

CHAPTER 12

JESUS' LAST DAYS WITH HIS DISCIPLES

Part 11: Prophecies in Preparation for the Death of Christ

[*Harmony*, pp. 187-211]

The final week Jesus spent on earth can be divided roughly into two parts: the first half, as he taught and debated publicly in the temple, and the second half, as he taught his followers and disciples privately. During the second half of that week Jesus disclosed to his disciples more information about his approaching death, their responsibilities after that event, and the future prospects of the church and the Jewish nation, including his own second coming to the earth.

Major addresses include the Olivet Discourse, found in the Synoptics, and the Upper Room Discourse, found in John. These discourses surround the account of the Lord's Supper, the final intimate fellowship of Christ with his disciples before his death.

The Olivet Discourse: Jesus Speaks Prophetically About the Temple and His Own Second Coming

The Olivet Discourse, so named for the location on which Jesus gave it, is one of the important eschatological portions of Scripture. The place is significant too, as the spot that not only overlooked the temple from the east (which inspired the disciples' questions), but also as the place to which the Messiah was to come in his great appearance in power (Zech 14:4). This is the place from which Jesus ascended and to which the angels said he would return (Acts 1:9-12).

The Olivet Discourse is found in all three Synoptics, but as the arrangement in the *Harmony* suggests, Matthew and Mark emphasize the final coming of Christ, while Luke emphasizes the nearer judgment coming on Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Both catastrophic events are described with the same prophetic imagery.

Sec. 139a: *Setting of the discourse*

As Jesus lead his disciples up the slope of the Mount of Olives after having spent the day teaching in the temple, the afternoon sun would have reflected off the golden roof of the temple and the marble buildings would have reflected its rays magnificently. Overcome by this splendid sight, the disciples pointed them out to Jesus. In addition, from that vantage point from across the Kidron valley, they would see the great foundation stones of the temple courts, cut and laid in the time of King Solomon (these are still visible today). They also won the disciples' admiration (Mark 13:1).

Jesus replied that in coming days, not one stone would be left on another (referring not to the foundation stones, but to the temple structures). This inspired two questions from the disciples: (1) "When will this destruction take place?" and (2) "What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

Sec. 139b: *Beginning of birth pains*

First Jesus explained the nature of the time period between his two comings. There would be many false Christs and false prophets claiming the end was near; they should not be heeded, because the coming of Christ will be unmistakable. There would be a greater intensity of wars and commotions, and many natural disasters, including famines, pestilences, and earthquakes. Jesus called these "the beginning of birth pains."

Jesus also predicted persecutions and troubles for his disciples; they would be betrayed, flogged in the synagogues, and imprisoned; they would give their testimony before kings and governors. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would have them the words to speak on these occasions.

Another important event of this period is that the gospel will be preached in the whole world before the end of the age would come (Matt 24:14).

Notice that Luke's gospel has a different arrangement in this section. In Luke 21:10-11 the sermon moves right up to the second coming of Christ with its heavenly signs (cf. Matt 24:29-30), but then in verse 12 is found the phrase "but before all this," which takes us back to the events in the time of the disciples, including the taking of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (vv. 20-24). That event will usher in the "times of the Gentiles" (v. 24). Then, in verse 25, Luke resumes the future narrative with the heavenly signs again, culminating in the second coming of Christ (vv. 25-27).

By comparing Luke with the other two Synoptic gospels, we conclude that Jesus mentioned both future catastrophic events. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans in A.D. 70 (as emphasized in Luke) was a truly horrific event, but it was only a type and figure of the future troubles to befall that city under the Antichrist of the last days (as emphasized by Matthew and Mark). Both questions from the disciples received their answer in this discourse. (Cf. the remarks in the *Harmony*, p. 187, n. j.)

Sec. 139c: Abomination of desolation and subsequent distress

All three Synoptics mention the “desolation” of Jerusalem. Luke refers to its destruction in A.D. 70, after “being surrounded by armies” (21:20). Matthew and Mark employ the phrase “the abomination that causes desolation,” and Matthew refers to the prophecy of this event in Daniel (Matt 24:15; Dan 9:27; 12:11. Daniel 11:31 uses the phrase for the earlier defilement of Jerusalem under Antiochus Epiphanes. [The reference to Daniel in Mark 13:14 in the KJV is a harmonistic corruption of the Greek text at that point]). This means that Antiochus Epiphanes did not exhaust the prophecies of Daniel, and that Jesus claimed that a future fulfillment was still coming. This appears to be speaking of the future Antichrist (cf. 2 Thess 2:3-4; 1 John 2:18; Rev 13:1-8).

