

What Would You Eat at Your Last Meal?

Last Sunday Walter Morrill gathered with members of his church in Maine for worship. After the morning service they all sat down to a meal together. It wasn't long until Morrill and most of the others in the congregation got very sick. Walter Morrill's funeral was held this past Wednesday, although most of his friends were too ill to attend. Police are investigating how arsenic got into the food or beverages.

Morrill, 78, lived next to the church and over the years had done work on its property, including groundskeeping and maintenance. "He had been a great source of support for fellow worshippers who are now feeling a combination of anxiety, fear, grief and pain," said Jim Morgan the pastor.

Walter Morrill went to church on Sunday never expecting to eat his last meal there. That will probably be the way it is for many of us. Even if we're sick, we won't know for sure which meal will be our last.

Jesus Christ knew exactly which meal would be His last. He knew when He'd eat it, where He'd eat it, and what He'd eat. He knew because He was in control of everything that happened.

What would you eat for your last meal? Jesus had lamb, matzo, and red wine. To see the account, **turn with me to Luke 22 pg 933**

A number of events have taken place in the few days before this.

1. Jesus made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and cleansed the temple
2. The Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem determined that Jesus must die
3. After the meal at the house of Simon the Leper, at which Mary anointed the feet of Jesus, Judas decided to betray the Lord, approached the chief priests, and received an advance payment
4. Jesus publicly rebuked the religious leaders for their hypocrisy and misinterpretation of Scripture

Now it was time for Jesus to prepare to eat His last meal.

If you've been a Christian for any length of time you've heard some of the verses were going to look at today over and over again. For some of you they'll be brand new but for others they'll be very familiar.

What I'd like us to do is look at them from a little different perspective than the way we might in a communion service.

We'll see three things this morning from Jesus last meal. The first is: *When God Gives You A Job To Do He Always Prepares The Way*

Read 7

Passover commemorated the divine rescue of the Israelites from Egypt in 1445 BC. The OT books of Exodus and Deuteronomy give the details of how the memorial was to be carried out.

First, the Passover was to be partaken of only by those who have embraced the faith of Israel. No "uncircumcised" person could eat of it. This did not exclude foreigners who had accepted the faith of Israel, as evidenced by circumcision.

Second, the Passover was to be observed on the 14th day of the first month, at the time when the Israelites first killed the Passover lamb in Egypt. The animal was to be slain on the evening of the 14th, and the meal followed shortly afterward.

Third, no bones of the animal were to be broken, and no leftovers were to be kept until the next day.

Fourth, the Passover celebration also commenced the Feast of Unleavened Bread. No yeast was to be used, and all leaven was to be removed from the dwellings of the Israelites on the first day of the celebration.

Finally, the Passover animal could only be slaughtered at the place which God would designate, which would later be specified as Jerusalem.

Remember, Jesus and His disciples weren't Southern Baptists or Episcopalians, or Lutherans. They were Sons of Abraham by birth and Jewish by faith.

Everything they said and did must be understood in the context of Judaism. The Passover was a precious Jewish remembrance. It was a memorial to God's faithfulness to the Jews.

Since the Passover meal had certain stipulations Jesus sent two of His most trusted disciples to prepare it for Jesus and the 12. **Read 8-9**

Peter and John were members of the inner circle of disciples. John is even referred to as "the disciple whom Jesus loved." There's a bit to this preparation so they ask a normal question: Where do you want us to get this ready? They'd need space and food for 13 people.

Remember, Jerusalem was jam packed with Jewish pilgrims from all over Israel and the surrounding countries. Finding a place at this late date would be a feat in itself.

Besides that **look back at vs 3 Read 3-6**

This sounds like a real “cloak and dagger” scenario. The reason is, Jesus was a marked man. It wasn't like he could go to the "Upper Room Inn". He needed a secret place - a special place.

