

Handout 1: Matthew Lesson 24

It was God's plan to set the sacrifice and resurrection of the Christ and the redemption of mankind that would open the gates of heaven (CCC 1026) within the context of three annual sacred feasts. These feasts remembered the salvation and redemption of the children of Israel from bondage in Egypt and the celebration of the Israelites as the "firstfruits" of the covenant people in the Promised Land (Ex 12-13; Lev 23:4-14):

- The Passover sacrifice on Nisan 14th (Lev 23:4-5)
- The pilgrim feast of Unleavened Bread on Nisan 15th – 21st (Lev 23:6-8)
- The feast of Firstfruits on the day after the Sabbath (Saturday) on the first day of the week (Sunday) during the holy week of Unleavened Bread (Lev 23:9-14).

St. Matthew reveals the forward movement toward the fulfillment of God's plan for Jesus' sacrificial death in three scenes in Matthew 26:1-15:

1. Jesus' announcement that the Passover will signal his coming crucifixion and the plotting of the chief priests and elders with the High Priest to kill Him (Mt 26:1-5).
2. The woman disciple who anoints Jesus in preparation for his death and burial at a banquet in Bethany (Mt 26:6-13).
3. Judas Iscariot's betrayal of Jesus to the religious leaders (Mt 26:14-15).

Each anointing of Christ's three anointings symbolized the 3 holy offices He fulfilled as God's supreme Prophet, High Priest, and Davidic King (CCC 436).

On the Day of the Passover sacrifice, the groups that represented their households assembled at the Temple with their animals at noon. The different groups were divided into three large divisions in fulfillment of Exodus 12:6: *And the whole assembly of the congregations of Israel shall slaughter it ... (Mishnah: Pesahim, 5:5A-B):*

- "whole" = division #1
- "assembly" = division #2
- "congregation" = division #3

The requirements for this pilgrim feast of Unleavened Bread included:

- Attendance at the sacred meal of the Passover victim on the first night of the feast of Unleavened Bread.
- The eating of bread without leaven during the seven-day holy week.
- The observances of the required Sacred Assembly during the morning Tamid service on the 15th and the 21st of Nisan and the other daily Tamid services to which covenant members brought communion *Hagigah* sacrifices to be eaten in communal meals in Jerusalem during the week.

Food served during the sacred meal at sundown on Nisan the 15th:

- Two kinds of bitter herbs and salted water or vinegar: representing the gift of life and the bitterness of their bondage in Egypt that caused suffering and tears.
- Haroseth/charoseth (a mixture of chopped apple or chopped figs with red wine): representing the red clay of Egypt and the sweetness of God's redemption.
- Unleavened bread: the bread they made in haste when they escaped from Egypt.
- Four communal cups of red wine: the four ways God promised to redeem Israel and the blood of the sacrificial victim that became the sign of their redemption on the doorways of their houses from the threshold to the lintel to the door posts, forming a cross.

- The roasted whole body of the sacrificial lamb or kid (no bones broken) and the optional *hagigah* sacrifice: the Passover victim represented the sacrificed animal that died in the place of the firstborn of Israel.: the victim that died in the place of the firstborn of Israel.

The four cups of wine during the sacred meal represent the four ways God promised to redeem His people in Ex 6:6-7 (only 2 cups are mentioned in the Gospels*):

1. The Cup of Sanctification
2. The Cup of Forgiveness* (Lk 22:17)
3. The Cup of Blessing/Redemption* (Mt 26:27-28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 10:16; 11:23-25)
4. The Cup of Acceptance

That they ate the sacred meal of the Passover victim before Jesus gave them His Body and Blood is confirmed in all the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper:

- *And while they were eating, he said, "Amen, I say to you, one of you will betray me" (Mt 26:21).*
- *And while they were eating, he took bread, said the blessing, broke it and gave it to them ... (Mk 14:22).*
- *When the hour came, he took his place at table with the apostles. He said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer..." (Lk 22:14-15).*
- *So he dipped the morsel and took it and handed it to Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot (Jn 13:26b).*

We call the gift of this Sacrament that our Lord gave us on the last night of His life the Eucharist, a word derived from the Greek words *eucharistein* and *eucharistia*, meaning an expression of "thanks" or "thanksgiving" (see Mt 26:26-7 and Mk 14:22). The word "Eucharist" is used for all three aspects of Christ's one mystery:

1. The Real Presence: Christ in His abiding *Parousia* (presence) in His Church on the earth today.
2. The sacrifice of the Mass: Christ in His continuing action as our High Priest who continues to communicate to His Church the graces He merited on Calvary
3. Holy Communion: Christ uniting Himself in fellowship with the believer and nourishing his soul in preparation for eternal life.

Handout 2: Matthew Lesson 24

Dinners and anointings in Bethany recorded in the Gospels during the last week of Jesus' life. Notice that the accounts in Matthew and Mark are the same dinner with the same attendees on the same day, at the same location and with the same woman who anoints Jesus' head for His burial, while John's account is entirely different.

