



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 26:17–25; Mark 14:12–16

Gospel of Matthew

“The Last Passover and the First Lord’s Supper: Part I”

TRANSCRIPT

For the Scripture reading today, I want you to turn to Matthew chapter 26, and let me read verses 17 through 25, and also, I want to read one of the sections from the Gospel of Mark, which contains fuller information of the preparation of the Passover. So if you have your New Testaments, turn with me to Matthew chapter 26, verse 17. In these three verses Matthew describes the preparations for the Passover supper:

“Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, ‘Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the Passover?’ And he said, ‘Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at thy house with my disciples.’ And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover.”

I’d like for you to turn with me, if you will, to Mark chapter 14, and listen as I read verses 12 through 16 of Mark 14, for here we have the same account we have just read, but in Mark, it is just a little bit fuller than it is in Matthew. In Mark we read, the 12th verse of the 14th chapter:

“And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the Passover, his disciples said unto him, ‘Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the Passover?’ And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, (Luke, incidentally, tells us these disciples were Peter and John) and saith unto them, ‘Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man (notice that, particularly) bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the Passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.’ And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover.”

Let’s turn back now to Matthew 26, and let me read verses 20 through 25, in which we have the Matthean description of the celebration of the Passover supper. Verse 20, Matthew 26:

“Now when the evening was come, he sat down with the Twelve. And as they did eat, he said, ‘Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.’ (Mark, incidentally, adds the words that ‘One of you that eateth with me shall betray me’ is allusion to Psalm 41 and verse 9. In other words, in the statement that our Lord made at the

table, there was a reflection of the fact that he gathered that information from the study of the Old Testament Scriptures, and Judas’ betrayal of our Lord was prophesied in the Old Testament. That’s not the only place that reference is made, but nevertheless, it is important to realize that as our Lord was carrying out the observation of the last Passover, he recognized that even the activities of the betrayer were activities that had been prophesied by the Scriptures of the Old Covenant. Verse 22 says) “And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, ‘Lord, is it I?’ (In the Greek text it may be, I think, a little more accurately rendered): “It isn’t I, Lord, is it?” (And Jesus continues): And he answered and said, ‘He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born.’ (That’s a very important statement, theologically; I’d like for you to think about it. It had been good for that man if he had not been born.) Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, ‘Master, it is not I, is it?’ He said unto him, ‘Thou hast said.’”

Now that was a way of answering affirmatively. It was very close to our, “You said it.” In other words, “You have made the necessary admission.” In effect, it says, yes, you are the betrayer.

May the Lord bless this reading of his Word.

Our subject for this morning and for next Sunday morning, the Lord willing, is “The Last Passover and the First Lord’s Supper.” The Apostle Paul wrote, “For even Christ, our Passover, is sacrificed for us.” And as we continue our journey into the study of the holiest of all, in this section of the study of Matthew, our Passover goes to his Passover.

This Passover that is described here is the last authorized Passover in the Word of God. All Passovers celebrated since that time do not have authorization. For since this time, the Passover sacrifice and all that it symbolizes has come to its fulfillment. Now, as we read through this, we also notice that in the midst of this last Passover, the Lord institutes the first Lord’s Supper. It is rather cleverly done, because in the use of the emblems, the Lord Jesus took things out of the Passover service, and made them the grounds for the use of the Lord’s Supper. It was the custom, for example, to use unleavened bread, for the bread of that meal. Our Lord took part of that and instituted the part of the Lord’s Supper in which the bread is reminiscent, or is intended to remind us of the fact that he gave his body for us.

It was the custom of the Jewish people in their observation of the Passover to partake of four different glasses of wine. In fact, in some of the tradition, there is a fifth glass of wine involved which is left untouched. But when the third glass came for its use, it was at that point, it seems, in the service, that our Lord took that third glass and used it as the completion of the service of the Lord’s Supper by taking it and pointing out that it suggested that it be the blood that was shed in the foundation and the institution of the New Covenant based upon it. So, you can see this was a momentous occasion, and it was a momentous occasion in the Gospel of Matthew. It is extremely important. It signifies the passing of the Old Covenant into the New Covenant, and it is important that we study it in that light.

When we look at this account, it seems very strange, but nevertheless true, that the two important characters in it are Jesus—that’s not unexpected—and Judas—and that’s unexpected. Several unusual interchanges take place between Judas and the Lord Jesus. None is more significant than the statement that is found in the 24th verse, “The Son of man goeth, as it is written of him, but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had not been born.”