I believe that was part of the reason for Jesus cryptic answer to the question of “where.” Judas wouldn't know the location until he got there so the betrayal and arrest couldn't happen prematurely. **Read 10-12**

Remember, *When God Gives You A Job To Do He Always Prepares The Way*

Jesus tells Peter and John just go into Jerusalem and follow a guy carrying a water pitcher. Does that sound strange or what? Jerusalem is bursting at the seams with people.

In Biblical Judaism there are three pilgrimage festivals. One is in the fall, and two are in the spring. The biggest holiday that would bring in pilgrims from all over the the known world is the Spring holiday of Passover.

It resonated historically with the liberation of the children of Israel from Egypt. So it had a tone of national liberation. But also, Jews everywhere, if they chose to, if they were pious, would put aside part of their income. They'd save up all year ... and that money was spent having a celebration in Jerusalem.

People from all over the Empire went to Jerusalem on Passover. Josephus, the Jewish historian, tells us that one year a census was taken of the number of lambs slain for Passover and that the figure was 256,500.

I don't know what the average family size was that made the pilgrimage but multiply the number of lambs by that figure and you'd have the number of people there.

To say it was a lot was the understatement of the year. People were crammed into every corner of the city with thousands more camped around the city walls.

How would they ever find one guy carrying a water jar? Here's how. Men in the first century Mid-Eastern culture did NOT carry water jars. That was a woman's duty. It was an extremely feminine act. Yet this humbled man, who probably drew a few cat calls from his neighbors was carrying a water jar as they entered the city.

If it wouldn't have been Jesus Himself giving these instructions I doubt whether Peter and John would have gone. But it was their Lord so they did what He said.

read vs 13

Let me ask you: Have you ever found yourself in a situation where you believed that God wanted you to do or say something, but you really didn't know how things would work out? Have you ever done something in obedience to what was clear in the Bible, but you thought to yourself, "I don't have the slightest idea how God's going to see me through this one?"

That command to find the guy with the water pot seemed a little strange. Some of God's commands to us can seem a little strange too. How about:

"For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's will save it."

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.

Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.

Here's a faith tester: Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.

Or Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.

When God commands us to do something, He'll always have gone before us,

preparing the way for us. All we need to do is to obey, trusting that things will work out as He has planned.

We may not know the outcome ahead of time like Peter and John did, but we can rest assured that it will be just as God has ordained it.

There's nothing more beautiful than to walk in obedience to God's will and God's word, and to watch Him open the doors before us, preparing our way. And what's really exciting is, God hasn't told us is for our own good.

God hasn't shown us what lies down the road for a purpose. So that we can learn the preciousness of walking in faith. That's how we grow. If we had everything handed to us on a silver platter we'd be a bunch of immature babies.

God tells us to step out in faith to the clear commands of His word. And when we do we find out the same thing Peter and John found, God's already been there to prepare the way.

An upper room would be an extra room, built onto the flat roof of a typical Palestinian house. It was probably "furnished" with carpets and cushions on which guests would recline for their meal. The Bible Scholar Alford Edersheim speculates that this was probably the house of a follower, perhaps Mark's parents' home.

He supposes that all that is needed for the meal is already in the upper room -- wine for the four cups, cakes of unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs. All Peter and John would need to do would be to sacrifice the Passover lamb at the temple. Either Peter or John would have personally cut the lamb's throat at the appropriate time in the temple service. The lamb would then be roasted on a pomegranate wood spit, and the lamps prepared for the room.

I. When God Gives You A Job To Do He Always Prepares The Way
II. When God Acts We Don't Always Understand All The Details

Here's another faith tester. **Read vs 14**

Isn't it fascinating that God chose to give us so little information about Jesus last meal? Isn't it intriguing that the meal that's the basis for communion gets so little space here.

Communion is one of the most precious aspects of Christian worship. It's charged with spiritual meaning and implications. But it only gets 7 verses here. There are as many verses explaining how they got the place to hold the last supper as there is about the institution of communion.

