

Christ in Prophecy
Bible Times 2: “The Last Supper”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Leonardo Davinci’s version of the last supper is one of the most famous paintings in the world. And although it is a masterpiece of art, most people are unaware that it is an incorrect depiction of the event from start to finish. To get the true, biblical picture, stay tuned.

Program

Dr. Reagan: Once again I have with me Annie Thrasher who is the executive director of the Bible Times Learning Center in Ein Karem, a suburb of Jerusalem. And we are just delighted to have her to serve as an expert for us concerning the Last supper. And we’re going to show you how important it is to understand Hebrew background in order to understand the Scriptures. Now, for example, here is one of the most famous paintings in the world. It’s a painting by Leonardo DaVinci. It has great color, it has great perspective, there is no doubt this man was one of the world’s great painters. But the problem was, he knew nothing about Hebrew culture and therefore the painting is incorrect in many ways.

Annie Thrasher: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: Okay Annie, tell us about it.

Annie Thrasher: Well, first the most obvious is that the Passover meal begins at sunset, when you can see three stars in the sky.

Dr. Reagan: Lots of daylight back here.

Annie Thrasher: Right, so three stars in the sky indicate sunset there’s nothing there

but a nice, blue Italian sky. So from the very beginning you notice that it's at the wrong time of day. Now, the colors, you notice that there's a great deal of blue used in here. Blue, well, what do they call it? Royal blue, royal purple, these colors were so rare in the time of the first century that only the royals could wear it. So, who these disciples, maybe fishermen maybe tax collectors I don't know, but they definitely are wearing blue so that's inaccurate. Then at the Passover table of course you would have a stew made from lamb, so they would have bowls on the table for that, and the only thing I see on here is some fish. Now, it doesn't mean they couldn't have fish for Passover, but of course they have to have lamb because that's what the Bible says to eat for Passover. Also it says that you should drink wine, I don't see any wine bottles on the table.

Dr. Reagan: In fact you have like four glasses of wine at a Passover meal right?

Annie Thrasher: Yes, absolutely. So you would see some jars of wine. And speaking of jars you should have a jar of water here because as part of the ritual you would wash your hands. And the servant would wash the hands of everyone there before they would even handle food. So there's nothing in this picture that indicates where the servant even us.

Dr. Reagan: What about this long table?

Annie Thrasher: Well, isn't it beautifully done? I think it's some fine Italian embroidery also in blue here. But most of all, in the first century in this part of the world, the Hebrew people generally were allowed once a year to sit around a Roman style table called a triclinium. With three sides and it had the most important side and the least important side and that way you always knew where the important people were seated and who was supposed to be the servant. Now obviously this is not like a U it's a beautifully done long table, indicating well, where's the most important person in this picture?

Dr. Reagan: Right in the center.

Annie Thrasher: Yes, and that is our problem with Renaissance art is that very often we don't understand what Jesus is actually saying because we don't understand the

culture. This is not where the most important person would sit. So, there you have some things right there. And well, that's just beginning.

Dr. Reagan: What about sitting?

Annie Thrasher: Well, you've got a good point there. Sitting would not be the way to do this. If you were in fact seated around the Roman table, well, you would be actually reclining. A Roman table is low to the ground.

Dr. Reagan: Recline like on one elbow?

Annie Thrasher: Absolutely, you would be resting on your left elbow and eating your food with your right because the right hand is always used for blessings. You eat with your right hand, you bless with your right hand, you eat with your right hand, and the left hand is used for something else entirely. Now, the right hand I think sometimes when we hear in churches let's have the right hand of Christian fellowship, it means more now, it should, that you understand that this is the correct hand for blessings.

Dr. Reagan: Well, you've given us a great summary there of the things wrong with this painting. How about showing us how it probably really looked? I'd be delighted.

