



# *The King's Ransom*

Matthew 20:28

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Text

Matthew 26:17-30

Topic

Jesus shares the Passover dinner with His disciples as the final lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world

Title

*"Sinner, Sinner, Passover Dinner"*

Introduction

"Judas" is making a comeback in terms of its popularity as a baby name.

Looking at applications for Social Security cards, exactly zero babies were named Judas from 1940 through 1968. Then, in 1969, there was a spike, as 5 applications for "Judas" were received.

2008 was a record-breaking year, as 21 applications for "Judas" were processed.

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Matthew 26:17-30

*"Sinner, Sinner, Passover Dinner"*

You probably won't ever meet any of the 2008 Judas'. The 21 applications were only 0.001% of the total applications.

While we are on the subject of baby names, I discovered that certain names are banned by countries<sup>1</sup>:

- Both Alicia Silverstone and Kate Winslet would have had to find a name other than Bear for their baby boys if they had been living in Malaysia, where the names of all animals, fruits and vegetables are banned.
- Hermione is one of the names forbidden in the Mexican state of Sonora in an effort to prevent possible bullying.
- According to CNN, in Germany, rejected baby names depend on gender. If you can't tell the gender of the child by the first name, it's a no go.
- In Denmark, parents must choose from a government-approved list of 7,000 names. If they want to go "off-list," they have to get permission from a local church. About 1,100 names are reviewed every year, and 15 percent to 20 percent are rejected, mostly for odd spellings.

Getting back to Judas, one reporter wrote, "People don't attend Benedict Arnold High School, *and they don't name their child Judas.*"

Judas betrayed Jesus, eventually surrendering Him over to the religious authorities who were seeking to kill Him.

Too bad for Judas he didn't surrender himself to Jesus.

As we work this this text, I'd like to keep that distinction in mind - *surrendering* rather than *surrendering to* Jesus.

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<sup>1</sup> Huffington Post, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/24/banned-baby-names\\_n\\_5134075.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/04/24/banned-baby-names_n_5134075.html)

I'll organize my thoughts around two questions: #1 Why Surrender Jesus And Live For Yourself?, and #2 Why Not Surrender To Jesus And Live For Him?

## #1 Why Surrender Jesus And Live For Yourself?

(v1-25)

The annual Passover dinner commemorated the sacrifice of a lamb in Egypt when the people of Israel were freed from slavery. They smeared the blood of the lamb on their doorposts as a signal to God that He should "pass over" their houses when He destroyed the firstborn of Egypt. It was the tenth and final plague upon Egypt, after which Pharaoh let God's people go.

Passover was observed on the 14th day of the first month of the Jewish calendar, called Nisan, beginning in the evening.

This would be Jesus' final Passover dinner... Or was it - a Passover dinner, that is?

- According to Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus ate the Passover meal with His disciples on the day when "they sacrificed the passover lamb" (Mark 14:12; cf. Luke 22:7; Matthew 26:17).
- However, according to the Gospel of John, He ate the meal the day *before*, because He was crucified on the day the Passover lambs were being sacrificed (John 19:14; 18:28).

Which was it? There are at least three suggested solutions:

1. Jesus' meal with His disciples may have been a specially arranged Passover meal. Do you always celebrate Thanksgiving on the fourth Thursday of November? I've had it earlier, and later, depending upon circumstances. The

problem, however, with this suggestion is that Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell you it was on the calendar date on which the feast was to be held.

2. The dinner may have been a farewell fellowship meal unrelated to Passover, eaten the evening before the official Passover. I came across information from a Jewish source that said it was customary for a rabbi to have a final, celebratory meal with his disciples once their formal training with him was concluded. That certainly fits the context; this was Jesus' last night with His disciples before His crucifixion. The problem with this, however, is that, in the Gospel of Luke, Jesus said to His disciples, "I have eagerly desired to eat this **Passover** with you before I suffer" (Luke 22:15).

