

## THE MEDICINE OF IMMORTALITY

### Mark 14:12-26

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for you to eat the Passover?"

So he sent two of his disciples, telling them, "Go into the city, and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him. Say to the owner of the house he enters, 'The Teacher asks: Where is my guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' He will show you a large room upstairs, furnished and ready. Make preparations for us there." The disciples left, went into the city and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover. When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me." They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely you don't mean me?" "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many," he said to them. "Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

### MESSAGE:

*"And God commanded the man, 'You are free to eat from any tree in the garden but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil for when you eat of it you will surely die.'" (Genesis 2:16-17)* So God commanded Adam but we all know what happened. Satan assured Eve that God didn't mean what He had said and that not only would she not die if she ate the fruit but she would know things that God only knew. So Eve disobeyed God's command because she yearned to be like God. And Adam followed her example because he was apparently too much of a wimp to stop her. And just as God had promised—for God cannot lie—on the day they disobeyed His command, they died. Oh they kept their physical life but they died spiritually and became spiritless zombies walking down death row. They traded eternal life in paradise for the knowledge of evil and sacrificed a relationship with God on the altar of intellectual pride. They let sin, misery and death into the world and left them to us as our inheritance.

But God is a God of love so He didn't abandon us to the consequences of Adam and Eve's sin. He arranged a way to bring us back to life—eternal life. But it had to be a way that didn't break his promise that sin must be punished by death—for once again, God cannot lie. So God placed the responsibility for all of our sins upon His Son and then sentenced Him to death to pay the penalty for the sins of all mankind. And once the penalty was paid, there was no more need for us to die. The scale was balanced and we were square with the house. All we had to do was accept the gift of His death and He would raise us up to live with Him eternally in the paradise that Adam and Eve had forsaken.

Satan, however, doesn't give up easily and he didn't give up then. Filled with rage he looked for a way to snatch us back from God's hands. And the weapon he used—and still uses—is the lie. Jesus said of him, *"He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies."* (John 8:43-44) Like any other confidence man, Satan tries to convince us that his lies are the truth and that God's truth is a lie. He employs the same strategy he used to tempt Eve—whispering in our ear, *"Did God **really** say that? Are you sure that's what He meant?"* It worked once—why not try it again? If he can shake our confidence in the truth of God's word, about all we have left is whatever makes sense to us—forgetting that it once made sense to people that the earth was flat. It's the same old shell game: an appeal to our intellectual pride. "You don't need God! You can figure it all out for yourself! Besides—you're not gonna die!"

Satan didn't wait to start his attack. Almost immediately after Jesus ascended into heaven, he began to plant lies in the church. There's an old saying that wherever God builds a church, the devil builds a chapel and that has never been truer than it was during the early years of Christianity. Heresies—which are lies that attract a following—literally swamped the church. Most of them were designed to distort and cast doubt upon the fundamental mysteries of Christianity: that God was one God in three persons; that Jesus Christ was both God and man; that the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper were also the body and blood of Christ. In regard to the Trinity, Satan said, "Impossible! Three can't be one!" As to the claim that Jesus was both God and man, he said: "Ridiculous! That's like being wet and dry at the same time!" And as to Jesus' words when he held up the bread and wine and said "This is my body" and "This is my blood," Satan said, *"He couldn't have meant that! It must be one or the other—it can't be both! It doesn't make sense."*

One of Satan's most effective lies was that Jesus Christ could not have been a human being because Almighty God could not possibly be contained in human form. Jesus must have really been a spirit who only appeared to be a physical human being. That, of course, made more sense. The only problem was that God's word clearly says that Jesus Christ was a physical human being, a man who ate, drank, walked, talked, breathed, bled and died physically on a cross. As if anticipating Stan's lie, John writes of Christ: *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word*

of life.” ((1 John:1) And again, “Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.’ ” (John 20:27) Jesus was God incarnate, a flesh and blood man who came into this world to die a physical death for our sins, not a hologram who only appeared to be flesh and blood. Are we then to suppose that at one of the most crucial points in his ministry—the night before he was crucified when he introduced the Lord’s supper to His disciples—that he abandoned “physical things” and spoke to them only symbolically? That Paul didn’t mean what he said when he wrote: “Is not the cup of Thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:14-16)

Jesus called the wine and the bread “...the new testament in my blood.” (Luke 22:20) Do you know what a testament is? Most people think it refers to something like a “testimony” or “witness.” They are wrong. A testament is a will, a legal instrument which transfers or bequeaths property from a person to his heirs after he dies. Thus we refer to a “last will and testament.” When Jesus died, he willed His body and blood to us, making us heirs of all he had to give us: the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life in the paradise of God. And when we go to the altar, as we will tonight, we go to receive a deposit, a down payment on our inheritance: the life-giving body and blood of our Savior.

Do you know what they called communion in the early church? They called it the “medicine of immortality.” When you go to the Lord’s Supper tonight, you will be eating and drinking the medicine of immortality.

Amen.