

26:1 *Finished all these sayings*- The same rubric as in 19:1, suggesting that this was a way of dividing up the material to assist in memorization. The earliest converts would have memorized the good news preached to them by e.g. Matthew, and then the material was written up under inspiration as 'the Gospel of Matthew' which we now have.

26:2 *You know*- The knowledge can refer to both the subsequent clauses in the sentence. The Lord said that they knew that Passover was coming, and that He must be handed over to crucifixion. Yet the disciples did not 'know' of His crucifixion in that clearly they had shut their minds to it. And the Lord knew that. But He is still trying to get them to understand. His effort in teaching the disciples is admirable; we would likely have sought to focus solely upon personally getting through with the trauma of death over the next few days. But He perceived that His perfection involved love for His chosen to the end.

*Is the Passover*- A present tense, when we expect a future. The essence of the Lord's function as the Paschal lamb was lived out throughout His life. Perhaps the Lord used this unusual tense because He wanted to prepare the disciples for the fact they were going to keep the Passover a day earlier than usual; but they need not worry about that, because the essence of Passover was ongoing in the Lord's life. John the Baptist had perceived that when commenting that the Lord was "the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29,36) even when it wasn't Passover time. See on :28 *Is shed* and on :30 *They went out*. Luke says "the feast of unleavened bread drew nigh, which is called the Passover". "Called the Passover" might suggest that it was only called Passover, but was not so in reality. This would connect with the theme of the feast being called a "feast of the Jews" rather than of Yahweh, and the temple becoming "your house" rather than God's.

*Is betrayed*- Literally, 'is being betrayed'. The next verse shows what was going on in justification of this statement. The Lord could have known of it through direct Divine revelation, but I prefer to think that His sensitivity was such that He perceived it of His own perception. The Greek can mean to be handed over, and also to be betrayed, with reference to Judas. The obvious double meaning indicates that the Lord did purposefully use words and ideas with more than one meaning, realizing that after His death, the other meaning would be made apparent. This means that we are quite justified in perceiving multiple meanings and intentions in inspired words, the Olivet Prophecy being a classic example, with its various possible applications. "Is betrayed" reflects a present tense in the Greek. The Lord's handing over to death, indeed His death itself, was in essence lived out throughout His life. His life was a form of ongoing death.

26:3 *Then assembled*- The record may wish to give the impression that it was because of the Lord's prediction of His death that the Jews assembled and arranged it. He certainly planned His death consciously, and the Jews responded to His provocations. The gathering or assembling

together of the Lord's enemies is a major theme (:57; 27:17,27,62; 28:12); and uses the same word for the gathering together of the rejected to condemnation at the last day. Coming before Christ in His time of dying was and is a foretaste of the last judgment. The Lord Jesus causes people to gather together either for or against Him. This is the fundamental divide- not between brother and brother, but between the believer and the world, light and darkness.

*Court-* The AV "Palace" is misleading. Wycliffe in archaic English renders Mt. 26:3: "Then the princes of priests and the elder men of the people were gathered into the hall of the prince of priests, that was said Caiaphas". See Digression *Caiaphas As "The prince of this world"*.

The word translated "court" or "palace" is used 12 times in the New Testament, and eight of them refer to the court of the High Priest. It's tempting, therefore, to think that the Lord may well have had this same court / palace in mind when He spoke of how an armed strong man "keeps his palace" [s.w., Lk. 11:21], but the Lord Jesus through His death on the cross would overpower him, and take his goods and share them with His people. The strong man who kept the palace may have had some reference, therefore, to the Jewish High Priest; the good things of the temple were inaccessible to God's people, until the Lord overpowered that entire system. The Lord also spoke of how He has a "fold", the same word translated "palace" or "court", into which He must gather His sheep (Jn. 10:1,16). He had to take over the whole temple system, and replace the Jewish religious leadership with His own band of secular men, prostitutes and hangers on.

26:4 *Consulted-* The Greek specifically means to jointly decide. The collective guilt of Jewry is being emphasized, because their judgment was likewise collective.

*Take Jesus-* The same word used four times later in this chapter about the 'taking hold' of the Lord Jesus in Gethsemane (:48,50,55,57). This 'laying on of hands' against the Lord is likewise strongly noted by Mark (s.w. Mk. 14:44,46,49,51). The sight of it was burnt into their memories. There are likewise parts and aspects of the Lord's sufferings, and words associated with them, which are likewise burnt in the consciousness of all those who truly love Him.

*By subtilty-* An allusion to the Lord's Jewish opposition as the seed of the serpent at whose hands the seed of the woman was wounded (Gen. 3:15). But the word literally refers to a bait, implying some plan to deceive Him into a position in which they could arrest Him. But what were these plans? The Lord fell for no bait. Perhaps the idea was that Judas would come and kiss Him, and lead Him into some isolated ambush or compromising situation. When the Lord made it clear to Judas that He knew what Judas was up to, the plan fell apart and the soldiers simply grabbed the

Lord. And they ended killing Him “on the feast day”, which was exactly what they had planned to avoid (:5).

*Kill Him-* The plan made ahead of time to kill Him was clearly typified by the brothers’ plans to kill Joseph.

26:5 *Not on the feast-* But they did crucify the Lord during the feast, at the same time as the Passover lambs were being killed. Their plan went wrong- see on :4 *By subtilty*. Try as they might to not kill Him then, the Lord wanted to die as the Passover lamb, and this happened despite the Jews *not* wanting that. The Lord had control over the time of His death, because He gave His life rather than having it taken from Him.

*An uproar among the people-* This indicates the popularity the Lord enjoyed even at that stage, and the fact He was crucified with the general goodwill of the masses is therefore an essay in the fickleness of human nature. And yet the careful plans of the leaders didn't work out- there was "a tumult" about it, the same Greek word translated "uproar" (27:24), and likewise they did end up killing Jesus "on the feast day" when it was not their intention to.

26:6 *In Bethany in the house of Simon the leper-* The anointing recorded in Mark 14 is clearly the same as that here in Matthew 26. But the anointing in Luke 7 appears to have occurred in the house of a Pharisee called Simon somewhere in Galilee. The anointing recorded in John 12 is very similar, but occurred six days before the Passover and one day *before* the triumphal entry (Jn. 12:12), whereas the anointing recorded here in Matthew and Mark occurred *after* that. There are other differences, too. In Jn. 12:3 Mary uses "a pound of spikenard" whereas the anointing in Matthew seems to emphasize the use of spikenard as a liquid, in an alabaster flask that had to be broken to release the liquid. The spikenard was worth *more* than 300 pence (Mk. 14:5), whereas that of Jn. 12:5 was worth 300 pence; it was used to anoint the Lord's *feet* (Jn. 12:3), whereas that of Mt. 26:7 was used to anoint His *head*. In Jn. 12:4 it is Judas who complains at the apparent waste of the money, whereas in Mt. 26:8 it is the disciples. Mt. 26:11,12 record the Lord's word about "You will always have the poor with you" and goes on to record His explanation that the woman had done this for His burial; whereas in Jn. 12:7,8 these two sayings are the other way around. The wiping of His feet with her hair is stressed in Jn. 12:3, but Matthew and Mark are silent about this. Jn. 12 clearly identifies the woman as Mary the sister of Martha and Lazarus; whereas Matthew and Mark are careful to preserve her as a nameless "woman" who "came unto Him" (26:7). I therefore have no doubt that Jn. 12 and Mt. 26 / Mk. 14

speak of two separate anointings, both in Bethany, separated from each other by four days. The anointing in Luke 7 is clearly framed as a similar incident, also in the house of a man called Simon.