That is a statement which very plainly teaches the sovereignty of God. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him. Not a single step of the way is wrong. Every step that our Lord took,

every step that Judas took, every step that the apostles take in connection with this remembrance of him is in connection with the Scriptures. The Son of man goeth as it written of him. The blueprint, the guide, is the Word of God, and every detail is brought to its completion.

Now we stress very strongly in Believers Chapel—the sovereignty of God—because we believe the Bible stresses the sovereignty of God, because we believe the Bible stresses the sovereignty of God. I was speaking to my wife last night about this because, because this subject is here before us. And it is my contention—I don’t know whether she would agree or not—but it is my contention that we would never have any difficulty with the doctrine of the sovereignty of God if we just read the Bible. The only difficulties we have come from the fact that occasionally there are people who will say, but, what about such-and-such. We never think about those things until someone raises an objection. If you read the Scriptures, the impression you get is of a deep doctrine of the sovereignty of God in the experiences of men.

Now we must not think that this doctrine of the sovereignty of God means that men are not responsible. Notice the next statement that our Lord makes. He said, the Son of man goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed. So he expresses the viewpoint that Judas is liable to terrible judgment even though he is part of the plan of God in the betrayal and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot flee behind the sovereignty of God and say that because God is sovereign, we, therefore, are not responsible. The Son of man goeth, as it is written, but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed. And incidentally, that word, woe, expresses terrible judgment—not light judgment—terrible judgment.

And then to enforce it, he adds, it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Now that statement is a statement that thoroughly and completely refutes the doctrine of universalism and establishes also the doctrine of the eternal punishment of the finally impenitent. I know that that doctrine has fallen upon very evil times, and it is not popular to speak about hellfire and damnation. In fact, it is generally thought that if a man preaches hellfire and damnation, he’s old fashioned, out-of-date, and thoroughly irrelevant. But let me assure you, again, if you read the Bible

and pay particular attention to what it says, you will not have any difficulty with the doctrine of eternal punishment.

It is not only taught by the Bible, it is taught most plainly and most fully by our Lord Jesus Christ himself. I think, rather, that the reason that the Lord Jesus is the one who has spoken so strongly about eternal punishment, so much more fully than anyone else, is simply the fact that the Lord Jesus is the only person who has to this point experienced the terrors of hell. And he experienced the terrors of hell when he hung upon the cross and cried out, “My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?” And he is therefore most qualified to speak about the terrors of eternal judgment. He has experienced them for those for whom he has died.

So, in the Bible, it is the Lord Jesus who speaks above all others about eternal punishment. And that text, it had been good for that man if he had not been born. If you would just think about it for a moment—we’ll think about it later—you’ll see that that text could not have been given were it not for the fact that Jesus Christ believed in eternal punishment, the everlasting punishment and torment of the finally impenitent.

We have the idea in the 20th century that lapse of time converts guilt into innocence, but that is not true. The verdict “guilty for ten days” or “guilty for six months,” or “guilty for ten years” is, as William G. T. Shedd used to say, “Hibernian. Guilt is indivisible and untransferrable. Sin,” Professor Shedd used to say, “is the only perpetual motion that has ever been discovered.”

All suffering in the next life of which the sufficient and justifying reason is guilt, must continue as long as the reason continues. And when a person has sinned against God, he has become guilty, and since that guilt is everlasting guilt, then the punishment that goes with the guilt is everlasting. It is impossible that we not as guilty ten days from now as we are today if we have sinned.

For example, suppose we have never sinned until today, and now we have sinned today and therefore we are guilty before God. The wages of sin is death. We are guilty of death. Well, next Sunday, are we any less guilty because seven days of transpired? No. The reason why our guilt is still

there: the lapse of time does not convert guilt into innocence. Are we just as guilty a year from now? Yes, we are just as guilty a year from now—ten years from now, 1,000 years from now, 10 million years from now—we are just as guilty. Lapse of time does not convert guilt into innocence, for the reason for the guilt, human sin, still exists. That’s why in the Bible, one of the reasons why, we have the doctrine of eternal punishment.