John 12:1-13	Matthew 26:1-16	Mark 14:1-11
The event takes place six days before Passover at Bethany before Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm [Passion] Sunday (Jn 12:1; 12-19).	The event takes place two days before Passover (Mt 26:2) at Bethany (Mt 26: 6) after Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm [Passion] Sunday (Mt 21:8-11).	The event takes place two days before Passover at Bethany (Mk 14:1) after Jesus entry into Jerusalem on Palm [Passion] Sunday (Mk 11:1-10).
Prior to the dinner, Jesus had not arrived in Jerusalem and the people were looking for Him (Jn 11:55-56). The chief priests and Pharisees were looking for someone to inform them about Jesus' whereabouts so they could arrest Him (Jn 11:57).	Jesus taught at the Temple and cured the sick every day that week (Mt 21:14-26:1). He announced his coming arrest and crucifixion to His disciples. The chief priests and elders conspired to arrest and kill Him (Mt 26:2-5).	Jesus taught at the Temple every day that week (Mk 11:11-13:47). The chief priests and scribes conspired to arrest and kill Him (Mk 14:1-2).
The dinner was in Bethany "... where Lazarus was ... Martha waited on them ..." (Jn 12:1-2).	Dinner was in Bethany at the home of Simon the Leper (Mt 26:6).	Dinner was in Bethany at the home of Simon the Leper (Mk 14:3).
Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and Jesus' Apostles attend (Jn 12:1-3, 4).	The disciples/Apostles are present as guests (Mt 26:8).	Those who attend are unnamed with the exception of Simon, the host (Mk 14:3).
Mary of Bethany has "ointment of pure nard" (Jn 12:3).*	Unnamed woman has "an alabaster jar of very expensive ointment" (Mt 26:7).*	Unnamed woman has "an alabaster jar of ointment of pure nard" (Mk 14:3).*
Mary of Bethany anoints Jesus' feet and wipes His feet with her hair (Jn 12:3).	The woman anoints Jesus' head (Mt 26:7).	The woman breaks open a bottle of ointment and anoints Jesus' head (Mk 14:3).++
"Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples", protests the waste (Jn 12:4).	Disciples are indignant over the waste (Mt 26:8).	Some who were there were indignant over the waste (Mk 14:4).

Judas says the jar is worth 300 denarii and protests it should be given to the poor (Jn 12:4-5).	Could have been sold at a high price and given to poor (Mt 26:9).	Worth over 300 denarii and should be given to the poor (Mk 14:5).
Jesus defends Mary and says “<u>Let her keep it for the day of my burial</u>”** (Jn 12:7).	Jesus defends the woman as doing a good work (Mt 26:10).	Jesus defends the woman as doing a good work (Mk 14:6).
“The poor you always have with you, but you do not always have me.” (Jn 12:8).	“For you always have the poor with you, but you will not always have me” (Mt 26:11).	“For you always have the poor with you ... but you will not always have me” (Mk 14:7).
	“In pouring this ointment on my body she has done it to prepare me for burial. ” ** (Mt 26:12).	“She had done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burying. ”** (Mk 14:8).
	“... wherever this Gospel is preached ... what she has done will be told in memory of her” (Mt 26:13).	“... wherever the Gospel is preached ... what she has done will be told in memory of her” (Mk 14:9).
Jesus enters Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Jn 12:12-15).	Judas betrays Jesus (Mt 26:14-16)+ (Jesus’ “hour” has come).	Judas betrays Jesus (Mk 14:10-11)+ (Jesus’ “hour” has come).
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* same word in Greek, *muron*, is used in all three accounts.

note the difference between “to keep it** for the day of my burial” in the Gospel of St. John and “she did it to prepare for the day of my burial” in St. Matthew’s Gospel and “has anointed my body beforehand for its burial” in St. Mark’s Gospel.

++ the woman breaks open the jar of ointment to use the last of it; it is the jar Jesus told her to keep for His burial.

+Luke also records Judas’ betrayal just prior to the Last Supper in Luke 22:1-6.

The Celebration of the Ancient Seder

1. The meal opened with prayers and the drinking of the first cup (mixed with a little water) called the **Cup of Sanctification**. This was followed by the first ritual hand washing and the eating of the first dipping of the bitter herbs (*Mishnah: Pesahim*, 10:1-2). This is probably when Jesus replaced the ritual hand washing with the washing of His Apostle's feet.
2. The second cup was the **Cup of Forgiveness** (mixed with a little water), which is poured out but not passed. Then came the four ritual questions, the story of the first Passover, and the singing of Palms 113-114 before this cup was blessed, passed, and consumed (*Mishnah: Pesahim*, 10:3-10:6).
3. After the drinking of the second cup came the second ritual hand washing followed by the eating of the unleavened bread, bitter herb, fruit mixture (charoset), and the lamb. The lamb or kid was to be completely consumed, with no bones broken, and afterward no more food was to be eaten (*Mishnah: Pesahim*, 7:11). Hands were washed a third time and then the most important cup, the climax of the meal, the **Cup of Blessing** (also called the Cup of Redemption) was mixed with a little water, poured, blessed and passed communally (*Mishnah: Pesahim*, 10:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16). This cup represented the blood of the sacrificed victim that was splashed on the altar at the liturgical service and which symbolized the "sign" under which the Israelites were saved on the night of the first Passover.
4. At the conclusion of the meal the 4th cup was poured out (*Mishnah: Pesahim*, 10:7). It was the **Cup of Acceptance** (mixed with a little water), which sealed and united those present to Yahweh through the Passover Sacrifice, continuing the people's acceptance of the covenant for another year. The assembly sang the remainder of the Hallel Psalms 115-118, the faithful drank the 4th cup, and the host announced out: "**It is finished [fulfilled].**"

Sources:

Christ in the Passover, pages 50-61

Mishnah: Pesahim