

A Christian Passover Ceremony

By Dennis Fischer & Randy Vild

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*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?*

Matthew 26:17

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Dear Brethren,

Every spring thousands of God's people around the world participate in an ordinance of profound significance. It is called the Passover and is a memorial of the death of the Savior of the world. By thoughtfully participating in this ceremony true believers have an opportunity to claim that sacrifice and everything it pictures. Additionally, those who partake of the Passover with sincerity of heart have a far greater appreciation of its symbols and the remarkable story they tell.

The booklet you are about to read examines this extraordinary ceremony and how participation in it directly impacts God's plan for His people. By carefully examining its content we are confident you will gain a deeper understanding of one of the most pivotal events in history.

Conducting Your Own Service

Although we strongly encourage God's people to partake of the Passover under the direction of an established Church of God association and its representative(s), we are also aware that under certain circumstances it may be necessary for some to conduct their own ceremony. For this reason we have provided this booklet and the accompanying audio message which contains an actual Passover service conducted in 2012. For the purpose of clarity the booklet has been arranged into five broad sections.

- **Section I: Preparing for the Passover Ceremony.** This section addresses administrative issues to consider when making arrangements for the service. It includes such areas as the appropriate setting, the equipment and supplies necessary as well as how they may be procured. Additionally, this section provides specific recommendations for the set up and take-down of the room, as well as the acquisition of and disposal of the bread and wine.
- **Section II: Sequence of Events.** This section provides a brief description of the major components of the Passover service and the order they take place.
- **Section III: The Service.** This section contains a transcript of an actual Passover service conducted in Southern California in 2012. It is provided as a model for those planning to conduct their own service. An audio of the ceremony is also included. This particular ceremony lasted approximately 75 minutes which included time for the foot washing, bread, and wine. We strongly encourage those conducting their own service to listen to this in advance. Even if one chooses to craft his own ceremony, this model could prove quite useful.
- **Section IV: "The Day Christ Died."** This section provides a very detailed reconstruction of the last twenty four hours of the Messiah's life. Although it is not employed in the actual Passover service it is an excellent resource for gaining a better understanding of what took place during this extraordinary event. We strongly encourage those officiating their own service to carefully review this section during the days leading up to the actual ceremony. It is presented in a narrative format making it easy to understand as well as compelling and real.
- **Section V: "In the Glory of God."** This section contains a gripping essay describing the enormity of Christ's sacrifice and the impact it had on Him and the Father. It has been read in numerous COG fellowships including during actual Passover services.

We sincerely hope this material will contribute in making your Passover more meaningful as well as assist you in drawing closer to the One Who made it all possible.

Respectfully,

Dennis Fischer & Randy Vild

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Section I Preparing for the Passover

The scriptures indicate that at the time of Jesus' last Passover He dispatched two of His disciples to seek out a specific place and make sure it was properly prepared for them to keep this day in accordance with God's command.

Luke 22:7-8,13

Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the Passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the Passover, that we may eat... And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the Passover.

It goes without saying that the Messiah was hugely mindful of the importance of honoring all of God's feasts in a way that would insure their dignity as well as their function, and it should be no different with His people today. For this reason great care should be given to the preparation required to "make ready the Passover."

This section provides guidelines for conducting a Passover ceremony that will honor both Christ and His sacrifice. It addresses the process involved in the service (i.e. how it is conducted as well as critical issues that must be addressed). It is offered with the hope that "all things might be done decently and in order" (I Cor. 14:40).

Critical Issues

- **The Room:**

The room used for the service should be prepared to comfortably accommodate all the participants. Therefore, it is always beneficial to have a good idea of how many will be attending. Additionally, the room itself should be clean as well as de-leavened.

The Arrangement of the Room

With respect to the room set-up, it has been the tradition of the Church to arrange the chairs "theatre style"--the same as is done during Sabbath and Holy Day services. At the front of the room there should be a table and chair(s). This is because unlike other services where ministers generally stand when addressing the congregation, the host(s) conducting the Passover sit(s) at a table. Mind you there is no Biblical mandate requiring this. It is simply a tradition of the Church based on the experience and wisdom of its leadership (past and present). It is a wisdom we believe should be trusted. Additionally, the table should be completely covered with a white cloth. Furthermore, if at all possible, the room should be made ready prior to the arrival of the participants. Therefore, when they enter there should be no doubt that it has been prepared specifically for God's service.

Passover Room Checklist

1	Is the room neat, clean and orderly?
2	Is the room free of all leaven?
3	Are chairs neatly arranged (preferably theatre style)?
4	Is there adequate room in the hall to accommodate participants?
5	Is there a table in the front for the host(s) officiating the service?
6	Is the table completely covered with a white cloth?
7	Is there an additional room(s) to accommodate the foot washing portion of the service?

- **The Participants:**

The long standing practice of the Church has been that only baptized members be permitted to partake of the Passover. This understanding is based on the fact that in ancient Israel only those who were circumcised could do so.

Exodus 12:43-45

And the LORD said unto Moses and Aaron, This is the ordinance of the Passover: There shall no stranger eat thereof: But every man's servant that is bought for money, when thou hast circumcised him, then shall he eat thereof. A foreigner and an hired servant shall not eat thereof.

With this understanding, the scriptures also tell us that in the New Covenant, circumcision is of the heart (Rom. 2:28, Phil. 3:3, Col.2:11) and takes place upon conversion which is expressed in baptism (Acts 2:38). Therefore, in deference to the enduring principle reflected in the scriptures as well as the long held practice of the Church, the host presiding over the ceremony should respectfully prohibit those who are not as yet baptized from participating. This is not to suggest that those attending must provide proof of their baptism. However, if there are doubts, caution should be exercised. One way to accomplish this without causing embarrassment would be for the host to mention, as a part of the introduction, what the scriptures say about partaking of the Passover (See: verse above). After doing so he might say:

"Therefore, brethren, if there are some here that are not baptized, we respectfully ask that you NOT participate in any of the activities that are a part of the service. However, you are welcome to observe the ceremony. Furthermore, if you have any questions feel free to jot them down and we can discuss them later, perhaps this Sabbath."

Observing the Ceremony

In the past, attendance at Passover services was reserved exclusively for baptized members of the Church. More recently however, non-members have been permitted to observe (not participate in) the ceremony. This would also include the foot washing portion of the service. Some groups even believe that unbaptized members be prohibited from singing the congregational hymn at the conclusion of the service because it too was taken from Jesus' Passover model, although most permit it.

Additionally, most Church associations today even extend an invitation for parents to bring their children to the service. This newer position is based on the principle found in God's instructions to ancient Israel.

Exodus 12:24-27

And ye shall observe this thing for an ordinance to thee and to thy sons for ever. And it shall come to pass, when ye be come to the land which the LORD will give you, according as he hath promised, that ye shall keep this service. And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped. (See also: Ex.18:2, Dt 4:9-10, Dt. 6:5-7).

Preparing Spiritually

Clearly, the most important aspect of preparing to take the Passover is spiritual. The scriptures actually characterize this period as a time of deep introspection. Because of this the apostle Paul exhorts God's people to "examine themselves." Furthermore, he warned that failing to adequately prepare could place a person's salvation in jeopardy.

I Corinthians 11:28-29

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:28-29)

- **Pre-recorded Service:**

For those who plan on using a pre-recorded ceremony such as the one included in this package, it will require an audio player. Additionally, the host will need to be familiar with various features of the unit. Therefore, we strongly advise playing the entire audio service well in advance of the actual ceremony. When doing so sound levels should be checked as well as how to pause the tape when prompted by the audio

Audio Message Checklist

1	Is the audio message clear and audible?
2	Is the recorder in good working order?
3	Has the audio ceremony been listened to in its entirety?
4	Is there a complete transcript of the audio to be used in conjunction with the ceremony (See: section III)?

- **The Foot Washing:**

Perhaps the most unique aspect of the Passover ceremony is the foot-washing in which participants break into pairs and wash each other's feet. This is done in accordance with Christ's personal example on the night He was betrayed (See: Jn. 13: 1-17). With that said, it is a part of

the service that can present potential problems because of logistics--not the least of which is that it requires leaving the main room and relocating to another area. It also requires certain things such as bowls, water, towels and a disposal area. With that said, this part of the service can be managed with adequate preparation. Consider the following.

- **Foot washing area:**

Chairs in this area are generally arranged in a way that best takes advantage of the size of the area and the number of participants. In one configuration chairs are lined up against a wall. Under each chair are two small basins of water. While one participant sits, his or her partner kneels before them and washes their feet. The rolls are then reversed using the second basin. At this point it is important to understand that each participant should assume both roles.

Note:

For those who have never participated in this ceremony it can be a very moving experience. For some it can cultivate a special bond with their partner.

Additionally, what takes place in this part of the ceremony may be far more powerful than we can imagine. In a very real sense the participant washing their partners feet is symbolically washing Jesus' feet. Furthermore, when the participant is having his/her feet washed it is symbolically being done by Christ.

- **Bowls:**

The basins used in this part of the ceremony are generally rectangular in shape and constructed of sturdy plastic. These can be procured at most department stores. It is strongly recommend that this purchase not be left till the last minute.

Note:

The basins are reusable and should be retained by the host group. If the basins being used are from prior years it would be wise to make sure they do not leak as a result of age.

- **Towels:**

Towels will be needed to dry participants' feet. It has been the general practice of the Church that participants furnish their own towels. Some groups may wish to have extras in the event someone forgets.

- **Water source:**

Although almost all facilities have access to water, it is incumbent upon the host group to adequately plan for the acquisition, distribution and disposal of the water. It is strongly advise that any issues in these areas be addressed and resolved during planning meetings well in advance of the service.

Foot Washing Checklist

1	Are foot-washing area(s) ready prior to the arrival of participants?
2	Is there a sufficient quantity of water basins?
3	Have the basins been checked for leaks?
4	Is there a plan in place for acquiring, distributing, and disposing of the water?

- **The Unleavened Bread:**

The unleavened bread represents a critical component of the ceremony. Therefore, great care should be given to it. With respect to the bread itself the tradition within the Church has been to use matzos. However, it is perfectly acceptable to use homemade bread (unleavened) as well. Because some matzos may actually contain leaven it would be wise to purchase kosher matzos.



The Presentation

The matzos should be neatly placed on a tray and covered with a white napkin. The tray is then placed on the head table prior to the arrival of the participants. At the appropriate time during the ceremony a prayer will be offered after which the bread will be distributed. Depending on the size of the group participating ushers may be designated to distribute the bread. After everyone has taken a piece the usher(s) should return the tray(s) containing the unused bread to the head table. Once returned they should be covered by the host.