Annie Thrasher: You'll see behind me a triclinium. This is the typical Roman style table that has three sides. On the right side of the U is where the most important people would be seated, and then at the far left side of the U would be the servant's area. In this arrangement you will see that during the Passover only at the time of the Passover could the people completely recline as if they were free people. Of course Passover is called the festival of our freedom and for those celebrating at Jesus' time, they were thrilled to be having this great festival where they could go up to the Holy City, see friends from different villages that would come up to worship the King of King and the Lord of Lord in the city of holiness. They were rejoicing that they could remember one more time about the great and wonderful things that God did for them when they were slaves in Egypt and celebrate this great time of freedom. So you see, when the disciples came into this room that was furnished and ready for them, their excitement was overwhelming

because they were going to have an amazing teacher. Jesus himself was going to tell the story of the Passover and the festival of freedom.

Jesus sent Peter and John ahead to prepare the feast. He said go into the town, follow a man carrying a large jug of water, go to the home owner and say to him, the Teacher says He will celebrate the feast at your home. There he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready. There prepare the feast.

Behind me of course you see the triclinium that was being prepared by Peter and by John. This was a huge responsibility because the room had to be perfect it had to be made clean. It had to be made without leaven meaning no bread crumbs in the house everything clean because for Passover. It is a symbol of us, our people, we, being cleansed of all unleavened as we go into the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Now, the week of Passover we have an argument going on between the disciples, one said I should sit on the right hand of Jesus and the other says I should sit on the left hand. Who is going to be seated at the right and the left in the most important places when we go into the Kingdom? And Jesus said, "That's the end, this is not the way it's supposed to be. Let me tell you. When you go to a feast, do not sit yourself where the most important people would sit. That would be at my right. Because if the host comes in and there is someone more important than you how terrible it would be because he would have to raise you up and say please let's go to another spot. And then you of course would lose face and be very embarrassed." He says, "Then when you go to a feast seat yourself in the servant's seat and then wait. The host may come in he may raise you up and put you in the higher place, the special place." So at the Passover meal that was to become the last supper, where were the most important people seated? And where were the servants?

At the Passover last supper we have the room furnished and ready perfectly. Peter and John have done their job. We have the most important people seated here and they are seated across from the servants on this side. Why? So that they can catch the attention of the servants if they needed anything during the course of the meal. You will notice that next to the lowliest of servants we have a basin a pitcher of water and a towel. Everyone used their hands for eating and usually out of a common bowl so of course you want to have clean hands. So your job as the servant is to get up and wash the

hands. But you have failed in your duty because Jesus had to get up and do your job. Now we read in the Gospel that at one point at the meal Jesus took off his outer garment, His festival garment and He had to lay this aside. Then, he took a towel. He wrapped this towel around Him and then He picked up the basin and the pitcher and He went around the whole outside of the triclinium to wash the feet of the disciples. In this culture, the feet, the most reprehensible dirty terrible part of the whole body, so instead of washing the hands, to wash the feet was just mortifying to any of the disciples. Now, Jesus' seat is here, not one but two. Jesus would have had to get up and go around the table starting with the most important people and then ending with the servant. There are several indications that the servant who failed in his duty was Peter. Peter seated in the lowest seat. Now the reason for this is that in the Gospels it's explained that Jesus went around the table washing the disciples feet humbling them but when He got to Peter, the last one mentioned. Peter says, "Lord you cannot wash my feet." Jesus said "Peter, if you don't let me wash your feet you can have no part of me." In other words he wanted to say, "Peter, look, be a servant. Be like me. I will wash your feet you will see this is how a servant behaves." But Peter was so mortified that he didn't know what to do with himself. Finally he got it and said, "Okay, okay Lord, then wash my head, wash my hands, wash me all over." Typical Peter overdoing it but realizing that he had missed the mark and yet Jesus was giving him one more chance.