The question, of course, is why these three anointings are described in such similar language. Higher critics immediately speak of textual dislocation and mistakes made by the writers in their chronology of events. These kinds of approaches arise from a focus upon the text before our eyes, rather than having a wider perspective on Scripture earned by years of careful Bible reading of the entire Bible text. Those who read the entire Scriptures over a period of time cannot fail to be impressed by the repetition of situations and events. The way Joseph is called out of prison to interpret a King's dream and is then exalted to rulership in a pagan land is clearly the basis for the language used about Daniel's experience in Babylon. This is not to say that text got dislocated, that Daniel was Joseph or vice versa. Rather do we perceive a single Divine mind behind the production of the Bible as we have it; and God's intention was clearly to show that circumstances repeat within and between the lives of His people. And the language He uses in recording history seeks to bring out those repetitions. This is why the lament of Jeremiah in depression is so similar to that of Job in his depression. And of course we are free to assume that Biblical characters were aware of and took inspiration from those who had gone before them. I suggest that this is what we have going on in the records of these three anointings of the Lord by despised and misunderstood women. They were inspired by each other- for the Lord comments that what the women did was to be told worldwide. This was a command, and it was surely obeyed. Mary of Bethany was inspired by the woman of Luke 7, and the anonymous woman of Matthew 26 was inspired by Mary's anointing of four days previously. Mary had given spikenard worth 300 pence; this woman used even more expensive ointment. And in this is our lesson- to be inspired by the devotion of others to their Lord. Heaven's record of our response is as it were recorded in similar language, in recognition of the inspiration provided by earlier acts of faithfulness by those we know or who have gone before us.

*26:7 Precious ointment-* The Greek *bar-utimos* uses a term, *utimos*, elsewhere used about the precious, costly blood of Christ. Matthew uses it about the "price" of the Lord's blood (27:6,9), as does Paul (1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23) and Peter (1 Pet. 2:7). The point is simple. The Lord's blood shed for us was and is the most valuable thing in existence, in the entire cosmos; and we should feel that when we take the cup which symbolizes it. And our response is to give our most valuable things, materially and otherwise, for Him.

*On His head-* The woman anointed the Lord's head in order to reflect her belief that He really was the Christ, the anointed one. She gave her life savings for this belief. It can be apparently painless to believe that Jesus is Christ, and yet the implications of accepting this simple fact can

transform a life. What she did was surely rooted in her understanding of Song 1:12, where Solomon's lover has spikenard (s.w. LXX Jn. 12:3) which sends forth its smell "While the king sitteth at his table". Clearly enough she saw Jesus right there and then as the King- even though His Kingdom was not of that world. Her love for Him, her reflection upon the Old Testament, and her perception of Him as her future Lord and King to the extent that she even then treated Him as such, so certain was her faith in His future victory and worthiness... this all motivated her to give the quintessence of her life's work for Him. And it should for us too.

26:8 *Indignation, saying-* Mk. 14:4 adds that the indignation was within themselves, and so the words they are here recorded as saying were likely within themselves. We wonder how many other times when we read of people 'saying' something, the 'saying' was within their own minds. For self-talk is understood by the Lord as our actual words. Whether or not we hold our tongues back is not the ultimate issue. The words have been said within us. See on 26:10 *When Jesus understood*. If the reconstruction of events I offered in commentary on :8, we can better understand their frustration. They would have seen an identical 'waste' of wealth in the anointing of four days previously in the same village, perhaps in the same home; and they had seen it in Galilee at the incident recorded in Luke 7. And they were doing their math and calculating the total cost 'wasted'.

*To what purpose?*- The Greek *eis tis* could equally mean 'For whom?', the implication being that the poor could have been benefitted far more than the Lord Jesus. Hence the Lord replies that the purpose of the anointing was to embalm Him ahead of time for burial. Just as the woman was inspired by the generous anointing of Mary four days previously and the Galilean prostitute of Luke 7, so the huge amount of spices purchased by Nicodemus in Jn. 19:39 was likely motivated in turn by her example. Critics claim that the amount of spices ("one hundred pound weight") bought was more than used in the burial of the Caesars. The woman here used a pound of spikenard, worth more than the 300 pence at which Mary's anointing liquid was valued. And in turn, Nicodemus was motivated yet more- 100 times more. She gave one pound, he gave 100 pounds' weight. This is the reason for the *deja vu* of our lives, of how experiences repeat between human lives- it's so that we may be inspired to greater service than even those who went before.

*This waste-* This is the same Greek word used nearly 20 times in the NT for destruction and condemnation; it is the same word used in describing Judas as "the son of *perdition*". The tragedy of condemnation is the waste of what could have been. This is the sadness with which God sees condemnation. We note that four days before, it had been Judas who complained about the 'waste'. His attitude had spread to the disciples. But the paradox was that he was thereby the son of waste, he was condemning himself by complaining about the waste of devotion towards the Lord Jesus. The idea could even be that they were so angry that they thought that the woman was condemning herself by what she had done, because she could have given the money to the

poor. This is seen so often in religious experience- those who stand on the sidelines become so bitter at how others actively express their devotions to their Lord that they go so far as to condemn them. We think of how Michal despised David for dancing before the Lord, and was punished with barrenness; and of the Lord's observation: "Is your eye evil, because I am good / generous?" (20:15). The world's wealthiest individuals are often very generous to charitable causes- and yet they do so to a chorus of criticism from those who have given little or nothing to such causes.

*26:9 Sold for much and given to the poor-* The very words used by the Lord to the rich ruler, telling him to sell what he had and give to the poor (19:21). Their idea in saying this may have been to accuse the woman of disobedience to the Lord's teachings. We see here how deep are the feelings aroused by spiritual jealousy. This woman had made a stellar commitment to her Lord; and quite unspoken, her devotion challenged the other disciples. And so by all means they had to condemn her, and were happy to misquote the Lord's words to achieve that. This is one simple reason why those most active and sacrificial in church life are often the most viciously attacked by their fellow disciples.

*26:10 When Jesus understood-* This translation is misleading; the idea of the Greek is that the Lord perceived the situation immediately. But the fact He perceived it confirms the suggestion that the words the disciples apparently spoke were in fact spoken within their minds and not out loud- see on 26:8 *Indignation, saying*.

*Good work-* The Greek has the idea of beauty. The same Greek phrase rendered "a good work" is found in 1 Tim. 5:10 as something required of a mature spiritual woman, and for which she must be "reported"- clearly alluding to how this woman's "good work" was to be told / reported worldwide. She thus became a model for other sisters to follow, in the same way as she herself had copied the examples of Mary four days previously, and the sinful woman of Luke 7. This is the intended power and purpose of good works- they serve as inspiration for others to likewise glorify the Lord. The Greek expression 'to work a [good] work' is used elsewhere regarding the Lord's working of miracles (Jn. 6:28; 9:41; 10:33). Her response was no less significant than the working of a miracle.

*Upon Me-* The Greek *eis eme* could as well mean 'in Me', as if the woman's work gave the Lord huge encouragement within Himself.

26:11 *The poor always with you*- Christ's love for us, His Father's spiritual house, was typified by His being likened to the poor slave under the Law who perpetually dedicated himself to serve his master's house. An extension of this idea is revealed by a connection between the Lord saying "Ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always" (Mt. 26:11) and Dt. 15:11 "For the poor shall never cease out of the land". Thus Jesus is associating himself with the "poor man... of thy brethren" of Dt. 15:7. Note how Jesus calls himself a "poor man", especially on the cross: Ps. 34:6; 35:10; 37:14; 40:17; 69:29,33; 70:5; 86:1; 109:22; 113:7 cp. 2 Cor. 8:9- an impressive list. Christ exercised the rights of the poor to glean in the cornfield on the Sabbath (Lk. 6:1); Dt. 15:7 warned the Israelites not to be hard hearted and refuse help to such a poor brother. Christ is alluding to this passage by saying that the disciples should not be hard hearted by stopping Mary give her rich ointment to Him, the poor. The following Dt. 15:12-17 is also concerning Jesus. Thus Jesus was spiritually poor and hungry, and was so grateful for Mary's encouragement.

