The Lord's supper…

Matthew 26 v 1 to 35

The plot to kill Jesus (Matthew 26 v 1 to 5)

- Note the difference between Jesus' prophecy in v 1 and 2 and the Jewish leaders' plans in v 3 to 5 – whose word prevailed and why? See Acts 2 v 23, Psalm 33 v 10, 11.

The chief priests and elders did not want to put Jesus to death during the Passover feast, yet that is exactly what happened. This is an indication that Jesus was in control of events. The leaders were right to fear the people. Jerusalem's population swelled to a million during this 'compulsory' feast; and with religious fervour and national 'Messianism' at a high pitch, a spark might set off an explosion…

Jesus anointed at Bethany (Matthew 26 v 6 to 13)

- What did Mary do and why? How did the disciples react? By contrast, how did Jesus respond?

Bethany was within a Sabbath-day's journey from Jerusalem, and was Jesus' favourite place to stay. This incident took place "six days before the Passover" (John 12 v 1) in the house of Simon the leper. John identifies the woman as Mary, sister of Martha and Lazarus. Each time Mary is mentioned in the Gospels, she was at the feet of Jesus: she sat at his feet and listened (Luke 10 v 38 to 42); she fell at his feet in sorrow after the death of Lazarus (John 11 v 28 to 32); she anointed his feet (John 12 v 3). Jesus explains that Mary knew by faith that his body would not see decay (Psalm 16 v 10), so instead of anointing his body after his death, she did so beforehand as an act of worship…

Judas to betray Jesus (Matthew 25 v 14 to 16)

"Thirty pieces of silver" (v 15) – "thirty shekels of silver" was the redemption price paid for a slave (Exodus 21 v 32). See also Zechariah 11 v 12, 13 and Matthew 27 v 3, 4. "From that moment he sought opportunity to betray him" (v 16) – the leaders were trying to find a way to take Jesus quietly, to avoid a public uproar.

The Passover with the disciples – the Lord's supper (Matthew 26 v 17 to 29)

- "My time is at hand" (v 18) – how does this 'catch-phrase' (told to the host of the Passover, or *Seder* meal) demonstrate Jesus' understanding and control in this time of crisis? Note that in many other places Jesus refers to the 'hour' (see Matthew 26 v 45, John 13 v 1, John 17 v 1).
- How does v 24 illustrate the paradox of God's fore-ordained purpose and man's responsibility?
- Matthew includes the idea of a 'new covenant' in v 28, 29. In what way does this link with Jeremiah 31 v 31 to 34?

When the bread was lifted up at Passover, the head of the family would say: *"This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let everyone who hungers come and eat; let everyone who is needy come and eat the Passover meal."*

Everything had a symbolic meaning: the bitter herbs recalled slavery; salt water symbolized tears shed under Egypt's oppression; the lamb represented the sacrifice that allowed God's judgment to 'pass over' the believers' household.

[MORE OVER…]

The Passover created a nation; the Lord's Supper also creates a people – those united in Jesus, trusting his sin-bearing sacrifice for us.

As we eat the bread we remember how Jesus' body was broken, pierced, and beaten for our redemption.

As we drink the cup we remember that his blood, his life, was poured out at Golgotha for us.

Traditionally there were four cups of Passover, based on Exodus 6 v 6, 7:

> (i)   the cup of *bringing out*;
>
> (ii)   the cup of *deliverance*;
>
> (iii)   the cup of *redemption* or *blessing*; and
>
> (iv)   the cup of *taking out*.
>
> Jesus stops at the third cup, the cup of blessing (1 Corinthians 10 v 16). This Passover is unfinished (v 29), but the feast will be consummated at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (1 Corinthians 11 v 26, Revelation 19 v 9).

Jesus foretells Peter's denial (Matthew 26 v 30 to 35)

- "But after I am raised up" (v 32) – do you think the disciples had any idea what Jesus meant by this?
- Peter evidently found it much easier to apply Jesus' words of warning to the other disciples than to himself. What was wrong with his attitude? What lessons can we learn from Peter's failure?