There is a story of a Baptist minister who was, at one time, well-known in here in the Southern part of the United States. His name was Dr. L. R. Scarborough. A man came to him once and said, “I’m thinking of joining your church, Dr. Scarborough. Do you believe it’s necessary in order for a man to be a Baptist to believe in the doctrine of hell?”

And Dr. Scarborough said, “Well, maybe your trouble is more serious than what you think. You believe in hell, don’t you?”

The man said, “Yes. You’ll remember Dr. Scarborough, that my wife died not long ago, and you buried her, and you’ll remember her, too, that we lost a little child some time ago who you also buried. I do believe that they are not in hell. I believe that they are in heaven.”

“And yet you do not believe in hell?” Dr. Scarborough said.

He said, “No, I do not believe in hell. I believe hell is an injustice. I believe that it is dishonoring to God. I do not believe that a merciful God would allow that there would be a place of eternal punishment.”

“Well,” Dr. Scarborough said, “On whose authority do you believe that there’s a heaven?”

“Well, on the authority of the Bible.”

Well Dr. Scarborough said, “On whose authority in the Bible?”

He said, “Well, on Jesus Christ’s authority, because Jesus Christ said, ‘I go to prepare a place for you.’”

The preacher said, “On the authority of Jesus Christ, then, you believe in heaven. Suppose I should quote to you a text from the words of Jesus Christ which just as plainly teaches that there is hell and everlasting punishment. Will you believe, then, in that?”

He said, “Oh, do you put it that way?” [Laughter]

And Dr. Scarborough said, “Yes, I put it that way. Jesus Christ speaks more times about eternal punishment than he does about heaven.”

And then he added, “If you don’t believe the doctrine of hell, you don’t really believe that Jesus Christ is an authority about anything else.” The Bible is an authority about the teaching of hell and everlasting torment, and it is our Lord Jesus who talks about it more than anybody else.

Well now, let’s turn to our section here, and in a moment we’ll talk further about that statement. I think it will be well for us to, just for a moment, to review a few things. In the New Testament, we have set before us two ordinances. I know that there is a large religious organization that has added five more: the ordinance of ordination, the ordinance of confirmation, the ordinance of matrimony, the ordinance of extreme unction, and the ordinance of penance. I do not, however, believe that these are taught in Scripture.

The Protestants and the Roman Catholics have agreed that there are at least two ordinances plainly taught in the Word. One is the ordinance of baptism. The other is the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. Sometimes these are called sacraments.

The ordinance of baptism is the ordinance that signifies our entrance into the Christian life. That’s why, when you come to faith in Jesus Christ, you don’t raise your hand in the meeting. You don’t write your name on a decision card. You don’t come down front and pray through. You do not do anything. The biblical way to express your faith is to ask for water baptism of the elders. That is the way we practice water baptism in Believers Chapel. If you have come to faith through the preaching of the Word, then you should come to the elders, give your testimony to them and say you would like to be baptized in testimony to your salvation. And one of the elders will interview you and will baptize you in water, and you can give your testimony to others that you have come to faith in Christ. That is the biblical way to express your faith.

It is much better to do things the biblical way. Raising your hand in a meeting or writing your name on a decision card or coming down front, these are all the inventions of well-meaning

men, but they are not taught in Holy Scripture. And there is no need to depart from Holy Scripture in these matters. The Word of God is sufficient for us. Now I hope you will only take that as a mild attack on these other things. It is intended to be only mild, because it’s possible for a man to be a very fine and godly Christian—better than I—and believe a few of these things that are not found in the Word of God. But it is much better for us to stick to the Bible. Much simpler, much plainer.

The other ordinance is the Lord’s Supper. That signifies our continuance in the body of Christ. In baptism we signify that we have come in to the body of Christ through conversion. It therefore is observed once; once only. Of course, if you were baptized as a child, and you weren’t sure you became a Christian or not, it’s perfectly all right to come and be baptized twice.

As a matter of fact, I’ve been baptized twice, too. I was sprinkled when I young, but I was not a Christian. I’m not blaming the church. It was my own disobedience to the Word of God. Later on, after I was converted, I was baptized by immersion. The mode is not all that significant in my mind, though I think immersion is the biblical way. But believer’s baptism is the normal thing. After that, no further baptisms. If I were to not be baptized again, it would not help me one bit. I would not receive any more assurance of my salvation, and I assure you that when I visit the Holy Land and stand by the Jordan River, I will not ask someone to baptize me in the Jordan River in order that I might have a little more assurance by having the waters of that river flow over my head.