What I want us to see here is that Jesus gathers His disciples together, teaches them, instructs them, explains what's going on, but they still don't grasp it.

He says, **read vs 15-18**

Can you imagine sitting down to what you know is your last meal and saying, "I've just been waiting for this moment. I was on the edge of my seat with expectation. I thought this moment would never get here!"

Jesus says, "With fervent *desire* I have *desired* to eat this Passover with you before I suffer."

The word "fervent" is in italics in the NKJV to let us know that the translators added it to make things clearer. If your reading in the KJV it says, "With desire I have desired to eat..."

That's a literal translation of the original Greek wording but it sounds strange to our ears.

Let me give you something to really ponder about vs 15. This is from AT Robertson's *Word Pictures in the Greek New Testament*. You can kind of take this home a meditate on over lunch today. He writes: "A Hebraism common in the LXX. Associative instrumental case of substantive and first aorist active indicative of same like a cognate accusative."

What all that means is, Jesus being a Greek-speaking Jew incorporated Hebrew-like idioms into His speech. In Hebrew to put two instances of the same verb together was the strongest way of stating something.

That's why they put the word fervent in there. Jesus was saying in no uncertain terms "I had an unquenchable passion to eat this meal with you."

The liturgy for the Passover meal consisted of four cups of wine, each with its own blessing and words of explanation. Jesus no doubt utters the ancient words, but at

this point in the ritual, he emphasizes the fact that he won't eat the Passover with them again until the Great Feast in the Kingdom of God.

He's going to eat this last meal, and then He's going to suffer on the cross.

As many times as Jesus explained to His disciples that He would die in Jerusalem they still didn't get it. At the arrest of Jesus in the garden Peter is going to try to defend Jesus with a sword. They didn't understand all the details.

When God Acts We Don't Always Understand All The Details Either.

Bob Deffenbaugh writes: "The last supper was not, in its observance, a glorious occasion. Regardless of how the artists might have portrayed it, this was a time of confusion, of fear, and of self-seeking on the part of the disciples. Jesus was the only one present who knew the meaning of what He was doing. The disciples did not know what was about to take place, but there was a sadness, a heaviness, in their spirits, knowing that something ominous was about to occur."

Just think about what's happening here. Jesus is saying "I've been looking forward to this. This is why I came. This is about the cross." And the disciples are clueless.

What's a Christian to do when we're clueless? Trust God. It may be hard to do at times but you can distill it down to a simple two word command, Trust God. Several years ago Jeff Sturecker was a US Army Ranger posted in Mogadishu, Somalia. Today he is a student at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

For him Oct 3-4, 1993 were the defining moments of his life. He was one of the troops called on to go into the center Mogadishu to secure a building. The movie "Black Hawk Down" chronicles the events of those two days.

In the first trip into the city he and most of his friends got out through a hailstorm of bullets. One man was shot and killed. It was then that he felt the fear. He began to pray. The humvee was splattered with blood as they escaped the city with their dead and wounded comrades.

The news soon worsened. A helicopter was shot down. The team received orders to return to the melee. Sturecker says, "I began to talk to the Lord. I thought I was going to die." Feeling his fear grow, he began to ask God to protect him. But his prayer changed.

"I'll never forget this for the rest of my life. ... A scene appeared in the landscape of my mind. The scene was the Biblical account of Jesus... He clearly and honestly knew that he was going to die. ... He also showed that he did not want to go to that cross and die. And I knew that I didn't want to die that night. But Jesus courageously prayed, 'God, not my will, but yours be done.'

"If I die tonight, that's fine, as long as your will is done," Struecker said. For the first time in his life, Struecker -- who had been a Christian since age 13 -- was prepared to die. "God spoke to my mind and my heart and said, 'I've been protecting you every day of your life,'" Struecker said. "He did not tell me, 'You will live through the night.' He simply showed me my life has always been in his hands."