Unleavened Bread Checklist

1	Is there an adequate amount of unleavened bread?
2	Have the appropriate precautions been made to ensure that the bread is completely unleavened.
3	Are there trays on which the unleavened bread will be placed?
4	Is the unleavened bread covered with a white napkin?
5	Is the unleavened bread placed on the head table prior to the arrival of participants?

- The Wine:

One of the most poignant moments in the Passover ceremony is the partaking of the wine. Regrettably, some believe the drink consumed by Christ and His disciples was grape juice and not a fermented beverage. However, the scriptures strongly indicate otherwise. The Greek word for wine in the New Testament is *oinos* and refers to an intoxicant. It is the same word used by the apostle Paul when admonishing the Church at Ephesus to "Be not drunk with wine" (Eph. 5:18). It is also the same word used in the parable of "The Good Samaritan" in which a Samaritan treated a man who fell among thieves by "pouring oil and wine on his wounds" (Lk. 10:34). In this case the alcohol in the wine would have acted as a cleansing agent.

Additionally, it is interesting to note that the grape harvest in Judea at that time took place in the summer. Thus, because any beverage extracted from them ferments almost immediately it would be impossible for it to not contain alcohol the following spring (when the Passover takes place).

Selecting the Wine

It has been the long standing practice of the Church to apply certain criteria when selecting the wine to be used during the ceremony. The wine itself should be red (burgundy) and of high quality. Additionally, when selecting it one should be mindful of the level of alcohol it contains. This is because wines with a higher rate of alcohol are often fortified with brandy. Therefore, it is best to purchase an unfortified wine with a lower alcohol rate (10-13 percent).

Presenting the Wine

Prior to the arrival of the participants, the wine should be poured into small thimble-like cups and placed in a tray specifically used for this purpose. Both the thimbles and the trays may be purchased at most Christian bookstore. This too should be done well in advance of the service.



Once the wine is poured it should be placed on the head table and covered with a white napkin. At the appointed time the host will uncover it offering a prayer (giving thanks) just as the Messiah did (Mt. 26:27).

Wine Checklist

1	Is the wine of good quality and of a red variety?
2	Is the wine unfortified?
3	Are there an adequate number of thimble-cups?
4	Is there a tray suitable to carry the thimble-cups?
5	Is there a white napkin to cover the wine?
6	Is the wine set up prior to the arrival of participants?

Disposing of the Bread and Wine

In accordance with the scriptures the unconsumed wine, including that which remained in an open bottle is to be poured into the earth as was the case with Jesus' blood. Although this is done after the completion of the formal service some participants may wish to observe this being done. The cups should also be cleaned as soon as is practical.

The remaining unleavened bread including opened boxes is also to be disposed of. In accordance with the principle found in God's instruction to ancient Israel it should be completely burned. Nothing is to remain.

Exodus 12:10

And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

Disposal Checklist

1	Was the leftover bread (including crumbs) completely burned?
2	Was it destroyed prior to the next morning?
3	Was the leftover wine poured into the earth including that which was left in any opened bottles?
4	Was the wine disposed of prior to the next morning?

- Congregational Hymn:

At the conclusion of the service almost all Church of God fellowships sing a hymn. Traditionally, it has been Psalm 51, "In Thy Loving Kindness Lord." This being the case it is incumbent on the host(s) to provide the appropriate sheet music for those in attendance. Additionally, a decision should be made concerning accompaniment. Some groups will elect to play a tape, others will sing it "a cappella" (without accompaniment).

Congregational Hymn Checklist

1	Has a closing hymn been selected?
2	Are there sufficient copies of the hymn for distribution?
3	Has a decision been made regarding musical accompaniment?
4	If a tape is going to be used as accompaniment is it properly cued?

A Christian Passover Ceremony

Section II Sequence of Events

Although Passover services may vary depending on the COG association conducting them, for the most part they are quite similar. This is because the gospels provide a very detailed account of the Messiah's last day on earth. In a very real sense the Passover kept by God's people today is a reenactment of what took place during the Messiah's final hours with His disciples. With that said, what follows is a brief description of the various components of this ceremony in the order they occur.

- **Commencement (Prelude):**

In accordance with the scriptures as well the historical record, the service should begin precisely at sunset (Lev. 23:5, Lk. 22:14). At that time all the participants should be seated. Because of the nature of the service it is not an appropriate time for the typical fellowship normally engaged in on a Sabbath or Holy Day. In truth, the room should be very quiet, even before the ceremony begins. This is because the Passover is actually a memorial service honoring a sacrifice that required unimaginable brutality and suffering inflicted on our Savior. Furthermore, it was done on our behalf. Everything in the scriptures portrays this service as a very sobering event requiring thoughtful reflection. Therefore, it is strongly suggested that participants comport themselves the way they would if they were actually invited to share the Messiah's final hours of agony with Him, because that is precisely what is taking place.

Note:

In the audio message provided with this material the service commences with a song entitled "Passover Me." It was composed and performed by Mr. Randy Vild and was included because of its rich meaning and emotion. Furthermore, this particular selection leaves no doubt that the ceremony has begun. With that said, some may prefer to forgo this component and start the service with a more conventional introduction (see below).

Opening Prayer

Additionally, unlike traditional Sabbath and Holy Day services that open with prayer, it has been a longstanding tradition of the Church to forgo this practice on the Passover. This is because the only prayers identified in the scriptures regarding this service are offered in conjunction with the unleavened bread and later with the wine. However, we believe those wishing to have an opening and closing prayer in their service may confidently do so without any risk of compromising the scriptures. Clearly God's people today are reflecting back on Christ's sacrifice for which prayers of thanksgiving are most appropriate. With that said, the audio service included in this material contains neither an opening nor closing prayer.

- **Introduction:**

At the beginning of services the host may wish to make some general comments such as observations about the state of the world/nation and how it relates to the Passover. The point is to introduce participants to the importance of what they are about to be a part of.

Establishing a Biblical Context

As a part of the introduction, the host presents the Passover in light of the Biblical record. Reading from the scriptures he presents God's instructions concerning the importance of this service and the consequences for partaking of it improperly (I Cor. 11:23-30). At this point it is interesting to note that this is the only convocation that requires those unable to attend because of illness or travel, to partake of it the following month (Num. 9:9-13). That alone sets it apart as totally unique.

- **Foot Washing:**

Although the apostle Paul never mentions foot washing when addressing Jesus' last Passover, the gospel of John does. Furthermore it goes into considerable detail when describing this act and its significance. For this reason the Church has included it in the formal ceremony. It is at this time that the host presiding over the service reads the account of Jesus washing the disciples feet and why this act is so important in our relationship with Him (Jn.13:1-17). He (the host) may also read other verses relating to humility and service. At the conclusion of the reading he will instructs the participants to go to their respective areas to reenact what Jesus did.

Note:

It has been the custom of the Church for men and women to participate separately in the foot washing portion of the service. This is done to ensure appropriate modesty. With that said, every effort should be made to accommodate this custom. It should even be a consideration when selecting a location for the service. This is not to suggest that a single room could not be used. However, if such is the case the men and women should be separated as much as is reasonable. Some may even wish to have the women go first followed by the men.

Pre-recorded Services

For those choosing to use the audio service provided with this material, you will need to pause the tape at certain points during the ceremony. For the foot washing portion it should be paused when you hear the speaker say,

"At this point in accordance with our Savior's personal example as well as His instructions to us, we will participate in the foot washing portion of the service."

At this point participants will be directed to go to their designated areas in an orderly fashion. Once everyone has performed this part of the ceremony they will return to the main room and the service will resume. For those using the audio service provided with this material it is now time to un-pause the tape.

- **Partaking of Unleavened Bread:**

At this time the host presiding over the ceremony explains that on the night He was betrayed, Jesus instituted new symbols to be partaken of every year. The first of these symbols is unleavened bread which pictures Christ's broken body. Several scriptures may be read pertaining to this—not the least of which is Isaiah 53.

Pausing the Tape

For those choosing to use the audio service provided with this material, you will need to pause the tape upon hearing the speaker say:

"Brethren, in accordance with Jesus' example as well as His instructions to us we will now partake of His body."

At this point the host will uncover the bread and ask a blessing over it just as the Messiah did nearly 2000 years ago (Mt. 26:26). After the prayer he will break the bread. As the sound of the bread being broken softly moves through the room, the image it conveys is inescapable. The broken bread is then passed out to the participants. Any bread that is not used is returned to the head table and re-covered. It will be disposed of after the service. Once this is done the host should restart the tape.

- **Partaking of the wine:**

The second symbol introduced by Jesus was the wine. According to the Messiah, the wine pictures the blood He would shed for the remission of sin (Mt. 26:27-28). After reading the appropriate scriptures, the host presiding over the service will remove the napkin covering the thimbles of wine. He will then offer a prayer of thanksgiving in accordance with the example given by Jesus (Lk. 22:17). After the prayer, the tray of wine will be passed to the participants. The empty thimbles will then be retrieved and covered. Any wine leftover will be disposed of after the service

Pausing the Tape

For those choosing to use the audio service provided with this material, you will need to pause the tape upon hearing the speaker say:

"In accordance with Jesus' example as well as his instructions to us, we will now partake of the wine."

Then, when the unused wine is retrieved it should be placed at the head table and covered. Once this is done the host should restart the tape.

- **Jesus' Final Instructions:**

The service then transitions to Jesus' "Farewell Discourse" in the upper room (Jn.14). It then continues as He walks with His disciples toward the Garden of Gethsemane (Jn. 15 &16). There, He offers up an intercessory prayer to His Father (Jn. 17). When listening to this part of the service, participants should be mindful that the words being read were uttered by a man who was acutely aware that His torturous death was imminent. Despite this fact, He remained totally focused and determined to finish the work He was given (Jn. 17:4).

- Conclusion and Dismissal:

In accordance with the example set by Jesus on His last Passover most COG groups conclude services with a hymn. Traditionally, the hymn sung is from the 51st Psalm and is entitled "In Thy Loving Kindness Lord." What follows are the words to this song.

In Thy Loving Kindness Lord Psalm 51

In thy loving kindness Lord, be merciful to me;
In compassion great blot out all iniquity.
Wash me thoroughly from sin, from all guilt cleanse Thou me;
For transgressions I confess; sins I ever see.

'Gainst Thee only have I sinned, done evil in Thy sight,
That Thou speaking may be just, and in judging right.
My iniquities blot out, my sin hide from Thy view,
And in me a clean heart make, spirit right renew.

From Thy gracious presence, Lord, O cast me not away,
And Thy Holy Spirit take not from me I pray.
Joy which Thy salvation brings again to me restore;
With Thy Spirit free do Thou keep me evermore.

