to skip over them lightly.

1. Therefore, over the next few weeks we want to continue looking at the institution of the Lord's Supper, and learn the significance of what that great Memorial of Love should mean to each one of us.
2. We also want to take special notice of how Jesus dealt with a traitor among His most trusted disciples.
 - a. If we give only a cursory reading to the betrayal of Jesus by Judas, we miss one of the most beautiful lessons ever taught – the lesson of Jesus on how to love a traitor.
3. And finally, we need to look closely at the greatest lesson on humility ever taught – a lesson that would define the true meaning of what it means to be a disciple of Christ.
 - a. It's a lesson Jesus taught to a group of disciples with proud hearts and dirty feet.

II. As we move closer to the moment when we must come face-to-face with the horror and the brutality of the cross, we will also move closer to coming face-to-face with our own sin.

A. In the end, we will be forced to admit that it was not so much the enemies of Jesus that sent our Lord to the cross, it was you and me.

1. It was for OUR sins that Jesus died, and it is by HIS blood that we are HEALED.
2. That's all the more reason why we need to show our DEEPEST and most heartfelt appreciation for what the Lord did by giving Him our hearts and our will.
3. Think about that – He gave His life for you.
4. How could ANYONE reject THAT kind of love? And yet, many will.

B. Have you rejected the Lord? Have you turned your back on Jesus?

1. If you know you need to be baptized into Christ for the remission of your sins, and yet have walked away time after time, you've turned you back on Jesus.
2. And if you're a child of God and you know you need to change things in your life, and yet you have walked away time after time, you've also turned your back on Jesus.
3. Why not change all that, and come TO Him now.