



Part 27: The Last Supper – for now

Word ALIVE



This is my body



Background Notes -

PURPOSE: To present the events surrounding Holy Thursday, the night Jesus was betrayed, including the Last Supper. John sums up the mystery of unbelief amongst the Pharisees and those who were more afraid of them than of God.

AUTHOR: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John the Evangelists. We turn back mostly to John.

DATE: Towards the Passover of the year 29 or 30.

STYLE: John relays Jesus' alternating use of the term "world" in a positive and a negative sense. Used in the positive sense, the world is God's glorious creation. Used in the negative sense, it is currently under the dominion of Satan. John's overall style is unmistakable, using more expressive, glorifying phrases than the more straightforward (though still glorious) synoptic Gospels.



Opening Quotes -

“I have earnestly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I shall not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” Lk 22:15

“This is my body ...” Lk 22:19

“Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you... but I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.” Lk 22:31

“Truly, I tell you, he who receives anyone whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me.” Jn 13:20

“A new commandment I give you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” Jn 13:34

“No one comes to the Father but by me.” Jn 14:6

“Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me.” Jn 14:11

“If you love me you will keep my commandments. And I will pray to the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever... the Spirit of Truth.” Jn 14:15

“I have spoken this to you that my joy may be in you, and your joy be full.” Jn 15:11

“Father, the hour has come; glorify thy Son that thy Son may glorify thee, since thou hast given him power over all....” Jn 17:1

“...that they may be one, even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you.” Jn 17:21

the BIG PICTURE		: LAW, History, Writings, Prophets		: key covenants in our Father's plan	
12 Periods	Plot	Other books related to period		stories in each period	
BC	THE BEGINNINGS	GN 1-11	Ps 8, 104	Creation, Adam & Eve, Cain & Abel, Noah's ark, Tower of Babel	
1850	THE PATRIARCHS	GN 12-50		Abraham, Isaac, Jacob (Israel), Joseph, Melchizedek	
1250	EXODUS FROM EGYPT	EX		Moses, the burning bush, the plagues, passover, exodus	
1200	JOURNEY TO CANAAN	NM, Jos	LV, DT	Sinai desert, 10 commandments, Levites, Law, Joshua	
1100	THE JUDGE CYCLE	Jg	Ruth	12 tribes, Gideon, Samson, Ruth, Samuel	
1030	KINGS & PROPHETS	1 & 2 S	1 Ch, Ps, Prov	Saul, David, Solomon, Jerusalem, the Temple	
1000	THE DIVIDED KINGDOM	1 Kg	2 Ch, Prov,	Israel (N), Judah (S), Elijah & Elisha, Isaiah, Assyrian exile	
721 587	BABYLONIAN EXILE	2 Kg	2 Ch, Tob, Hos, Am, Hab, Is, Jer, Lam, Jl, Mic, Zp, Jon, Nah, Ob, Ez, Dan, Bar	Babylonians, "major" prophets, Isaiah (to Israel), Jeremiah (to Jerusalem), Ezekiel (to the Exiles)	
538	THE RESTORATION	Ezr, Neh	Est, Judith, Hag, Zech, Mal, Job, Ecc, Songs	Cyrus, 2nd temple, 2nd Law, "minor" prophets, new writings	
163 63	THE REPURIFICATION	1 Mac	Dn, 2Mac, Sirach, Wisdom	Greeks, Maccabean revolt, Hasmonean Dynasty, Romans, Jewish sects (Pharisees, Saducees, Zealots, Essenes)	
AD	JESUS CHRIST	LK	MT, MK, JN	Incarnation, Good News, New Law, Cross & Resurrection	
33 70	APOSTOLIC CHURCH	Acts	Rm, 1&2Co, Ga, Ep, Phil, Col, 1&2Th, 1&2 Tm, Ti, Phm, Hb, Ja, 1P, 2P, 1,2&3J, Jd, Rv	Pentecost, council, journeys, epistles, Body/Bride of Christ	



The Story of Part 27: The Last Supper – for now



Judas agreed to betray Jesus by handing him to the Pharisees for thirty pieces of silver, the price of a slave! Just before this, a woman had poured expensive ointment on Jesus' feet and dried them with her hair. Judas and some of the other apostles complained that they could have sold the ointment and given the money to the poor. Jesus told them that there will always be poor people to take care of, but that he would not always be with them. The generous gesture was welcomed and proper, since it would serve as a preparation for his burial! Jesus was now speaking openly about the fact that he was about to be betrayed and crucified. "Should I ask the Father to spare me?" he asked, and then answered, "No, for this is why I came. Unless a grain of wheat dies it will not produce fruit."