Since those theories seem problematic, there is a third. For a long time, scholars suggested that different groups among the Jews, e.g., the Pharisees and the Sadducees, used slightly different calendars. It was hard to prove until along came the Dead Sea Scrolls and revealed to scholars that, at the time of Jesus, there really were two different calendars being used,

Thus they would celebrate the Passover on different consecutive days.

If you think the two calendar thing is silly, imagine living in Indiana. The location of Indiana at the boundary of the Eastern and Central time zones has led to the state being split between the two time zones. You could live in one time zone and work in another.

Does anybody really know what time it is?

The two-calendar thing is probably the correct answer. We know it was in effect in the first century. Plus, it has massive practical advantages:

- For one thing, it gave the priests in the Temple an additional day in which to sacrifice the lambs. With tens of thousands of pilgrims swelling the regular Jewish population, sacrificing all their lambs was no small task.
- For another thing, the two dates kept the two groups somewhat separated, keeping a lid on the normal tensions between them.

Jesus and the disciples considered their Passover day to have started at sunrise on Thursday and end at sunrise on Friday. The Jewish leaders who arrested and tried Jesus, being mostly priests and Sadducees, considered their Passover day to begin at sunset on Thursday and end at sunset on Friday. This explains how Jesus could thereby legitimately celebrate a last Passover meal with His disciples and yet still be sacrificed on Passover day.

It was important that Jesus Christ's death should synchronize with the death of the Passover lambs because He was God's promised, final lamb.

Jesus therefore planned for the earlier Passover so that the types of the slaying of the lamb would be fulfilled not only as to the event, but as to the time.

Mat 26:17 Now on the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

There was a definite air of secrecy surrounding this last Passover. Judas was looking for a time and place to surrender Jesus to the authorities, so Jesus kept the location of the meal under wraps.

It must have created a little stress for the disciples. Imagine if you didn't know where you'd be celebrating Thanksgiving until the day itself, and yet you still had to prepare everything for the meal.

Mat 26:18 And He said, "Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, "My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with My disciples." ' "

When is the last time you tried to book a venue for a reception? Places are super hard to find, and they cost an arm and a leg. Yet the owner of this upper room had kept it available. Maybe God had given him a dream, or a vision; we don't know why, but he was obedient to let his valuable real estate sit vacant, waiting on the Lord.

Peter and John were the disciples sent on this mission. Mark and Luke, in their Gospels, say they would be able to identify the man because he would be "carrying a pitcher of water," a chore normally reserved for women.

Even with that clue, Jesus wasn't making this easy.

Mat 26:19 So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.

When you're watching a movie or TV show, you know the opening credits are over when you see the director's name. You can probably name a dozen famous Hollywood directors. They are that important.

Follow Jesus' direction. Don't worry that you don't have enough time or information. Don't argue that men don't carry pitchers of water. Just follow directions, and love it when a plan comes together.

Mat 26:20 When evening had come, He sat down with the twelve.

Mat 26:21 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."

I cannot think of more compassionate way of presenting this crucial piece of information. The eleven needed to know that what was about to happen was definitely a part of God's plan. But the Lord told them in a way so as to not embarrass Judas, still giving him opportunity to repent and not lose face with the boys.

Mat 26:22 And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?"

This, to me, is absolutely amazing. These are the guys who always misunderstood Jesus; who got upset when kids were around; who were bothered by the interruption of a sick woman touching the hem of Jesus' garment. They fought over who would be the greatest in His kingdom, ignoring His predictions of His impending death.

Suddenly, without any warning, they responded spiritually. Instead of blaming one another, they each (except Judas) wondered if it could be them.

This tells me at least two things:

1. Even someone who is normally spiritually dull can have a deep moment with Jesus.
2. Even if I think I am spiritually sharp, I ought to constantly and thoroughly examine myself.

"Lord, is it I?," is a great question to ask yourself as you are reading the Bible. Not just in the context of disobedience, but even more so in the context of desiring to obey. If you read something that is a call to action, ask, "Lord, is it I?" who You are calling to serve You?

Ask, "Lord, is it I?" You are speaking to today; to give, to pray, to fast?