At my right hand side, there are three seats that are the most important seats. In the second seat, we have the place where the host would sit. The host of course as I mentioned before would have his eye on the servant over here. Now the host, he would be the one at a Passover who would be telling the story on this night when night begins and three stars are seen in the heavens then we know that the holiday has begun. And it is said in the Bible that he who tells the story of the Passover at great length will be praised. So during the course of this evening Jesus would be telling the whole story of the exodus of the people going down into Egypt, of them becoming enslaved, crying out to God, the plagues coming as Moses is brought into the picture to ask Pharaoh to let the people go. Now, Jesus would not just be telling this story, He would also be singing songs of praise with people and the praise songs that are sung during this meal are Psalms 113-118, And there would probably be not just storytelling and songs but dancing and great joy because remember this is the festival of freedom. Now, when you have the Passover next to the host who is telling the story you have the youngest in the

family. Why? You have to tell the youngest the story as if he has never heard the story, so that the youngest there will hear it and be able to begin to memorize it, to remember the great joy of this holiday because this is a holiday that the Bible says you will celebrate this every year, from generation to generation forever. So the host's' job is to teach the youngest at the meal the full story of the exodus and the redemption of the people. And John is the youngest. So, we have John seated right next to Jesus where Jesus can then tell him the story as if he was the youngest and it says it was John the younger.

Now, at one point in the meal Jesus makes the statement, a startling statement, He says, "One of you will betray me." And then John, it says leaned his head into Jesus and said, "Is it I Lord?" And Jesus said, "The one who dips with me." And He dipped into the sop and took the choice morsel of lamb and gave it to Judas Iscariot. He then said to Judas, "Whatever you do, do quickly." And Judas got up from the table and left and went into the night. If seat two was the seat of the host, and obviously the elder or the most important person at the feast, and the younger one at a Passover is seat number one, and this seat number three would then be what? The most honored guest. And he was the most trusted guest, the reason being, as Jesus is seated here, and John can lean into him, so Jesus can lean into the guest in seat number three. That's correct, that's good. Now, this person literally is to watch the host's back. That's why he is so trusted. Now can you imagine the idea of Peter thinking to himself, what is Judas, that zealot doing sitting next to Jesus? John of course I understand, he helped prepare the feast. But what about Peter, me, I should be seated next to Jesus, but instead Judas is sitting there. I think that perhaps, Peter missed the mark of what he was supposed to be doing in being in the servant's position. Because he expected Jesus to raise him up and not only did Jesus not raise him up, he let Judas sit in the most honored trusted seat. Now, why would this also be the most trusted place? Because whoever is here must protect completely the back of the person sitting to his right the host. And Judas' name meant the "the knife" his name was Judah the knife he was a zealot and he was like a gangster. And this man sitting here, Jesus trusted knowing he had already betrayed him, and that any time the one seated behind him could very easily. Now don't jump. Just take and slit his throat, this is why the person seated here in place number three, had to be a most trusted friend.

At the end of the exodus story the main character has to be the lamb. Nine plagues came upon all the people of Egypt. These people were plagued by everything that would mock their gods, from gnats, to lice to hail. But the last, the very last plague, would affect the Hebrew people also. And this was the plague of the death of the first born. Now the first nine were seen as signs and wonders. The signs and wonders were to show the people whose god is God. And of course they realized the god of the Hebrew people were very powerful because He defeated all of the Egyptian gods. Now we have the tenth plague and people came and they said how can we escape this because the Hebrews had not been touched by the other plagues. So, he said, take a lamb, a perfect lamb a lamb without spot or blemish a male lamb. And at the door of your home you shall take the lamb and slay the lamb. This lamb shall be roasted, and the meat taken and made into a stew that all can eat. And then you shall take the blood from this lamb and put it upon the lintels and upon the doorpost of your home. Now, all those that believe in the Hebrew God, in the God of Israel, if you will come into that house that is covered by the blood of the lamb, you will be saved. You shall eat the lamb and make bread, make bread quickly. Make it so quickly that you can eat it with your lamb and then with staff in hand, and sandals on your feet, be ready, because at midnight a cry will go out of all of Egypt. And at that time the Pharaoh and the people will say, "Leave the country go to the land of promise." And then God will show himself in a pillar of fire, and He will lead the people out of Egypt by a pillar of fire at night, and a pillar of cloud by day, and they will be led to the Promised Land.

