

## John Lightfoot comments on passover... [Matthew 26](#)

From: *A Commentary of the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*

### Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper.

*[Now when Jesus was in Bethany, etc.]* That this supper in Bethany was the same with that mentioned [John 13](#), I dare venture to affirm; however that be taken by very many for the paschal supper. Let us examine the matter a little home:

I. This supper was before the Passover; so was that: that this was, none need doubt; no more may they of the other, if we consider these things:

1. It is said by John in express words, *before the feast of the Passover*; [Mat 26:1](#), *Passover*; indeed, not seldom signifies the lamb itself; sometimes the very time of eating the lamb; sometimes the sacrifice of the day following, as [Joh 18:28](#). But *the feast of the Passover*; alway signifies the whole seven days' paschal feast, both in the language of the Scripture and of the Talmudists: a Jew would laugh at one that should interpret it otherways.

2. When Christ said to Judas going out, "What thou doest, do quickly," some thought he meant this, "Buy those things that we have need of against the feast," at the twenty-ninth verse. For what *feast*; I pray? For the paschal supper? That, according to the interpreters which we here oppose, was just past. For the remaining part of the *feast* of that solemnity? Alas, how unseasonable! Where were those things, I pray, then to be bought, if this were the very night on which they had just eaten the lamb? The night of a feast day was festival: where were there any such markets to be found then? It was an unusual thing indeed, and unheard of, to rise from the paschal supper to go to market: a market on a festival-night was unusual and unheard of. It would argue some negligence, and a little good husbandry, if those things that were necessary for the feast were not yet provided; but that they must be to run, now late at night, to buy those things they knew not where, they knew not how. It is certainly very harsh, and contrary to reason, to understand these things thus, when, from the first verse, the sense is very plain, *before the feast of the Passover*. The Passover was not yet come, but was near at hand: the disciples, therefore, thought that our Saviour had given order to Judas to provide all those things that were necessary to the paschal solemnity against it came.

3. Observe that also of [Luk 22:3](#); etc.: "Satan entered into Judas, and he went his way, and communed with the chief priests," etc. And after, in the seventh verse, "Then came the day of unleavened bread." Hence I inquire, Is the method of Luke direct or no? If not, let there be some reason given of the transposition; if it be direct, then it is plain that the devil entered into Judas before the Passover: but he entered into him at that supper in [Joh 13:27](#); therefore that supper was before the Passover. For,

4. Let them who take that supper in [John 13](#) for the paschal supper, tell me how this is possible, that Judas after the paschal supper (at which they do not deny that he was present with the rest of the disciples) could make his agreement with the priests, and get his blades together ready to apprehend our Saviour, and assemble all the council, [Mat 26:57](#). The evangelists say that he made an agreement with the chief priests, [Mat 26:14](#); and with the captains; [Luk 22:4](#); and "with all the council," [Mar 14:10-11](#). But now, which way was it possible that he could bargain with all these in so small a space as there was between the going out of Judas from supper and the betraying of our Lord in the garden? What! Were these all together at supper that night? This is a matter to be laughed at rather than credited. Did he visit all these from door to door? And this is as little to be thought, since he had scarce time to discourse with any one of them. Every one supped this night at home, the master of a family with his family. It would be ridiculous to suppose that these chief

priests supped together, while, in the mean time, their families sat down at home without their head. It is required by the law that every master of a family should be with his family that night, instructing them, and performing sacred rites with and for them. These were, therefore, to be sought from house to house by Judas, if that were the first time of his treating with them about this matter: and let reason answer whether that little time he had were sufficient for this? We affirm, therefore, with the authority of the evangelists, that that supper, [John 13](#), was before the Passover; at which, Satan entering into Judas, he bargained with the priests before the Passover, he appointed the time and place of his betraying our Saviour, and all things were by them made ready for this wicked deed before the Passover came. Observe the method and order of the story in the evangelists, [Mat 26:14-17](#); [Mar 14:10-12](#); "Then went Judas to the priests, and said, 'What will ye give me,' etc. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him. Now, the first day of the feast of unleavened bread, the disciples came," etc. When was it that Judas came to the priests to treat about betraying Christ? Surely before the first day of unleavened bread. Luke also, whom we quoted before, proceeds in the very same method: "From that time (say they), he sought for an opportunity to betray him." If then first he went to and agreed with the priests when he rose up from the paschal supper, as many suppose, he did not then seek for an opportunity, but had found one. The manner of speaking used by the evangelists most plainly intimates some space of deliberation, not sudden execution.

5. Let those words of John be considered, [Joh 14:31](#), *Arise, let us go hence*; and compared with the words, [Joh 18:1](#), "When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron." Do not these speak of two plainly different departures? Did not Christ rise up and depart when he said, "Arise, let us go hence?" Those words are brought in by the evangelist without any end or design, if we are not to understand by them that Christ immediately changed his place: and certainly this change of place is different from that which followed the paschal supper, [Joh 18:1](#).