As in the previous desecration and destruction of Antiochus and the coming one under the Romans, so the final destruction of the city would be accompanied with religious defilement, the “abomination that causes desolation.” Jesus applied the same “escape” terminology to both coming destructions. However, since Matthew and Mark are speaking of the final abomination under the Antichrist, their descriptions are more intense, stating that no flesh would be saved if those days of tribulation were not cut short. The phrase “the great tribulation” is taken from Matthew 24:21.

Sec. 139d: Coming of the Son of Man

Jesus predicted that after the great tribulation he would appear coming on the clouds, accompanied by heavenly signs. These predictions are worded as the prophecies of Isaiah 13, 27, and 34, and Daniel 7. The gathering of Israel would follow, and then the glorious kingdom of the Messiah.

Sec. 139e: Signs of nearness but unknown time

Jesus pointed out that these great world events would include observable signs, which the elect would note. Once the final events began, they would continue to their completion. The “this generation” that would not pass away before seeing these signs probably refers not to the Jewish nation as a whole, but to the people who see the first signs (cf. Neil D. Nelson, Jr., “This

Generation' in Matthew 24:34: A Literary Critical Perspective," *JETS* 38/3 [Sept., 1995], 369-385, who argues that the generation spoken of is the evil opponents of the gospel at that time).

Matthew's and Mark's statement that even the Son does not know the day or hour of his second coming is significant theologically. It reveals that Jesus Christ has two natures, God and man, and that his human nature was not omniscient.

Sec. 139f: Five parables to teach watchfulness and faithfulness

Luke's account of the discourse closes with an appeal to be watchful, and a promise that those who are prepared will escape the judgments of that time and will stand before the Son of Man. Mark's account ends with a parable of a man going away, leaving his servants in charge of his house and the command to watch and be ready for his return. Matthew's account of the message has a longer conclusion, including the parables of the thief coming at night, the wise servant left in charge of the house, the ten virgins waiting for the wedding celebration, and the talents being left to three servants. All these parables have the same purpose, to inspire us to be prepared for the second coming of Christ, at a time that is future yet unknown.

Sec. 139g: Judgment at the Son of Man's coming

Jesus' sermon ended with his account of the future judgment of the nations that will take place when he returns to earth. This ending is recorded only in Matthew. Often called the "judgment of the sheep and the goats," this picture of judgment shows those who loved and helped God's children as the sheep, and those who refused such help as the goats. It fits well with the characterization of the last times as a great tribulation, especially when the saints are persecuted by the Antichrist (cf. Rev 13:1-8). Just as many Christians helped the Jews during Hitler's persecutions, so in those days many will help those who are in need.

It appears that this judgment is different from that in Revelation 20:11-15 or from that mentioned by Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:10. This judgment seems to be conducted over the living nations at the time when Jesus begins the earthly phase of his Messianic kingdom.

Arrangements for Betrayal

Sec. 140: Plot by the Sanhedrin to arrest and kill Jesus

As Jesus concluded his discourse on the Mount of Olives, he stated that the Passover would begin in two days, and that he would be crucified. At the same time the Sanhedrin was

meeting in the palace of Caiaphas. They determined to arrest and execute Jesus after the Passover week was over, so as to avoid popular unrest while arresting him. However, the unexpected cooperation they received from Judas enabled them to carry this out earlier, as Jesus had predicted (see *Harmony*, p. 195, n. r).

Sec. 141: Mary's anointing of Jesus for burial

This event is recorded in Matthew, Mark, and John; it is different from the earlier anointing by another woman recorded in Luke (see discussion below, Harmonistic Problem #9). Mary of Bethany had earlier sat at Jesus' feet to hear his teaching, then she had been resentful when Jesus did not first come to cure her brother Lazarus. Now Jesus had not only raised her brother from the dead, but he now was himself going to die in Jerusalem. She realized that his time on earth was short, and pointedly demonstrated her love and devotion to him by this act of extravagant generosity.

