

THE HOUSE OF THE PASSEVER TO SUPPLY A SEQUEL
THE HOUSE OF THE PASSEVER TO SUPPLY A SEQUEL (LUKE 22:7-14)

`Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed. And he sent Peter and John, saying Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat. And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare? 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. And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished; there make ready. And they went, and found as he had said unto them; and they made ready the passover. And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with ~

This has always been one of the most intriguing stories of the New Testament. Throughout the history of the church scholars have debated concerning the identity of the man who owned the room in which Jesus and His followers celebrated the feast of Passover. Theologians believe he might have been the husband of Mary and the father of John Mark. Luke, who wrote the Acts of the Apostles, said that when Peter was miraculously released from prison, he eventually came to the house where many were gathered together praying (see Acts 12:12). Historians claim that three million people attended the feast, and accommodation for such a large number of pilgrims was difficult to find. That a large room was still available in Jerusalem supports the idea the Savior had already arranged with the owner for the special room to be reserved for His use. It was furnished and could easily have been rented. Evidently the disciples were unaware of any previous arrangements, for Peter and John were given specific instructions how to contact their guide. If the man were the father of John Mark, he could have been a committed believer. That he willingly cooperated with strangers suggests this was not his first contact with the Savior. Details of which nothing is known might have been previously planned.

Even if the man were the husband of Mary, he was not included among the apostles who sat at the table with the Lord. Probably the owner, whoever he might have been, celebrated the feast with his family in another part of the home. This story is one of the most fascinating accounts in the New Testament.

139

The Unusual Man... Carrying Water

Water carriers in the Middle East are always women. During visits to Jordan, Egypt, and Israel, I have never seen a man performing that task, but it is a common sight to see a woman balancing a waterpot on the top of her head or carrying a large jar on her shoulder as she either talks with friends or walks through a crowded street. The task is beneath the dignity of males. Bedouin women carry water over long distances to refresh their families. When Christ instructed His disciples to look for and follow a man carrying water, He either revealed arrangements had already been made or that He was omniscient and saw beforehand what would happen. Jesus knew the exact time of day when this event would take place. It is not known whether the man's wife was incapacitated, but evidently he was not concerned with the attitude of onlookers. If the Savior suggested this course of action, the fellow was very cooperative. If he had not received instructions, he was a most unusual man.

Dr. D. M. Spence, writing in the Pulpit Commentary, supplies interesting information. He says, "The name of the man who was to meet the disciples was omitted—purposely think Theophylac and others, lest the place of meeting should be prematurely known to Judas. Bearing a pitcher of water' would be an unusual sight in an

THE HOUSE OF THE PASSOVER TO SUPPLY A SEQUEL

Oriental city where the water is drawn by women. It is probable that the 'man' whom the Master foretold John and Peter would meet, was the master of the house, who according to Jewish custom, on the 13th of Nisan, before the stars appeared in the heaven, had himself to go to the public fountain to draw the water with which the unleavened bread for the Passover was kneaded" (quoted from The Pulpit Commentary, vol. 16, Luke, p. 196).

The Unselfish Man... Surrendering His Premises

"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. 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? And he shall shew you a large upper room furnished: there make ready."

Immense crowds from all over the world celebrated the feast of Passover. It was the busiest and most sacred time of Israel's year. Special legislation had to be passed by the rulers allowing visitors

140

to erect tents on lawns or any piece of spare land. Formerly, pilgrims were required to camp within specified areas, but the multitudes made it necessary to erect tents wherever land could be found. People established temporary homes as far away as Bethany. A comparison might be made with the crowds of Moslems who annually visit their holy city of Mecca.

Jewish property owners joyfully anticipated every feast when they were able to augment their income. Even beggars in the street exploited the occasion. When many strangers sought accommodation, rents increased enormously, and property owners were able to ask any price desired. It was therefore obvious the friend who reserved his "large upper room" for Jesus could have rented his property for a large sum of money. Evidently, helping the Lord was more to be desired than increasing wealth.