6. In that thirteenth chapter of John [John 13](#) there is not the least mention nor syllable of the paschal supper. There is, indeed, plain mention of a supper *before the feast of the Passover*; that is, before the festival day; but of a paschal supper there is not one syllable. I profess seriously, I cannot wonder enough how interpreters could apply that chapter to the paschal supper, when there is not only no mention at all in it of the paschal supper, but the evangelist hath also pronounced, in most express words, and than which nothing can be more plain, that that supper of which he speaks was not *on* the feast of the Passover, but *before* the feast.

7. If those things which we meet with, [John 13](#), of the sop given to Judas, etc. Were acted in the paschal supper, then how, I pray, was it possible for the disciples to mistake the meaning of those words, "What thou doest, do quickly?" In the paschal supper he said, "He that dips with me in the dish is he"; and the hand of Judas, as some think, was at that very moment in the dish. To Judas asking, "Is it I?" he plainly answered, "Thou hast said": and besides, he gave him a sop for a token, as they say who maintain that opinion: then with what reason, or with what ignorance, after so clear a discovery of the thing and person, could the disciples imagine that Christ said, "Buy quickly those things that are necessary, or give something to the poor?"

8. And to what *poor*; I pray? It was unseasonable, truly, late at night, to go to seek for poor people here and there, who were now dispersed all about in several *families* eating the passover: for the poorest Israelite was obliged to that duty as well as the richest. They who supposed that Christ commanded him to give something to the poor, could not but understand it of a thing that was presently to be done. For it had been ridiculous to conceive, that Christ sent him so hastily away from supper to give something to the poor tomorrow. But, if it be granted that the matter was transacted at Bethany, and that two days before the Passover, which we assert, then it is neither necessary you should suppose that supper to

have been so late at night; nor were poor people, then and there, to be far sought for, since so great a multitude of men followed Christ everywhere.

II. This supper was at Bethany, two days before the Passover: the same we conclude of that supper, [John 13](#), both as to the place and time; and that, partly, by the carrying on of the story to that time, partly, by observing the sequel of that supper. Six days before the Passover Christ sups at Bethany, [Joh 12:1](#).

The next day (five days before the Passover) he came to Jerusalem riding on an ass, [Joh 12:12](#); and in the evening he returned to Bethany, [Mat 21:17](#); [Mar 11:11](#).

The day following (four days before the Passover) he went to Jerusalem, [Mar 11:11](#); [Mat 11:15](#); etc.; and at evening he returned the same way to Bethany, [Mar 11:19](#).

The day after (three days before the Passover), he goes again to Jerusalem, [Mar 11:27](#). In the evening, he went out to the mount of Olives, [Mat 24:1](#); [Mat 24:3](#); [Mar 13:1](#); [Mar 13:3](#); [Luk 21:37](#). Now where did he sup this night? At Bethany. For so Matthew and Mark, "After two days was the Passover," etc. "Now when Jesus was in Bethany." And from this time forward there is no account either of his supping or going to Jerusalem till the evening of the Passover.

From that supper both the evangelists begin their story of Judas' contriving to betray our Lord; [Mat 26:14](#); [Mar 14:10](#); and very fitly; for at that supper the devil had entered into him, and hurried him forward to accomplish his villainy.

We therefore thus draw up the series of the history out of the holy writers: *Before the feast of the Passover* ([Joh 13:1](#)), namely, *two days* ([Mat 26:2](#); [Mat 26:6](#)), as Jesus was supping in Bethany, a woman anoints his head: and some of the disciples murmur at it. Our Saviour himself becomes both her advocate and encomiast. Before supper was done Christ riseth from the table, and washeth his disciples' feet; and, sitting down again, acquaints them with the betrayer. John asking privately about him, he privately also gives him a token by a sop, and gives a sop to Judas. With this the devil entered into him, and now he grows ripe for his wickedness: "The devil had before put it into his heart to betray him," [Mat 26:2](#); now he is impatient till he hath done it. He riseth up immediately after he had the sop, and goes out. As he was going out, Jesus said to him, "What thou doest, do quickly": which some understood of buying necessaries for the feast, that was now two days off. It was natural and easy for them to suppose, that he, out of his diligence (having the purse, and the care of providing things that were necessary), was now gone to Jerusalem, though it were night, there being a great deal to be done, to get all things ready against the feast. He goes away; comes to Jerusalem; and the next day treats with the priests about betraying our Lord, and concludes a bargain with them. They were afraid for themselves, lest they should be either hindered by the people, or suffer some violence from them on the feast day. He frees them from this fear, provided they would let him have soldiers and company ready at the time appointed. Our Saviour lodges at Bethany that night, and spends the next day and the night after there too: and, being now ready to take his leave of his disciples, he teaches, instructs, and comforts them at large. Judas, having craftily laid the design of his treachery, and set his nets in readiness, returns, as is probable, to Bethany; and is supposed by the disciples, who were ignorant of the matter, to have performed his office exceeding diligently, in providing necessaries for the approaching feast. On the day itself of the Passover, Jesus removes from Bethany with his disciples: "Arise (saith he), let us go hence," [Joh 14:31](#); and comes to Jerusalem.