Now the Lord’s Supper signifies continuance in the body of Christ. And we meet around the Lord’s table and partake of the elements of the bread and wine, in token of the fact that we owe all of our spiritual life to what Jesus Christ did, and in so doing, all of us together, we signify everything to him, but we also signify that we are one with one another in this common faith with him.

That, incidentally, is the fellowship taught in the Word of God. The fellowship taught in the Word of God is not having a church banquet three or four times a year. The fellowship in the Word of God is not having a fellowship supper on Wednesday night. The fellowship taught in the Bible, if you’ll carefully examine Acts chapter 2 verse 42 in the original text is the fellowship of the breaking of bread and prayers. That’s the fellowship that we all have; the fellowship in our Lord Jesus Christ.

And listen, the more we know of him and the more we have come to understand him, the deeper is our fellowship with one another. No social relationship—purely social—could make up for the fellowship that we have of a common love and appreciation for Jesus Christ. And I want to assure you that there is no fellowship like the fellowship of the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the fellowship.

Now we don’t, when we say that, mean that it is wrong for us to get together, occasionally, and break bread together outside of the communion service. Thanksgiving morning we shall make a little attempt to do that. But fellowship is not essentially that. Fellowship is fellowship in our Lord Jesus Christ. Well, that’s the Lord’s Supper. An ordinance is, incidentally, a symbolic rite that sets forth the primary facts of the Christian truth and is universally obligatory among believers. And therefore, it should be the desire of every Christian to observe these ordinances.

The Lord’s Supper, the one that is before us here, particularly, is called, in the New Testament, the communion, because it is a time of fellowship with the Lord. It is called the Lord’s Table, because he is the host, and we are the guests at the table. Wouldn’t you like to be invited to something by him? Well, I would. Well, he invites you every week to the Lord’s Table. He’s the host, and we are the guests.

It is called in Scripture the Eucharist; a term which has prevailed in the more liturgical groups of Christians, but Eucharist is simply the English transliteration of *eucharistia*, which means “thanksgiving” in Greek. So it is an expression of the fact that the Lord’s Supper is a time of thanksgiving. And it is called, simply, the breaking of bread in Acts chapter 2 and verse 42, one of the earliest descriptions of what we do. We break bread together.

The importance of the corporate worship of the church is expressed in the instructions the Lord Jesus has given concerning the Lord’s Supper. So far as I know, this is the only act of worship for which he gives special direction. That’s why it is important that believers should observe the Lord’s Supper. I know believers who talk a great deal about the victorious life, and all of the things that they do in order to attain to the victorious life, or of the meetings that they attend to listen to

expositions of the victorious life, who oddly, if ever, sit at the Lord’s Table. Will you pardon me for not thinking that their life’s so victorious when there’s something in the Word of God as simple as attendance at the Lord’s Supper?

It pleases him. He says, “With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you.” It pleases the Lord for his saints to gather around the Lord’s Table, and if we never gather around the Lord’s Table, can we believe that we are living a life so victorious that we neglect these simple little things that please our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ? By the way, it was called something a little bit different from the Lord’s Supper.

Now, in Charleston, South Carolina where I grew up, we had dinner in the middle of the day. We had breakfast in the morning, and then in the afternoon, at 1:20 to 2, we ate our dinner. Then, at night, we had supper. And most of our places, I think, through the Southern part of the United States, that is reversed. We have breakfast in the morning. We have a light meal in the middle of the day, and then we have dinner at night. That was the custom in the East, which merely shows that Charleston was unscriptural, or biblical, I presume. [Laughter] But then, they’re strange about other things, too.

Now in the East, individuals had a light breakfast, and then they had a very light lunch. It was usually taken wherever they happened to be. Many of them were working men and laborers. And so they had a piece of bread and a little glass of wine in order to wet their lips, and that was about it, until they came home. And then at home, at night, they had the principal meal, when the whole family was gathered together. It was time of family fellowship as well as eating.

Now, the term that is used to describe that in the Bible is *deipnon*, or dinner, and that is the word used by the Apostle Paul to describe the Lord’s Supper. It really should have been called, the Lord’s Dinner, and that stresses again that it is the Lord’s Dinner, when the whole family is gathered together we have fellowship with him.