During, and after, every Bible reading or Bible study, ask, "Lord, is it I?"

Mat 26:23 He answered and said, "He who dipped his hand with Me in the dish will betray Me.

Jesus meant this to emphasize that He would be betrayed by someone with whom He had shared His very life. Judas' betrayal was personal to Jesus - not just a prophetic tick on the timeline. It hurt; a lot.

Imagine if you were Jesus, and had spent three and one-half years living with a guy, and in the end it had no effect on saving him. In fact he became your enemy.

Maybe Jesus needed better witnessing skills, or tools. *Not!* I hate to draw encouragement from a negative, but if people rejected Jesus while they could see, feel, and hear Him, it shouldn't surprise us when they reject Him today.



Mat 26:24 The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."

More amazing-ness! Here we learn that God's ultimate will cannot be thwarted by man. He will accomplish what He has planned by His providence; but He does it in such a way as to never violate a man's free will, still holding each man responsible and accountable for all his actions.

I've said more than once that Jesus held out to Judas the opportunity, and real possibility, of his repentance. Judas was not an automaton, predestined to damnation.

Mat 26:25 Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."

Notice that the other eleven guys asked, "Lord, is it I?" Judas didn't call Jesus "Lord," but said, "Rabbi, is it I?"

Rabbi means *teacher*. Jesus was a great teacher; but if He is not your Lord, you cannot hope to understand, let alone follow, any of His teachings. They require the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit, and for that you'll need to be born-again.

Judas would get up and go out and betray the Lord, surrendering Him to the religious authorities in the Garden of Gethsemane.

He surrendered Jesus rather than surrendering *to* Jesus.

I won't try to get all sensational and suggest that we can be Judas'. I will suggest this. When I know what Jesus wants me to do, or to be, and I refuse in favor of my own wisdom and desires, I am surrendering Him.

I am surrendering Him in the sense that I won't be enjoying His sweet, intimate fellowship. In Second Corinthians 6:15, in the Message version, Paul asks, "Does [Jesus] go strolling with the devil?" No, He doesn't; so when I walk out of His will, I am out of fellowship.

I'm not saying you lose your salvation. But you are not fellowshiping with Jesus when you disobey Him, when you sin. You are surrendering fellowship.

You also surrender Jesus when you go your own way in the sense of ignoring His power over sin. He has given you the Holy Spirit, to dwell within you. You can always say "Yes!" to God, and "No!" to sin. Why surrender that power to your sworn enemies - the devil, the flesh, and the world?

It makes no sense - except that sin is pleasurable for a season. Just know that, in the end, sin brings death.

Don't surrender Jesus!

## #2 Why Not Surrender To Jesus And Live For Him?

(v26-30)

When Jews today sit down to celebrate Passover, they use a book known as the Haggadah.

The Hebrew word *haggadah* literally means *telling*; the title refers to the book's purpose - to provide the ordered framework through which the story of Passover is told at the meal.

The celebration is sometimes called a Passover Seder, because the word "seder" means *order*.

Telling the story of Passover is, of course, one of the fundamental purposes of the celebration, as stated in Exodus 13:8, "And you shall **tell** your child on that day, 'It is because of what the Lord did for me when I went forth from Egypt.'"

You should know that practically everything in the Haggadah was recorded *after* the destruction of the Temple in 70AD. In fact it could not have been written, according to one source, before 170AD.

And the Haggadah keeps getting amended. Many modern editions of the Haggadah contain contemporary readings of one sort or another. Even traditional Jews have, for instance, adapted the Haggadah so that mention can be made of the Holocaust.

As far as the Bible is concerned, the only details about what to eat, and the seder of service, are in Exodus twelve.

Exo 12:5 Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year. You may take it from the sheep or from the goats.

Exo 12:6 Now you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of the same month. Then the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it at twilight.

Exo 12:7 And they shall take some of the blood and put it on the two doorposts and on the lintel of the houses where they eat it.

Exo 12:8 Then they shall eat the flesh on that night; roasted in fire, with unleavened bread and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.

