

Chapter 3 – The Institution of the Lord’s Supper

According to the Synoptics the Lord’s Supper was instituted during the final Passover Jesus celebrated with his disciples. It may be assumed that, by and large, the Passover celebration in Jesus’ day went just as the Mishnah depicted it above in Chapter 2, even if there were still trivial details about the Passover meal over which the Schools of Shammai and Hillel (in the first half of the first century AD) had a difference of opinion (see notes *b* & *f* on p. 37, 50-51). At most it might be questionable whether Jesus felt bound to the prayer ritual which the scribes had established for the Passover celebration. In this respect Luke 24:35 is significant, where it says that the two Emmaus disciples recognized the Resurrected at the “breaking of the bread.” That does not mean that Jesus had a special method of dividing the bread into smaller pieces, but rather that the prayer ritual he observed with the breaking of the bread at the beginning of a joint meal differed substantially from the ordinary practice.* So also for the Passover meal Jesus would have followed his own distinctive practice in various particulars, but in other respects the Passover celebration of his people was doubtless also his own. Thus we may rightly pose the question: At what point in the Passover meal did Jesus likely institute his holy supper?

1. It may be taken as certain the cup mentioned in Luke 22:17 is identical with the first cup of the Passover celebration, over which the consecration blessing was spoken over the wine and the festival day before the beginning of the precourse (see *Pesahim* 114^a Mishnah on p. 37). From the words that Jesus also joined to this cup according to Luke 22:17, “Take this and divide [it] among yourselves,” we should only conclude that the disciples were to divide the wine in this cup among themselves by putting it into their own cups. There is no connection between this cup and the institution of the Lord’s Supper.
2. Of the two occurrences of ἐσθιόντων αὐτῶν in Matthew 26:21,26 (= Mk 14:18,22), the first refers to the eating of the precourse (see notes *b* & *c* on p. 37, 40), the second to the eating of the main course (see note *f* on p. 50-51). The incident with the betrayer in Matthew 26:21ff and John 13:26 happened during the eating of the precourse (see Note on p. 41-42). Not until after that, when they started eating the main course, did Jesus speak the benediction over the unleavened bread (mazzah) and also break the bread (see note 2 on p. 51-52). This would have been the point at which Jesus gave his disciples the bread of his new institution, signifying this with his words, “This is my body” (Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22), “which is given for you” (Lk 22:19). — Luke does not in any way fix the time when Jesus gave the bread with a more exact indication of any kind.

* Dalman in *Jesus-Jeschua* also refers to this (p. 124).

3. The report in Matthew 26:27 (= Mk 14:23) has the giving of the cup follow immediately after that of the bread; Luke 22:20 and 1 Corinthians 11:25 show more precisely that Jesus did not give the cup until after the meal (μετὰ τὸ δειπνήσαι). Now in the Passover it was the third cup that was given after the meal in the middle of the broader celebration, while the fourth cup was enjoyed at the conclusion after the singing of the Hallel (see note g on p. 55). The third cup served the purpose of having the meal blessing (Grace after Meals) spoken over it after the meal, and that was the reason it was generally called the “cup of blessing” (see note 1 on p. 55). When one considers that Jesus also joined a prayer of thanks to the cup he gave his disciples as the cup of his new institution (Mt 26:27; Mk 14:23), that the apostle Paul expressly identified the cup of the Lord’s Supper as “the cup of blessing” (1Co 10:16), and finally that Jesus gave his disciples the cup of his new institution *before* the singing of the Hallel and so too *before* the fourth cup was enjoyed, there can scarcely be any doubt that the cup in which Jesus gave his disciples his blood of the new covenant was the third cup of the Passover meal.

4. The joint singing of a hymn formed the conclusion to Jesus’ final Passover celebration, as can be learned from the words ὑμνήσαντες ἐξῆλθον in Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26. The second part of the Hallel (Ps 115:1 to 118:29) is meant (see note g on p. 55). The fourth cup was not enjoyed until after the singing was concluded (see note g on p. 55). There could hardly have been any time left for this fourth cup at Jesus’ final Passover celebration. — It is noteworthy that, just as the word ὑμνεῖν is employed in Matthew 26:30 and Mark 14:26 for the singing of the Hallel, so also the Hallel itself was occasionally identified in rabbinical literature as הלל מן = ὕμνος.

Pesikta Rabbati 2 (5^a): “Why does one recite the Hallel [at the Festival of Dedication]? Because it is written [in the Hallel]: ‘The Lord is God, and he gave us light’ [Ps 118:27]. Why does one not recite it on the Festival of Purim? It says: ‘To annihilate, kill, and destroy any army of people or nationality which would attack them’ [Esth 8:11], and one recites the Hallel only for the collapse of a government, and the government of Xerxes remained standing; therefore one does not recite the Hallel [on the Festival of Purim]. But for the government of Greece, which God wiped out [at the time of the Hasmoneans], they begin to offer hymn [הלל מן] and praise by reciting: ‘Once we were servants for Pharaoh, servants for Greece, but now we are servants of God. Praise, you servants of the Lord!’ [thus begins the Hallel at Ps 113:1].” — For a markedly deviating parallel passage from *Arakin* 10^{af}, see at Matthew 21:9, p. 848, note e.

5. On the question of whether Jesus' disciples drank from one and the same cup at the institution of his holy supper, cf. what was noted on p. 32. From this it follows that the use of a common cup was indeed quite possible also from the perspective of ancient Jewish practice. In any case, the wording of Matthew 26:27 and Mark 14:23 supports the understanding that all the disciples drank from the one cup Jesus gave them, passing it from hand to hand.
6. Dalman's worthy work, *Jesus-Jeschua*, provides a detailed discussion of the words of the institution of the Lord's Supper, p. 122ff.