Note that the Law also taught that if Israel were obedient, then there would be no poverty. And yet the same Law tacitly recognized the reality of human weakness in noting that "the poor shall never cease out of the land" (Dt. 15:11). God's law therefore also reflects His grace and understanding of human failure to be fully obedient.

*But Me you do not have always*- We would likely have been tempted to expose the root of the immediate problem- Judas was a thief, and wanted the cash because he would keep some of it and only distribute part to the poor. But the Lord as ever, was wiser than to confront issues in such a primitive way. He brushes past the complaint that this woman had ignored His principle of selling what we have and giving to the poor, and doesn't expose the core reason for Judas' trouble stirring about the issue. Rather He focuses upon what the woman *had* achieved, and bids the disciples look closer at His death and how they should be responding to it.

*Always*- Literally, 'at all times'. There would always be opportunity, times of opportunity, to do good to the poor.

26:12 *She poured this ointment on My body*- A different word from that used to describe how she poured the ointment on His head (:7). Perhaps her focus was upon anointing Him- but because the ointment dripped from His head onto His body, the Lord imputed to her an understanding of His upcoming death and saw it as an embalming of Him, in line with the oft repeated idea that His life was in effect His death; as He sat at the meal table, it was as if He were already dead.

*She did it for My burial-* The RV has “to prepare me for burial”. This could be read as the Lord saying that what she did inspired Him to go forward in the path to death which He was treading. The Greek means specifically embalming. It was as if the woman perceived that the Lord was effectively the slain lamb of God even whilst He was alive. It is used only once more in the New Testament, describing the embalming of the Lord's body (Jn. 19:40).

26:13 *There shall also this-* Her generosity was set up as a cameo of the response to the Lord which all who believe the Gospel should make. The Gospel is not just a set of doctrines to be painlessly apprehended. It is a call to action after the pattern of this woman. The good news was to be of the Lord's death and burial, and yet integral to that message was to be the pattern of response which was seen in her- to give our all, our most treasured and hoarded things, for His sake.

*Wherever in the whole world this gospel is preached-* There is evident connection with Christ's prophecy of how the Gospel would be preached in all the world (Mt. 24:14; Mk. 16:15). He seems to have seen the 'Gospel' that would be preached as a re-telling of His life and incidents in it, such as the woman's anointing of Him. It is significant that her anointing is mentioned in all four Gospel records. In Mk. 14:9 we read that wherever the gospel was to be preached, what she had done would be narrated in memory of her. So ‘preaching the Gospel’ is defined there as a narration of the events and sayings of the Lord Jesus in His ministry. The Gospel records are transcripts of the Gospel preached by e.g. Matthew. The Gospel is therefore in the Gospels. The rest is interpretation and theology, necessary and helpful, but there is no avoiding the fact that the Gospel itself is in the records of the Gospel which we have in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

The Lord foresaw that transcripts of His work and words would indeed be made, and He envisaged how the supreme devotion of this anonymous woman would be part of that message. The language is very similar to that of 24:14: "This Gospel... shall be preached [*kerusso* again] in all the world... and then shall the end come". Matthew may have had in view how his version of the Gospel needed to be spread into all the world.

*A memorial of her-* The language of 'memorial' is typically used in contemporary literature about memorials to the gallant deeds of *men*. But the Lord was challenging such thinking by saying that the Gospel would include a memorial of an anonymous *woman*. And her humanly senseless pouring out of her wealth in a ten minute act of devotion to Him was none less than the bravest

or noblest act of any man.

26:14 *Then-* In all the Gospel records, the decision of Judas to betray the Lord follows on from the anointing incidents. The [apparent] waste of money in senseless devotion obviously irked Judas. People who are obsessed with money as he was often find such things unbearable to be part of. Judas is repeatedly called "Simon's son" at this time. And the anointing took place in Simon's house (:6). It could well be that Judas was a member of the family, possibly even a brother of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. To see the family wealth 'wasted' in this way was unbearable for him. The reasons for his betrayal were surely multi-factorial, but attitudes to money played a large part. "What will you give me, and I will betray Him...?" clearly suggests a financial motive; and the records seem to give the impression that the apparent waste of money, especially if it was money he thought might be coming to him in the inheritance, was the final straw for him. After that, he went to the Jews and opened discussions about betraying the Lord. The way he threw the thirty pieces of silver down on the ground reflects his final realization of how foolish he had been. And yet the lesson is so often never learnt; men and women effectively betray their Lord for money; accumulation of wealth, development of career, take precedence over devotion to Him, and finally lead to betrayal.

26:15 *What will you give me?-* The financial aspect was important to Judas. He, like so many after him, was prepared to betray the Son of God purely for money. The decision of Judas to make this offer is recorded as coming straight after the record of the woman anointing the Lord's feet with the expensive ointment. Judas's heart cried out as he saw all that money wasted; he knew that the perfume could have been sold for much and the money entrusted to him as the treasurer, and therefore he would have had the opportunity to take some for himself. As I read the records, the motivation of Judas was *fundamentally* financial, whatever we may like to speculate about his other reasons. It's almost too farfetched to believe; that a man who walked in the company of the Son of God, who entered into deep spiritual conversation with him, who is even described by the Spirit of Christ as "a man mine equal, my guide and mine acquaintance" (Ps. 55:13,4), could steal the odd few dollars (in our terms) out of the bag of those 12 travelling men. It couldn't have been any great sum that he notched up in those three years. And yet this led Judas to betray the Lord of all grace, for a sum no more than at most a few thousand US dollars (in our terms). They valued the Son of God at 30 pieces of silver (Mt. 27:9)- and *all it could buy was a field*. And Judas was happy with that. The way he later hurled those coins down and stalked off to hang himself suggests that he saw the essence of his failure as being tied up with that money. "The reward of iniquity" was what Peter contemptuously called it (Acts 1:18).

*Deliver Him unto you-* The Lord had predicted this, using the very same words, concerning how He would be delivered over to the "chief priests" (20:18). The Lord had only just used the word

translated "deliver" in predicting His betrayal (:2). And Judas did it. The Lord surely knew the power of self-fulfilling prophecies; to some degree He psychologically set up this situation so that this would indeed happen. For ultimately the Lord 'gave Himself', He handed Himself over [the same Greek word] for us (Gal. 2:20; Eph. 5:2,25; 1 Pet. 2:23). It is not at all unbelievable that Judas would do the very thing which the Lord had predicted the betrayer would do. It is true to human experience; people do the very thing they know they should not, performing to the letter the very situations which they have been clearly warned about. Yet through all this, it must be remembered that the same word for deliver up / betray is used about how *God* 'delivered up' His Son for us all (Rom. 8:32). Although Judas was without question guilty and did what he did of his own volition, God's hand was somehow in it, working through the freewill of men. And this is the great comfort to all those who suffer evil at the hands of evil men; the evil of the men and their actions doesn't mean that we have been forsaken by God, nor that His far higher hand is not in it all, working as He does for our ultimate good in the latter end.

We noted earlier that the very language of betrayal into the hands of the religious leaders and thence to the power of the Gentiles (20:18,19) was used about the experience of the faithful in the final tribulation (24:9,10). In the very last few days, the last generation will pass through the sufferings of the Lord Jesus, identifying with His death so that they might live with Him. This will be especially appropriate if the last generation are the only human beings to never taste of death. And even for those believers who do not live at that time, they too find that their experiences of betrayal are a part in their fellowship of their Lord's sufferings. For the same word is used in speaking of how we are all "delivered unto death for Jesus' sake" (2 Cor. 4:11). For the sake of being in Him, identified with Him, we must all share in His sufferings and betrayal experience.

*They covenanted*- They weighed [Gk.] the money, fulfilling Zech. 11:12 "They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver". The legalism of all concerned shines through. According to Mark 14:11, this was really an advance payment. The money was perhaps weighed out because the shekels were the temple shekels, those used in the temple.

