**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**LUKE-077**. **THE LORD'S SUPPER by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"9. Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. 8. And He sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. 9. And they said unto Him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? 10. And He said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in. 11. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with My disciples? 12. And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready. 13. And they went, and found as He had said unto them: and they made ready the passover. 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. 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. 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. 20. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you."*

*Luke 22:7-20*

Paul had his account of the Last Supper direct from Christ. Luke apparently had his from Paul, so that the variations from Matthew and Mark are invested with singular interest, as probably traceable to the Lord of the feast Himself. Our passage has three sections--the preparation, the revelation of Christ's heart, and the institution of the rite.

**I. The Preparation.**

Peculiar to Luke are the names of the disciples entrusted with it, and the representation of the command, as preceding the disciplesquestion Where?The selection of Peter and John indicates the confidential nature of the task, which comes out still more plainly in the singular directions given to them. Luke's order of command and question seems more precise than that of the other Gospels, as making our Lord the originator instead of merely responsive to the disciplessuggestion.

How is the designation of the place which Christ gives to be understood? Was it supernatural knowledge, or was it the result of previous arrangement with the goodman of the house? Most probably the latter; for he was in so far a disciple that he recognised Jesus as the Master, and was glad to have Him in his house, and the chamber on the roof was ready furnishedwhen they came. Why this mystery about the place? The verses before our passage tell the reason.

Judas was listening, too, for the answer to Where?thinking that it would give him the opportunitywhich he sought to betray Him in the absence of the multitude. Jesus had much to say to His disciples, and needed the quiet hours in the upper room, and therefore sent away the two with directions which revealed nothing to the others. If He had told the group where the house was, the last supper might never have been instituted, nor the precious farewell words, the holy of holies of John's Gospel, ever been spoken. Jesus takes precautions to delay the Cross. He takes none to escape it, but rather sets Himself in these last days to bring it near. The variety in His action means no change in His mind, but both modes are equally the result of His self-forgetting love to us all. So He sends away Peter and John with sealed orders, as it were, and the greedy ears of the traitor are balked, and none know the appointed place till Jesus leads them to it. The two did not come back, but Christ guided the others to the house, when the hour was come.

**II. Verses 14-18 give a glimpse into Christ's heart as He partook, for the last time, of the Passover.**

He discloses His earnest desire for that last hour of calm before He went out to face the storm, and reveals His vision of the future feast in the perfect kingdom. That desire touchingly shows His brotherhood in all our shrinking from parting with dear ones, and in our treasuring of the last sweet, sad moments of being together. That was a true human heart, fashioned alikewith ours, which longed and planned for one quiet hour before the end, and found some bracing for Gethsemane and Calvary in the sanctities of the Upper Room. But the desire was not for Himself only. He wished to partake of that Passover, and then to transform it for ever, and to leave the new rite to His servants.

Our Lord evidently ate of the Passover; for we cannot suppose that His words in verse 15 relate to an ungratified wish, but, as evidently, that eating was finished before He spoke. We shall best conceive the course of events if we suppose that the earlier stages of the paschal ceremonial were duly attended to, and that the Lord's Supper was instituted in connection with its later parts. We need not discuss what was the exact stage at which our Lord spoke and acted as in verses 15-17. It is sufficient to note that in them He gives what He does not taste, and that, in giving, His thoughts travel beyond all the sorrow and death to reunion and perfected festal joys. These anticipations solaced His heart in that supreme hour. For the joy that was set before HimHe endured the Cross, and this was the crown of His joy, that all His friends should share it with Him, and sit at His table in His kingdom.

The prophetic aspect of the Lord's Supper should never be left out of view. It is at once a feast of memory and of hope, and is also a symbol for the present, inasmuch as it represents the conditions of spiritual life as being participation in the body and blood of Christ. This is where Paul learned his till He come; and that hope which filled the Saviour's heart should ever fill ours when we remember His death.