The Lord’s Supper is rooted in the Passover. What was the Passover? Well, the Passover was a memorial of the physical deliverance from the land of Israel by a penal sacrifice. That is, by the life

of a lamb; a lamb that was slain for the members of the family. So that Passover, then, was a memorial sacrifice, when year after year they celebrated the Passover, they thought of that great deliverance from the bondage to Pharaoh. And they did it by means of the slaughter of a lamb, a lamb for a family.

Now, in the case of the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s Supper is a memorial of a spiritual deliverance from a bondage to sin by a penal sacrifice—not of a physical sacrifice, an animal—but by the lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ. So in the case of the Passover, we have a memorial sacrifice. In the case of the Lord’s Supper we have a memorial observation.

Not only do we have that similarity, but in the case of the Passover, that Passover was in anticipation of a future fulfillment of that which they are doing. When they ate of the lamb, they looked forward into the future, toward the time when the Lamb of God would come and would offer the sacrifice which would deliver them from the bondage—not bondage to Pharaoh—but bondage to Satan and sin and the world. So it was a memorial service of anticipation. They did it till he comes, to use Paul’s words.

Now in the Lord’s Supper, we are told to observe the Lord’s Supper until he comes, until he comes with the kingdom, until he sets up his kingdom, until we eat and drink the bread and wine with him in the kingdom of God. That’s what he states in the passage we shall not consider today. So it is a memorial sacrifice that looks toward the past. It is also an anticipatory observance that looks toward the future. It’s not surprising, then, that the Lord’s Supper was instituted in the matrix of the last official authorized Passover.

The preparation was very simple. Incidentally, there are three movements in this section. There is the preparation described for us in verses 17, 18 and 19, and then follows the celebration in the passage that we read, and we save for our consideration next Sunday the institution of the Lord’s Supper. So we have the preparation for the Passover and the celebration of the Passover this morning.

It was a time of great anticipation for the members of the nation Israel. It was the festival of their birth night as a nation. And so, people came from all over that eastern world to Jerusalem to celebrate a Passover in Jerusalem for all that that meant to them. There were gay crowds—not crowds of gay people [laughter]—but gay crowds. And there were tents. Because there were so many people there, they did not have room for them. It has been estimated that four times the population of Jerusalem, at least, at this time would be there; perhaps more. And in addition, our Lord was staying in Bethany.

So if we can think of the festival, the festive crowds, the overcrowded city. The meeting of old friends and relatives, and if we can think of the city as being so packed and jammed that the Lord Jesus was evidently spending his nights in Bethany with the apostles, we get something of the picture of the occasion.

Well, as the day for the celebration of the Passover drew near, the disciples came to the Lord Jesus and said, where do you wish that we prepare for the Passover supper? And the Lord gave them these most interesting instructions. He said, I want you to go in to the city, Peter and John, and there you will meet a man. Now that was significant, because in those days, it was the woman who was the burden-bearer. The woman was the one who had the pitcher of water—as it should be, of course [laughter]. So, the very fact that that there would be a man bearing a pitcher of water would mark him out in the crowd.

But now think about it for a moment. There would be vast crowds of people, and the two apostles, Peter and John, were told simply—so far as we can tell, they were given no other instructions—you go into the city, and you will see a man bearing a pitcher of water. Well, you can see immediately that God’s powerful, providential hand was at work, because he had a man a particular point in time go over and pick up his pitcher, and go to the well, and undoubtedly it was crowded—he waited his turn. He got his water and started back, and just at the point of Peter and John’s entrance into the city, as they arrived at a certain place, here that man just happened to be—so an Arminian might think [laughter].

But nevertheless, the Bible teaches that this is the sovereign, providential activity of God by which he arranges all of this. You know, it is almost as if God himself is preparing the cloth over the Passover table for the express purpose of celebrating that Passover. He was in ultimate control of everything that was happening.

Those two men went in. They went, after they followed that man, to the house, after they entered, to ask the good man of the house, is there a place here where the Lord Jesus may observe the Passover? And evidently the Lord Jesus had spoken to him previously about this, and he took them, not to a room, a guest room, which is where the animals were brought in and the guests were put off, a very poor kind of room. That’s what our Lord asked for.

