

## **MATTHEW 26: 17-29 Jesus Last Supper (Gardner)**

17 On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, 'Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?'<sup>18</sup> He said, 'Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, "The Teacher says, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples."<sup>19</sup> So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal. 20 When it was evening, he took his place with the twelve;<sup>21</sup> and while they were eating, he said, 'Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.'<sup>22</sup> And they became greatly distressed and began to say to him one after another, 'Surely not I, Lord?'<sup>23</sup> He answered, 'The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.'<sup>24</sup> The Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that one by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that one not to have been born.'<sup>25</sup> Judas, who betrayed him, said, 'Surely not I, Rabbi?' He replied, 'You have said so. 26 While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is my body.'<sup>27</sup> Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you;<sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the \* covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.'<sup>29</sup> I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.'

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Jesus last meals with disciples occurs in the last week of his life, immediately preceding his arrest and crucifixion. ...Jesus is together with his disciples for the last time. The centerpiece throughout this section is a farewell meal, the mood is one of saying goodbye and letting go.<sup>1</sup>

Technically, the festival would not have started until the sundown when Thursday the fourteenth of Nisan ended and Friday the fifteenth of Nisan began. [The preparation of the Passover meal included] the disposal of all leavened bread, the baking of unleavened bread, and the slaughter of a Passover lamb. In the Fourth Gospel [John], Jesus is *crucified* on the day of preparation (cf. John 19:14-30). In Matthew, however (as in Mark and Luke), Jesus and his disciples prepare and eat a Passover meal, and Jesus is not crucified until the following morning or afternoon [Friday].<sup>2</sup>

## **This is My Body 26: 26-29**

According to Jewish practice, Jesus takes bread and wine, and blesses and thanks God for them. Then he redefines their significance and invites the disciples to partake. In the setting of the text, this moment in the story is usually labeled "the Last Supper." In the setting of the church, when the ritual of bread and cup is reenacted, the event is called the Lord's Supper, communion, or Eucharist. The latter name derives from the Greek verb *eucharisteo*, *giving thanks*, which is used in verse 27. Frequently the words of Jesus cited in the text are referred to as the "words of institution." Thus they are viewed as instructions that *institute* the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the life of Jesus' community.<sup>3</sup>

The breaking and distributing of the bread acts out what Jesus is doing with his body/self for the sake of others.

The pouring and offering of the cup acts out the way Jesus' lifeblood will be sacrificed for the sake of others. It is in this sense that Jesus proclaims *this is my body* and *this is my blood*.<sup>4</sup>

In the case of the cup, Matthew extends his interpretation further with addition of the phrase for the forgiveness of sins (v. 28; cf. 1:21; Rev. 1:5). The words for many reflect language used to describe the role of the suffering servant in Is. 53 (cf. 53:10-12), with many denoting the numberless multitudes for whom one individual acts.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Richard B. Gardner. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *MATTHEW* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 372.

<sup>2</sup> Richard B. Gardner. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *MATTHEW* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 373.

<sup>3</sup> Richard B. Gardner. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *MATTHEW* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 375.

<sup>4</sup> Richard B. Gardner. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *MATTHEW* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 375.

<sup>5</sup> Richard B. Gardner. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *MATTHEW* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 375.

*Blood of the covenant* alludes to the blood ceremony by which the covenant of Sinai was established (cf. Ex. 24:8; Zech. 9:11), and the identification of the covenant with Jesus' blood suggest a new or altered covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31; Luke 22:20-22; Rom. 3:25). According to Matthew, the covenant made at Sinai is "renewed and embodied in Jesus himself. He becomes the living blood bond between God and God's people." <sup>6</sup>

By eating the bread and *drinking* the cup, the disciples will signify their desire to be part of this living blood bond. They will be acting out their own parable in response to the action Jesus initiated. <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Richard B. Gardner. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *MATTHEW* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 375.

<sup>7</sup> Richard B. Gardner. Believers Church Bible Commentary on *MATTHEW* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991), 375.