*Thirty pieces*- The legal price of a slave (Ex. 21:32). The money intended for purchasing the temple sacrifices (see on *They covenanted*) was used to buy the Lord at the time when He appeared supremely "in the form of a servant".

*Pieces of silver*- They were "the price of [Christ's] blood" (27:6), "the price of [Christ]". We are surely intended to use this identification to interpret the parable of the pieces of silver [s.w.] given to the Lord's servants (25:18,27). He calls it "My money" [s.w. "silver pieces", Lk. 19:23]. The money of Christ was the money paid to get His blood. Perhaps those to whom more silver

pieces were given are those who had sinned the more, whose redemption was the more costly; or those who appreciate the price of their redemption the more.

26:17 *Came to Jesus*- This is noted so often, as if the Lord was alone, presumably in prayer to the Father, and wasn't with the disciples all the time.

*Prepare for you*- Lk. 22:8 adds the detail that actually this was said in response to Peter and John being told to go and prepare the Passover. Mk. 14:15 brings out the paradox that the Lord directed them to an upper room that was already "prepared" (s.w.), and there they prepared the Passover. The Lord had taught that the festal meal was already prepared for His people (22:4 s.w.). The Lord was surely using the language of Passover preparation in saying that He was going [to the cross] to prepare a place for us (Jn. 14:1-3)- and He said that at the very time Passover was being prepared. His request that *they* prepare Passover was therefore asking for a mutuality in response from them.

26:18 *A man*- Mark and Luke add that he was a man bearing a pitcher of water (Mk. 14:13; Lk. 22:10). This water was carried upstairs into the upper room, and became, as it were, the wine of the new covenant. Carrying water was woman's work, and the Lord surely arranged this special sign in order to show how at His table, there was gender equality. He was so far ahead of His time. The vague "such a man" is perhaps to conceal the identity of the householder, given that the Gospels were distributed at a time of persecution. Or perhaps it was in order to avoid the identifying of the house and turning it into some kind of shrine, or special honour being given to the householder.

*The Master*- The anonymous man, unnamed perhaps for security reasons, was presumably a believer for this title to mean anything to the man. Likewise the reference to the Lord's time being at hand would've only been understandable by a disciple. The Lord wishes to assume that the man will appreciate that if the Lord's time of death was at hand, then He must first keep the Passover.

*My time is at hand*- The Lord used similar language in teaching how in the very last days of the tribulation, we will likewise know that the Lord's time is at hand (24:32,33). This is another one of many suggestions that we who live in the last days will go through the essence of the Lord's sufferings.

*With My disciples*- The use of *meta* carries the sense of amongst, in the midst of, and not simply 'together with'. Heb. 2:12 perhaps alludes to this by quoting and applying to Jesus the Old

Testament passage which says "I will declare Your Name unto My brothers, in the midst of the church will I sing praise". This is quoted in the context of a sustained argument in Hebrews 2 that the Lord shared our nature. His breaking of bread with the disciples therefore was an essay in His humanity and solidarity with us- and that is the intention of the breaking of bread meeting to this day. The intended meaning is so much enhanced by correctly appreciating how the Lord shared our nature.

26:19 *Did as Jesus had commanded them*- The same rubric is used about Moses' obedience to all commanded him. Those secular men were being painted in terms of Moses, who was seen as without equal in Judaism. But the Lord often paints His secular followers in the very terms of the most stellar Old Testament heroes of Judaism.

26:20 *Reclined*- Joachim Jeremias gives a whole string of quotes from Rabbinic and historical writings that indicate that "At the time of Jesus the diners sat down" to eat. Yet the Gospel records are insistent that Jesus and the disciples *reclined* at the last supper (Mt. 26:20; Mk. 14:18; Lk. 22:14; Jn. 13:12,23,25,28). Yet at the Passover, it was apparently common to recline, because as Rabbi Levi commented "slaves eat standing, but here at the Passover meal people should recline to eat, to signify that they have passed from slavery to freedom". The breaking of bread is thus stressed in the records as being a symbol of our freedom from slavery. It should not in that sense be a worrying experience, taking us on a guilt trip. It is to celebrate the salvation and release from bondage which has truly been achieved for us in Christ our Passover.

*With the twelve*- This doesn't mean that only the twelve partook or were present. Matthew's record may simply be focusing upon them. There are reasons to think that there were others present too. See Digression, *Was the Last Supper Restricted?*

26:21 *One of you shall betray Me*- The Lord had repeatedly predicted that He would be 'betrayed' or 'handed over'. But He had not defined who would do it, indeed the form in which He had spoken of being 'handed over' was vague and didn't necessarily require that one individual would do it. We must remember that *paradidomi* means literally 'to hand over' and doesn't carry the sense of personal betrayal which the English word 'betray' is loaded with. They were there shocked when He stated that "one of *you*" would do this.

26:22 *They were extremely sorry*- It is commendable that their dominant emotion was of sorrow rather than anger. We perhaps would have expected anger more than sorrow. But their sorrow is a reflection of the degree of their love for the Lord, and their sorrow for the person who would

face the awful consequences of doing so.

*Began-* The idea is that they all burst out with the same question at the same time. And yet Mk. 14:19 records that they asked this "One by one". The scene is imaginable- after initially all bursting out with the same question, they try to ask Him the same question personally in order to get an answer. Which is why Judas asks the question somewhat later (:25). Again it is commendable that their very first reaction was to wonder whether they personally could be the betrayer- rather than 'Lord, is it *him*?'. But after realizing that it was not them personally, naturally they began to look at one another, wondering whom He was speaking of (Jn. 13:22). Although "doubting of whom He spoke" (Jn. 13:22) really means they were at a loss to know. Clearly they had absolutely no suspicion that it was Judas. And when Judas is told "What you are doing, do quickly" and Judas exits (Jn. 13:27-29), they still assume that he must have been sent out to minister to the poor [suggesting there were beggars around the feast, again hinting that the last supper was not held behind closed doors]. This again speaks to us who replicate the last supper week by week. Some will indeed betray their Lord, but we have absolutely no idea who they are.

*Every one of them-* Including Judas. The Lord's patience with him was remarkable.

*Lord, is it I?-* The negative implies the answer 'No, you are not the one'. It was more than a question- it was a declaration of innocence. This is the basis for self-examination at the Lord's table; we should be able to do it and conclude that we are not the Lord's betrayer. Some who sit at that table will betray Him, and we are to realize the very real possibility of our own ultimate failure, the eternity of the future we may miss. Perhaps "every one of them" excludes Judas, because he apparently asked the question later (:25), and replaces 'Lord' with "Master"[Gk. 'rabbi'] when he asks: "Master ['rabbi'], is it I?" (:25). His usage of 'rabbi' to address the Lord may reflect how influenced he was by Judaism, and how he failed to appreciate the utter Lordship of Jesus. Judas maybe persuaded himself that this Jesus was just another itinerant rabbi, who Judaism would be better off without. Note that "Is it I?" is *eimi ego*, literally 'Am I?'. This is one of many examples of where *ego eimi* means simply 'I am', and [contrary to Trinitarian claims] the words do not mean that the speaker of them is claiming to be God.

*26:23 He that dipped his hand with Me in the dish-* The past tense is important, for if the Lord was predicting a future event, then all the disciples would be looking carefully at the dish. "Dipped", *em-bapto*, carries the suggestion that there was liquid or water within the dish. Lamb is greasy, and there would have been dishes of water on the table in which the diners dipped their hands. The Lord had done that at the same time as Judas, and must have pressed His fingers against those of Judas. But none of the others had noticed. Jn. 13:26 says that "It is he to whom I gave the morsel of bread after I dipped it"- perhaps meaning that the Lord had put a crumb of

bread into Judas' fingers whilst their hands touched in the bowl. Any other reading of the incident faces the obvious difficulty that if indeed the Lord publically pointed Judas out as the betrayer, there would have been no confusion as to why he went out into the darkness. And we would expect to read of an outcry amongst the 11 against Judas; but the record instead stresses that they totally didn't suspect Judas until he was out of the room. Mk. 14:20 adds that the Lord said that the man was "One of the twelve" who had dipped his hand with the Lord in the dish. This suggests there were others apart from the twelve eating at the table and dipping their hands in the dish. It was not therefore a closed communion. There would have been no need for such a "large" room (Lk. 22:12) if only the twelve were present.

