

### Week 3: The Gospels and the Lord’s Supper (Mark 14, Lk 22)

#### The R<sup>4</sup>: Read, Reflect, Review, Resolve.

1. **Read** Mark 14:1-26 (and, if possible, Luke 22:1-38).
2. **Reflect** on the ideas, context, concepts, and stipulations presented in these passages and in your conversations.
3. **Review** the handout provided, including the discussion questions offered. Take your conversations in whatever direction you like. Have fun with them.
4. **Resolve** the major issues and tensions that arose in your discussions (whether in the biblical text, in your reflection, or in your review of the handout). Remember to focus on how each topic refers back to the Lord’s Supper.

#### Background to the Lord’s Supper in the Gospels

##### Mk 14:12-25 – Passover/New Exodus/Last Supper/Seder Meal

Symbol	Significance	Scripture
Unleavened bread	Misery experienced	Ex 12:5
Bitter herbs	Slavery	Ex 12:8
Fruit and nuts	Mortar for forced labor	Ex 5:7
Lamb	God’s mercy in passing over Israel	Ex 12:13
4 cups of wine	God’s deliverance	Ex 6:6-7

##### Mark’s Use of Zech. 9-14 during the Lord’s Supper (Mark 14)

Theme	Mark	Zechariah
Blood of the covenant	14:24	9:11
New day, kingdom of God	14:25	14:4, 9
Mount of Olives	14:26	14:4
Striking the shepherd	14:28	13:8-9

Mark intends this Passover meal to signal a new covenant meal between Jesus and his followers. It centers on Jesus himself (Jesus becomes the very food his followers must eat). Note the following:

- Zechariah (see above), Exodus 24 (“blood of the covenant”) and Psalms 23 (“you prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies”) and 41 (“even my trusted friend on whom I relied, who shared my table, takes advantage of me”), among other OT passages, undergird this symbolic meal.
- This Passover celebration would have begun with Psalms 113-114 and ended with psalms 115-118, which were seen as a unit—called Hallel (“Praise”) Psalms (see v. 26).
- It is possible that Jesus eats the Passover meal earlier than usual and secretively, thus illegally, as he would have had to bypass the lawful sacrifice of the lamb in the temple by the priests.
- Jesus and his disciples do *not* engage in the mandatory purity regulations associated with eating the Passover meal, either because Jesus intentionally allows them to bypass these regulations or because Mark intentionally does not refer to them—either of which illustrates Jesus’ radicalness.
- Jesus does *not* eat the bread or drink the wine (he only participates in the first course of the meal, it seems). Instead, he gives it to the disciples to eat and drink.
- Jesus’ command for the disciples to “eat” his body and “drink” his blood was sacrilegious and would have been abhorrent in Jewish culture, since blood was seen as life and thus undrinkable. Likewise, eating a person’s body (even though symbolic) would have been an affront to the disciples and Jewish sensibilities (Lev 3:17, 7:26-27; 17:14).
- Jesus himself breaks the bread (his body) and distributes the wine (his blood), signaling that he makes the decision to sacrifice himself—nobody makes him do this.

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- The Passover meal is *not* a “memorial”; rather, it is a reliving of the story—making it present for the people who are experiencing it. It is similar to the idea of mission (finding my significance in light of the larger story as my life unfolds in its unfolding) rather than application (finding the significance of the larger story in light of me and my unfolding story).
- The Lord’s Supper (and other sacrament, Baptism) is about solidarity in Jesus’ death (10:38-40).
- Mark intentionally does *not* refer to the slaughtered lamb—because he wants the reader to see Jesus as taking over that symbol through his actual death in behalf of his followers. The Greek word for “Passover” (*pascha*) is very similar to the Greek word for “suffer” (*pascho*)—and Mark wants the reader to recognize this significance.
- Jesus’ fast here goes back to one of his earlier statements about fasting at the wedding feast in 2:18-22, as seen below:

Mk 2:18-22	Mk 14:22-25; 15:24
Jesus and his disciples do not fast but feast because groom is present with them.	Jesus begins his fast since he will be taken, and his disciples will do so after his death.
The new wine cannot be joined with old wine.	Jesus cannot enjoy this old wine until the kingdom is fully arrived.
The old clothing cannot be joined with the new clothing.	Jesus has his clothes taken from him, so that he “fasts” from them—that is, he is naked.