Struecker and his men returned to the field of fire in Mogadishu that night and fought with a God-given courage. The sergeant first class would later be awarded the Bronze Star. "I fought differently that night than everybody else ... because of my faith," Struecker said. God had given me a "supernatural peace" in the midst of pandemonium, further firefights and an ambush that nearly blew his humvee off the road.

"I began to understand God's omnipotent power." "He was orchestrating every single bullet that was fired that night. ... The peace that I had was not only for my own life, but for the lives of my soldiers. If any of us were to get shot, then that was part of God's sovereign plan." And God chose to preserve Struecker that night.

That's faith, but it's not blind faith. It's faith based upon the truth of Scripture.

I. When God Gives You A Job To Do He Always Prepares The Way
II. When God Acts, We Don't Always Understand All The Details
But III. God Gives of Himself For Our Blessing

Read vs 19-20

Do you ever have trouble forgetting things? Do you ever forget where you put your keys?, wallet? checkbook? a telephone number you've written down? someone's name? a birthday or an anniversary?

Of all people who have ever lived I believe we have more stuff to remember. Passwords, usernames, web addresses, computer intricacies, how to program the VCR, cell phone numbers, how to use our cell phone. We are literarily drowning in a deluge of information.

We're a forgetful people, and not only do we forget names, where we put our car keys, we also tend to forget God and all that he has done for us... - THAT IS WHY throughout the bible God's people are exhorted to remember him over 100 times.

In the last supper Jesus took a memorial and gave it new significance. He took Passover which remembered God's deliverance and used it to point to Himself. See God's deliverance of His people from Egypt prefigured something.

It prefigured the deliverance from hell that we all need. The God's judgment of death passed over every household that was marked by the blood of a lamb.

God's judgment of eternal death passes over every individual who has faith in the blood of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ.

Jesus took the matzo after supper, gave thanks, and passed it out and said, "This is my body. This is a memorial."

He took the third cup in the meal, called the cup of redemption, passed it to His disciples and said, "This is my blood given to institute a new covenant."

Various religious groups have interpreted Christ's words in different ways. Some have said that the elements in communion mystically change into the actual body and blood of Christ. (Transubstantiation) Others say, The body and blood are mystically surrounding the elements (Consubstantiation).

I think Jesus explanation is plain. He said, "They're to remember Me by."

The ceremony of the bread and cup isn't mystical, but it is holy. It's holy because it causes us to worship the living God who gave Himself for us.

Ga 1:4 (Jesus) gave Himself for our sins...

Ga 2:20 the Son of God, ... loved me and gave Himself for me.

Eph 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

1 Timothy 2:6 (Christ) gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time,

Tit 2:14 (Jesus) gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us...

Why can we trust God when we don't always see the details? Because *God Gives of Himself For Our Blessing*. There's a lot of religions out there with all kinds of human conjectures of God.

The Bible wipes away all human speculations. It tells us about the true and living God. He's a God unlike any that anyone on the planet could ever make up. He's the God who *Gives of Himself For Our Blessing*

The Holy one who must punish sin, took our sins upon Himself in Christ. That's what the body and blood is about. That's what Jesus was pointing to in the Last Supper.

That's why the Bible says, *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.*

God did the work of redemption at the cross. We appropriate what He did for us by faith and receive new life from Him.

That's a God we can trust no matter what things look like. That's a God we can have confidence in no matter what our feelings tell us. That's a God we can rely on even if we can't see the outcome.

Jesus Christ was in complete charge of His last meal. In fact He was in complete charge of everything that took place in those final hours including the cross. That's why He said in John 10 *"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again."*

What Would You Eat at Your Last Meal? For all we know, we might have eaten it already. The Bible says our life is like a vapor. It's like a little puff of steam that vanishes into the air in no time at all.

Have you received Jesus Christ as Savior? Is your hope and confidence for eternity in the one who gave His body and blood for you?

If not, it can be. Let's bow together...