But rather, he took them to a large upper room, furnished and prepared. It’s almost as if this man anticipating that it is the king who is going to observe the Passover supper, does not give him a poor place for the observance of it, but takes him to the finest room in the house. That’s the difference between the two words, *kataluma* and *anogeon*, the difference between an ordinary place and this upper room, beautifully carpeted and prepared where the apostles prepared for the Passover feast.

Well, we don’t need to talk about they took the lamb, how they went to have it slain by the priests, and how they came back to have it roasted (I guess we’d say barbequed) over pomegranate spits. And they decorated the room for the observance of the Passover.

Now we read in verse 20 and 25 of the celebration itself. Our Passover goes to his Passover, but it’s very strange—I guess it’s fitting—demons and devils follow him. Now when the evening was come, we read in the 20th verse, he sat down with the Twelve. And he said, “Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.”

Incidentally, when they sat down, they were reclining. Leonardo da Vinci has given us, of course, one of the great masterpieces, the painting of *The Last Supper* in the church in Milano, Santa Maria delle Grazie, our lady or Holy Mary of Graces. And many of you in this room have seen that

remarkable piece of work. There is not question but that he had great insight into some of the things that were taking place, but one fundamental thing was wrong.

If you remember, he had the disciples, the apostles, sitting behind the table with the Lord Jesus in the middle, something like one, long banquet table. And there is John on his right, and there is Peter behind him and Judas between them. And Peter is looking over the back of Judas to ask John the question, and then over on the other side are various other members of the apostles, on the other side, down to, I think, Simon is one the end on the right.

But in those days, they did not sit at tables like that. They reclined. They reclined around a rectangular table. Now this rectangular table, if we could think of it as this aisle right here, a lengthy table like this. This table would be about 18 inches high, or perhaps only 12 inches high. So they would lay, they would recline on their left side and eat with their right hand on pillows. And they would recline in such a way that the head of one would be against the breast of another. That’s how we read of John who as on Jesus’ breast.

Now on the left side, over here, the first place would be the place for the youngest—that would be John. Then the next place for the *pater familias*, that is the head of the family, the second place. The third place was the place for the guest of honor. That was where Judas was seated. And then the others around the table, around to the end, the last place on the end on this side would be opposite the Apostle John.

Now we not only know that this was likely the situation, because not only was it true to the customs of the time, but it enables to understand certain things that might be difficult otherwise. It enables us to understand, for example, how John heard about the sign of the dipping of the sop. If Peter had heard, the one who shall betray is the one who dips the sop with me, Judas would have never left that gathering alive, because Peter would surely have taken his sword after him. [Laughter] It explains, also, why Jesus Christ took the sop and first handed it to Judas, because he was the guest of honor. He was seated in the place of the guest of honor.

It explains how Judas can ask to see if his treachery is known, and our Lord answer him positively and no one else hear it, because he was leaning on Judas’ breast. And it also explains how Peter could beckon to John. Leonardo had difficulty showing that, and so he has Peter leaning back behind Judas in seeking to talk to John. But it would be very simple if he was seated right across the end of the table from John, and so he beckoned to him, right after the Lord announced that someone would betray him, and asked who it is that was to do the betraying.

It also explains how Peter would be seated over here, because as they began this supper, remember, they had a little dispute again over who should be the greatest. And Judas, evidently won out in that dispute, because he was placed in the place of honor, and Peter, having been shamed in being found out for his pride, raced over and took the lowest place which was over here, perhaps thinking that the principle of those being humble should be raised to superiority, he might gain it after all [laughter]. Who can tell?

But at any rate, that was the situation as they were around the table and Jesus said, verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. It was the custom, incidentally, at the Passover for them to have four cups—I mentioned this. The service was a very simple one in which they gathered. They had a word of thanksgiving—I’ll not go into details—but they took one of the cups and drank the cup.

Then the food was brought in, but the food was not eaten at that point. It was brought in and then the child would ask the father a question. This was part of the service. He would ask, what does all this mean? And his father would explain to him the meaning of the Passover. You see, the Passover service was really for the children. It was to impress upon them the theocratic character and the redemptive nature of the nation Israel in the world. And the father’s duty, as the head of the family—not the mother’s incidentally; the best Bible teacher we shall ever have is our own father, not our mother but our own father—so the father would explain the significance of the Passover rite.