Exo 12:9 Do not eat it raw, nor boiled at all with water, but roasted in fire - its head with its legs and its entrails.

Exo 12:10 You shall let none of it remain until morning, and what remains of it until morning you shall burn with fire.

Exo 12:11 And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the LORD's Passover.

We don't really know, not exactly, how Jesus and His disciples went through their Passover meal. They did not have a Haggadah. A lot of things that you might see at a modern, re-enacted Passover Seder may or may not have been part of the Last Supper.

What is important is what we can actually see in the Bible - not in what we think were the traditions of the day.

Mat 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."

Mat 26:27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.

Mat 26:28 For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Jesus did this *after* the customary Passover, giving it as a new celebration, rather than simply changing the meaning. He wasn't telling us to continue to observe Passover annually, but to observe the Last Supper it had become on account of Him being the final Passover lamb. We are free to partake of these elements as often as we like.

This symbolic act was the clearest statement Jesus ever made of the redemptive purpose of His death. The sharing of bread and wine were tokens that His coming death was sufficient to provide forgiveness for all mankind, and effective in removing the sins of those who believe.

We understand the elements of bread and wine to be symbols, and the celebration to be a memorial. That is, there is no literal or mystical transformation of the elements into Jesus' body and blood. The bread is bread; the wine is wine; but they represent His body and blood.

I said 'wine,' so why do we commonly use grape juice? Because it doesn't matter in this sense: It isn't about the elements, but rather the spiritual meaning of them. When we become preoccupied with the elements, the Lord's Supper takes on a superstitious aspect - as if we're not doing it 'right.'

If you're a stickler for accuracy, it's obvious we should use unleavened bread. As to the wine, that's harder, because even though the wine Jesus drank was definitely fermented, according to the traditional Jewish writings, it would definitely have been watered down by a ratio of as little as three-to-one to as much as six-to-one.

Again - it isn't the elements. It's what they represent, and that is the "new covenant."

What is the new covenant? It was promised in the Old Testament:

Jer 31:31 "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah -

Jer 31:32 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD.

Jer 31:33 But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jer 31:34 No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

The new covenant, as Jeremiah presents it, is the forgiveness of sin accompanied by the dynamic power to live a life pleasing to God. Instead of trying to keep the Law outwardly and failing, you are empowered to keep the Law inwardly, and can walk with the Lord.

It's what we commonly call being born-again.

This new covenant has begun to be fulfilled by believers, Jew and Gentile, in the church age. It will find its final fulfillment at the Second Coming of Jesus, when all Israel is saved.

Mat 26:29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

The "kingdom" Jesus was referring to is the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, the Millennial Kingdom, that He will establish upon His return in His Second Coming.

It's precious that Jesus has taken a vow not to drink wine until He returns. It's His way of telling us that His joy will not be full until we can all be together.

I remember a Crosby, Stills & Nash song from my youth, *Love the One You're With*.

*If you can't be with the one you love,  
Love the one you're with*

It's terrible advice! I sometimes think that, since Jesus is absent, as we await His return, we tend to "love the world we're in."

A little fasting from the world, and the things of the world, would be more in keeping with our love for Him.

Look at verse twenty-six, and notice the words "gave," "take," and "eat," keeping in mind the symbolism of what Jesus was offering.

"Gave" tells us that the forgiveness of sin and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is a gift. It must be given, never earned. It is received, not achieved. It is by grace, through faith, in Jesus Christ, that you are saved.

But it must be personally received. A person must "take" the gift of salvation Jesus offers by making a willful decision.

How is that possible, if we are sinners? God's grace comes before, freeing our will, enabling us to choose.

"Eat" indicates that there is nourishment and on-going growth in this new covenant life.

I'm trying to capture all of that by asking, "Why not surrender to Jesus and live for Him?"

- There is an initial surrender when you realize you're a sinner, and you repent of your sins, and turn to God.
- Then you are to go on being surrendered to Him, by obedience to His Word, walking by faith.

Never surrender Jesus; always surrender **to** Him.