*Shall betray Me-* The Greek word translated "betray" really means 'to hand over'. This was yet future for Judas. The 'betrayal' in the English sense of that word had already happened.

26:24 *The Son of Man goes-* The Lord's 'going' was His going to the cross. The Lord used the same word in 13:44 in describing Himself as the man who 'goes' *with joy* and sells all that He has in order to buy / redeem [s.w.] the field (representing the world) in order to gain for Himself the treasure (the redeemed). His 'going' to the cross was therefore done with some form of "joy". Even when the only visible representative of the treasure were that band of mixed up men and a few doubtful women. He uses the word again in telling Peter to 'go' behind Him and carry His cross (16:23). Yet the Lord looked beyond the cross; He saw Himself as 'going' to the Father (Jn. 7:33; 8:14,21,22 s.w.), in the same way as we do not only 'go' to our death, but ultimately even death itself is part of an onward journey ultimately towards God and His Kingdom. The Lord's attitude to His death was that He *knew* that He was now 'going to the Father' (Jn. 13:3; 14:28; 16:5,10,16,17 s.w.). This unique perspective upon death and suffering is only logical for those who have a clear conception of future resurrection and personal fellowship with the Father in His future Kingdom.

*As it is written of Him-* Jn. 13:18 is specific: "But the scripture must be fulfilled: He that eats my bread lifted up his heel against me". The reference to the heel naturally suggests the Gospel promise of Gen. 3:15. But it seems the wrong way around- it is the seed of the woman who lifts up a bruised heel with which to crush the seed of the serpent. There is no lack of evidence that on the cross, the Lord identified totally with sinners, to the point that He felt forsaken just as sinners are forsaken. Or perhaps Judas justified his actions by deciding that Jesus was a false Messiah, the seed of the serpent, and the righteous thing to do was to crush the serpent with his heel.

*But woe-* The Lord typically pronounced 'Woe' upon the Jewish world and their religious leaders. He classes Judas along with them, because his actions had been inspired by them. The devil, in this context referring to the Jewish opposition to Jesus, had put the idea of betrayal into the heart of Judas (Jn. 13:2). "Woe" translates *ouai*, an intensified form of *ou*, "no". Perhaps in His word choice the Lord was still desperately saying to Judas 'No! No! Don't do it!'. He knew that He had

to be betrayed, but His appeals for Judas to repent were therefore rooted in an understanding that the Bible prophecies would come true in some other way than through Judas. For otherwise, Judas would have had no real possibility of repentance, and no real choice but than to do what he did.

*Good for that man if he had not been born-* The Lord foresaw Judas' agony at the last day. But the Greek can bear a retranslation: 'It would be virtuous for that man if he did not conceive / gender'. In that case, there would be yet another appeal for Judas to stop dead in his heart the conception of sin. The Lord elsewhere uses words with two [or more] meanings in order to deliver a specific message to an individual, within a statement of general truth which appeared intended for others. The messages He sent back to the imprisoned John the Baptist are a clear example. The Lord's last ditch attempts to save Judas, rather than allow himself to be so hurt by him that He just ignored him, are a powerful encouragement to us in dealing with those who harm us and willfully do evil.

*26:25 Master, is it I?-* See on :22 *Lord, is it I?* If Judas openly asked the question and was told 'Yes Judas, it's you I'm referring to', then there is no easy explanation for why no reaction from the disciples is recorded, nor any attempt by them to persuade him otherwise or limit his actions. Likewise we must give full weight to the fact that when Judas exits, they assume he has gone to buy something for the feast or to minister to the poor (Jn. 13:27-29). This leads to the conclusion that Judas asked the Lord this quietly and received a hushed reply. John likewise leaned on the Lord's chest and asked Him quietly who it was (Jn. 13:24-26). Is it possible that Judas also at this stage also lay on the Lord's chest, so close to Him that he could whisper to Him out of earshot of the others? It was a "large upper room", and so it may well have been possible. In this case, Judas was indeed the Lord's "familiar friend in whom I trusted", and the closeness of Judas and Jesus would explain why the disciples were completely not suspicious of Judas. If the Lord had publically answered Judas, then surely events would not have unfolded as they did. The Lord knew exactly what Judas was planning, more by His premonition and sensitivity to Judas' feelings than by a bolt of Divine revelation. The Lord freely gave His life, it was not taken from Him by betrayal and murder. He therefore set the situation up, on one level, to happen as it did. And He didn't want to stop it happening. And yet on the other hand, He so wished for Judas' repentance on a personal level. And this is how He works with men to this day.

*You have said-* This is exactly the style the Lord adopts with Pilate in answering the question as to whether He is King of the Jews: "You said it" (Mt. 27:11). He allows people to come to a point where they state the truth out of their own mouths, rather than Him putting words into their mouths. And He works likewise today.

26:26 *As they were eating*- Eating the Passover lamb. The bread and wine were accessories, side dishes, and the Lord takes these things and makes them so significant. He doesn't, e.g., take some lamb and divide it between the guests with the message that "This represents My body". Even though the lamb was the more obvious symbol of Himself than the bread was. He wanted the last supper to be repeated by poor and ordinary people, who had bread but not lamb each week; He used common, readily available bread because that spoke more of His humanity, His ordinariness. He used what was to hand, just as we can for the breaking of bread.

Note that Judas was still present at this point. Jn. 13:18 makes the point concerning him that "He that eats bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me". If Judas broke bread with the Lord, this surely indicates that there is nothing intrinsically sinful in breaking bread with sinners. The quotation from Psalm 41 is interesting in the LXX: "the man of my peace, on whom I set my hope". There was special potential in Judas, and the Lord on one hand had hopes for him. It has been argued that the giving of the "sop" to him was the sign of special love and fellowship. Jn. 13:20 goes on to say: "He that receiveth whomsoever I shall send, receiveth me". The 'receiving' in this context is receiving at the Lord's table. To reject others from His table is to reject the Lord.

*Took bread*- Taking bread, blessing and breaking it and giving to the disciples was exactly what the Lord did at the feeding of the 5000 and 4000 (14:19; 15:36), and we are thereby justified in seeing what He did then as having a religious dimension, practicing thereby an extremely open table. To 'take bread' can mean [although not always] to actually eat bread. Consider: "The disciples had forgotten to take bread, *neither* did they have with them more than one loaf" (Mk. 8:14)- the force of "neither..." is that they had not eaten bread, rather than that they had forgotten to bring any with them. Philip complained that there would not be enough bread for each of the crowd to 'take' even a little, i.e. to eat just a little (Jn. 6:7). So it could be that the Lord took and ate bread, blessed it, and then asked the disciples to eat it. This sequence of events would then make the eating of bread a more conscious doing of what Jesus had done. He took the bread, and then He asks them to take the bread ("Take, eat"). He is inviting them to mimic Him.

*Blessed it*- It was usual to bless a meal, especially the Passover lamb, but here the Lord offers a special prayer for the accessory to the meal, the side dish of bread. He wanted to highlight the significance of the most ordinary thing on the table and show that it represented Him.

*Gave it*- The use of *didomi* is set in the context of all the talk about how the Lord would be *paradidomi*, betrayed / handed / given over to the Jews. The idea is that what happened was ultimately the Lord's choice. He gave Himself, to God and to His people, rather than being given over to death against His will. Lk. 22:29 says that the Lord then used the word *didomi* again:

"This is My body, which is given for you". The giving of the bread to them was symbolic of how He would give His body to crucifixion, and how the 'giving over' of Jesus by Judas was not something outside of the Lord's control. It was not a misfortune which changed plans, rather was it precisely in line with the Lord's own giving of His body.

