

AHH LIFE!

REFLECTING ON JESUS' UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE

Water from Rock, October 17, 2017, Tim Smith

"I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly."

John 10:10

In this series we reflect on Jesus' teaching about experiencing the abundant life He came to give us. We will focus on what is customarily called "The Upper Room Discourse", or, Jesus' teaching in the Upper Room (and prayer afterwards) a few hours before He died. In John 13-17 Jesus describes how followers can live in God's "eternal life", zoe ainos ("life of the age to come").

THE UPPER ROOM DISCOURSE CONTINUED: John 13:21-38

The Upper Room

This may be the most important room in history. The Gospels call the room "*a large upper room*", and Jesus calls it "*my guest room*" (Mark 14:14-15). Bible scholars think it likely the room where Jesus breathed the Holy Spirit on the apostles (John 20:19-23), where He showed Thomas His wounds, where Jesus' followers devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 1:13-14), where the Holy Spirit descended on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-2), and where the infant church regularly worshipped (Acts 12:12-17). The room belonged to Mary of Jerusalem, the mother of John Mark, the writer of the Gospel bearing his name (Acts 12:12). It was likely the guest room where Barnabas, John Mark's cousin, lodged when he was in Jerusalem (Colossians 4:10).

The Room Arrangement for Passover

By New Testament times Jews had adopted the Roman style of banqueting (Latin: Convivium). The Gospels' account of the Last Supper suggest that Jesus and His disciples adopted a modified form of the Convivium.

"At banquets, three or four people (in the eastern Mediterranean world, usually men) would recline on each couch (or, in the possible absence of couches here, they would recline on mats, rugs, or cloaks). Each would lean on the left elbow with the right hand free to collect food (already

sliced) from the table in front of the couch. The diner's feet would point away from the table. Each diner to the right of another on the couch would be ranged somewhat further back, so the diner to the right of another would lead back his head on the other's chest." (*Cultural Background Study Bible*)

v. 23 *One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him.*

- Here the disciple whom Jesus loved, i.e. John, is pictured as reclining next to Jesus. The original text is more intimate, as it speaks of the kolpos, that place on the body between the two arms. The King James translates as, "*leaning on Jesus' bosom*".
- John likely wants readers to recall the opening of John's Gospel where the only Son of God is pictured as "*close to the Father's heart*", or, in the kolpos of God (John 1:18). The King James translates this "*in the bosom of the Father*".
- The arc of John's Gospel is this: Jesus comes to us from "close to the Father's heart (kolpos)" to draw us "close to His heart (kolpos)". "*As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you*" (John 15:9). Jesus makes the way for us to live each day close to His heart and the Father's heart. Here the dwelling place He prepared for us.

v. 26 *"this piece of bread"*

- In the present context this refers to the unleavened bread dipped in the Charoset, a mixture of bitter herbs, and sweets such as chopped nuts, grated apples, cinnamon, and sweet red wine. Charoset was meant to remind Jews of the bitterness of slavery in Egypt. Its color and texture were meant to recall the mud used to make bricks in Egypt.
- The host of the Passover meal (in this case Jesus) would present this "*piece of bread*" to an honored guest. This was a sign of honor and affection Jesus presented to Judas.

v. 34 *"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another.*

- The command to love was not new for the Jews; love of neighbor was commanded in the Law of Moses (Leviticus 19:18). What is new about this command is the measure of love: *“Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another.”*

v. 35 *“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”*

- It is this supernatural love that distinguishes Jesus’ disciples. This kind of love is the fruit of the disciples’ union with Jesus, and in Jesus, with the Father
- Disciples are called to enter into and abide in the love that exists between the Father and Son.

v. 38 *“Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows”*

- The *Mishnah* states that chicken could not be raised in Jerusalem due to purity concerns. This decree comes from the first century when the Temple stood.
- The *Mishnah* says that there is a “cockcrow” that refers to the blast of a trumpet in early morning when the priests began to prepare the Temple for the worshippers. “At cockcrow they blew a sustained, a quavering, and another sustained blast. (*Sukkah* 5:4)

CONCLUSION

Francis Schaeffer, *The Mark of the Christian*

“In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon his authority he gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians, on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians.

That's pretty frightening. Jesus turns to the world and says, ‘I've something to say to you. On the basis of my authority, I give you a right: you may judge whether or not an individual is a Christian on the basis of the love they show to all true Christians.’

In other words, if people come up to us and cast in our teeth the judgment that we are not Christians because we have not shown love

toward other Christians, we must understand that they are only exercising a prerogative which Jesus gave them.”

John 13:21-38

²¹ After saying this Jesus was troubled in spirit, and declared, ‘Very truly, I tell you, one of you will betray me.’ ²² The disciples looked at one another, uncertain of whom he was speaking. ²³ One of his disciples—the one whom Jesus loved—was reclining next to him; ²⁴ Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask Jesus of whom he was speaking. ²⁵ So while reclining next to Jesus, he asked him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ ²⁶ Jesus answered, ‘It is the one to whom I give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.’ ^{*} So when he had dipped the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas son of Simon Iscariot. ^{*} ²⁷ After he received the piece of bread, ^{*} Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, ‘Do quickly what you are going to do.’ ²⁸ Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹ Some thought that, because Judas had the common purse, Jesus was telling him, ‘Buy what we need for the festival’; or, that he should give something to the poor. ³⁰ So, after receiving the piece of bread, he immediately went out. And it was night.

³¹ When he had gone out, Jesus said, ‘Now the Son of Man has been glorified, and God has been glorified in him. ³² If God has been glorified in him, ^{*} God will also glorify him in himself and will glorify him at once. ³³ Little children, I am with you only a little longer. You will look for me; and as I said to the Jews so now I say to you, “Where I am going, you cannot come.” ³⁴ I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. ³⁵ By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.’

³⁶ Simon Peter said to him, ‘Lord, where are you going?’ Jesus answered, ‘Where I am going, you cannot follow me now; but you will follow afterwards.’ ³⁷ Peter said to him, ‘Lord, why can I not follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.’ ³⁸ Jesus answered, ‘Will you lay down your life for me? Very truly, I tell you, before the cock crows, you will have denied me three times.’