Sacrifice dost thou not want, else would I give it Thee,
And with offering shalt Thou not delighted be.
For a broken spirit is to God a sacrifice,
And a broken, contrite heart, Thou wilt not despise

Because some scholars believe that the song traditionally sung at the time of the Passover was the "Hallel" recorded in Psalms 114-118, some congregations sing "When Israel out of Egypt went."

When Israel out of Egypt Went Psalm 114-118

When Isr'el out of Egypt went, and did his dwelling change,
When Jacob's house went out from those that were of language
strange,
God Judah made to be his own, and Isr'el His domain.
The sea it saw, and quickly fled, Jordan was driven back.

Like rams the mountains, and like lambs the hills skipped to and fro.
O sea, why turnest thou? Jordan, back why wast thou driven so?
Ye mountains great, wherefore was it that ye did skip like rams?
And wherefore was it, little hills, that ye did leap like lambs?

O at the presence of the Lord, earth, trembled so for fear, While as
the presence of the God of Jacob doth appear: Who from the hard
and stony rock did pools of water bring; And by his pow'r he turned
the flint into a water-spring.

Special Note

In keeping with the spirit of the Passover concluding with a song, some fellowships have presented "Special Music" in lieu of a congregational hymn. The audio ceremony included in this material adopted this approach. It was done because of the extraordinary drama the particular song contained. It is entitled "Who Has Believed?" It is from Isaiah 53 and is an emotional expression of Christ's sacrifice.

A Christian Passover Ceremony

Section III The Service

What follows is a transcript of an actual Passover service conducted in 2012 by Messrs. Randy Vild and Dennis Fischer. The ceremony follows a traditional Church of God format although the content may vary slightly. It begins with a musical prelude (Part I) followed by six distinct parts (II – VII) which comprise the entire ceremony. An audio recording of the actual service is included with this material.

Part I Prelude:

“Passover Me” By Randy Vild

Death Angel

Passover me

I will eat the bread of life

I will drink the fruit of thy vine

I will clean out leavening

I will purge out sin in my life

Be my cloud by day

Be my pillar by night

Let me cross the Red Sea

To a land of milk and honey

Part II Introduction/ Establishing a Biblical Context

Good evening everyone.

Brethren, tonight thousands of God’s people around the world are coming together to commemorate what is undeniably the most selfless act in human history. It is called the Passover and is a memorial of the death of our Savior—a death that was envisioned by God before creation itself. Consider the words of the apostle Peter.

I Peter 1:19-20

But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you...

The Expositors Bible Commentary offers a very interesting observation about Peter's words relating to when God planned to offer up His Son as a ransom for mankind. It examines the word "foreordained."

The Greek word for "foreordained" is *poregnosmenou*, and is often translated "known before." The meaning, however, must be more than "foresight." For why would Peter at this point make the obvious statement that God knew before about Jesus and His death? The word connotes purpose and has been translated as "predestined before the foundation of the world." The redemption was in the plan of God before Creation occurred. In other words, the salvation in Christ was purposed from eternity and is now made plain. (The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 12 p. 225)

It is hard to fathom the depth of a Plan so dedicated to success that God the Father would commit His most priceless resource to ensure its achievement. But that is exactly what He did. At some point in the vastness of eternity, the Greatest Being in existence consciously planned to offer the unblemished life of His own Son in order that man could be spared the effects of sin (1Jn. 3:4).

The apostle Paul wrote that our part in that sacrifice was also envisioned before the universe was formed.

Ephesians 1:3-5

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will...

When giving ancient Israel His instructions regarding the Passover God explained that they would honor this time in perpetuity (Ex. 12:4). Furthermore, so important is this particular observance that individuals missing it due to illness or travel are actually commanded by God to keep it one month later.

Numbers 9:9-13

Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or be in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the Passover unto the LORD. The fourteenth day of the second month at even he shall keep it, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

...But the man that is clean, and is not in a journey, and forbears to keep the Passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people:

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul emphasized that God's people are to show great deference to the solemnity of His service and even warned against taking it unworthily.

I Corinthians 11:27-29

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so let him

eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Today God's Church keeps the Passover in accordance with the example set by Jesus Christ on the night He was betrayed. What follows is a chronicle of what occurred that evening. It begins as the sun is setting on Tuesday evening the 14th day of Nisan.

At that time Jesus and His disciples arrive at a home prepared for them to partake of the Passover in accordance with the command. They will keep this feast in an upper room. Although the name of the homeowner is not mentioned in any of the gospels, many authorities believe he may have been the father of John Mark. (Mt. 26:20)

Part III Foot Washing "A Lesson in Greatness"

As they enter the upper room, the disciples are arguing over power and status as well as who will be the greatest in the Kingdom. Regrettably, this was not the first time they engaged in such a dispute. A few weeks earlier, the mother of James and John actually lobbied for her sons to sit at Jesus' right and left side in the Kingdom (Mt. 20:20-28). Although their arguing is clearly a distraction, Jesus addresses this issue.

Luke 22: 24-27

And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he (Jesus) said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But it shall not be so with you: therefore, he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? Is not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serves.

Sadly, in the Church today we see the same ego raising its ugly head. But it should not be so with us. Our example of true greatness should come from the true leader of the Church. Here is how the apostle Paul described that leader.

Philippians 2: 3-8

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the stake.

The Messiah's remarkable attitude of service was actually demonstrated in the upper room. After correcting His disciples because of their bickering over personal status, Jesus provided a tangible example of how a true King in God's service conducts himself.

John 13:3-17

Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He rose from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poured water into a basin, and began to wash

the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter said unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou know not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.

Peter said unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter said unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus said to him, He that is washed need not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean.

So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.

Instructions Regarding Foot Washing

At this point in accordance with our Savior's personal example as well as His instructions to us, we will participate in the foot washing portion of the service.

Pause the Tape:

If you are using the audio service provided in this material pause the tape. Then dismiss participants in an orderly manner to their designated areas for this part of the service. Once everyone has returned and seated restart the tape.

Betrayal and Desertion

As the meal progresses, Jesus indicates that He will be betrayed by one of His disciples (Mt. 26:21-23). He later identifies that disciple by saying, "He it is for whom I shall dip the sop and give it to him."

Given the eating styles of the day, everyone present may have dipped their hands in the dish with Jesus. Therefore, His words may have been of little use to the disciples in determining who the betrayer was. The point the Messiah may very well have been making was that His betrayal would come from a friend, with whom He had shared His food just as it was prophesied (Psa. 41:9).

Psalm 41:9

Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

At this point Satan enters into Judas Iscariot (Jn. 13:27), causing him to leave the upper room. However, the disciples are unaware of what he is about to do. They think he is going to purchase provisions for the feast or perhaps give something to the poor (Jn. 13:27-30).

The Messiah then makes a powerful statement regarding Judas and his act of treachery. Jesus says that although His betrayal was prophesied in the scriptures, this did not mean that the one who would betray Him would not be held responsible. Jesus actually reveals that it would have been better if Judas Iscariot had never been born (Mt. 26:24).

After Judas leaves, Jesus presents some disappointing news regarding the loyalty of the remaining 11 disciples. Quoting from the book of Zechariah (Zech. 13:7), He informs them that they will all desert Him (Mt. 26:31-32). Peter responds by rebuking Jesus for even thinking such a thing. He even declares that he is prepared to go to prison and even face death for his Lord (Lk. 22:33).

However, the news Jesus has for Peter is even more sobering. He informs him that despite all his protests to the contrary, he (Peter) will actually deny his Lord three times before the cock crows the following morning (Lk. 22:34). Peter must have been genuinely mystified by these words. He was totally convinced that his loyalty to the Messiah was unwavering.

Part IV Partaking of Unleavened Bread

At this point, Jesus introduces new elements to the Passover. He institutes the symbols of the bread and wine as types of His body which would be broken (1Cor. 11:24) and His blood which would be shed (Mt. 26:26-28; 1Cor. 11:25). He begins with the unleavened bread.

Matthew 26:26

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

The apostle Paul describes this moment as follows:

I Corinthians 11:23-24

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.

Earlier in His ministry Jesus explained the significance of unleavened bread and how it related to His life and ultimate sacrifice.

John 6:33-35

For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and gives life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst.

John 6:48-51

I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.

John 6:57-58

As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eats me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eats of this bread shall live forever.

Brethren, the bread we are about to eat pictures Christ's broken body. He said as much. As you partake of it consider that the savagery He was subjected to was not for anything He had done. The violence He suffered was for what we have done. The great prophet Isaiah expressed it this way.

Isaiah 53:1-6

Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised (crushed) for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Brethren, in accordance with Jesus' example as well as His instructions to us we will now partake of His body.

Pause the Tape:

If you are using the audio service provided in this material pause the tape. Then remove the cloth covering the unleavened bread. Once this is done ask a blessing on it just as the Messiah did on the night He was betrayed. The audio does not include the actual prayer given when this service was recorded.

After the prayer, break the bread (Matzos) it into small pieces. Once this is done pass the plate to the participants allowing them to select the piece they will eat.

Please allow time (a few minutes) for all the participants to partake of the bread. Then, restart the tape.

Part V Partaking of the wine

The book of Hebrews teaches us that the blood of Christ accomplished what no other sacrifice ever could.

Hebrews 9:11-14

But Christ becoming a high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh: How much more

shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

Hebrews 9:22-25

And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others;

Hebrews 9:28

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Ephesians 1:7

In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

Colossians 1:20-22

And, having made peace through the blood of his stake, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now has he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:

Jesus was acutely aware of the enormity of the burden He would have to bear in order to redeem us from the consequence of our actions and it is difficult to imagine what He must have been thinking when He poured wine into the cup.

Mark 14:23-25

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God.

In accordance with Jesus' example as well as his instructions to us we will now partake of the wine.

Pause the Tape:

If you are using the audio service provided in this material pause the tape. Then remove the cloth covering the thimbles containing the wine. Once this is done ask a blessing on it just as the Messiah did on the night He was betrayed. The audio provided with this material does not include the actual prayer given when this service was recorded.

After the prayer pass out the wine allowing the participants to select the specific container they will drink.

Please allow time (a few minutes) for all the participants to partake of the wine. Once this is done collect the wine thimbles covering them with the cloth. Then, restart the tape.

Part VI Jesus' Final Instructions

After instituting the symbols of the New Covenant, Jesus teaches His disciples about their responsibilities as leaders in the New Testament Church. This is often referred to as His "Farewell Discourse" and takes place prior to leaving the upper room. At this point, Jesus promises the disciples that He will send the Holy Spirit to guide them. He also speaks of the connection between obedience and love. The point He makes is that you cannot have one without the other.

