

The Last Meal That Jesus Christ Ate Before His Crucifixion – Was It The Passover Meal?

John 13:2-5, 17-31 [NIV] *“The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas Iscariot, son of Simon, to betray Jesus. Jesus knew that the Father had put all things under his power, and that he had come from God and was returning to God; so he got up from the meal, took off his outer clothing, and wrapped a towel round his waist. After that, he poured water into a basin and began to wash his disciples' feet, drying them with the towel that was wrapped round him.” ... “Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them. “I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfil the scripture: ‘He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.’ “I am telling you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe that I am He. I tell you the truth, whoever accepts anyone I send accepts me; and whoever accepts me accepts the one who sent me.” After he had said this, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “I tell you the truth, one of you is going to betray me.” His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, “Ask him which one he means.” Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?” Jesus answered, “It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.” Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. “What you are about to do, do quickly,” Jesus told him, but no-one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night. When he was gone, Jesus said, “Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him.”*

The departure of Judas was during the meal **before** the introduction of the bread and wine.

Matthew 26:26-30 [NIV] *“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom.” When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.”*

John 18:2-13 [NIV] *“Now Judas, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So Judas came to the grove, guiding a detachment of soldiers and some officials from the chief priests and Pharisees. They were carrying torches, lanterns and weapons. Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, “Who is it you want?” “Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “I am he,” Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, “I am he,” they drew back and fell to the ground. Again he asked them, “Who is it you want?” And they said, “Jesus of Nazareth.” “I told you that I am he,” Jesus answered. “If you are looking for me, then let these men go.” This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: “I have not lost one of those you gave me.” Then Simon Peter, who had a sword, drew it and struck the high priest’s servant, cutting off his right ear. (The servant’s name was Malchus.) Jesus commanded Peter, “Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?” Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year.”*

Still the same night when Jesus was arrested.

John 18:28 [NIV] *“Then the Jews led Jesus from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover.”*

Chief Priests and Pharisees [v3] had not yet eaten, the Passover.

It was the day before the Passover evening, the day when the Passover lambs were sacrificed just before dusk.

Jesus Christ did not eat the Passover that final year, He was the Lamb of God who was crucified as the Passover lambs gave up their lives.

What meal was this supper the disciples were eating?

In the first century, it was held that the command not *“to appear empty”* before the Lord at the pilgrim feasts had a precise meaning.

It meant each male Israelite bringing a burnt offering and a peace offering, in addition to the Passover lamb. This oblation is the subject of the tractate Hagigah in the Mishnah.

The question, therefore, that faces us is, ‘was it possible to use phrases like *“to sacrifice the Passover”* and *“to eat the Passover”* to cover these other sacrifices and sacred meals as well?’

Leviticus 7:11-12 [NIV] *“These are the regulations for the fellowship offering a person may present to the LORD: “If he offers it as an expression of thankfulness, then along with this thank-offering he is to offer cakes of bread made without yeast and mixed with oil, wafers made without yeast and spread with oil, and cakes of fine flour well-kneaded and mixed with oil.”*

Fellowship or peace offering meal had to be eaten the same day it was offered.

Leviticus 7:28-36 [NIV] *“The LORD said to Moses, “Say to the Israelites: ‘Anyone who brings a fellowship offering to the LORD is to bring part of it as his sacrifice to the LORD. With his own hands he is to bring the offering made to the LORD by fire; he is to bring the fat, together with the breast, and wave the breast before the LORD as a wave offering. The priest shall burn the fat on the altar, but the breast belongs to Aaron and his sons. You are to give the right thigh of your fellowship offerings to the priest as a contribution. The son of Aaron who offers the blood and the fat of the fellowship offering shall have the right thigh as his share. From the fellowship offerings of the Israelites, I have taken the breast that is waved and the thigh that is presented and have given them to Aaron the priest and his sons as their regular share from the Israelites.’” This is the portion of the offerings made to the LORD by fire that were allotted to Aaron and his sons on the day they were presented to serve the LORD as priests. On the day they were anointed, the LORD commanded that the Israelites give this to them as their regular share for the generations to come.”*

The major part of the animal offered was eaten by those who brought it as a fellowship offering, add to this the cakes of bread that accompanied it we have a very enjoyable supper.

Leviticus 7:13 [NIV] *“Along with his fellowship offering of thanksgiving he is to present an offering with cakes of bread made with yeast.”*

These were made with yeast so must have been before the days of Unleavened Bread.

2 Chronicles 30:18, 22 [NIV] *“Although most of the many people who came from Ephraim, Manasseh, Issachar and Zebulun had not purified themselves, yet they ate the Passover, contrary to what was written. But Hezekiah prayed for them, saying, “May the LORD, who is good, pardon everyone” ... “Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites, who showed good understanding of the service of the LORD. For the seven days they ate their assigned portion and offered fellowship offerings and praised the LORD, the God of their fathers.”*

The time of the Passover in the second month which included peace or fellowship offerings [with leaved cakes], these were a prelude to the Passover meal itself.

When John said “*eat the Passover*” in **John 18:28** [NIV] it means “*eat the sacred meals of the festival*”.

Isaiah 9:6 [NIV] “*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, **Prince of Peace.***”

One of the titles given to Jesus Christ is “*Prince of Peace*”.

It seems to me very natural that the Prince of Peace should share a peace offering meal in fellowship with His disciples just before He laid down His life to bring them and us peace of mind, by freeing us from the just penalty of our sins, death.

John 14:27 [NIV] “*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*”