Matthew and Mark mention the opposition of some of Jesus' disciples, but John names the source of the opposition as Judas Iscariot. Jesus gently rebuked Judas and commended Mary's faith and love. John points out that Judas was a thief, and wanted control of the money himself. Perhaps this episode is what finally convinced Judas to betray his master.

Harmonistic Problem #9: The Anointing of Jesus

[*Harmony*, 81-82, 195-96]

Critics of the Bible often claim that the Bible contains contradictions; therefore, it cannot be the Word of God and without error. A fertile field to find such "contradictions" is the life of Jesus, as recorded in the Gospels. There are only a few stories about Jesus recorded in all four Gospels; one of them is his being anointed by a woman, with costly ointment. One such story is found in each of the four Gospels (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; Luke 7:36-50; John 12:1-8).

The Problem

When the four stories are compared, there are obvious similarities, but also differences. These differences have led many to conclude that one or more of the gospel writers were mistaken in at least some details.

For example, W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann in the *Anchor Bible* commentary on Matthew state: “It is entirely possible that Luke’s researches misplaced the incident” (Garden City, N.Y., 1971), 315; and E. P. Sanders writes, “These stories probably rest on memories, though details have been exchanged and possibly confused,” *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (New York: Allen Lane, Penguin Press, 1993) 126-127.

In order to compare these four accounts, we will arrange them in table format:

	Matthew & Mark	Luke	John
Place:	Bethany	Galilee	Bethany
Time:	2 days before Passover (Mark 14:1)	Galilean ministry	6 days before Passover (cf. 12:1; <i>Harmony</i> #128a)
House:	Simon the leper	Simon the Pharisee	Martha serving & Lazarus & Mary present
Woman:	“a woman”	sinner woman	Mary of Bethany
Action:	pour on head	anoint feet, tears, hair	anoint feet, hair
Opponent:	“disciples,” “some”	Simon the Pharisee	Judas Iscariot
Objection:	waste, 300 denarii	sinner touch Jesus	waste, 300 denarii
Answer:	beautiful thing, burial, memorial to her	much forgiven, love much, sins forgiven	burial

Obviously, there are many remarkable similarities among these accounts, yet there are great differences also. This has led to various solutions. For example, this led another scholar to suggest that Luke and John record two true accounts, and that Matthew and Mark have erred by combining them into one (William Ramsay, *Was Jesus Born in Bethlehem?* [1898; reprinted; Minneapolis: James Family Publishing Co., 1978], 91-92).

Is it reasonable to try to harmonize these four accounts? Some would say that such an attempt is not legitimate; we must allow the Gospels to contradict each other. However, for believers in Christ, we are to accept his judgment that “the Scripture cannot be broken,” and that he told his apostles, “the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you” (John 10:35; 14:26). For us, it is necessary to dig deeper and try to resolve these apparent contradictions. Believing each account to be true, it is not difficult to do so.

The Solution

There are significant differences between the account in Luke and those in the other three Gospels:

- The place (Galilee vs. Bethany in Judea)
- The time (middle of ministry vs. end of ministry)
- The objection (sinner touching Jesus vs. waste of money)
- And the answer (forgiven and loved much vs. prepare for burial)

Therefore we conclude that Luke must be referring to a separate event earlier in Jesus' ministry. It is not surprising that during Jesus' ministry two different women would have anointed him in this special way.

On the other hand, the other three accounts all take place in Bethany near Jerusalem shortly before Jesus' crucifixion. Therefore, it is more natural to suppose that they all refer to the same event.