Jesus, at the Passover supper he celebrated that evening with his friends, then poured out his heart and told them, "I have waited a long time to share this meal with you, and I will not eat again with you until the Kingdom comes." He broke the bread, gave it to his disciples and said, "Take this and eat it. This is my body." He then took the cup of wine and said, "Drink this. It is my blood, the blood which will be shed for the forgiveness of sins." Having already lost many disciples for telling them that they had to eat his flesh, these chosen apostles did not question him, but did as he asked. Jesus then reminded them that they would receive the Spirit, enabling them to fulfill God's will. He told them that they were destined to sit on thrones over the twelve tribes of Israel, but that the greatest would be the one who serves. He then backed up his words up by washing their feet like a slave, despite their complaints.

Judas, who just dipped his bread in the same bowl as Jesus, was ready to betray him. "Do what you must," Jesus told Judas. The others thought he was simply going to take care of the money that he was in charge of. Peter promised he would follow Jesus all the way. "You will deny me three times!" Jesus responded. "But after this, when your faith is restored, I need you to watch my flock and support your brothers in the faith."

Jesus then laid on the table that to glorify him was to glorify God the Father, for they were one. He then gave them a new commandment – "Love one another, even as I have loved you." In fact, for the rest of time, people would know that the Father was glorified in the Son by the disciples' unity and love! "May they be one as you and I are one," he prayed to his Father.


But again, slow as always, the apostles (Philip this time) asked him, "Then show us the Father." "How can you ask this after knowing me?" responded Jesus, "For the Father is in me and I in Him. If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." And, once again, he assured them that he would be sending them the Spirit, the counselor of Truth, after he died. Speaking then as a man, he said, "I go now to the Father who is greater than

I." He then told them that they would bear fruit as proof of being his disciples, doing a greater number of works than he had done! But this would be possible only in and through him. Apart from him, like a vine separated from the root, they (and any follower) would simply wither and die. But joined to this vine, sharing the sap of this vine, the branches flourish. "You are no longer mere servants," he told them. "I now call you my friends!"

But, he warned them, the disciple is not above the master. He would suffer, and therefore, so would they. His "hour" had finally come. They would be afraid, despite his reassurances that he needed to die so that the Holy Spirit would come to teach them what they could not understand yet. He confused them by saying "You will look for me, not find me, then find me, and your joy will be so complete you won't ask for anything else!" He was, of course, referring to his (and their eventual) resurrection. "Ask anything in my name, and you will have it," he assured them, stressing that when our will is perfectly united with God's, every prayer will be granted.

"Let me stop speaking in symbols," he told them. "I came from the Father and I'm going back to him." Pretty clear. "We get it," the apostles said, "and we're with you all the way." "Really?" Jesus said... "The time is coming when you're going to scatter in fear! But don't worry, I've prayed to the Father for you to remain strong."

After reassuring his apostles, his own grief surfaced. "Come with me to pray." He took them to the garden of Gethsemane, an olive garden that he liked to frequent. "Please stay awake," he asked them. He went to off to pray, knowing what lay ahead, and became filled with unspeakable agony. "Father!" he cried, "take this cup of suffering away from me." Then, after crying and sweating blood, an uncommon physiological phenomenon that the body can undergo during severe trials, he humbly said, "but your will be done, Father, not mine." Angels then comforted him.

He returned to find his apostles asleep. "Couldn't you stay awake even for an hour? Behold! My hour has come!" And with that, Judas arrived with the chief priests, who brought clubs to arrest him by force. "Which one is he?" the makeshift soldiers asked. And with the famous Judas kiss, Judas singled him out. Jesus, looking out for his apostles' safety, asked the chief priests, "Okay, you found me. Why the clubs? Am I a criminal?" One of them slapped him in the face, asking him (ironically), "Do you know who you're talking to?" When the apostles awoke, Peter struck one of the soldiers with his sword. "Put it away," Jesus told him, restoring the man's ear. "This was meant to be." And just like that, Jesus was taken. The apostles fled in total shock and disarray. 