**III. Verses 19 and 20 record the actual institution of the Lord's Supper.**

Note its connection with the rite which it transforms. The Passover was the memorial of deliverance, the very centre of Jewish ritual. It was a family feast, and our Lord took the place of the head of the household. That solemnly appointed and long-observed memorial of the deliverance which made a mob of slaves into a nation is transfigured by Jesus, who calls upon Jew and Gentile to forget the venerable meaning of the rite, and remember rather His work for all men. It is strange presumption thus to brush aside the Passover, and in effect to say, I abrogate a divinely enjoined ceremony, and breathe a new meaning into so much of it as I retain. Who is He who thus tampers with God's commandments? Surely He is either One having a co-ordinate authority, or----? But perhaps the alternative is best left unspoken.

The separation of the symbols of the body and blood plainly indicates that it is the death of Jesus, and that a violent one, which is commemorated. The double symbol carries in both its parts the same truth, but with differences. Both teach that all our hopes are rooted in the death of Jesus, and that the only true life of our spirits comes from participation in His death, and thereby in His life. But in addition to this truth common to both, the wine, which represents His blood, is the seal of the new covenant. Again we mark the extraordinary freedom with which Christ handles the most sacred parts of the former revelation, putting them aside as He wills, to set Himself in their place. He declares, by this rite, that through His death a new covenantcomes into force as between God and man, in which all the anticipations of prophets are more than realised, and sins are remembered no more, and the knowledge of God becomes the blessing of all, and a close relationship of mutual possession is established between God and us, and His laws are written on loving hearts and softened wills.

Nor is even this all the meaning of that cup of blessing; for blood is the vehicle of life, and whoso receives Christ's blood on his conscience, to sprinkle it from dead works, therein receives, not only cleansing for the past, but a real communication of the Spirit of lifewhich was in Christto be the life of his life, so as that he can say, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me. Nor is even this all; for, as wine is, all the world over, the emblem of festivity, so this cup declares that to partake of Christ is to have a fountain of joy in ourselves, which yet has a better source than ourselves. Nor is this all; for this cupis prophecy as well as memorial and symbol, and shadows the new wine of the kingdom and the marriage supper of the Lamb.

This is My bodycould not have meant to the hearers, who saw Him sitting there in bodily form, anything but this is a symbol of My body. It is but the common use of the word in explaining a figurative speech or act. The field is the world; the tares are the children of the wicked one; the reapers are the angels,--and so in a hundred cases.

Luke alone preserves for us the command to do this, which at once establishes the rite as meant to be perpetual, and defines the true nature of it. It is a memorial, and, if we are to take our Lord's own explanation, only a memorial. There is nothing here of sacramental efficacy, but simply the loving desire to be remembered and the condescending entrusting of some power to recall him to these outward symbols. Strange that, if the communion were so much more, as the sacramentarian theory makes it, the feast's own Founder should not have said a word to hint that it was.

And how deep and yet lowly an insight into His hold on our hearts the institution of this ordinance shows Him to have had! The Greek is, literally, In order to My remembrance. He knew that--strange and sad as it may seem, and impossible as, no doubt, it did seem to the disciples--we should be in constant danger of forgetting Him; and therefore, in this one case, He enlists sense on the side of faith, and trusts to these homely memorials the recalling, to our treacherous memories, of His dying love. He wished to live in our hearts, and that for the satisfaction of His own love and for the deepening of ours.

The Lord's Supper is a standing evidence of Christ's own estimate of where the centre of His work lies. We are to remember His death. Why should it be selected as the chief treasure for memory, unless it was something altogether different from the death of other wise teachers and benefactors? If it were in His case what it is in all others, the end of His activity for blessing, and no part of His message to the world, what need is there for the Lord's Supper, and what meaning is there in it, if Christ's death were not the sacrifice for the world's sin? Surely no view of the significance and purpose of the Cross but that which sees in it the propitiation for the world's sins accounts for this rite. A Christianity which strikes the atoning death of Jesus out of its theology is sorely embarrassed to find a worthy meaning for His dying command, This do in remembrance of Me.

But if the breaking of the precious alabaster box of His body was needed in order that the housemight be filled with the odour of the ointment, and if His death was the indispensable condition of pardon and impartation of His life, then wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there, as its vital centre, shall His death be proclaimed, and this rite shall speak of it for a memorial of Him, and show the Lord's death till He come.