It is possible that the event recorded by John is different from that in Matthew and Mark. In that case, Mary's action in her house inspired another woman to anoint Jesus in a similar manner in the house of Simon the leper four days later. However, it seems more probable that John describes the same event as Matthew and Mark. All the points can be harmonized:

- *The place.*—The house of Simon the leper (Matthew and Mark) was in Bethany. Since Bethany was a small village, it would have been near the house of Mary and Martha, and it is quite plausible that they were helping the other women with the serving and that Lazarus, their brother, was present as a guest (John). Simon the leper (probably healed by Jesus!) appears to be a different person from Simon the Pharisee (Luke).
- *The time.*—The time can be harmonized in two ways; in either case the dinner would have been held two days before the Passover. John 12:1 (“six days before the Passover”) could very well refer to the time of Jesus' first arrival in Bethany, not to the time of the dinner (which is mentioned in verse 2). In that case, the time of the dinner in John could be the same as that in Matthew and Mark (“two days before the Passover”).
 - Timeline:
 - Friday, arrive in Bethany
 - Saturday, rest
 - Sunday, Triumphal Entry
 - Monday, clear temple
 - Tuesday, Olivet Discourse
 - Tuesday or Wednesday night, dinner in house of Simon the Leper
 - Wednesday, stay in Bethany
 - Thursday night, Passover meal and Lord's Supper

- Or, John 12:1 could be translated “before the six days of Passover.” (This translation is favored by Nigel Turner, *Syntax* [vol. 3 of *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*; ed. James Hope Moulton; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1963], 248). In that case, John would not be specifying the day on which the dinner was held, and, again, there is no contradiction with Matthew or Mark.
- *Other details.*—The other differences among the three gospels (Matthew, Mark, and John) are very easily harmonized, and contain no contradictions. The woman, unnamed in Matthew and Mark, is named by John as Mary of Bethany (not Mary Magdalene, as some have mistakenly assumed). Her action was to anoint both the head and the feet of Jesus with the costly ointment. The main critic was Judas Iscariot, and he was joined in the criticism by others present. Mary’s anointing of Jesus prepared him for his burial, and would be a memorial for her. The various accounts simply supplement each other.

Sec. 142: Judas’ agreement to betray Jesus

Stung by Jesus’ refusal to give Judas the money from Mary of Bethany, Judas went to the Sadducee chief priests and arranged to betray him for thirty pieces of silver (equal to about 120 denarii, about 5 months’ wages). Later Matthew mentioned this figure as a fulfillment of Scripture (Matt 27:9; Zech 11:12-13; cf. Exod 21:32, a slave killed by an ox). Judas’ motives are not stated, but probably are related to greed (cf. Matt 26:15; John 12:6). It is apparent that he later was filled with an ungodly remorse, but apparently he entirely misunderstood Jesus and his mission. Judas’ cooperation gave the temple leaders an unexpected advantage in arresting Jesus without risking a public riot.

The Last Supper

All three Synoptic gospels relate the Last Supper institution; John does not, but does have the theological significance of the Supper in Jesus’ statements in John 6. Probably the very first account of the Supper to appear was Paul’s description of it in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25. All the accounts are very close verbally, indicating that the early church very quickly standardized its liturgy surrounding the Lord’s Supper. Paul’s calling this narrative “the tradition handed down” to him, which he also “delivered” to this readers (1 Cor 11:23), shows the great importance placed on Jesus’ actions and words of institution on this occasion.

Sec. 143: Preparation for the Passover meal

Passover week began on the day of Nisan 14, when the yeast would have been removed from the house and the Passover lamb sacrificed. The Passover meal was celebrated that night (Nisan 15) after sunset. Apparently this took place with Jesus on Thursday night, Nisan 15, A.D. 30 (see following section, Harmonistic Problem #10: Day of Passover).

On Thursday Jesus sent two disciples, Peter and John, to prepare the Passover lamb and arrange for the supper. Notice Jesus' miraculous knowledge and ordination of events. The traditional site of the upper room is in the southwest corner of the Upper City, southwest of the temple (see map in back of *Harmony*).

Harmonistic Problem #10: Day of Passover

[for a good discussion of this complicated question, see Essay 10 the *Harmony*, "The Day and Year of Christ's Crucifixion," pp. 311-314]

The problem

All the Gospels place the death of Jesus on the day before Sabbath; i.e., on Friday afternoon (e.g., Matt 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54, 56; John 19:31).

Some have held that the phrase "after three days" implies an earlier day for the burial of Jesus. Yet that Greek phrase is equivalent to "on the third day" (Mark 8:31; cf. parallel Matt 16:21; see Robertson, *Harmony*, pp. 289-91).

