

In this chapter, we focus on the verses describing Jesus' final Passover meal, His betrayal by Judas and subsequent arrest, and Peter's denial of Jesus three times before the cock crowed the next morning. All of these events were laden with significance and emotion as Jesus proceeded to fulfill the OT prophesies that had been made concerning His suffering and death on the cross.

Verses 1-13: In the days leading up to the Passover feast, Judas makes a deal with the chief priests and scribes to betray Jesus to them for a sum of money. They were looking for an opportunity to arrest Jesus but couldn't find one because they feared the people who seemed to always be surrounding Jesus (v. 2). Judas promised to give them an opportunity to arrest Jesus in one of His more private moments when He was not surrounded by a multitude of people (v. 6). Soon after, when the day of Passover had arrived, Jesus sent Peter and John to make preparations for them to eat the Passover meal.

14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. 15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: 16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

“And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him” – “The hour” was sundown, marking the official start of Passover. At this time the group sits down (or reclines) at the table to eat the Passover meal.

“And he said unto them, With desire I have desired [craving; longing] to eat this passover with you before I suffer” – The Greek words for “desire” and “desired” are variations of the same word, with the phrase “with desire have I desired” amplifying the meaning to refer to an intense desire or longing. It meant something to Jesus to be able to eat this final Passover meal with His disciples before He had to suffer and be crucified.

“For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God” – The Passover meal, with the bread and the wine, foreshadowed the sacrifice that Christ would make on the cross for us. That sacrifice gives us access to God's kingdom and thus Jesus would not eat of the Passover again until He can celebrate it with His people in His kingdom, where it will have a much greater meaning.

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: 18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

After having the disciples share the cup of wine, Jesus makes a similar statement about the wine as He did about not eating the Passover meal until they could share it in the kingdom of God.

19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

Jesus uses the bread to represent His body so that it would serve as a reminder of the sacrifice that He made of Himself in order to bear the punishment for our sins. This use of the bread is symbolic, unlike the false Roman Catholic belief of transubstantiation that says that the bread literally transforms into the body of Christ.

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

Wine serves as a visual analog to blood and serves to remind us of the fact that Jesus shed His blood in order to satisfy God's wrath for our sins. The Roman Catholic belief of transubstantiation also says that the wine transforms into His literal blood, which is not what Jesus is saying here. In contrast with the old testament (covenant), which was dedicated and based on the blood sacrifice of animals (Ex. 24:1-8), the new testament is dedicated and based on the blood that Jesus Christ shed for us (Heb. 9:19-28). Transubstantiation is not taught anywhere in scripture.

Verses 21-46: Jesus disclosed that one of the disciples would betray Him and then instructed them not to seek to be the greatest but to serve one another, just as He was doing. Jesus also revealed that Peter would deny Him three times before the cock crowed the next morning. They then got up from the Passover meal and make their way to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives where Jesus then prayed to prepare Himself to face the suffering and death that coming.

47 And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them, and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him. 48 But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?

“And while he yet spake, behold a multitude, and he that was called Judas, one of the twelve, went before them” – We know from John 13:21-30 that Judas left the meal early and now he has returned leading the crowd of people who wanted to arrest Jesus. Judas knew where to find Jesus because he knew that the Garden of Gethsemane was one of Jesus' favorite places to go to get away from the crowds (John 18:2).

“and drew near unto Jesus to kiss him” – This kiss was no expression of affection, but a prearranged signal to identify which person the multitude should arrest (Matt. 26:48).

“But Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?” – Jesus points out the irony that Judas had chosen a kiss to commence his betrayal. A kiss is typically intended to show affection but the purpose of Judas' kiss was the opposite.

49 When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword? 50 And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear.

“When they which were about him saw what would follow, they said unto him, Lord, shall we smite with the sword?” – When the disciples recognize what was about to happen, they ask Jesus if they should resist and fight to prevent Jesus from being taken.

“And one of them smote the servant of the high priest, and cut off his right ear” – One of the disciples doesn't wait for Jesus' answer and attacks one of the people (likely the closest one to him) and cuts off his ear. John 18:10 identifies this disciple as Peter and that Malchus was the name of the high priest's servant that Peter attacked.