John 14:1-8

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him. Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.

John 14:9-21

Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth it not, neither knoweth it but ye know it for it dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

John 14:22-31

Judas saith unto Him, not Iscariot, Lord how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world. Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance,

whatsoever I have said unto you. Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away, and come again unto you. If ye loved me, ye would rejoice, because I said, I go unto the Father: for my Father is greater than I. And now I have told you before it come to pass, that, when it is come to pass, ye might believe. Hereafter I will not talk much with you: for the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me. But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence.

Leaving the Upper Room

Jesus and His disciples now prepare to leave the upper room. However, before they go, they sing a hymn (Mt. 26:30). The scriptures do not identify the specific song they sang; however, the one normally sung at the Passover was the last part of the "Hallel" (Psa. 114-118). During this song, the leader would sing the verses while the followers would respond with "Hallelujah."

At some point during this period, Judas Iscariot is meeting with the chief priests and the Pharisees and plotting the capture of Jesus. Additionally, Judas has received thirty pieces of silver for his betrayal just as it was prophesied (Zech. 11:12).

On the Way to Gethsemanae

9:00 PM – 10:00 PM

After leaving the upper room, Jesus and His disciples begin to walk toward the Mount of Olives. Little did the disciples know that their time with the Messiah can now be measured in less than four hours. (Mk. 14:26).

During this journey, the Messiah provides His disciples with very specific instructions concerning their relationship with Him and His Father. He exhorts them to bear fruit and to keep His Commandments. He also warns them that they will be persecuted because of their loyalty to Him.

John 15: 1- 5

I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit. Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Jesus then speaks powerfully concerning the great sacrifice He will make in just a few short hours. His words are deep and very moving and reveal what is required to be the beneficiary of that sacrifice.

John 15: 9-17

As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I

have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you. Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you. These things I command you, that ye love one another.

A Warning of Impending Persecution

Jesus then reminds His disciples that the life they have chosen will be received by the world with contempt and disdain.

John 15: 18- 21

If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also. But all these things will they do unto you for my name's sake, because they know not him that sent me.

Jesus Promises a Comforter

As Jesus and His disciples continue toward the Mount of Olives, He informs them that after His death, He will return to the Father in Heaven. However, He will not leave his disciples alone. Jesus explains that He will send the Holy Spirit to guide and comfort them. The Messiah then emphasizes that although He will not be with them physically, He will always be connected to them and that they can count on His love and the love of the Father (Jn. 16:1-33).

John 16:1-12

These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them. And these things I said not unto you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asks me, Whither go thou? But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send it unto you. And when it is come, it will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

Of sin, because they believe not on me;

Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.

John 16:13-15

I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, it will guide you into all truth: for it shall not speak of itself; but whatsoever it shall hear, that shall it speak: and it will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for it shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the

Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that it shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you.

John 16:16-29

A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father. Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father? They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith. Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you. And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God. I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

John 16:29-33

His disciples said unto him, Lo, now speakest thou plainly, and speakest no proverb. Now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me. These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Approaching Gethsemanae

As the Messiah and His disciples enter Gethsemanae, He offers up a very moving intercessory prayer. In it, He acknowledges that His end is near. He then appeals to the Father to restore to Him the glory he had before the world began. Additionally, Jesus asks His Father to bless the disciples as well as those who will believe because of what the disciples will teach. He concludes this prayer with words of great hope: He appeals to the Father to love the disciples as much as He loves His only begotten son.

John 17:1-13

These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gave me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine. And all mine are thine, and thine are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee.

Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves.

John 17: 14-26

I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil [one]. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them.

Part VII Conclusion and Dismissal

Brethren, earlier this evening we learned that just prior to leaving the upper room Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn.

In deference to this act, we will hear a hymn. It is entitled "Who Hath Believe?" It is performed by Mr. Marty Goetz and is from Isaiah chapter 53. I invite you to follow along.

Special Note:

If you are using the audio service provided in this material you may wish to pause the tape and sing a hymn as opposed to listening to the one provided. In this particular recording we chose a very moving selection from Isaiah 53.

Closing Prayer

Additionally, some fellowships give a prayer at the conclusion of the service. This is perfectly acceptable. However, because there is no indication that Jesus or His disciples concluded their Passover with a prayer along with the fact that it has been a long standing tradition in the church to forgo this practice no prayer is included. Therefore, at the conclusion of the song the participants were dismissed.

“Who Has Believed?”

By Marty Goetz
Words from Isaiah 53

Who hath believed our report?
To whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
He grew up among us a tender shoot
A root from dry ground:
In him no beauty we found

Scorned and rejected by men
A man of sorrows, acquainted with grief
Like one from whom men hide their faces
Not esteemed but denied
Not desired but despised

He was wounded for our transgressions
He was bruised for our iniquities
The chastisement for our peace fell on him
And by his stripes we are healed

Like a sheep before shearers is silent
As a lamb led to slaughter He said not a word
Assigned a grave with the wicked
Tho no evil he'd done
No deceit was on his tongue

He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities:
The chastisement for our peace fell on him;
And by his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray;
Turned every one to his own way;
Our iniquity on him was laid
Surely he has born our griefs and our sorrows
He has born our griefs and our sorrows

He was wounded for our transgressions
He was bruised for our iniquities
The chastisement for our peace fell on him
And by his stripes we are healed
And by his stripes we are healed

A Christian Passover Ceremony

Section IV The Day Christ Died

The last twenty-four hours of Jesus' life stand as the most important in human history. During this time, the Great Creator of all that exists offered Himself to atone for the sins of all mankind.

The words that follow trace what took place as the Lamb of God advanced toward His death. This period begins with Jesus and His disciples keeping His final Passover. Contrary to what many believe, this observance actually took place on a Tuesday evening, making Jesus' crucifixion occur on Wednesday, the eve of the High Sabbath that began the Days of Unleavened Bread (Lev. 23:6). The times assigned to each event are estimates based on the Biblical record.

Jesus' Last Passover

Tuesday evening, Nisan 14.

6:00 PM – 8:00 PM

Jesus and His disciples arrive at a home prepared for them to partake of the Passover. They will keep this feast in an upper room. Although the name of the homeowner is not mentioned in any of the gospels, many authorities believe he may have been the father of John Mark. (Mt. 26:20)

As they enter the upper room, the disciples are arguing over power and status as well as who will be the greatest in the Kingdom (Lk. 22:14-30). Regrettably, this was a recurring dispute among them. A few weeks earlier, the mother of James and John actually lobbied for her sons to sit at Jesus' right and left side in the Kingdom (Mt. 20:20-28). Although their arguing is clearly a distraction, Jesus addresses this issue, and in doing so, offers a profound lesson about power and greatness in His Father's Kingdom.

He does so by kneeling before His disciples and washing their feet. So shocking is this act that Peter at first refuses to allow Jesus to do such a thing to him. However, he later consents. (Jn. 13:1-17)

As the meal progresses, Jesus indicates that He will be betrayed by one of His disciples (Mt. 26:21-25). He later identifies that disciple by saying, "He it is for whom I shall dip the sop and give it to him."

Note:

Given the eating styles of the day, everyone present may have dipped their hands in the dish with Jesus. Therefore, His words may have been of little use to the disciples in determining who the betrayer was. The point the Messiah may very well have been making was that His betrayal would come from a friend, with whom He had shared His food just as it was prophesied (Psa. 41:9).

Satan then enters into Judas Iscariot (Jn. 13:27), causing him to leave the upper room. However, the disciples are unaware of what he is about to do. They think he is going to purchase provisions for the feast or perhaps give something to the poor. (Jn. 13:27-30)

The Messiah then makes a powerful statement regarding Judas and his act of treachery. Jesus says that although His betrayal was prophesied in the scriptures, this did not mean that the one who would betray Him was not responsible for this act. Jesus then reveals that it would actually have been better if Judas Iscariot had never been born. (Mt. 26:24)

Then, quoting from the book of Zechariah (Zech. 13:7), Jesus informs the disciples that they will all desert Him. (Mt. 26:31-32)

Peter rebukes Jesus for even thinking such a thing. He then declares that he is prepared to go to prison and even face death for the Messiah. (Lk. 22:33)

Jesus responds by informing Peter that he (Peter) will deny his Lord three times before the cock crows the following morning (Lk. 22:34). Peter must have been genuinely mystified by these words. He was totally convinced that his loyalty to the Messiah was unwavering.

At this point, Jesus introduces new elements to the Passover. He institutes the symbols of the bread and wine as types of His body which would be broken (1Cor. 11:24) and His blood which would be shed (Mt. 26:26-28; 1Cor. 11:25).

After instituting the symbols of the New Covenant, Jesus teaches His disciples about their responsibilities as leaders in the New Testament church. This is often referred to as His “Farewell Discourse” and is given while they are still in the upper room. During this discourse Jesus promises the disciples that He will send the holy spirit to guide them. He also speaks of the connection between obedience and love. The point He makes is that you cannot have one without the other (Jn. 14).

Jesus and His disciples now prepare to leave the upper room. However, before they go, they sing a hymn (Mt. 26:30). The scriptures do not identify the specific song they sang; however, the one normally sung at the Passover was the last part of the “Hallel” (Psa. 114-118). During this song, the leader would sing the verses while the followers would respond with “Hallelujah.”

At some point during this period, Judas Iscariot is meeting with the chief priests and the Pharisees and plotting the capture of Jesus. Additionally, Judas has received thirty pieces of silver for his betrayal just as it was prophesied (Zech. 11:12).

On the Way to Gethsemanae

8:00 PM – 9:00 PM

After leaving the upper room, Jesus and His disciples begin to walk toward the Mount of Olives. Little do the disciples know that their time with the Messiah can now be measured in hours. (Mk. 14:26).

During this journey, the Messiah provides His disciples with instructions concerning their relationship to Him and His Father. He exhorts them to bear fruit and to keep His Commandments. He also warns them that they will be persecuted because of their loyalty to Him.

Jesus then speaks powerfully concerning the great sacrifice He will make in just a few short hours. His words are deep and very moving: “Greater love has no man than this: that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends, if you do the things I command you” (Jn. 15:1-27).

As Jesus and His disciples continue to walk toward the mount of Olives, He informs them that after His death, He will return to the Father in Heaven. However, He will not leave his disciples alone. Jesus explains that He will send the holy spirit to guide and comfort them. The Messiah then emphasizes that although He will not be with them physically, He will always be connected to them and that they can count on His love and the love of the Father (Jn. 16:1-33).