The Synoptics indicate that the Last Supper was a Passover meal, which was to be celebrated 15 Nisan (night after 14 Nisan; remember that the Jewish day began at sundown).

The lamb was to be killed 14 Nisan at twilight (Exod 12:6). Yeast had already been removed from the home earlier that day (Exod 12:15, 18). The meal was to be eaten that night (beginning of 15 Nisan, Lev 23:5).

Since there was not enough time in the twilight hours to slaughter all the necessary lambs, the Jews redefined "twilight" ("between the stars") to mean the period of time between noon and evening.

According to many commentators John seems to link Jesus' crucifixion with the killing of the Passover lambs, making it Friday, 14 Nisan, instead of the Synoptics' version of Friday, 15 Nisan. These reasons are given:

- (1) John does not equate the Last Supper specifically with the Passover meal (cf. 13:1-2).
- (2) John seems to consider it the day before the Passover (18:28).
- (3) John considers the day of Jesus' crucifixion to be the day of preparation, that is, 14 Nisan (19:14, 31, 42).

The solution

There are two approaches used to reconcile this seeming discrepancy. One approach is to assume that Jesus did indeed die on the same day as the lambs were killed, and that the Lord's Supper was a Passover feast held a day earlier than the day observed by most of the Jews in Jerusalem. The other approach is to assume that Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples on the regular day, and that the statements in John can harmonize with that fact. Either of these approaches will bring all the Gospels into agreement on this point.

(1) Approach #1

Assuming that both the Synoptics and John to be true, we assume that Jesus did celebrate the Passover meal with his disciples in the upper room. It is generally recognized that, even in John, a Passover meal is in view (cf. R. E. Brown in *Anchor Bible* of John, 2:556, "a meal with Passover characteristics"; see also Stauffer, *Jesus and His Story*, pp. 113-18). Yet it could have been earlier than the "official" date observed in Jerusalem.

Many argue that the actions involved in Jesus' arrest and trial would have been impossible legally if the Passover week had already begun.

No lamb is mentioned in the Synoptics (cf. Mark 14:12 = Luke 17:12). All lambs used in the Passover had to be offered and slaughtered at the temple between noon and sunset, 14 Nisan. Most Jews did not use the lamb (Deut 16:5-6), but substituted roast kid (F. F. Bruce, *NT History*, pp. 191-92).

Apparently there was some disagreement among the Jews concerning the exact occurrence of Nisan 14. Many Jews recognized different calendars, with Nisan starting at different times. It depended on the definition of the new moon. The "Palestinian" system reckoned the new moon to be when it was totally dark; the "Badu" system counted the new moon to be when the first light was seen; often there was a one-day difference between the two systems (M. Burrows, *More Light on the DSS*, pp. 82-85).

Stauffer has pressed this argument a little farther (*Jesus and His Story*, pp. 113-18). He believes that the Galileans often differed a day or so from the Sadducees' calendar, and that Jesus could have eaten the Passover a day earlier than the temple officials would have recognized. He says that Jesus, as an "apostate preacher" who already had a warrant out for his arrest, would not have been allowed to sacrifice his lamb at the temple anyway, and that he celebrated the meal early so that his crucifixion would fall on the same day as the Passover lamb was to be killed (cf. John 1:29; 19:36; 1 Cor 5:7).

(2) Approach #2

It is possible to reconcile the accounts by assuming that Jesus celebrated the Passover on the regular date recognized in Jerusalem (Thursday night, the beginning of 15 Nisan). John can agree with this schedule. See Robertson, *Harmony*, pp. 279-84; David Smith, *The Days of His Flesh*, pp. 534-40; Samuel J. Andrews, *The Life of Our Lord upon the Earth*, pp. 457-81; Edersheim, *LTJM*, 2/481-84; Thomas and Gundry, *Harmony*, pp. 311-14.

The first argument for this approach is that more recent research has confirmed that John is speaking of a real Passover meal, as the Synoptics do.

Second, the "preparation" mentioned in John 19:14 simply should mean the Friday of Passover week, which is its uniform usage elsewhere (Matt 27:62; Mark 15:42; Luke 23:54).

