

Our Atonement

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Matthew 26:17-30

It is less than 24 hours until He will be taken into custody by a mob of the religious elite led by the betrayer, Judas Iscariot. He will then be put on trial for crimes He did not commit. The verdict by mob rule will be that He must die by crucifixion.

He will be stripped naked and beaten beyond recognition. The innocent Son of God will be scourged by Roman authorities; a process by which strips of flesh are torn from His back (a punishment many died from). He will have a cross of wood placed on His back, and He will carry it until strength fails, and one Simon Cyrene will carry His cross the rest of the distance to Golgotha.

At that point, He will be laid out upon the cross, and His hands will be stretched out and nailed in place. Finally, His feet will be nailed to the cross, a nail driven through the ankle and secured to the wood. Next, He will be lifted from the ground by a Roman guard, and the cross will be dropped into a hole, where it will land with a sickening thud. Now, He is left to die.

And yet, less than twenty-four hours before any of this happens, Jesus is sitting at a table with the men closest to Him — teaching them, in His own words, what His death is going to mean.

I. Why this night?

- A. Jesus is using this moment, this meal, this city, this night on purpose to teach what His death means.
- B. The text tells us it is “*the first day of Unleavened Bread.*”
 - 1. This is more than a calendar note – Matthew is telling us what kind of meal, what kind of night, and what kind of death is coming.
 - 2. To understand what Jesus is about to do, we must understand what these feasts meant from an Egyptian deliverance mindset of the Jews.
- C. **The Passover:** the night God’s people were delivered by blood.
 - 1. The Passover feast memorialized the Passover event in Exodus (**Ex 12:2-6**).
 - a) Observed every year in Jerusalem. Each family offered a lamb as a sacrifice and celebrated with a meal rich in symbolism of their deliverance.
 - b) It is estimated that in Jesus’ day, 250,000 sacrificial lambs were slain during a typical Passover.
 - c) They were slaughtered in a two-hour window between 3 and 5 pm. The blood would flow to the Kidron Valley, turning it red.
 - d) With all that, sin remained **Hebrews 10:4**, *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.* **Hebrews 10:11**, *And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.*
 - 2. **Exodus 12**, **John 1:29**, are being connected, and Paul confirms in **1 Cor 5:7b**. Amid the slaughter of Passover lambs, Jesus leans into this imagery and teaches, He is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world.
 - a) **John 1:29**, *The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”*
 - b) **1 Corinthians 5:7b**, *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.*
 - c) Jesus is the Lamb, the lambs were always pointing to
- D. **Unleavened Bread:** after deliverance comes new life.
 - 1. Passover taught Israel that they had been delivered. Unleavened Bread taught them what the delivered people look like (no longer in bondage, no longer subject to the Pharaoh of this world).
 - 2. Seven days following Passover – bread of haste, bread of separation.
 - a) Bread of haste – God moved fast; He does not wait for readiness.
 - b) Bread of separation – Once God delivers, we no longer belong to Egypt.
 - 3. Redemption first (Passover), the separation (Unleavened bread). The order matters.

II. What Does the Meal Mean?

- A. The Directive (**Matthew 26:26a–27**, *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat;” 27 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you.”*) Jesus commanded believers to remember

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- through participation in the meal.
- B. The Doctrine (**Matthew 26:26b, 28**, “*this is my body.*” **28** *for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*)
1. **This is my body:** After breaking the bread, Our Lord uses the unleavened bread to point to His body that would be offered on the cross tomorrow. The Supper is interpreting the cross before the cross happens. The bread represents the Lord’s body, which was offered as the sacrifice for sin and for the salvation of men.
 2. **This is my blood:** Jesus is inaugurating a new covenant in His blood.
 - a) “*Blood of the covenant*” is **Exodus 24:8** language — Moses sprinkling the blood of the covenant on the people after Sinai. Jesus is announcing that a new covenant is being ratified, in His blood, on this night.
 - b) **Jeremiah 31:31-34** promised this covenant centuries before — a covenant in which God Himself would forgive sins and write His law on His people's hearts. Jesus is saying: that promise begins now, in Me.
 3. **The secured forgiveness:** “*poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*”
 - a) This “*pouring out*” was purposeful, intentional, and deliberate.
 - b) For many: not a vague generosity — a specific people. **Isaiah 53:11-12**, the Servant who justifies many.
 - c) For the forgiveness of sins: this is what the lambs could not do (**Heb. 10:4**). What every Passover pointed to but could not deliver, this blood accomplishes.
 4. The blood was required (**Heb. 9:22; 1 Peter 1:18-19**). Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness — and the blood that was finally enough was His.
 5. This is the atonement. Not a possibility. Not a transaction made available. Not a hope offered on the chance someone would take it. A finished work — blood poured out, sin covered, a new covenant ratified in the body and blood of the only Lamb who was ever enough. And Jesus tells His disciples how His people are to live in light of it.
- C. The Duration (**Matthew 26:29**, *I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*”)
1. **Always remember - past** (**1 Cor 11:25**, *In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”*) Every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we remember what He did. The Lord’s Supper guards the church from forgetting the cross.
 2. **Always assured - present** (**1 Corinthians 11:26**, *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*) This is the heart of the atonement: not that Christ made salvation possible, but that Christ accomplished it. For His people. By name. At the cross. The Supper is the believer's repeated assurance that the cross was for him.
 3. **Always worship - forward** (**Psalms 118; Revelation 19:9**) On the very night He was betrayed, Jesus and the disciples sang a hymn — **Matthew 26:30** — and that hymn was **Psalms 118**, the traditional Passover Hallel. Jesus walked toward Gethsemane singing about “*the stone that the builders rejected*” becoming “*the cornerstone.*” The Supper looks ahead to the marriage supper of the Lamb. We don't just remember a death — we anticipate a feast.
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