*This is My body-* See on *Gave it*. He said "This is My body which is given for you" (Lk. 22:29), and also "This is My body which is broken for you" (1 Cor. 11:24). He surely said both, repeating the words as the disciples ate the bread. He chose bread and not lamb to represent His body because He wished to emphasize His ordinariness and thereby His presence in the human, daily things of life. To give ones' body is a very intimate statement, almost to the point of being sexual. This is the sober intensity and extent to which the Lord gave Himself for us.

When Jesus said "this is My body" we are to understand that 'this *represents*, this is [a symbol of] my body'. Jesus was clearly referring to what was usually said at the Passover: "This is the bread of affliction which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt". It wasn't of course literally the same bread. "This is" clearly means 'this represents' in Zech. 5:3,8; Mt. 13:19-23,38; 1 Cor. 11:25; 12:27. In some Bible versions, when we read the word 'means', it is simply a translation of the verb 'to be' (Mt. 9:13; 12:7; Lk. 15:26; Acts 2:12). 'This is' should be read as 'this means / this represents'. The deftness of the way He broke that bread apart and held the cup comes out here in Mt. 26:26. He knew what that breaking of bread was going to mean.

*26:27 He took the cup-* This was by no means easy for Him, because in Gethsemane He struggled so deeply in order to take it. Surely Matthew was aware of this and wishes us to remember it every time we break bread. He *did* take the cup- the cup we go on to read about, that was so difficult for Him to accept. Luke's record records the taking of the cup twice. This could be a reference to multiple cups of wine drunk at the Passover; or it could be that Luke simply records the incident twice. Or perhaps the Lord was simply drinking from the common table wine, and more than once drew out the symbology.

*Gave thanks-* Here *eucharisteo* is used, but *eulogeo* for the 'blessing' of the bread. The difference may be in that the Lord took the bread, an accessory to the meal, and turned that which was so ordinary into something of spiritual symbolism; and His blessing of the bread was necessary for this. But *eucharisteo* includes the idea of grace, *charis*, and suggests more thankfulness for grace- a thought appropriate to the meaning of the Lord's blood shed for us by grace. And naturally we wonder whether the wine that was taken was one of the Passover cups, or simply some of the table wine, an accessory to the meal just as the bread was. Whilst there

was a taking of four cups of wine at the Passover, this may not be the only explanation for Luke recording the taking of two of them. It could simply be that as they were eating the Passover lamb, they ate bread and drank weak wine as part of the accompaniments which went with every Palestinian meal. And the Lord twice passed comment on the wine, that it represented His blood. This would be similar to the manner in which He chose the bread, the *artos*, the ordinary word for bread rather than one referring specifically to unleavened bread, as the symbol for His body- rather than the meat of the Passover lamb. He could have made use of the blood of the Passover lamb as a symbol in some way- e.g. He could have asked a servant to bring the blood of the lamb and asked the disciples to all dip their fingers in it. But instead He uses wine as a symbol of His blood. My hunch is that the wine was the ordinary table wine accompanying the meal, just as the bread was, and was not the ritually significant Passover cup. In any case, the tradition of drinking cups of wine at Passover was non-Biblical, and somehow out of keeping with the original spirit of Passover, which was to remember the haste with which the first Passover was eaten. 1 Cor. 10:16 speaks of "the cup of blessing which *we* bless", with the emphasis on the "we". We are to do what the Lord did that night- not be mere audience figures, but actually do what He did.

*All of you, drink it-* The appeal for all to drink it was surely said because some were doubtful as to whether they should take it. Perhaps there were others in the room apart from the twelve. But most likely this was yet another appeal to Judas- to drink the cup of salvation and forgiveness. He gave the reason in :28- "For", or because, this was the symbol of the means for the forgiveness of sins. The Lord's attitude to Judas leaves us realizing we should never give up with the lost. Even the very worst of them. And given the Lord's eagerness that Judas break bread, we can hardly conclude that any sinner is thereby unworthy of participation at the breaking of bread. It is after all His table and not ours. This isn't to say that forms of discipline may not be required at times, but welcome at the Lord's table should never be withdrawn.

26:28 *For this is My blood-* Given Jewish obsession with blood and ritual uncleanness arising from contact with it, such language was surely purposefully challenging and radical, just as He had spoken of eating His flesh and drinking His blood in Jn. 6:53. This made many turn away when He said it, but the Lord realized that His followers had to make a total break with Judaism. The drift of some Christian believes back towards the mentality of Judaism is totally missing the Lord's point- He was speaking in such challenging terms to make His followers realize that there was no middle path of compromise between Him and Judaism. Although He never commanded them to leave the synagogue system, and assumed they would remain in it until they were thrown out of it, all the same the Lord stated His principles in such a way that it would've been effectively impossible for His followers to remain within that system.

*Blood of the new testament-* The promises to Abraham were effectively the new covenant, even though they were given before the old covenant [the law of Moses] was given. The Lord's death

confirmed those promises made to the Jewish fathers (Rom. 15:8). But God's word is true as it stands and in that sense needs no confirmation, no guarantee of truthfulness. But in an effort to persuade us of the simple truth and reality of the promises of eternity in the Kingdom which were made to Abraham, God confirmed it through the death of His Son. This was foreseen in the horror of great darkness which Abraham experienced in Genesis 15. Abraham did nothing to confirm his side of the covenant; it was God who passed between the pieces of the slain animal, during a time of Divine darkness as there was on the cross, in order to demonstrate to Abraham and to us all how serious He was about keeping His promise. Through the death of Christ, God commended His love to us (Rom. 5:8), He confirmed the covenant; not that He needed to do so, nor that His love needs any more commendation to us. But He did, in order to seek to persuade us of the truth of the promises which comprise the Gospel (Gal. 3:8). In this sense "the promise was made sure [s.w. 'confirmed'] to all the seed" (Rom. 4:16); the extra element of making sure or confirming the promise was in the death of God's Son. Our hope is therefore "sure *and* confirmed [AV "steadfast"]" (Heb. 6:19). Heb. 9:17 puts it another way in saying that a will or legacy is only confirmed [AV "of force"] by the death of the one who promised the inheritance, and the death of Christ was God's way of confirming the truth of what He had promised. This same word meaning 'confirmed' is used by Peter in writing of how we have "the word of prophecy made sure / confirmed" (2 Pet. 1:19). The prophesied word is the word of the Gospel, the promise of the Kingdom which began in Genesis, and this has been confirmed to us, made even more sure, by the Lord's death. Peter isn't referring to prophecy in the sense of future events being predicted in the arena of world geopolitics; the prophesied word is the word of our salvation, of the Gospel- which is how Peter elsewhere uses the idea of "the word". God can save who He wishes, as, how and when He wishes. He was not somehow duty bound, left with no option, forced by an unpleasant logical bind to suffer the death of His Son. He gave His Son, according to His own plan from the beginning. But He did it that way in order to persuade us of His love and simple desire to give us the Kingdom He has promised from the beginning of His revelation to men. The Lord's blood is "of the new covenant" not in that it *is itself* the new covenant, but rather in that it is the blood associated with the confirmation of that covenant as true. And so it is understandable that the Lord should wish us to understand His blood as the blood of the new covenant, the supreme sign that it is for real, and desire us to regularly take that cup which reminds us of these things. Heb. 6:17,18 carries the same idea- that in order to demonstrate the utter certainty of the things promised to Abraham's seed, God confirmed it by an oath so that we might a strong consolation and persuasion of the certainty of the promise. The death of God's Son was not therefore unavoidable for Him; He could save us as He wishes. But He chose this most painful way in the ultimate attempt to persuade men of the reality of His Son. With this understanding we can better appreciate the tales of the old missionaries who went to pagan and illiterate tribes and reported a strange response to their message once they explained the idea of the Son of God dying on a cross to show us God's love. It must be persuasive to us too, week by week as we reflect on the blood of the covenant.