Defending the Faith: The Eucharist

"How could Catholics seriously think bread and wine become body and blood? God in a wafer! There is only the one sacrifice of Calvary. And why does the Church forbid communion to the divorced?"

We seriously think bread and wine become body and blood because we take Christ's words seriously. Ironically, most "fundamentalist" Christians abandon their rule of taking the Bible literally when they read the words "This is my body." Jesus often spoke in parables, but not this time. With no "symbolic explanation," he allowed many disciples to leave, unable to accept in faith his shocking teaching. "Will you leave, too?" he asked his apostles. "Where else could we go?" was Peter's sincere response, "You have the words of eternal life." And so he does.

Just after the Last Supper, Jesus assured his apostles that he would send them the Holy Spirit to teach them the things they could not understand. This was one of them. The Church thus defines the *transubstantiation* of the bread and wine: while the appearance of bread and wine remain, their essence is *changed* into (not *added* to) the body and blood of Christ. Although "transubstantiation" sounds complicated, it does not attempt to explain *how* it happens. Christ specifically wanted us to accept this teaching in faith, challenging us to simply trust him. If he said it, it must be so.

"How can the Creator of the universe be contained in a small wafer?" a non-Catholic Christian may ask. A fair response would be, "How could He be contained in a woman's womb, let alone a microscopic, fertilized egg?" The Eucharist troubles some Christians more than the greater mystery of the Incarnation! But the belief in the bodily presence of Christ in the bread and wine, it should be made clear, existed from the earliest days of the Church. The Romans even accused the first Christians of cannibalism, for they ate the flesh and drank the blood of their leader! The earliest letters of the Church Fathers also attest to the Real Presence. It was not until the Reformation that it was ever doubted. Even Luther defended the teaching as biblical, but defined it instead as *consubstantiation*, meaning that the

Body and Blood are present *with* the bread and wine. It didn't take long for this to evolve into a merely symbolic interpretation of Christ's teaching. But, as difficult as it is, the Church has followed Jesus' teaching literally.

Why forbid the Eucharist to some? Paul warned us not to profane the body of Christ by taking Communion in an unworthy state. What does that mean? The Church teaches simply that receiving the Body of Christ, the Eucharist, implies living in accordance with the teaching of the Body of Christ, the Church. As for the divorced, it is only the divorced who have remarried (without prior annulments) who contradict Christ's teaching on divorce. This does not mean that they are excommunicated! Nor does it mean they might as well miss Mass! It only means that they refrain from Communion as a visible sign of respect for Christ's teaching on marriage.

There is also *spiritual* communion, a sacred tradition open to all (regardless of marital status), in which Jesus is worshipped in his bodily presence in the consecrated bread. Chapels for Eucharistic adoration are found in most parishes. The remarried but repentant Catholic who worships Jesus in this way may receive greater grace than "compliant" Catholics who bring judgment upon themselves for not thinking twice about the bread they eat! How can we casually allow the molecules of our Savior's body and blood mingle with our own?

Together as one body in Christ, we can all acknowledge his bodily presence and our own unworthiness. Whether we commune physically or spiritually, we can make our own the words inspired by the Roman Centurion whose faith astonished Christ – "Lord, I am not worthy to receive you, but only say the word, and I shall be healed."



Expressing the Faith: Take Our Bread

The bread offered in the Mass is not a new sacrifice, but a partaking in the one sacrifice of Calvary, offered by our High Priest, Jesus Christ. May we be one as He is one with the Father.

*Take our bread, we ask you, take our hearts,
We love you, take our lives,
Oh, Father, we are yours, we are yours.*

*Yours as we stand at the table you set
Yours as we eat the bread our hearts can't forget.
We are the sign of your life with us yet.
We are yours, we are yours.
(chorus)*

*Your holy people standing washed in your blood,
Spirit-filled, yet hungry, we await your food.
We are poor but we've brought ourselves
the best we could.
We are yours, we are yours.
(chorus)*

↗ **Next time: "The Friday called 'Good'"** ↖