

### I. Outside And Inside The Walls Of The Room.

**A.** Outside the walls of an upper room in Jerusalem, the enemies of Jesus are preparing. The chief priests and teachers of the law have wanted him dead for a long time. His triumphal entry into Jerusalem added urgency to their scheming, but they haven't been able to do anything because of all the people and His popularity. But now they have Judas on their payroll, and their opportunity was coming.

**B.** Soon it will all come to a head: their plot—and God's plan. The next 24 hours will be a whirlwind—the mob arrest of Jesus at Gethsemane; the numerous trials; the crucifixion and death on Calvary; and the burial in the tomb. But that is not for a few hours. Right now, inside the walls of that room, it's just Jesus and his disciples. A moment He had longed for.

**C.** This time with his disciples was precious to him. As their brother in the flesh, Jesus loved to be with them. Repeatedly during his ministry, he looked for time alone with them, but always seemed to be interrupted. Yes, outside this upper room his enemies were lying in wait, but inside Jesus was with his disciples, His friends.

### II. The Passover Celebrated.

**A.** What was going on in that room was more than just Jesus and his disciples hanging out. They were gathered to celebrate the Passover—to remember the night the Lord rescued the Israelites from Egypt. You know the story: The Lord said he would strike down all the firstborn in the land and commanded his people to celebrate a special meal. They were to slaughter a young lamb without defect; roast and eat it; and brush its blood on their doorframes. That night destruction came to every house in Egypt, except those marked by the blood of the lamb and gathered around that special meal. God saved His people and led them out of slavery.

**B.** Every year, God's faithful people—including Jesus and his disciples—celebrated that meal. It was a chance not only to remember what God did for his people in the past but also to look ahead. That flawless lamb was a picture of the perfect Lamb of God, who would be sacrificed for his people. He would be the Lamb whose blood would protect them from God's just anger, and free them from their slavery to sin and death. This meal had been celebrated annually for well over a thousand years, but not until this generation was the true Passover Lamb of God there to celebrate with them!

### III. A New Covenant.

**A.** The best part of this night, though, was that what Jesus was doing with his disciples in that upper room wasn't a new twist on an old tradition. He was introducing something never seen before as Jesus gives his real body and blood to his people. He gives them the very things he would offer in death for them the next day. He was giving a down payment on the new covenant, that God was making with sinners; a covenant sealed on the cross. This is His promise of forgiveness through faith. In that upper room, Jesus institutes a meal that has been celebrated not just every year but every week and even more ever since. In this meal, he gave his disciples something to strengthen them for the dreadful events they were about to experience and the work they would carry out the rest of their lives. No wonder Jesus has been eagerly desiring to eat this meal with his disciples before he suffers!

**B.** Yet even as Jesus had been looking forward to this moment, he was also looking beyond it. He told his disciples he will not eat this meal again *"until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."* He adds that he *"will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."* The kingdom of God is the rule of God in and with his people. The Old Testament prophets and Jesus himself talked about that relationship between God and his people as a festive fellowship meal. This communion is made possible by Jesus' life and death and it will find its greatest fulfillment in what the Bible describes as a heavenly banquet, the Lamb's High Feast. It will be one of joy and peace where no enemies will be found, just God and his people forever. How we long to take our places at that table!

### IV. Outside And Inside These Walls.

**A.** Right now, though—outside these walls—enemies are everywhere. The people of the world rise up to put God and his people on trial. They stand in judgment over God's good gifts. They ridicule the words God has given us and conspire to prevent those words from influencing our culture or our children. They judge us to be out of touch and are happy to exclude us, or they do all they can to *include* us in their sin. Worst of all is our archenemy, the devil, always prowling and crouching around every corner, ready to pounce. All around us, hostile forces lurk and conspire. Which is why it's so good for us to be in this room, in God's house, with God's people!

**B.** Not that we don't bring sin in here with us. Those doors aren't some kind of airlock that keeps spiritual contaminants out. Where there are sinners, there is going to be sin. Sin was in that upper room too in the hearts of the twelve men

who dined with Jesus, including the one who would betray him. We drag our guilt in here with us. We carry in our doubts and fears.

**C.** Which is all the more reason why we need to be here! In this room, Jesus gathers us together to assure us that his blood covers our sins and shields us from God's anger. He reminds us that the kingdom belongs to him—that he has perfect control over all events and power over all enemies. When you hear God's Word here, Jesus is speaking to your hearts just as if he were sitting across the table from you.

#### **V. The New Covenant Meal For Us.**

**A.** But Jesus doesn't just speak across the table; he invites you to the table. Here he gives you the very body he gave into death on the cross. He gives you the blood he shed to establish His new covenant. This isn't like the covenant the Lord made with the Israelites at Mount Sinai, sealed with the blood of bulls, a contract that the people broke. This is an unbreakable, unilateral covenant, that God makes for us. It is the promise of forgiveness through faith and is sealed with the blood of the Lamb of God.

**B.** Tonight, Jesus gives you this invitation: "Come with me to a quiet room and I will give you respite. Come, recline at my table. Let's celebrate a special meal together. I've already made all the preparations; there's nothing you need to do. The food is ready. The drink is prepared. It's my body and my blood. Let me serve you. Let me strengthen you for the struggles you will face tomorrow. How eagerly I desire for you to eat this meal with me!" Let your enemies rage all around; here, in this moment, at this table, it's just you and Jesus.

**C.** Of course, it's not just *you* individually but *all* of you, all of us, together as Jesus' disciples. Here we enjoy communion with one another, as Jesus gathers us together into one body. To your right and your left, here at Jesus' Table, are your brothers and sisters, who are fighting alongside you, facing the same enemies, needing the same divine strength, and receiving the same forgiveness with you. If the perfect Son of God in the flesh valued fellowship with his people, how much more should we sinners treasure it!

**Conc.:** If this life is like a courtroom where the world puts God and his people on trial, think of this Supper as a recess, a time of respite. Jesus ushers you into a quiet room where there are no accusations, no prosecutors, no hostile witnesses—only faithful supporters and the promise of a victorious outcome. How eagerly we desire to eat this meal! Here we find peace. Here we stand in the presence of God. Here we are surrounded by his people. Here it's like . . . well, heaven. Amen.