As Jesus and His disciples approach the garden of Gethsemanae, He offers up a very moving intercessory prayer. In it, He acknowledges that His end is near. He then appeals to the Father to restore to Him the glory he had before the world began. Additionally, Jesus asks His Father to bless the disciples as well as those who will believe because of what the disciples will teach. He concludes this prayer with words of great hope: “O righteous Father, the world has not known You: but I have known You, and these (the disciples) have known that You have sent me. And I have declared unto them Your Name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith You have loved me may be in them and I in them” (Jn. 17:1-26).

Jesus and His disciples then proceed to enter the garden of Gethsemanae.

In the Garden of Gethsemanae

9:00 PM – Midnight

Upon their arrival at Gethsemanae, Jesus instructs eight of His disciples to wait and pray while He, as well as Peter, James, and John go further into the garden (Mt. 26:36-37).

Jesus then reveals to these three men that His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, “even unto death” (Mk. 14:34). With these words, Jesus is not suggesting that He wants to die, but rather that the great emotional stress He is experiencing at this time is so severe it is actually life threatening.

Jesus then leaves these three very close friends and goes further into the garden by Himself. There He falls to the ground and pours out His heart to the Father. Jesus appeals to Him to remove the “cup” containing the horror of His impending death. However, the Messiah also acknowledges that the decision regarding what would happen was up to the Father and that whatever His Father choose, He would honor it without hesitation (Mk. 14:35-36).

Note:

At this point, it is important to understand that never once did the Messiah consider abandoning the course He was on. There was not one ounce of doubt in Jesus concerning His commitment to His Father’s will. To suggest otherwise is simply ignorant of God’s great Plan and how it would play out. What Jesus was seeking was clarity. He would accept another course only IF it would achieve the same end (Mt. 26:39).

As Jesus suffers in the garden, His perspiration becomes as it were “great drops of blood.” In response to this incredible mental anguish, an angel is sent to strengthen Him (Lk. 22:44).

The Messiah will offer up His appeal for the Father to intervene three different times. After each prayer, He will return to His disciples, only to find them sleeping (Mt. 26:39-46).

Upon the conclusion of His third and final prayer in Gethsemanae, Jesus hears the sounds of soldiers approaching. He quickly gathers His disciples and goes out to meet them (Mt. 26:46).

The Arrest of the Messiah

Between midnight and 1:00 AM
Wednesday Morning

While still in the garden of Gethsemanae, Jesus and His disciples meet up with Judas Iscariot and a contingent of soldiers dispatched by the chief priests and the Pharisees (Jn. 18:2).

Jesus asks the arresting party whom they seek. When they inform Him they are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, the Messiah informs them “I am He” (Jn. 18:3).

Upon hearing Jesus’ words, the soldiers stagger backwards and fall to the ground (Jn. 18:6).

Judas Iscariot then moves toward Jesus and kisses Him as a sign to the soldiers that this is, in fact, the one they seek (Mt.26:48).

At this point, Jesus requests that His disciples be allowed to go because it is Him they are looking for. Furthermore, He will offer no resistance to those who had come to seize Him (Jn. 18:8-9).

As the soldiers begin to arrest the Messiah, Peter draws his sword and attempts to defend his Lord. During the commotion he cuts off the ear of the servant of the high priest. His name is Malchus (Mt. 26:50-51).

Jesus rebukes Peter for his attack and informs him that He does not require the protection of His disciples. He explains to Peter that if He wished to be delivered from this situation, He could summon twelve legions (72,000) of angels to come to His defense. However, this is not what the Messiah has in mind. He clearly knows what lies ahead and His heart is ready for it. (Mt 26:52-53).

After this rebuke, Jesus touches the ear of Malchus and heals him of the wound he received by Peter. This is the last miracle Jesus will perform before His death (Lk. 22:51).

The Messiah then questions the tactics used by the chief priests and the elders when arresting Him. He says, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me?" (Mt. 25:55). The point the Messiah was making is that if He had been leading such a rebellion, this action might have made sense.

However, because Jesus openly taught in the temple, this clandestine arrest simply defied logic. Therefore, those who orchestrated it must have been motivated by something else, perhaps fear. In reality, taking the action they did revealed a great lack of moral courage on the part of these "spiritual leaders." Jesus was exposing this fact.

At this point, the Messiah is bound and taken back to the city to be tried by the Jewish leadership under the direction of the high priests. As Jesus is being led away, all the disciples flee just as He had predicted they would (Mt. 26:31; Mk. 14:50-52).

As He proceeds toward the site of His trial, Jesus most assuredly pondered the events that were about to play out in the next several hours. This could not have been easy to do.

The Interrogation of Jesus

At the Home of Annas

1:00 AM – 2:00AM

Jesus is first taken to the home of Annas, where He will be briefly interrogated. Annas was the former high priest prior to Caiaphas. As such, he is regarded with great respect and seen as an expert in the religious matters of the Jews. Additionally, he is Caiaphas' father-in-law.

Annas begins his interrogation by asking Jesus about His doctrine as well as His disciples (Jn. 18:19). It is possible that by asking about Jesus' disciples, Annas is attempting to ascertain the Messiah's sphere of influence. Perhaps the Jewish leadership was even considering taking action against those loyal to Him. After all, they had even plotted to kill Lazarus after Jesus had raised him from the dead (Jn. 12:10). They may have considered doing the same to Jesus' inner circle of followers.

Jesus explains to Annas that His message was no secret. It was, in fact, declared openly in the temple. He then goes on to say that if Annas is truly interested in what Jesus taught, all he would have to do is ask any of the numerous people who had heard His message (Jn. 18:20-21).

At this point, a soldier strikes Jesus and rebukes Him for speaking to the high priest in such a disrespectful manner (Jn. 18:22). At this point it is interesting to note that the act of striking a man who had not been condemned was illegal. However, this did not deter the guard.

The meeting with Annas is brief but speaks volumes concerning the legitimacy of the trial that awaits the Messiah. It is now clear that the Jewish leadership is interested in only one thing. They intend to condemn the Christ.

At the conclusion of His interrogation by Annas, Jesus is bound and sent to the home of Caiaphas, the current high priest. It is here that He will be formally tried (Jn. 18:24).

On the Way to the Palace of Caiaphas

2:00 AM – 2:30 AM

As Jesus is being led to the home of Caiaphas, Peter and a second disciple return and follow at a distance. Most authorities believe this second disciple is John, the son of Zebedee. (Jn. 18:15)

Because John knows the high priest, he is allowed to enter into the court. He then requests that Peter also be allowed to enter. (Jn. 18:15-16). His request is granted.

A young girl attending the gate at Caiaphas' palace asks Peter if he is one of Jesus' disciples. Peter responds, "I am not" (Jn. 18:17). This is his first denial of the Messiah. But it will not be the last.

As Jesus' trial begins, Peter waits in an open courtyard with some officers who have just started a fire to warm themselves (Lk. 22:55). Although it is a spring evening, it is very chilly. Jerusalem lies at an altitude of 2800 feet above sea level. This fact, along with the time (well after midnight), would explain why a fire would be started.

The Trial before the Sanhedrin

The Palace of Caiaphas, the High Priest

2:30 AM – 5:30 AM

As the trial begins, a group referred to as the scribes, elders, and chief priests gather at the palace of Caiaphas. This group, which most authorities believe comprises the Great Sanhedrin, seeks to bring charges against Jesus. They begin by presenting several witnesses accusing the Messiah of crimes worthy of death. This is done in an attempt to secure a quick verdict. However, although many witnesses speak, their testimony only conflicts with that given by other witnesses (Mk. 14:55-56). This frustrates the chief priest which only intensifies the emotionally charged atmosphere of the trial. In an attempt to recover from this legal blunder, Jesus' accusers are forced to bring forth still more testimony.

Two additional witnesses come forth and testify that Jesus threatened to destroy the temple and then raise it up in three days. This appears to be the most compelling evidence of the trial thus far. The argument being advanced by the Jewish leadership at this point is that Jesus intends to desecrate the physical temple.

The temple was an exquisite building and stood as the most significant structure in Jewish life. Furthermore, any desecration of a sacred place was almost universally considered a capital offense in the ancient world. Even pagans agreed with the Jews on this point.

In reality, Jesus did make such a claim early in His ministry. But the temple He spoke of was the temple of His body (Jn. 2:19-21).

Unfortunately for the Jewish leadership, their star witnesses are unable to agree with each other (Mk. 14:57-58). This clearly was not anticipated and only serves to exacerbate the situation.

As the case against Jesus appears to be falling apart, the religious leadership turns to the high priest. Caiaphas is a highly skilled Jewish scholar and an expert interrogator. He begins his examination of the Messiah with a long pause. This strategy is employed in hopes that Jesus will explain His actions without Caiaphas having to utter a word.

Unfortunately for the high priest, Jesus stays silent. It is possible this silence may have lasted several minutes. Additionally, it must have created a very unsettling atmosphere in the trial. However, the silence is broken when Caiaphas demands that the Messiah respond to the accusations being leveled against Him (Mk. 14:60-61).

The emotional pitch at this point is extremely high. The incredibly disciplined high priest was clearly outmatched by this young Galilean. Despite his talents, Caiaphas was being embarrassed by the Messiah – in his own home no less. As a result, he quickly abandons his earlier strategy. The high priest is not in any mood for games. Therefore, his questioning of Jesus becomes filled with intensity. He may even have been screaming at this point.

Meanwhile, as the Messiah is being threatened in what can only be described as a kangaroo court, Peter is accused of being one of Jesus' disciples as he warms himself by the fire in Caiaphas' courtyard. Once again, Peter denies having any association with Jesus (Jn. 18:25). This is Peter's second denial of the Messiah. But there is another yet to come.

Caiaphas now intensifies his interrogation of Jesus. The next question he asks is very direct and cuts through any doubt concerning his opinion of the Messiah. With all the intensity of a passionate prosecutor, Caiaphas says, "I adjure you by the living God that you tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God!" (Mt. 26:63). The phrase "I adjure you by the living God" is a legal formula. Here Caiaphas is demanding an answer in the strongest language he can use. This is done by imposing an oath. If Jesus refuses to answer, He will be breaking a legally imposed order to testify. However, if he responds, Caiaphas is convinced Jesus will still be ruined. If Jesus denies He is the Christ, the crisis will be over, but so will His influence. If, on the other hand, Jesus affirms that He is the promised Messiah, then He must be considered a liar because He has not delivered the Jews from Roman tyranny.

Caiaphas' ploy is simple. Since the false testimony of witnesses had failed to prove Jesus was guilty of blasphemy, the high priest is hoping that Jesus will openly blaspheme when He responds to this question, and thus Jesus will condemn Himself with His own words.