Third, the eating of the Passover mentioned in John 18:28 was not limited to the night of 15 Nisan. It continued for the whole week of Passover (cf. 2 Chr 30:22). The priests continued to eat the thank offerings and sacrifices for each day (Edersheim, *Temple*, p. 255). For this eating they must maintain their ceremonial purity. Actually, they would not have had the initial meal in mind as they appeared before Pilate, since they would have been unclean only until evening (cf. Deut 23:11; Lev 11:27-28, 31, 40; 15:5-11, 18-19, 27), and would have been permitted to eat the Passover that night.

(3) Conclusion

While the first approach is a possible solution, the second approach seems more natural and direct. It seems that Jesus ate the Passover with his disciples on the recognized date of Thursday night, 15 Nisan.

Sec. 144: Beginning of the Passover meal and dissension among the disciples over greatness

Since the Synoptics tell of the Lord's Supper institution, while John gives many discourses of Jesus during that evening, it is necessary to harmonize the two accounts. There is some disagreement as to where the different events should be inserted in John's overall narrative. For example, the editors of the Harmony follow A. T. Robertson in placing the dispute of the disciples over who would be the greatest and Jesus' reply to them at the very beginning of the Supper, but state their own preference for keeping Luke's order and placing this dispute after the identification of Judas as the betrayer (see *Harmony*, p. 198, n. v).

Jesus forcefully reminded the disciples that they would receive a kingdom, but that they should not seek their own greatness, but rather should serve each other. Note that Jesus did not try to disabuse them of the notion of a literal kingdom in the future.

Sec. 145: Washing the disciples' feet

John begins his rendition of the evening's events with this startling account. The disciples had argued about who would be the greatest. Jesus responded by assuming himself the lowest position among them, the one washing their feet, a task normally carried out by a slave. His dialog with Peter especially illustrates the need we have to let Jesus be our "servant," washing us from defilement. We are "entirely clean" when he washes us.

He then told them to do as he had done. Some church groups believe this means literal foot-washing, but it seems rather to mean that we should humbly serve each other. In our culture, there are other ways this can be done.

After this washing, the disciples were ready to receive the Passover supper.

Excursus: Jesus' Last Passover

As we examine the gospel accounts, we see that Jesus did indeed celebrate a Passover meal with his disciples. Many of the parts of that meal are apparent. Near the end of the meal Jesus took parts of the Passover ritual and turned them into the Lord's Supper ritual celebrated by the church in the New Testament. Here is a brief summary of the Passover meal as celebrated in Jesus' time.

Participants

Leader & guests

Seating of participants

—reclining on left side, right hand free (freedom)

—placement of John, Judas, Peter

Food items

That same night they are to eat the meat roasted over the fire, along with bitter herbs, and bread made without yeast (Exod 12:8).

- The lamb
- The wine (four cups, red, mixed with water)

“The use of wine in the Paschal Supper, was strictly enjoined by tradition. According to the Jerusalem Talmud, it was intended to express Israel’s joy on the Paschal night, and even the poorest must have ‘at least four cups, though he were to receive the money for it from the poor’s box.’ If he cannot otherwise obtain it, the Talmud adds, ‘he must sell or pawn his coat, or hire himself out for these four cups of wine.’” (Edersheim, *The Temple*, 235)

- The unleavened bread (two loaves, now three)
- The bitter herbs (lettuce, endive, bitter coriander, etc.)
- Salt water
- Charoseth (dates, raisins, nuts, vinegar)
- Chagigah (festive offering; optional; Num 28:18-19)

Order of service

1. Prayer of giving thanks
2. Drinking first cup of wine

3. Washing of hands (first time)

[probably here—Jesus washed disciples' feet]

4. Some bitter herbs dipped in salt water and eaten

5. Question of the son; answer of the father (Exod 13:6-10; cf. Deut 26:5-11)

[probably here—Jesus instructed his disciples—perhaps parts of John 13]

6. Father takes up and explains dishes: lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread

7. Prayer of thanks and praise

8. First part of *Hallel* sung (Pss 113-114)

Celebrates Israel's deliverance from Egypt

9. Second cup of wine drunk

10. Hands washed (second time)

11. One of two unleavened cakes broken (bread of poverty)

12. Prayer of thanksgiving

13. Broken pieces with some bitter herbs “dipped” in *Charoseth* and eaten (“the sop”)

Bitter herbs remind Jesus of bitterness of present situation—with Judas (cf. Heb 12:15; John 13:18-27)