51 And Jesus answered and said, Suffer ye thus far. And he touched his ear, and healed him.

“And Jesus answered and said, Suffer [permit] ye thus far” – Jesus instructs the disciples to not resist but to allow the multitude to do what they came to do because these things must happen in order to fulfill scripture (Matt. 26:53-54).

“And he touched his ear, and healed him” – In an act of compassion, Jesus heals the servant's ear. Apparently, this crowd is so hard-hearted that this act of compassion does not dissuade them from their purpose.

52 Then Jesus said unto the chief priests, and captains of the temple, and the elders, which were come to him, Be ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and staves? 53 When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness.

Jesus calls attention to the inappropriate way that the chief priests and elders were going about the business of arresting Him. Jesus had never shown any interest in violence and yet these Jewish leaders had come armed with weapons as if they were arresting a thief. They had plenty of opportunities to arrest Him while He was teaching in the temple during the day, and yet they chose to do so at night, the typical time that evil people choose to act under the cover of darkness.

54 Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house. And Peter followed afar off. 55 And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them.

“Then took they him, and led him, and brought him into the high priest's house” – They arrest Jesus and take Him to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest, in order to try Him in their kangaroo court. They want to accuse and condemn Jesus of whatever crime they can make stick.

“And Peter followed afar off” – The rest of the disciples have fled out of fear (Matt. 26:56; Mark 14:50), but Peter is following at a distance to see what was going to happen to Jesus (Matt. 26:58). John records that “another disciple” also followed (John 18:15), which was likely John himself.

“And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together” – These were the servants of the chief priests and other Jewish leaders who had assembled to condemn Jesus, along with officers of the temple police. They were outside awaiting further instructions from their superiors inside the house and had built a fire to stay warm as they waited.

“Peter sat down among them” – Peter tries to blend in while he monitors the situation with Jesus and gathers around the fire with the others.

56 But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him. 57 And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not.

“But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked [to fix one's gaze upon] upon him” – Peter's attempt to blend in wasn't as successful as he hoped. One servant girl stared at him, likely finding him familiar and trying to decide where she had seen him.

“and said, This man was also with him” – The servant girl finally remembers that she had seen Peter with Jesus and says so.

“And he denied him, saying, Woman, I know him not” – Notice that it says “he denied Him.” Jesus said that Peter would deny that He knew Jesus (v. 34) and that is what Peter does here. Despite claiming that he was willing to go to prison or even die for Jesus (v. 33), Peter succumbs to fear and denies being associated with Jesus.

58 And after a little while another saw him, and said, Thou art also of them. And Peter said, Man, I am not.

Eventually someone else also remembers seeing Peter with Jesus and Peter again denies knowing Jesus.

59 And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean. 60 And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew.

“And about the space of one hour after another confidently affirmed, saying, Of a truth this fellow also was with him: for he is a Galilean” – Around an hour passed before another person declared that Peter was one of Jesus' disciples, basing his proof on the fact that Peter was a Galilean. Apparently Peter had a Galilean accent (Matt. 26:73; Mark 14:70) and since Jesus was known to be from Galilee, the assumption was made that Peter's only reason for being so far from Galilee was because he was a companion of Jesus.

“And Peter said, Man, I know not what thou sayest” – Apparently Peter was so fearful that not only did he deny knowing Jesus, he seems to also deny being a Galilean. He denies any knowledge about the assertions that they are making.

“And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew” – The words of Peter's third denial aren't fully out of his mouth before the rooster crowed. Jesus' prediction that Peter would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed the next morning was 100% accurate.

61 And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. 62 And Peter went out, and wept bitterly.

“And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter” – No doubt Peter felt the guilt as soon as he heard the rooster, but the guilt he was feeling must have intensified when Jesus turned and looked him in the eye. That look reminded Peter that Jesus knew exactly what he had done.

“And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice” – Between the cock crowing and the look from Jesus, Peter realized that he had fulfilled Jesus' prediction despite his claims to the contrary (v. 33).

“And Peter went out, and wept bitterly” – Peter was overcome with guilt and grief as he realized what he had done, and it broke his heart. All he could do was seek a private place to weep bitterly over his failure.