Now I can imagine that this last Passover was carried out in all of its details to perfection, and those traditions that were scriptural or in harmony with Scripture would be carried out, too. So I

can imagine John being the one to ask the formal question, Lord, what’s the meaning of the Passover rite? And the Lord Jesus would then expound the significance of the Passover. Wouldn’t you loved to have been there when the Lord Jesus expounded the significance of the Passover supper, and said all of these things that I’m saying to you right now? [Laughter] That would have been a magnificent experience. And I’m sure that many expositions since that time would be corrected in many points if we could just have access to what our Lord said.

Well after they expounded the Passover, they took another cup. It was a time of joy and thanksgiving, and wine played a great part in it. Then, having taken the second cup, they launched into the eating of the lamb and the other things that were there on the table, each of them having certain significance with reference to the deliverance from the land of Egypt. The bread signifying one thing, the herbs signifying certain things, the lamb signifying certain things, the [indistinct] and other parts of it signifying certain things; all meaningful, part probably of the exposition of the Lord Jesus.

Well, this institution of the third part of the ceremony, the eating of the Passover meal, was for the *pater familias* to take a piece of unleavened bread, which he probably gave thanks for—and there instituted the ceremony of the bread in the Lord’s Supper—he took the piece of bread and put it down into the common pot or dish where the lamb and the other things that were cooked with it were. His tendency was, or his desire was, to go in with a piece of unleavened bread and secure on it the choicest piece of the lamb, which he in turn gave to the honored guest, which was Judas.

And so he reached down with the sop, took the lamb out and handed it to Judas, almost as if he were giving Judas one last chance. This did not take our Lord by surprise. He said that he was going to be betrayed and by one who was at the table. He knew full well from study of Scripture what was taking place. And so he took this, as if, when he handed it to Judas, to say, Judas, will you really go through with this act of betraying me? And Judas took the sop.

The disciples said, remember, is it I, Lord, or, it isn’t I, is it, Lord? all around the circle. And the Lord Jesus says, they went around the circle, came to Judas—he evidently was silent for a

while—and he said, the Son of man goeth as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed; it would have been good for him if he had not been born.

Judas, hearing our Lord say this, thinking that perhaps since he hasn’t said anything they’re going to think I’m the betrayer, knowing of course that he was. He then replied himself. He said, “Rabbi, it is not I, is it?” And did you notice the difference? In the once case, the eleven say, it is not I, Lord, is it? But in Judas’ case he says, it is not I, master, is it?

You know, there is a text in 1 Corinthians chapter 12 verse 3 that says, “No man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit.” Now that is a text that teaches, of course, the efficacious grace of God. No man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit. Now that does not mean, of course, that a man may not utter the word, Lord. Many people utter the word, Lord.

What is meant by that passage is, call him Lord, in the sense of acknowledging him as Lord and Savior. No man can call Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit. I can just imagine Judas, as they went around the circle saying, Lord, it’s not I is it? Lord, it’s not I, is it? Lord, it’s not I, is it? And then Judas forming his lips to l-lor—master, it is not I, is it? He couldn’t get out the word, Lord. Because no man calls Jesus Lord except by the Holy Spirit. How much we are to make of that, I don’t know, but I think it’s rather significant, that he alone says, master, it is not I, is it?

Many years ago, I was preaching in Greenhill School when Greenhill School was on Walnut Hill Lane, in the early days of the church that is now known as Northwest Bible Church in which I was preaching regularly. And we were meeting in the schoolhouse, and it was just a small auditorium that seated about a hundred people, and we had one Sunday night about 50 or 60 people there.

I was going through the Gospel of Luke, and had come to this section in Luke, and at night, some of the young people would come down and sit on the front row, some of those 6, 7, 10 years of age. They’d all sit right down underneath me. And I was on the same level with them.

And that night, I was talking about Judas, and then I talked about the Lord Jesus, taking that sop and dipping it down in, and taking the choice piece of the lamb, and handing it to Judas. And I was going through the motions of dipping it and handing it, and then this little boy, who is now

about 35 years of age [laughter]. He was about 8 or 9 years of age, and he was listening very intently to what I was saying. He was sitting just about there. And I did like this: I dipped it down, and I said, “He said to Judas, just as if he were saying, Judas, are you really going to betray me?” And I pushed it out toward him, and he jumped up out of his chair, and he said, “Don’t give it to me! Don’t give it to me!” [Sudden, loud laughter. Johnson laughs]

That young man, now, is in the Plano Bible Chapel as one of the members of that little church. I don’t know whether he remembers it. But I certainly remember it, and the people who were there remembered it up.