At this point, Jesus provides a very interesting response to Caiaphas' question. He says, "It is as you said" (Mt. 26:64). This answer is affirmative in nature but indirect in form. Essentially, what Jesus is doing is testifying to what Caiaphas has said. In essence, Jesus is agreeing with the assertion of Caiaphas. This response is an insult to the high priest, but the best is yet to come.

Jesus then speaks words that are brazen with confidence and strength. He says, "Nevertheless, I say unto you, henceforth you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Mt. 26:64). Once again, Jesus does not use the name of God in His testimony. Instead He uses the term "power."

Upon hearing these words, Caiaphas is infuriated. He rips his clothes and shouts "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need have we of witnesses?" (Mt. 26:65). He then asks the council, "What do you think?" They respond, "He is worthy of death!" (Mt. 26:66).

It is now approaching dawn and Peter is still outside trying to gain a glimpse of his Lord. At this point, one of the servants of the high priest notices him. This servant reveals that Peter was in Gethsemane with Jesus during the Messiah's arrest, and accuses him of being a disciple. Then someone else says that Peter's speech reveals that he is a Galilean. This is further evidence that links Peter to Jesus of Nazareth. However, Peter continues to deny any relationship with the Messiah. He even begins to "curse and swear" in an attempt to distance himself from his Master (Mk. 14:70-71, Jn.18:26).

The words "curse and swear" do not refer to obscene or profane language as it is thought of today. What Peter was doing was invoking a solemn oath in which he places a curse on himself if he is lying. He may also have appealed to something sacred in an attempt to persuade his accuser that he was telling the truth, which he wasn't.

Immediately after Peter's third denial of the Messiah the cock crows (Mt. 26:74).

Although Jesus does not hear Peter's denials of Him, He does hear the rooster crowing. This sound prompts Him to glance out a window and look upon Peter. As their eyes meet, Peter remembers what Jesus had predicted about his loyalty. Now devastated with guilt and shame, Peter leaves Caiaphas' courtyard and weeps bitterly (Lk. 22:61-62).

As Jesus turns back toward His accusers, He is spit upon and then struck. At this point, the Messiah is blindfolded. His accusers then resume mocking Him and continue to strike Him. As this indignity continues, Jesus is silent. (Mt. 26:67-68, Mk. 14:65)

Shortly after daybreak, the Messiah is formally condemned by the full council (Lk. 22:66-71).

After being condemned by the high court of the Jews, the Messiah is bound and delivered to the palace of Pontius Pilate, the governor of Judea (Mt. 27:2).

The First Appearance of Jesus

Before Pontus Pilate
6:00 AM – to 6:30 AM

Jesus is taken to appear before Pontius Pilate by the Jewish leadership who had just condemned Him (Lk. 23:1). However, these men refuse to enter into the governor's palace because they are afraid of being defiled and not being able to take the Passover. Therefore, as Jesus is brought into the palace, Pilate goes out to meet His accusers. He then inquires about the charges these Jewish leaders are bringing against the Messiah (Jn. 18:28-29).

The elders of the people advise Pilate that Jesus is an evil man deserving of death. His crimes include perverting the nation, forbidding to give tribute to Caesar, and saying He is Christ the King (Lk. 23:2; Jn. 18:30).

Pilate sees this as a religious matter and tells those bringing this accusation to judge Jesus according to their law (Jn. 18:31).

The Jewish leadership protests Pilate's suggestion. They inform the governor that they cannot preside over such a trial because Roman law prohibits them putting a man to death (Jn. 18:31). Noticeably absent was any admission that they had already tried Jesus.

At this point, Pilate is undoubtedly taken aback by the blatant hostility these men have toward the Messiah. Therefore, he returns to his palace to question Jesus regarding the charges against Him. He begins by asking, "Are you the king of the Jews?" (Jn. 18:33).

Jesus responds by asking if Pilate had drawn this conclusion on his own or if he was told this by others (Jn. 18:34).

Pilate is clearly puzzled by the open hostility these Jewish leaders have for someone who considers Himself a king. This ambivalence is reflected in his interrogation of Jesus. Here, the governor simply cannot understand why the Jews gathered outside his palace are clamoring for the death of their king. The idea of such a thing is totally foreign to him. In Rome, loyalty to Caesar was a given. Why wouldn't it be the same with these Jews and their king? (Jn. 18:35). Pilate may even have wondered why the crowd that was growing outside wasn't preparing to fight in defense of their leader.

Jesus understood Pilate's confusion and informed him that looks can be deceiving. The fact of the matter was that the Messiah did have a kingdom that was very real. However, His Kingdom was no threat to Rome at all. If the truth be known, it was not even of this world. If it was of this world, then Jesus' servants would fight (Jn. 18:36).

As a result of this interrogation, Pilate concludes that Jesus is innocent of the charges brought against Him. He then informs His accusers of this fact (Lk. 23:4).

When the chief priests hear this, they start hollering out multiple accusations against Jesus. This prompts Pilate to ask the Messiah why he doesn't defend Himself against such brutal words (Mk. 15:3-4).

At this point, Jesus continues to stay silent, causing Pilate to marvel greatly (Mt. 27:12-14).

As the chief priests see their chance of getting rid of the Messiah slipping away, they become desperate. They passionately argue that Jesus was a genuine threat to the empire and that He was raising up pockets of rebellion from Galilee to Judea (Lk. 23:5).

When Pilate hears this, he has what he now believes is a way to avoid getting involved in this matter. Because Jesus is a Galilean, Pilate concludes that this is a jurisdictional matter. Therefore, he will send the Messiah to Herod Antipas who presided over Galilee at this time (Lk. 23:6-7).

Jesus' Interrogation before Herod

6:45 AM – 7:15 AM

While Jesus is being moved to appear before Herod, Judas Iscariot returns to the chief priests and elders. In an attempt to absolve himself of guilt, Judas brings back the thirty pieces of silver he received for betraying the Messiah. He then confesses, "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood" (Mt. 27:3-4).

Upon hearing Judas' confession, these spiritual leaders respond, "What is that to us?" (Mt. 27: 4). These words are an attempt to absolve themselves of any responsibility in Jesus' betrayal.

However, with their response they actually indict themselves, in that they did not dispute Judas' confession that Jesus was innocent: "I have betrayed innocent blood" (Mt. 27:4). With this in mind, Judas' confession should mean something to these men because, although he (Judas) betrayed innocent blood, they (the chief priests and elders) were responsible for condemning innocent blood. It is very possible they knew this truth.

Judas then throws the betrayal money into the sanctuary and leaves. Shortly after that he commits suicide (Mt. 27:5-10).

At this point, Jesus appears before Herod Antipas. Herod is the tetrarch over Galilee and as a Jew, is in Jerusalem to observe the Passover.

During this interrogation, Herod asks the Messiah several questions. However, Jesus stays silent. This silence causes the chief priests and scribes to "vehemently accuse Him." And although Herod finds Jesus "not guilty," He, along with his soldiers, mock Him before sending Him back to Pilate (Lk. 23:8-12).

The Second Appearance of the Messiah

Before Pontus Pilate

7:30 AM – 8:30 AM

Upon receiving Jesus from Herod, Pilate informs the chief priests that neither he nor Herod can find fault in the one they accuse. The governor then states that he will beat the Messiah and then let Him go. However, Pilate can tell that this judgment is not setting well with the Jewish leaders who appear before him (Lk. 23:13-16).

At this point, Pilate's wife strongly advises him to have nothing to do with condemning Jesus. She informs the governor that she has suffered many things in a dream that warn against taking any action. She appeals to her husband to walk away from this matter. (Mt. 27:19)

Upon hearing her words, Pilate attempts to placate Jesus' accusers. He decides to invoke a Passover custom in which a condemned man receives a full pardon. However, according to the custom, the people must choose who is to be pardoned (Mk. 15:6).

Pilate then orders that a man named Barabbas be brought forth and set before the crowd gathering outside. He then asks the crowd who should be released, Jesus or Barabbas (Mt. 27:17).

The chief priests and the elders persuade the crowd to ask for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be crucified (Mt. 27:20:21).

Pilate orders that Jesus be beaten (Jn. 19:1). At this point, Jesus is scourged in a ritual called "the half death." This is not simply a beating. It is a vicious act of torture in which the Messiah is nearly skinned alive (Mt. 27:26). Additionally, the soldiers commanding the affair beat Him in the face with a stick and spit on Him. Once this is done, they prepare to lead Him away to His death (Mk. 15:16-20). However, before Jesus is marched to the site of His execution, He is returned to the governor one last time.

Pilate then presents Jesus before the crowd and announces that he finds no fault in Him worthy of death (Jn. 19:4-5). The governor may be hoping that Jesus' bloody condition will satisfy the crowd's desire for Him to suffer. However, this overture fails.

The crowd in a near frenzy cries out, "Crucify Him!" (Lk. 23:20-22).

At this point, Pilate cannot grasp why the Jewish leadership so desperately wants Jesus to be executed. The Jews then inform him that Jesus "made Himself the Son of God" (Jn. 19:7-8).

When Pilate hears this accusation, he becomes even more concerned. In reality, the governor may not be as afraid of the Messiah as much as he is impressed with Him. The point is that Pilate is witnessing firsthand the incredible poise and dignity Jesus maintains at a time when every other man in history would be falling apart (Jn. 19:8). The question Pilate may be considering at this point is: Could Jesus be more than just a man?

Pilate then goes back into his palace and appeals to Jesus to put up a defense. At this point he tells the Messiah that he (Pilate) has the power to acquit Him and set Him free if Jesus would only stand up and fight to vindicate Himself (Jn. 19:9-10).

Jesus informs the governor that the only power he (Pilate) enjoys is given to him by God. The Messiah then reveals that those who delivered Him into the hands of Pilate bear the greater sin (Jn. 19:11).

Here Jesus is explaining that although he (Pilate) may ultimately order the execution of the Messiah, the real guilt would rest with Caiaphas and the Jewish leaders who knew better than to accuse Him in the first place.

The governor then presents Jesus to the crowd and asks one last time: "Shall I crucify your King?" (Jn. 19:15).

The chief priests respond by declaring "We have no king but Caesar!" (Jn. 19:15). These words are nothing short of shocking and may very well be the first time these men ever uttered them. Imagine what they would have thought if Jesus had announced such a thing in the temple.

Pilate then washes his hands in a basin and declares that if these Jewish leaders want Jesus crucified, he will fight it no longer. Pilate then states that he believes this is an unjust sentence and will not be responsible for it (Mt. 27:24).

The crowd responds, "His blood be on us and on our children (Mt. 27:25).