*Testament-* The Greek literally means that which is to be disposed of or distributed, and was used about the distribution of property upon decease. The Lord's parables about the Master who distributes all His wealth and possessions to His servants were surely looking forward to His death, at which He gave us all He had- and that was and is visually symbolized in the breaking of bread, the division even of His body and life blood amongst us, for us to trade with.

*Shed for many-* He perhaps followed this by saying "Shed for you" (Lk. 22:20). This is often the way with Biblical statements- the general and global is stated, and then the scale is focused down to you personally. His blood was shed for many... but for you. However we may also have here a similar idea to that expressed in the parable of the man [Christ] who finds treasure [us] in the field of the world, and therefore gives all in order to redeem the field, in order to get us as His own (13:44). Likewise His blood was shed for many, the redemption price was paid for humanity, that He might redeem us. Putting Lk. 22:20 and Mt. 26:28 together, the Lord may have said: "... My blood which is shed for many for the remission of sins of you / for the remission of *your* sins". One wonders whether the Lord actually was pouring out the wine as He spoke the word "shed". The same word for "shed" is used of how the new wine put into old bottles "runs out". The idea may be that if we don't change, then we crucify Christ afresh. But the Lord may also have in mind that if Israel had accepted the wine of the new covenant which He preached, then the shedding of His blood could have been avoidable. The fact it could have been avoidable- for Israel didn't *have* to crucify their King- doesn't mean that God was not behind it, using it to confirm the covenant with us, nor that Christ did not of Himself give His own life.

*Is shed-* Gk. 'is being shed', another hint at the ongoing nature of His death.

26:29 *I will not drink... until-* An allusion to how the priest on duty was not to drink wine during his service. The Lord foresaw His work from then on, beginning with the cross, as an active doing of priestly work for us. This would imply that the essence of His work on the cross is the essence of His work for us today; there is a continuity between Him there and His work for us now, with elements of the same pain and passionate focus upon us and the achievement of our salvation. He is not waiting passively in Heaven for the time to return; He is actively busy for us. There is also the implication in His words that His future 'drinking' will be literal- He was holding literal wine in His hand, and He said He would not again drink it until the Kingdom. This suggests that at very least, He invites us to understand His future Messianic banquet as being in some ways a literal feast.

The Lord clearly taught the continuity between the breaking of bread and the future marriage supper by observing that He would not again drink the cup until He drinks it with us in the Kingdom. The parables of how the Gospel invites people as it were to a meal are suggesting that we should see the Kingdom as a meal, a supper, of which our memorial service is but a foretaste.

We are commanded to enter the supper and take the lowest seat (Lk. 14:10), strongly aware that others are present more honourable than ourselves. Those with this spirit are simply never going to dream of telling another guest 'Leave! Don't partake of the meal!'. But this is the spirit of those who are exclusive and who use the Lord's table as a weapon in their hands to wage their petty church wars. The very early church didn't behave like this, but instead sought to incarnate and continue the pattern of the meals of the Lord Jesus during His ministry. And this is one major reason why their unity drew such attention, and they grew. To exclude someone from the Lord's table is to judge them as excluded from the Kingdom banquet. And those who make such judgment will themselves be rejected from it.

*New-* This is not 'new' in the sense of freshly made (a different word is used for that), but new in terms of quality, not time. It speaks of a new quality, a freshness, rather than something 'new' in chronological terms. The new wine represented the blood of the new covenant which was shed on the cross. It could be argued that the drinking of this new wine became possible not simply at the last day, but in this life too, in the experience of the church after the Lord's shedding of that blood on the cross.

*In My Father's Kingdom-* The reference is primarily to the literal Kingdom to be established on earth at His return (Lk. 22:29,30 goes on to speak of the disciples eating and drinking in the Kingdom as they sit with Christ on His throne judging Israel), but there is a sense in which His word is fulfilled in the breaking of bread service, where He drinks wine with us as the invisible guest. For His parables of the Kingdom all speak of the experience of God's reign / Kingship as a present experience in the lives of His people. Lk. 22:16 adds with reference to the bread: "Until it be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God". The fulfilment of Passover deliverance is finally in the last day, and yet the fulfilment of Passover is also to be seen in the breaking of bread service. Note in passing that the Lord's predilection for the term 'Kingdom of God' or 'Father's Kingdom' was perhaps to counterbalance the Jewish emphasis upon the Kingdom as being that of *our* father *David* (Mk. 11:10). The Kingdom was God's, "*Yours* is the Kingdom", rather than simply and solely the re-establishment of Israel's Kingdom.

26:30 *Sung an hymn-* Probably the Passover hallel of Ps. 115-118. It's worth reading those Psalms imagining them on the lips of the Lord at the last supper; they are pregnant with relevance for His forthcoming death, especially the reference to "I will take the cup of salvation". Heb. 2:12 surely has the scene in mind, quoting "In the midst of the church will I sing praise unto You" as being proof of the Lord's absolute humanity. The fact He sung praise to *God* surely reveals a human and not Divine Christ. But doing so amongst His brethren, "the church", as one of them, is an essay in His unity with us, both in nature and experience.

*They went out-* The Passover ritual required that nobody should go out of the house until morning (Ex. 12:22). This is clearly teaching that the Passover deliverance had already begun, even before the Lord's blood had been shed, and would connect with the usage of present tenses concerning the Passover and shedding of the Lord's blood (see on :2,28). This sets the scene for the Lord's comment in :32 that He would go before them, and they should follow Him. He was as Moses and as the Angel which went before Israel on Passover night. The allusion to Ex. 12:22 shows that the old legislation had passed away, and in any case the type of Passover being kept by the Lord was not strictly the Mosaic one- for it's likely He was celebrating it a day earlier than stipulated. But the point perhaps was that the true Israel of God were now 'going out' from Egypt; so certain was the Lord that He would achieve deliverance that He could speak of that deliverance as already being achieved. He didn't, therefore, see His work on the cross as something which He might or might not successfully achieve- as we should, He went ahead in the certainty of ultimate success and victory.

26:31 *All you shall be offended-* They would spiritually stumble and fall because Zech. 13:7 predicted this would happen. But the Lord goes on to urge them to watch and pray so that they do not succumb to temptation (:41). He saw Biblical prophecy as being open ended in fulfilment- the prophecy of spiritual failure didn't have to come true. They could resist, sin and failure is never inevitable. He spoke to them in the upper room specifically so that they would *not* be offended (Jn. 16:1 s.w.); the prophecy didn't have to come true in the disciples, and the Lord did His utmost to provide the potential for it not coming true for them.

*The sheep shall be scattered-* His death was to be as that of Moses, which left the Israel of God as sheep without a shepherd (Num. 27:17). And yet the Lord's death would gather together the scattered [s.w.] people of God (Jn. 11:52), His death was as a shepherd giving His life for the sheep (Jn. 10:11). His death and resurrection was to be the means of reviving the lost faith of the disciples- when they meditated upon it. The people of Israel at the Lord's time had had no true shepherds and were therefore as scattered sheep (Mt. 9:36). The Lord's death would therefore temporarily leave the disciples just like the rest of Israel- they would return to the mentality of Judaism, the 'satan' of the Jewish system and its thinking would tempt them and they would give in. The wolf of Judaism would scatter the sheep (Jn. 10:12). The disciples were therefore as sheep who scattered because of the thinking of the Jewish world around them, who saw death on a cross as the final defeat for a man; and yet were to be gathered by that very death. Peter was one of those disciples, even though he insisted that *he* would not be scattered even if others were. He surely had this in mind in appealing to other believers who were falling under the influence of Judaism: "You were as sheep going astray, but are now returned [s.w. 'converted'- just as he was 'converted' to strengthen his brethren] unto the Shepherd... of your souls" (1 Pet. 2:25). Peter was therefore appealing to others to follow his own pattern- of revival and conversion after

spiritual failure. This is the basis for all powerful pastoral appeal.