14. Supper proper: unleavened bread with bitter herbs, *Charoseth*, *Chagigah* (if brought), lastly the Paschal lamb

[after sacrifices ended: shank bone instead of sacrificed lamb; conclude supper with piece of unleavened bread (the *Aphikomen*), but in Jesus' time the lamb was to be last]

[Jesus' breaking of bread probably here—the first *Aphikomen*; took place after eating and after giving thanks—Matt 26:26 and parallels]

15. Wash hands (third time)

16. Third cup is filled
17. Prayer: “grace after meat” —special blessing
18. Third cup of wine drunk (apparently this was the cup Jesus used to institute the cup of the Lord’s Supper; cf. “cup of blessing,” 1 Cor 10:16; see *Harmony* p. 204, n. d)
19. Fourth cup is filled and drunk (“cup of the kingdom”; this one Jesus apparently did not drink with them; he will in the Father’s kingdom; cf. Sec. 148)
20. Singing of second part of *Hallel* (Pss 115-118; Matt 26:30)
21. Two brief concluding prayers

Sec. 146: Identification of the betrayer

All four gospels relate how Jesus identified Judas Iscariot as the traitor who would betray him. The dipping of the “sop” (KJV) or bread into the dish probably is the dipping of the bread and some bitter herbs into the *Charoseth* (step #13 above). If the disciples were at all aware of what transpired between Jesus and Judas, they probably assumed it was a more minor accusation which would occur much later. They were unaware of Jesus’ and Judas’ immediate danger.

John’s final statement is significant. As Judas went out, “it was night.”

Sec. 147: Prediction of Peter’s denial

After the identification of Judas as the betrayer, the Synoptics and John all continue with Jesus’ conversation with Peter and the prediction of his coming denial of the Lord. John does give additional details, including Jesus’ coming glory with the Father and his new commandment to love one another as he has loved us.

All four gospels relate Jesus’ prediction that Peter would deny him three times. Mark alone mentions that the rooster would crow twice by the time Peter had denied Jesus three times. Mark also later implies the two crowings of the rooster (14:72; the reference to the first crowing in Mark 14:68 in the KJV is bracketed in the UBS text with a {C} rating). Mark, the gospel inspired by the preaching of Peter, was most intimately acquainted with Peter and these events. Notice that the *Harmony* editors believe that Jesus predicted Peter’s denials twice—once at this

point during the supper (recorded in Luke and John), and later at or near the garden of Gethsemane (recorded in Matthew and Mark; p. 202, n. *b*).

Peter and the others vehemently denied the possibility of ever denying Jesus. Luke adds that Jesus suggested they have swords for self-defense; they produced two, and Jesus said that was enough.

Sec. 148: Conclusion of the meal and the Lord's Supper instituted

The three Synoptics (and Paul's account in 1 Cor 11 in the fourth column of the *Harmony*) all relate the Lord's Supper institution to the bread and cup of the Passover. The broken bread represents his body given in sacrifice, and the cup represents his blood, the blood of the new covenant (Luke 22:20). At this point the new covenant replaced the Mosaic covenant for the visible church; in practice it took many decades for the actual transition to take place (cf. Heb 8:13).

Notice that the word "is" in the words of institution ("this is my body," "this is my blood") does not mean an actual change of essence (transubstantiation), but rather "signifies" or "represents" (as in other statements of Christ; e.g., "I am the door," "I am the true vine").

Christ commanded the disciple to continue the Lord's Supper until he would come again (1 Cor 11:26).

Discourse and Prayers from the Upper Room to Gethsemane

John's gospel contains a long section not found in the Synoptics. John 14-17 relates Jesus' final discourse to his disciples in the Upper Room and on the way to Gethsemane, and then his prayer to his Father. John does not record the agonized prayers in the Garden, as the Synoptics do. While the Synoptics emphasize Jesus' human sufferings of mind and soul, John emphasizes the close union between the Father and Jesus as God the Son. Both aspects of Jesus' life are true and important.