On the Way to Golgotha

8:30 AM – 9:00 AM

As Jesus is being led away to be executed, He is forced to carry the beam on which His body will hang (Jn. 19:16).

Because of the immense exhaustion He is suffering due to the brutality of His scourging, Jesus is struggling to carry the beam. Therefore, a man named Simon is conscripted to carry it the rest of the way (Lk. 23:26).

Also being led away to be crucified with Jesus are two “malefactors” (Lk. 23:32). Although none of the gospels specifically indicate what crimes these two men have committed, it is possible they were convicted of insurrection. Matthew’s gospel refers to them as “robbers” (Mt. 27:38).

At this point, it is important to note that neither theft nor robbery were capital offenses. This being the case, most authorities believe the Greek word (*lestai*) Matthew used when describing these two men is better translated “rebels,” “guerrillas,” or “insurrectionists.”

It has also been suggested that these criminals may have been associated with Barabbas. This belief is based on the assumption that three stakes had been prepared, which suggests that Pontus Pilate had already ordered the execution of three rebels. Jesus took the place of Barabbas.

As the execution party moves toward Golgotha, several women in the crowd are crying. Upon seeing this, Jesus tells them, “Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children” (Lk. 23:27-28). He then reveals that the time is coming when the destruction will be so great that people will actually prefer death. He concludes His words by saying, “For if they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?” (Lk. 23:31).

The point Jesus is making is that if such a tragic end could come to someone who is righteous (Jesus Christ), how much more tragic would be the end that comes to those who are unrighteous? To further illustrate this point, consider the effects of a fire: although a fire can burn a forest whose leaves are green, the forest whose trees are dry will be utterly destroyed.

The Crucifixion of Jesus

9:00 AM – Noon

Wednesday Morning

Jesus now arrives at Golgotha where He is nailed to the beam that will suspend His mangled body. Prior to this, His clothes are removed by the guards presiding over His

execution. They divide His garments without much thought, with the exception of a tunic. Because of the extraordinary quality of this piece of clothing, the guards decide to cast lots to determine which of them would keep it. (Jn. 19: 23-24).

While Jesus begins the initial hours of His torturous execution, He is offered wine mingled with gall (Mt. 27:34). Mark's gospel says the wine was mingled with myrrh (Mk. 15:23). When Jesus tastes it, He refuses to drink. The scriptures do not reveal why Jesus refuses this mixture. However, some authorities believe the myrrh in the drink may have acted as a narcotic to ease pain. Jesus detected this and refused to drink it in order to go through His suffering with His senses intact.

Jesus then utters the first of seven sayings He will make during His crucifixion. His words speak volumes about this great act and its purpose. "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do" (Lk. 18:34).

Suspended above Jesus' ravaged body is a sign identifying the offense for which He is being executed. It was ordered to be placed there by Pontus Pilate. The sign reads "This is Jesus, the king of the Jews." Furthermore, it is written in three languages: Hebrew, Latin, and Greek (Jn. 19:19-20).

The chief priests protest the words Pilate has chosen to declare as the Messiah's crime. They want it to read that Jesus claims to be king of the Jews, not that he actually is their king. However, Pilate is not moved by this appeal and informs the Jewish leaders that the words above Jesus are there to stay, just as they were written (Jn. 19:21-22).

As Jesus is hanging for all to see, several people begin to taunt Him. They repeatedly challenge Him to free Himself. Even the chief priests, scribes, and elders mock him. They cry out that they will accept Him as the Messiah if He will only come down from the beam that suspends His broken body. (Mt. 27:39-44)

As Jesus is being mocked by those witnessing His execution, one of the malefactors being crucified with Him appeals to the Messiah to save Himself and also save them. However the other "thief" rebukes the malefactor for his words. He then appeals to Jesus for forgiveness and asks that the Messiah will remember him when He restores His Kingdom (Lk. 23:39-42).

In response to this cry of repentance, Jesus utters His second saying. He informs the thief that he has been forgiven and that he will live again in paradise. His exact words are "Verily I say unto you today, you shall be with Me in paradise" (Lk. 23:43).

The word "verily" in this verse is "amen," and is used to introduce a shocking truth similar to the way a statement would be introduced today by saying, "You might find this difficult to believe, but it is true nevertheless." Jesus then goes on to assure the man that his request was granted.

As it approaches midday, Jesus sees His mother and utters His third saying: "Mother, behold your son!" He then speaks to one of His disciples (probably John) and says to him, "Behold your mother!" With these words, Jesus is making provisions for Mary to be cared for upon His death (Jn. 19: 25-27).

The Death of the Lamb

Noon – 3:00 PM

As Jesus moves closer to His final breath, darkness covers the whole land (Mk. 15:33).

At some point during the final minutes of His life, the sins of all mankind are conveyed to the Messiah. Once this happens, God the Father turns away, leaving His Son to die alone. Feeling the enormous loss, Jesus utters His fourth saying. The Messiah cries out, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Mk. 15:34).

Those witnessing the crucifixion who hear His words think Jesus is calling out the name of Elijah (Mt. 27:47).

Jesus is now utterly exhausted. The last fragment of His strength is depleted. As He hangs in this state, Jesus utters His fifth saying: "I thirst" (Jn. 19:28). In response, someone dips a sponge into a vessel and attempts to give it to Him (Mt. 27:48).

At this point, a soldier thrusts a spear into Jesus' side causing massive bleeding. His death is now imminent (Mt. 27:49 Moffatt translation).

Jesus cries out in agony from the wound (Mt. 27:50). He then utters his sixth saying on the stake: "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30).

As Jesus is about to take his last breath, He utters His final words: "Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit" (Lk. 23:46). He then bows His head and dies (Jn. 19:30).

At this point, an earthquake shakes the region and the veil of the temple is torn from the top to the bottom. Additionally, many tombs of the saints are opened, resulting in the dead being raised to life. So moving are these events that a soldier at the site of Jesus' execution declares, "Truly this was the Son of God" (Mt. 27:51-54).

Meanwhile, certain Jews, not realizing what has just taken place, appear before Pilate and appeal to him to expedite the deaths of Jesus and the malefactors being crucified with Him. They do this because the Jewish High Day (the first day of Unleavened Bread) is approaching and they do not want these men to be hanging during this special Sabbath. They realize that the deaths can be hastened by breaking the legs of the condemned men. By doing so they will be unable to suspend themselves. As a result, they will suffocate. However, this can only be accomplished by order of the governor. (Jn. 19:31)

Pilate grants the request and sends word to the soldiers presiding over Jesus' execution to accelerate His death as well as the death of those with Him. However, as the soldiers prepare to break Jesus' legs, they notice He is already dead. (Jn. 19:32-37)

The Burial of Jesus

The Tomb of Joseph of Arimathea
3:00 PM – Sunset

As the Sabbath is rapidly approaching, a man named Joseph of Arimathea appears before Pilate and requests permission to take Jesus' body down from the stake and bury Him. After confirming that the Messiah was in fact dead, the governor grants Joseph's request (Mk. 15:42-45).

Joseph returns to the execution site and claims the body of the Messiah. Once it is received it is brought to a nearby tomb and prepared for burial. Accompanying Joseph is a ruler of the Jews named Nicodemus. This is the same man who secretly met with Jesus a few years earlier (Jn. 3:1-8). Both of these men are prominent figures among the Jews. However, their respect for the Messiah is far greater than any concern they might have

regarding how the chief priests might react. Both of these men knew Jesus was innocent. And although there was a degree of anxiety over how the Jewish leadership might view this gesture, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus are committed to carrying it out. (Jn. 19:38-42)

After quickly preparing the Messiah's body for interment, Joseph and Nicodemus place it in the tomb. They then secure the site by rolling a large stone over the entrance to the crypt. (Mt. 27:59)

This marks the end of a perfect life offered up as a
ransom for the sins of all mankind.

A Christian Passover Ceremony

Section V “In the Glory of God”

Just hours before His arrest, trial and crucifixion, Jesus went to the garden of Gethsemanaee and poured out His heart to His Father in heaven. The words He would utter at this particular time are among the most poignant ever recorded. It is simply impossible to truly grasp what was taking place in the stillness of that evening. However, it is clear that this was a very special moment.

The events that were about to cascade down upon the Messiah bore tremendous weight and stand as a pivotal point in God's Plan. For this reason, He sought the strength and virtue of the only person in the entire universe who could lead him through it. Kneeling before His Father in heaven was something that defined so much of the Jesus' life. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that this is what He would be doing as He prepared for His death.

The immense love and devotion these two Beings had for each other is simply beyond human comprehension. For all eternity this Father and Son had shared life's greatest mysteries. They were together when the angelic realm was created. They were together when the universe was fashioned. They were together when Lucifer rejected God's sovereignty and moral leadership. They were together when man was formed out of the dust of the earth. They were together when the Destiny of all mankind was first envisioned. They were together when the Plan that would bring that Destiny to fruition was crafted.

Now, once again, they are together. They are intimately connected as the most selfless act in history is about to play out. With this said, there is something else taking place at this moment. As they share this final evening of Jesus' life, the time is now rapidly approaching when they will no longer be together. Imagine being cut off from the one Being in the universe who meant everything to you. This is what these two Wonderful Champions would experience in just a matter of hours.

As Jesus cried out to His Father, the agony He was going through was very apparent. The gospel of Luke states that the perspiration that fell from Him “became as it were great drops of blood” (Lk. 22:44). So intense was this moment that an angel was dispatched from heaven to strengthen Him. However, at this point, for the next precious minutes it would be just Jesus of Nazareth and His Eternal Father.

An Extraordinary Appeal

The gospel of John records words of extraordinary power spoken by Jesus as he approached the garden of Gethsemanaee. Here, in a prayer that may very well have been in the presence of all His disciples, the Messiah reveals that He was fully aware that something horrible was looming over Him. He knew that His end was near.

John 17:1-4

These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you. As you have given him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as you have given Him. And this is life eternal,

that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. I have glorified you on the earth: I have finished the work which you gave me to do.

It is interesting that Jesus said He had “finished” the work His Father had given Him. This, even though He had not yet been crucified. At this point, it is important to understand that Jesus was fully aware of the significance of His impending death as well as its method (crucifixion). Clearly, the Messiah knew that His sacrifice represented a critical part of the work He had been given (1Jn. 3:5). Yet He still uttered these words. This being the case, it is obvious that Jesus was speaking in a very assumptive tone. He was declaring that His sacrifice was already fixed in His Father’s will and He knew that He would carry it out. In other words, it was as good as done.

Jesus would then appeal to the Father to restore to Him the glory He possessed prior to His incarnation, even prior to the time the earth came into existence. Notice what He said.