Now we talked about the Passover and how important the lamb was. But in the week of Passover as I mentioned earlier, we had the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Now unleavened bread of course means it's pure, it's humble. And the blessing over the bread and the wine must be done. Now, in the case of the Passover according to the Gospel, after Judas left, then Jesus took the bread and He took the cup and this is the cup that you would drink after you told the story of the judgments and the redemption from the lamb. So it's called the Cup of Redemption. And with this bread and with this wine, Jesus made the New Covenant saying this is My Body this is My Blood, do this, eat this often, and remember me. Just like the Passover is to be remembered every year, Jesus took these elements that are a part of the Passover and said, "Now, you, the community of faith, can come together do this often and remember me." Now, it's

customary for a man to do the blessing and so I asked Sakher if he would do this in Hebrew and then repeat it in English.

Sakher: Blessed are you oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. Blessed are you oh Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth the bread from the earth, amen.

Annie Thrasher: Well Annie I want to thank you and Sakher once again for the wonderful teaching that you have given us. I mean it just has helped us to understand so many things that I'm sure most of us have never understood before. And you've covered so much, how about giving us a recap right here at the end, a summary of what you've presented.

Annie Thrasher: Well, again, in looking and thinking about the Davinci picture, we know that the table was probably completely wrong, okay? We know that if in fact this was a Passover meal, which I believe it was, then where's the lamb? Where's the wine? Why is the bread puffy? We now know it needed to be unleavened bread. It needed to be a simple meal. It was meant to be a festival meal. I don't see too much on Davinci's table that indicated that there were great fruits from the spring time and an abundance of what God has given. This is a time when we remember the great abundance that God gifted His people with. And so, where is it on the table? And why the fish? We do notice though that there was a knife in someone's hand, so maybe that indicated it was Judas, but of course where are they? Where are they portrayed in his picture? Quite honestly we now know that John had to rest into Jesus, and Jesus had to dip in with Jesus, so that is correct. And probably poor Peter just missed the mark one more time but then again, he had to learn to be that servant if he was indeed given the keys to the kingdom.

Dr. Reagan: That's a lifelong process for all of us.

Annie Thrasher: Oh yes absolutely. And it's a hard thing. It's a hard thing to accept, but I think most of all, I think that as believers very often one misses the fact that that blood of the lamb is like the blood of Jesus. That He was the Lamb slain from the very foundation of the earth. And the Revelation talks about how we need that blood on the lintel and on the doorpost of our hearts and that Jesus will knock on that door and He will

come and sup with us. And I think that supper that we're looking for is that bread and that wine that indicated reconciliation at the of this Passover last supper meal.

Dr. Reagan: Well thank you again for that wonderful teaching and I want to bring this to a conclusion by reminding you of something. And that is that that night Jesus said that He is one day going to return to eat this supper with us again. And He said every time we take of that cup we are to remember His promise that He is coming again.

Closing

Dr. Reagan: As we bring this study of the Last Supper to a close, I'd like to introduce you to a modern day painting of the event that is much more historically accurate than the famous one by Leonardo Davinci. This painting was done by a lady named Marilyn Todd Daniels. She serves as a professor of art at Collin College located in a suburb of Dallas, Texas. As you can easily see, it is far more accurate than the painting done by Davinci. You can get a print of this painting through the artist's website which is located at www.woodsonginstitute.com. I would suggest that you consider purchasing one, getting it framed, and then presenting it to your church so that other people can get a more accurate idea of what the last supper really looked like. You could also use the print as a valuable resource tool in teaching about the Last Supper.

Next week, the Lord willing, we'll be back at Bible Times Learning Center in Ein Karem Israel with our hostess Annie Thrasher to talk about Crucifixion techniques used by the Romans during the time of Jesus. What she has to share on this topic will help you better understand what Jesus suffered when He died for the sins of the world. If you would like to find out more information about the Bible Times Learning Center, you can find it at the website address you see on the screen. It is a wonderful place to visit and it is a ministry that can use your financial support. If you'd like to make a donation to the work of this ministry just send your check to us here at Lamb and Lion ministries at the address you see on the screen, designate it for the Bible Times Learning Center and we'll see that it gets to Annie Thrasher and her staff.

Well, that's our program for this week. I hope you can be back with us again next week when we will focus on the crucifixion. Until then this is Dave Reagan speaking for Lamb and Lion Ministries saying, "Look up! Be watchful! For our redemption is drawing near!"

End of Program