When the disciples saw a man carrying a pitcher of water, they approached and repeated what their Master had commanded. Probably this was some kind of password pre-arranged by Jesus. The water carrier then led the way to the "goodman of the house" who was asked about the large upper room. This was a unique situation. Passover was the time for family celebrations, but on this occasion twelve men away from their homes were meeting with the Lord. It is extremely doubtful whether they understood the significance of the words spoken by Jesus, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer." This was to be His final Passover. It would be a very special occasion.
The Unique Man A Large Upper Room Furnished"

Luke reminds us that the host had foreseen every need. The Lord and twelve disciples would be present, and whatever was considered necessary for their comfort was supplied by the owner of the premises. It is not known whether the men sat on the carpeted floor or reclined on couches. There would have been a table and perhaps benches. The kindly host had surveyed the room and decided nothing could be too good for the Master. Before the Passover began, that gracious host assured himself that Jesus would be pleased with everything arranged.

He was probably present when the disciples made preparations for the feast, but it would be interesting to know if he actually purchased the lamb used in the sacrificial ritual. Three million visitors were in Jerusalem, and each family needed a lamb. The

141

demand on the sheep markets outside the city would have been phenomenal. Hebrew law insisted that each lamb be presented to the priests for examination, for animals with a blemish were never accepted for sacrifice. To meet the legal requirements of the occasion, crowds of people would be waiting in line to present their animals for inspection; delays were inevitable. Whether the disciples or the host purchased a lamb remains unimportant; the animal never became a part of the Lord's Passover feast.

When the certificate of authorization was obtained and taken back to the home, the owner was pleased. Everything was in readiness for the Master. "And when the hour was come, he [Jesus] sat down, and the twelve apostles with him" (Luke 22:14). What followed begs description. The herbs, spices and unleavened bread were all ready for use, but as the disciples remembered the usual procedure, they were mystified by the absence of meat. The lamb—even if it had been slain—was never used. Jesus took bread and wine and blessed the sacred symbols, but portions of the sacrifice were not distributed nor eaten. If anyone present asked, "Master, where is the lamb?" Jesus may have quietly replied, "I am the Lamb." "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him" (John 6:54-56). Did the disciples understand what was said? Maybe not then, but later the Holy Spirit enabled them to explain that truth, and it was said, "These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also" (Acts 17:6).

The presence of Christ transformed the upper room into a sanctuary, and when the Lord led His followers in the singing of a hymn, the music was destined to echo around the world. After the ascension of the Savior, the disciples returned "unto Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is from Jerusalem a sabbath day's journey. And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas the brother of James. These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren" (Acts 1:12-14). The prayer meeting continued until the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon one hundred and twenty people—the place must have been a large upper room!

142

Later, it was written of Peter, "And when he had considered the thing [his miraculous escape from prison] he came to the house of Mary the mother of John, whose surname was Mark; where many were gathered together praying." It is significant that a large, upper room was mentioned on several occasions; the place was well known and popular among early Christians. Was it the same room in which the Lord celebrated the Last Supper? When the Savior broke the bread and instituted a new feast, He began something to last throughout the church age. Prior to that final Passover, attention was directed toward a lamb; afterward everything was centered in the true Lamb of God who took away the sin of the world (see John 1:29).

The communion service meant everything to the early Christians. The room in which the Lord broke the bread was large. If it was the same place where 120 people were anointed by the Holy Spirit, then it was very large. Yet it should be remembered that Jesus said, "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Man. 18:20). Had He said,

THE HOUSE OF THE PASSOVER TO SUPPLY A SEQUEL

"For where two or three hundred are met together in my name," He would have limited the areas in which His presence could be expected. The smaller number suggested that even the most humble dwelling can become a holy place. Perhaps in the final analysis it was providential that the name of the householder was never given. Every follower of Christ has the power to sanctify his own home and expect the great Physician to make frequent house calls.

143□

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