And now, O Father, glorify you me with thine own self with the glory I had with you before the world was. (Jn. 17:5)

The Greek word “glory” used by the apostle John when recording Jesus’ prayer, is *doxa* and can be translated: “dignity,” “honor,” “praise,” or “worship.” Here, Jesus was importuning the Father to return to Him the great dignity He surrendered when He came to earth as a man. Consider what Jesus willingly left behind in order to become flesh.

Prior to His birth, the Messiah was infinitely powerful. Even time and space could not subdue Him (Psa. 90:1-2). His strength was endless. His beauty and majesty was unmatched. His wisdom and virtue was pristine.

Jesus was the God of the Old Testament. It was He who spoke and earth existed. It was He who fashioned the heavens by His Wisdom. Jesus was the One who spoke to Abraham in Haran and to Moses on Mount Sinai. He was *El Shaddai*, the Almighty.

But now he was just a man. He had all the weaknesses that come with being human. Jesus could tire and even become exhausted. He could suffer hunger and thirst as well as pain. Furthermore, all the love and mercy He possessed could not insulate Him from the excruciating agony He would soon experience at the end of His life. His body was literally going to be ripped apart in a brutal ritual called “scourging.” He was then going to be nailed to a stake and left to die in the presence of His own mother. This is not something anyone would normally look forward to. But Jesus gave up eternity to be in this very spot. And He had no illusions regarding what was about to occur at a place called Golgotha. He was well aware of the numerous prophecies describing the gory details of His death. He inspired the twenty-second Psalm and the fifty-third chapter of the book of Isaiah. With this in mind, consider how this perfect Savior’s life would come to an end.

The Death of the Lamb

No single event in all the Bible consumes more room in the scriptures than the last twenty-four hours of Jesus’ life. In the gospels alone, thirteen chapters are dedicated to this moment. Here, God’s only begotten Son will be offered up as a perfect sacrifice to atone for the sins of all who will accept this great gift.

This period would begin with Jesus and His disciples partaking of the Passover in accordance with God’s command (Lev. 23:5). At this time, the Messiah would reveal that

He was the true Passover Lamb whose body would be broken and whose blood would be shed (Mt. 26:27-29). Additionally, during this meal, Jesus would indicate that He would be betrayed by one of His own disciples (Jn. 13:21). This must have been one of the saddest announcements the Messiah would ever make.

After the meal, Jesus and His disciples, less Judas Iscariot, journeyed toward the garden of Gethsemane. It is here that He would spend His last precious hours of freedom. As the Messiah agonizingly prayed over what was about to take place, His three closest friends, Peter, James, and John were sleeping just a stone's throw away (Lk. 22:41-46)

The Arrest of the Messiah

The gospels indicate that as Jesus concluded praying to His Father in the garden, a contingent of armed soldiers representing the chief priests and the Pharisees could be heard approaching. Leading this group was none other than His betrayer, Judas Iscariot. According to John's account, Jesus would then go forth to meet them (Jn. 18:4). At this point, an important but often overlooked fact takes place. Jesus went out to meet Judas and his party – as opposed to waiting for them to come to Him. This extraordinary act of courage speaks volumes about the Messiah and reveals Him as one who was totally prepared to advance toward the enemy of the faith even if it would mean His death.

At this point, events would begin to accelerate. For the next several hours Jesus would be tried by the Jewish leadership under the direction of Caiaphas, the high priest, and his father-in-law, Annas. Annas had also served as high priest from 6 A.D. to 15 A.D. At that time he was removed from office by the Roman procurator, Valerius Gratus. Some authorities have suggested that Annas was involved in Jesus' trial because he may have been instrumental in formulating the actual charges against Him. However, despite their greatest effort, Annas and Caiaphas had to rely on the testimony of false witnesses in their attempt to secure a guilty verdict. Their hostility toward the Messiah became so warped that they would do anything to destroy Him.

Meanwhile, as Jesus was being slandered and condemned in a kangaroo court presided over by the great "moral leaders" of God's people, His most loyal disciple was publicly forsaking Him. The apostle Peter, who had once rebuked the Messiah for even thinking he would allow his Savior to be abandoned (Mt. 16:21-22; Lk. 22:33), was now denying that he even knew Him. Peter did this at three different times. So adamant was his third denial that he actually pronounced a curse on himself to prove he had never been one of Jesus' disciples (Mt. 26:72-74). In this moment of great weakness, Peter abandoned his Lord just as Jesus said he would (Mt. 26:75). Now, consumed with fear and guilt, he would depart in grief, leaving his Savior alone. However, for Jesus, things would only get worse.

After being formally condemned by the high court of the Jews, the Messiah was bound and brought before Pontus Pilate, the governor of Judea at that time. His accusers informed Pilate that Jesus was guilty of the highest crimes against Rome. These crimes included 1) perverting the nation, 2) tax evasion, and 3) insurrection and treason (Lk. 23:2). John's gospel indicates that Jesus was also accused of being "an evil doer" (Jn. 18:30).

Although Pilate did not have a reputation as a just man, even he could tell Jesus was innocent of the charges being leveled against Him (Lk. 23:14-16). Pilate even understood the motivation these religious leaders had for trying to destroy the Messiah (Mt. 27:18). However, the pressure applied on him to execute Jesus was growing greater by the

minute. While all his sensibilities told him to walk away from this situation, the fear of a public uprising told him he could not (Mt. 27:24).

After several maneuvers to absolve himself from having to pass judgment in this matter, Pilate found himself cornered by a growing crowd, crying out for Jesus' blood. The instigators of this pressure even challenged the governor's loyalty to Caesar and Rome. They suggested that if Jesus was released, Pilate would be, for all intents and purposes, complicit in treason (Jn. 19:12).

With his options running out, Pilate made one final move. In a last ditch effort to spare Jesus' life, he presented a choice to the mob that was gathering outside. He would at this time invoke a Passover custom in which a condemned man would be set free (Mt. 27:15). In accordance with this custom, he would allow the Jews outside his palace to choose who would be released.

At this point, Pilate sought out the most despicable criminal he could find, and his search led him to a man named Barabbas. Barabbas was sentenced to die for high crimes against Rome. He was convicted of insurrection, murder and robbery (Lk. 23:19, 25). Matthew's gospel refers to him as "notorious" (Mt. 27:16 NIV). By today's standard, Barabbas could easily be likened to a violent terrorist. He was a first century sociopath with no redeeming qualities.

Pilate then ordered that this vile man be brought before the crowd. With this final stroke, the governor places before his growing audience two men; Jesus of Nazareth and Barabbas. He then invites his audience to determine who should live and who should die.

To Pilate the choice seemed obvious. However, he was gravely mistaken. When he asked the crowd who should be released, Jesus or Barabbas, the crowd, in a near frenzy, cried out, "Give us Barabbas!" The irony of their appeal was unquestionably lost on them, but it was truly remarkable. The name Barabbas means "son of the father." Here at this precise moment, a pseudo "son of the father" would be released while the real "Son of the Father" would be put to death.

As the cry of the mob was still echoing through Pilate's courtyard, the fate of Jesus was sealed. The last appeal for clemency had been denied. Here, the Great God of the Old Testament is about to become the Lamb of New Testament. With a death sentence now passed, Pilate orders Jesus to be prepared for execution. What would take place next was truly sickening. Pilate ordered Jesus delivered up to be "scourged," a ritual that was totally devoid of mercy (Mt. 27:26).

Scourging was a form of beating in which the thongs of a whip were weighted with jagged pieces of bone or metal to make the blows more effective. This practice was used to wrest confessions and secrets from enemies. Unlike beatings that were performed by the Jews ("forty lashes"), the Roman practice left the number of blows up to the whim of the one commanding the affair.

During this gory ritual, victims were tied to a stake with back bare, and generally fainted from the blows if they didn't die outright. Furthermore, a special scourging was designed to prepare a person for crucifixion. Under this practice, the administrator would "artfully" bring his victim to the brink of death, then pause to allow him to gain some strength. He would then sadistically resume the beating which would nearly skin his victim alive. This scourging was appropriately referred to as the "half death," and is undoubtedly what Jesus was subjected to.

After being mercilessly beaten and bruised, an exhausted Messiah was marched to the site of His execution. As He limped toward Golgotha, He could hear the taunts and jeers

of the crowds that followed Him. Then, at about 9:00 am Jesus was nailed to a beam that would suspend His bloody body for the next six hours. The pain he was now suffering was unbearable.

A Torturous Death

Crucifixion was one of the most barbarous forms of punishment known to man. It was practiced in times of war by the Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Egyptians, and later by the Romans. It was unspeakably cruel and degrading. The agony of crucifixion was brought about by the painful character of the wounds inflicted, the great suffering caused by the position of the body, and the traumatic fever induced by hanging for such a long time. This is how God's beloved Son would spend the final hours of His life.

As Jesus' ravaged body was exposed for all to see, His love for mankind was not abated. The first words He spoke were "Father forgive them: for they know not what they do" (Lk. 23:34). Imagine the enormity of love that inspired such words. Here hung a man more innocent than any child. Never once did He consider evil as an option. He never spoke a vile word nor pondered a wrong thought. The crucifixion of Jesus stands as the greatest act of injustice ever committed by man. And Jesus' response stands as the most merciful utterance in history. So committed was this Great King to the forgiveness of sin that He offered His own life so that man would not have to suffer the eternal consequences of his actions.

To Die Alone

The scriptures reveal that as Jesus was suffering the final moments of His torturous execution, he would experience the greatest horror of His life. In order for Him to pay the price for the sins of all mankind, He would have to shoulder them on His own. All the evil ever perpetrated by the human family was now going to be conveyed to the Messiah.

At this moment, Jesus became sin. He now felt the ugliness of every act of depravity as well as every nuance of error. At this moment, Jesus was very imperfect. As He hung suspended in this state, His Father turned away, leaving Him to die alone. All the intimacy they had shared throughout eternity was, in a moment, gone. The horror the Messiah was going through is simply beyond belief. He had now become everything He despised. At this point, He cried out to His Father in heaven, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" (Mt. 27:46). Noticeably absent was any answer.

Moments after Jesus' cry of anguish, a soldier would drive a spear into his side causing massive hemorrhaging (Mt. 27:49 Moffatt Translation). As His blood poured forth from His body, Jesus was now only seconds away from becoming the Savior of the world. His final utterance before commending His spirit back to the Father was, "It is finished" (Jn. 19:30). With these words, Jesus was declaring that he had accomplished what He purposed in His heart before the world was even formed. He had reconciled God's children back to the Father (Ro. 5:10). With this marvelous act of love a door to eternity was opened. Through it, God's human family would have an opportunity to become His spiritual Family and to share eternity with Him.