Sec. 149: Questions about his destination, the Father, and the Holy Spirit answered

Jesus promised that, although he was going away from them, they should not be discouraged, but rather filled with joy and faith. He was to prepare a place for them in his coming kingdom, and would come to them again at his second coming. In his absence the Holy

Spirit would minister to them, and they could enjoy spiritual fellowship with Christ and his Father.

In response to questions from Thomas, Philip, and Judas (not Iscariot, who had already left), Jesus explained the new situation in which the disciples would be laboring. Notice the famous “I am” saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). Jesus continued to state that he was the only way to the Father; he did not allow the modern idea that “all paths lead to God.” The gods worshiped in other religions are not the true God, the Father of Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Cor 10:20).

At the end of the chapter, he said “Come now, let us leave.” This may indicate that the rest of this discourse in John took place as they traveled from the Upper Room through Jerusalem, across the Kidron valley, and up onto the Mount of Olives. However, it may simply indicate that the time had come to leave, and yet the remaining words were spoken in the Upper Room (cf. John 18:1; *Harmony*, p. 206, n. f).

Sec. 150: The vine and the branches, Opposition from the world, Coming and ministry of the Spirit, Prediction of joy over his resurrection, Promise of answered prayer and peace

In this famous figure, the last of the “I am” passages in John, Jesus told the disciples that they would receive all the life and nourishment they needed if they remained united to him, as a branch to the vine. He then repeated his command to them to love each other as he loved them.

In the coming days with their trials and persecutions, the Holy Spirit would help and comfort them. The Spirit will use the disciples to convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.

Jesus assured them that his absence from them would be short at first—he would rise from the dead and their joy would be great. In the following time they would have the fellowship of all three persons of the Trinity as they continued their witness for Christ. He would give them peace in all their trials.

Sec. 151: Jesus’ prayer for his disciples and all who believe

This prayer, recorded in John 17, has been called “Jesus’ High Priestly Prayer.” In it he first prayed for himself, that God would sustain and glorify him, as Jesus had completed the work assigned to him by the Father (vv. 1-5). Then he prayed for his eleven apostles, that God would keep them united to him and each other in love and truth (vv. 6-19). Finally he prayed for all the other believers in the ages to come, that they likewise would be kept in God’s love and unity of faith (vv. 20-26).

This prayer of Jesus was answered by God in remarkable fashion in the lives and ministry of the apostles. Amazingly there was no rift or division among them in the following decades. Even when this could have happened easily, humanly speaking (cf. the confrontation between Paul and Peter in Gal. 2). The unity of the church today is spiritual, not necessarily organizational.

Sec. 152: Jesus' three agonizing prayers in Gethsemane

All four gospels record Jesus' going to the garden of olive trees on the Mount of Olives; Matthew and Mark name the garden as Gethsemane. The three Synoptics record Jesus' prayers there and his agony. John passes over that scene and pictures of Jesus in his more serene moments.

In all the Synoptics we read that Jesus instructed his disciples to pray; Matthew and Mark mention his taking Peter, James, and John along with him. They all record how the disciples failed to watch and pray, and how they later fled.

Jesus' three prayers reveal his agony of spirit. The cup he shrank from was receiving the wrath of God for sin, along with the physical sufferings that lay before him. Fear and anxiety are not sinful in themselves; what could be sinful is allowing that fear to turn us from our duty or our reliance on God. Jesus prayed for relief, but still prayed those all-important words, "not my will, but yours be done." He carried out the will of his Father, as required by the covenant of redemption made before the world began (cf. Rev 13:8).

Luke alone records that Jesus sweat as it were great drops of blood, and that an angel came and ministered to him (Luke 22:43-44). These verses are not in many older manuscripts, and are double bracketed as being omitted in the UBS with an {A} rating. However, some manuscripts containing them come from early times, and probably reflect an accurate historical tradition. Cf. Matt 26:37-38 = Mark 14:33-34.

This episode in Jesus' passion reveals the intense suffering he endured. The book of Hebrews mentions that Jesus prayed "with loud cries and tears," and was heard by the one who could save him from death (Heb 5:7). God the Father did hear Jesus' prayers, and while he did not remove the cup from him, he did sustain him and then raised him from the dead.