26:32 *After I am risen again*- There is no equivalent of "after" in the Greek text. This is an insertion by translators in order to try to give sense to the three brief Greek words which simply say "And I rise again". The idea is that 'By My rising again, I will go before you...'. The Lord's plan was that His resurrection would re-ignite faith in His disciples, and He would go before them as a shepherd leads His sheep, into Galilee.

*I will go before you into Galilee*- This is the language of the shepherd going before the sheep (Jn. 10:4), in obedience to His voice. The Lord is saying that although they will stumble and lose faith, His resurrection will provide them with a credible word from Him which they would obey by following Him into Galilee. This is why the resurrected Lord's first instruction to the women was to "Go tell My brothers that they go into Galilee; there shall they see Me" (28:10). But it actually didn't work out like that. His meeting with them in Galilee was in fact the third time He revealed Himself to them (Jn. 21:14). He appeared to them twice before that. And the picture we have of the disciples fishing in Galilee in Jn. 21 is of them still relatively faithless, depressed and having returned to their fishing; they are hardly pictured as eagerly awaiting the Lord's promised appearance in Galilee. So it seems to me that the Lord changed His intended program with them. Their faith was so weak that He appeared to them in Jerusalem twice, whereas He had originally planned for the women to tell them His word- to go before Him into Galilee, and there He would reveal Himself to them. But in His love for them, His own desire to see them, His awareness of their weakness in faith... He appeared to them twice *before* Galilee. And even then, we sense from the fishing incident of John 21 that they were still floundering in their faith, and may well have returned to Galilee in order to return to their fishing business, rather than in obedience to His word. Why did He so wish to meet them in Galilee, rather than in Jerusalem? Their journey to Galilee would've been a test of obedience for them, for sure. But surely the Lord reflected by this choice the paramount importance He placed upon the conversion of families. He wanted to appear to them there, surely, because that was where most of them were from, and where their families were. He wanted them too to be persuaded once and for all time of the reality of His resurrection.

26:33 *Though all shall be offended... yet will I never be offended*- Peter three separate times states that he will not fail the Lord (also in Lk. 22:33; Jn. 13:37). Yet he denied the Lord three times, and it was on the Lord's third appearance to him (Jn. 21:14) that the Lord undid the three denials by His three questions concerning whether Peter really loves Him, and three times (again by a charcoal fire) re-enstates Peter in the work of strengthening his brethren. These tripilisms and repetitions serve to make the record memorable, and also reflect how somehow the Lord worked through Peter's failures with some overarching plan; there was a higher hand at work through all of the failure, reflected in these tripilisms which could only have been effected by a Divine, higher hand. The Lord's question to Peter "Do you love Me more than these?" surely has

reference to the other disciples, whom Peter had thought himself spiritually superior to. He was sure that even if they stumbled, he would not. And the Lord paid special attention to undoing this attitude in Peter and specifically bringing him to realize that he was no better than his brethren. Any sense of spiritual superiority over others is so obnoxious to the Lord. And He will work in our lives to remove it from us, as He did with Job, Jonah and many others. Peter continually alludes to his denials throughout his appeal for Israel's repentance in Acts 2 and throughout his pastoral letters; it is our own failures and receipt of such utter grace which serve as the basis for our credible and persuasive appeal to others to repent. He spoke in 1 Pet. 2:8 of how the Lord Jesus is a stone of stumbling ['offence', s.w.] to those who do not believe- and yet he said this fully aware that he had been one of those who stumbled over Jesus. Mt. 21:44 offers us the choice- to stumble upon the stone and be broken, or for the stone to fall upon us and grind us to powder, in the figure of judgment and condemnation used in Daniel 2. We either stumble in failure upon Christ and rise up as Peter did, broken men and women, to do our best in serving Him- or that stone shall crush us in condemnation. That is the choice before us, and Peter is the parade example in this to all.

*Never be offended-* Literally, 'not at any time', i.e. 'not even once'. Hence the Lord's comment that Peter would deny Him not once but three times.

26:34 *Truly I say unto you-* Much of the Lord's knowledge and foreknowledge of events ahead of time can be explained in terms of His incredible sensitivity to others, His understanding of human psychology and behaviour patterns. But there are times when it seems He was given direct foreknowledge from the Father. And this seems one of them- to predict the exact number of denials that would be made that night, and to predict they would happen before the cock crew. This leads to the possibility that whenever He prefaces His words with "Truly I say unto you...", He is stating something received by direct revelation. Another example is when He uses this rubric to introduce His prediction of how Peter would die (Jn. 21:18). This would be His equivalent of how the Old Testament prophets introduced their directly inspired words with the rubric "Thus says the Lord". "Truly" (AV "verily") is literally 'amen', as if the Lord Jesus is saying that He is aware of the words of His Father and in uttering them from His lips, is giving His personal agreement, stamp or 'Amen!' to them.

*Before the cock crew-* There is no article in the Greek. 'Before cock crew' is the idea, before the earliest sign of morning when the first cock crew, that very night, before that night even began to come to a close.

*Deny Me-* See on :35 *Deny You*.

26:35 *Should die*- Gk. 'If I must die' or 'If it be necessary that I die, I will'. And yet the Lord had taught that He was going to die on the cross, and that all who would truly follow Him should likewise die with Him. When the Lord stated this in Mt. 16, Peter had earnestly sought to dissuade the Lord from that course of action because He didn't want to die with Him. Peter had a problem accepting the inevitable reality of the cross and its demand that we likewise lose our lives for Him. He considered it the most extreme possibility, rather than an obviously necessary sacrifice which is part and parcel of being a true follower of Jesus. We likewise can consider that extreme self-sacrifice is something we might possibly be called to make. But in fact if we are truly signed up to carrying the Lord's cross, it is exactly such radical self-sacrifice which is indeed required of us. The Lord said that Peter was not yet able to die for Him, he would deny Him rather than follow Him, but one day he would be strong enough, and *then* he would follow Him to the end (Jn. 13:36,37). Peter thought he was strong enough then; for he followed (s.w.) Christ afar off, to the High Priest's house (Mt. 26:58). But in ineffable self-hatred he came to see that the Lord's prediction was right.

*Deny You*- Surely the allusion is again to 16:24, where the Lord has urged Peter to accept that he must deny *himself* and take up the Lord's cross and die with Him. But instead, because Peter didn't want to do that, he would end up denying Jesus. This is the intensity of our choice- if we will not deny ourselves, then we shall deny Jesus. The Lord had clearly taught that whoever denied Him before men would be denied by Him at the last day (10:33), and Paul repeats this (2 Tim. 2:12). Peter stood condemned by that denial, and yet we can be condemned in this life and change the verdict if we repent. It is this which releases such fervency into our lives if we go through the experience of condemnation but perceive that the verdict has been mercifully changed. Peter appealed to Israel to recognize that they had denied Jesus (Acts 3:13,14 "You denied Him in the presence of Pilate"); and he made that appeal a stone's throw and only a few weeks after his own denials of Jesus in the presence of all. And yet this was why his appeal was so credible, as was his later appeal to believers not to do the worst imaginable thing, namely to deny the Lord who had bought them- for that was exactly what, as everyone knew, Peter had himself done (2 Pet. 2:1). John speaks of denying Christ as the hallmark of the antichrist (1 Jn. 2:22 "He that denies Jesus... is the antichrist"), and he wrote this knowing full well that Peter was the rock upon whom the early church had been built. His point, therefore, is that even those who had done that, the antichrist, could still repent as Peter had done.

*Likewise also*- Two words are used when one would suffice, such is the emphasis upon the fact that they all said the same. Peter was the one who went furthest in seeking to live out his claim, and yet he it is whose failure is the most emphasized. And that is how it is often is amongst God's people. But it is because we are asked to identify specifically with Peter.