**Historical Aside – Solving the Tension about Passover in the Synoptics and John**

The Synoptic’s portrayal of the Last Supper differs from John’s. John places the crucifixion of Jesus on the same day as the Passover, whereas the Synoptics place it before (1:29; 1:36; 18:28; 19:14;

19:31-33 a la Ex 12:46 and Num 9:12). The traditional time of preparation in the first century was Nisan 14, around 3:00 p.m., while the celebration of the meal was Nisan 15, which began after sunset.

Book	Passover Preparation	Passover Celebration	Crucifixion
Matt, Mark, Lk	Thurs morning / day, Nisan 14 (Lk 22:7-13)	Thurs night, Nisan 15 (Mk 14:16)	Friday day, Nisan 15; Sabbath began Friday at sunset, Nisan 16 (Mk 15:42)
John	Friday day, Nisan 14 (Jn 19:14), so Last Supper (13:1) fell on Thurs night, Nisan 14, so it was not a Passover meal	Friday at sunset, Nisan 14 (Jn 18:28)	Friday day, Nisan 14; Sabbath began Friday at sunset, Nisan 15 and lasted till Saturday at sunset (19:31); thus, in this year, Passover fell on the Sabbath

**Questions**

1. What is the best way to resolve these differences? Does it ultimately matter which is historically “correct”? Why or why not?

No.	Description
1	John historically accurate that Passover occurred during Jesus’ crucifixion, while Gospels theologically motivated to identify last meal as Passover. (Proponent: John Meier)
2	Gospels historically accurate to identify Jesus’ last meal with disciples as Passover, while John theologically motivated to place Passover during crucifixion to illustrate Jesus as Passover lamb. (Proponent: E. P. Sanders)
3	Both Synoptics and John are correct given that Jesus has Passover in Synoptics the day <i>before</i> normally celebrated.

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(Proponent: F. F. Bruce) There are several proposals forwarded as to why Jesus did this:

- i. due to his belief that he would be killed before he would be able to celebrate it with his disciples;
- ii. there were rival calendars (one lunar, one solar);
- iii. there were different ways to reckon days (sunset/sunset or sunrise/sunrise);
- iv. there were regional differences (Galilean or Judean); or
- v. the Pharisees and Sadducees disagreed on the date, so the Pharisees (and Jesus) celebrated the Passover meal on Thursday night (Nisan 15), while the Sadducees celebrated the Passover meal on Friday night (Nisan 15).

<b>Passover (before Jesus)</b>	<b>Jesus’ Sacrifice</b>
The lamb had no blemishes.	Jesus had no blemishes.
The lamb was a male first-born.	Jesus was the firstborn Son of God.
The lamb was killed at a certain time in the evening.	Jesus was killed at a specific time in the evening.
The bones of the lamb were not broken.	Jesus’s bones were not broken.
The Israelites applied the lamb’s blood to the door.	Jesus’s blood saves those who find refuge in him.
The whole lamb was to be eaten on the same night.	Jesus was crucified and killed on the same night.
No work was to be done on the Passover.	Jesus rested on Passover during his death.
People believed God used the lamb’s sacrifice to save.	Christians believe that Jesus’s sacrifice saves.

**Questions**

1. Does Mark understand the Lord’s Supper as a Passover? What does Mark want readers to think?
2. How does Mark make use of the Hebrew Bible in order to make his points?
3. If you were interested in the “historical aside,” what do you make of this? Do you recognize the tension about dating the event (remember that Nisan refers to a Jewish calendar month, as they did not have our months, which are Roman in origin)?
4. How does Luke’s version of the Lord’s Supper compare with Mark’s? What is similar, and what is different? How do you account for the different theological and spiritual directions they take? What about Matthew’s Gospel? Is Matthew closer to Mark or Luke?
5. What are your biggest take-aways from this entire discussion?
6. If Jesus were to come back and explain what took place during the Lord’s Supper, how do you think he would explain it? What do you think he would expect from us as a result?