Well, our time is just about up. I want to simply repeat this and then wait for next Sunday when we conclude. Now our Lord’s words that he speaks finally, the Son of man goeth, as it is written of him, but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man; it would have been good for that man if he had not been born, clearly teach the responsibility of Judas. Woe to that man through whom the Lord Jesus is betrayed.

Judas is one of the most poignant and one of the most fearful characters in the whole of the Word of God. His price was thirty pieces of silver. That’s what it took to buy his loyalty.

Harold Senjen was a Bible teacher who died just a few years back, a very effective Bible teacher. He was a great witness for the Lord. He had a gift for speaking on occasions that called attention to the Lord Jesus when you least expected it.

He was in Keble College in Oxford, and he was looking at the picture that Holman Hunt drew of *The Light of the Word*. And in one of the rooms of that college, there is a portrait. And as he was looking at it—he was the only one in the place—a guide came into the room and was showing people various things. And he stood back as they came in, and he heard the guide tell them about the place. And then he pointed to the picture there, and he said, that’s Holman Hunt’s *The Light of the World*. And he said, very silently, the original of that picture was sold for \$5,000 pounds, which was at one time a considerable amount of money.

Well Mr. Senjen at that point, stepped forward and said, “Pardon me, but I’d like to correct something. The original of that picture was sold for thirty pieces of silver.” He said a sudden silence fell on the crowd. He said the guide, not another word was said as they filed out of the room. It is true. The original was sold for thirty pieces of silver. Woe to that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed. Then our Lord adds, it had been good for that man if he had not been born.

I say to you that that text teaches as plainly as possible as it is for a text to teach that there is no universal salvation, and that there is, ultimately, the eternal punishment of the finally impenitent. If a man shall ultimately come into the presence of the Lord for all eternity, all other kind of suffering that might precede it would be as nothing in the light of the glorious bliss of eternal salvation. It would be impossible for our Lord to say, it would have been good for that man if he had not been born. When a ship is in the midst of a terrific storm, who cares about the billows if they’re safe? As one of the poets has written, in connection with this, “Who counts the billows when the shore is one?” And the fact that our Lord says it would have been good for that man if he had not been born, teaches eternal judgment.

And I say to you, this morning, my Christian friends, that’s what the Bible teaches. Not only that, but that’s what our Lord Jesus Christ teaches. William G. T. Shedd was engaged by the *North American Review* vindicating eternal punishment. He was to debate with Henry Ward Beecher, a very well-known clergyman. Dr. Shedd’s article was sent in for proofreading and for reading by Dr. Beecher before he wrote his reply. And the North American Review received a telegram from Denver, from Dr. Beecher after he had read Shedd’s article saying, “Cancel the engagement. Shedd is too much for me. I half-believe in eternal punishment now myself. Get somebody else.” [Laughter] The Bible is that plain about eternal punishment.

So I say to you this morning, with as much of the feeling of the feeling of the Holy Spirit as I possibly can, there is no way for us to escape the words of our Lord Jesus Christ. If we refuse the gospel of Christ, we face eternal judgment. And in spite of all of the things that men may say, God, in his eternity, lives on and on. The righteous, in the midst of the bliss of the future, shout on and

on, and the unrighteous, who have refused our Lord Jesus Christ groan on in the midst of torment through all of the ages of eternity.

What a terrible thing to have come into a meeting like this, to hear that our Lord Jesus has died for sinners and to pass out of this meeting without the knowledge of him. If you know your guilt, and you know your condemnation, Christ died for sinners. And the salvation that Christ has provided is available for those who by the Holy Spirit have come to see their own condition, and to see that Christ’s blood as the Lamb of God covers sin. May God help you to lean upon him for eternity. Let’s stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for these passages of Holy Scripture, which so beautifully express the truths of our great redemption. What a costly redemption it is. And we praise Thee that our Lord Jesus has given us straight truth concerning eternal judgment. He alone is able to tell us about hell because he alone has experienced it to its fullest. O God, enable us to be obedient by Thy grace to the revelation he has given. And O Father, if there are some here who have not come to Christ, give them no rest nor peace until they do.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.