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I Desire to Eat the Passover With You Before I Suffer

Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14-16

After sundown on Friday the fifteenth of Nisan



Estimated Times for Friday the fifteenth of Nisan: In the era before the modern clock, a specific hour of the night could not be precisely known, whereas an hour of the day was easily determined by sighting the location of the sun. Thus, the day had to begin by precise, simple and universally recognized standards. This meant that the day had to be reckoned either from the beginning of night or the beginning of day. Taking the pattern from **Genesis**, where Moshe wrote: **And there was evening, and there was morning – the** next **day,** the Jews reckoned **the day** beginning in the **evening** at sundown. Beginning **the day** with the night is, in a sense, a metaphor of life itself. Life begins in the darkness of the womb, then bursts into the brightness of the light and eventually settles into the darkness of the grave, which, in turn, is followed by a new dawn in the world-to-come.

When evening came. The Jews waited until after Tzeith Ha'Kochavim (the stars come out), which is seen as definitely after nightfall, to start the Seder. The reason is to make sure that the Mitzvoth (unleavened bread) of the Seder, and indeed even Kiddush meal, are definitely done at night **(see Mishnah Berurah 472:1:1 for example)**. Just like **the Oral Law** (**to see link click Ei – The Oral Law**), it was a precaution against violating the Torah, waiting until the

stars come out is a precaution against starting the Seder to soon. **Yeshua arrived and was reclining at the table with the Twelve (Matthew 26:20; Mark 14:17).** For many centuries, the Jews had taken their meals as the pleased, but the Greeks had pointed out that only free men are permitted to recline while eating, slaves must stand, and so the Jews had adopted the custom after they learned it from their conquerors, the Romans.

The table from which **Jesus** and **the Twelve** ate was called triclinia (singular) or triclinium (plural). They came indifferent sizes, from about seven to twelve feet. Only about eighteen inches tall, they were long rectangular U-shaped tables. Guests would stretch out on the floor with their heads facing a low table. Propping up with loose cushions to best suit their comfort, they leaned on their left elbows, keeping the right hand free to eat.

Among the Jews, the curved part of the U was considered a place of special favor, and three places were set there. As host, **Yeshua** would sit in the middle. The place of honor was to **His** left where **Judas** reclined on that particular night. In the formality of Jewish dining, it was considered to be a higher privilege to be at the left hand of the host – behind **Him** as they reclined – than to be before him on the right. **Christ** made sure that **Judas** was the honored guest on **His** left that particularly important night. The second place of honor was to the right of **the Master** where young **John, the talmid whom Jesus loved,** reclined.

The talmidim had eaten with **Messiah** in the homes of the rich and **they** had eaten with **Him** sitting on hillsides. Some of **them** were jealous of **their** assigned places in relation to **the Master**, so that after **Jesus**, **Peter** and **John** were seated, the remaining **ten** would often jostle for position. **They** didn't want to be too obvious – foolishly thinking that **Yeshua** wouldn't notice – but **the apostles** would whisper and shove and try to recline at the table as close to **the Good Shepherd** as possible.[1379]

When the hour came, Jesus confirmed **His Torah** observance when **He** said **to them: I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover [Seder] with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God (Lk 22:14-16). They** looked at each other, as **they** often did, for a greater understanding of **His** words. **They** were confused. Perhaps **the Master** meant that **He** loved **them** and desperately wanted to **eat this** important **feast with them**, and that **He** would **not eat it again** until Judea, which had rejected **Him**, had recognized as **the Messiah**.

Since the days of Moshe, it has been a requirement to not only have a **Passover** dinner but to retell the story of Jewish redemption (see my commentary on **Exodus Bz –Redemption**). Down through the centuries, the written story called the *haggadah* meaning *the telling* was compiled and has been read every year to fulfill the commandment to **tell your son** about the events of that great day **(Exodus 13:8)**. It is in the *haggadah* that Jews are told specifically to recline at the table, as this was also a sign of their newfound freedom. In the ancient world, only the free people had time to relax in such a way. What a beautiful picture this is, as **the Messiah** is relaxing before **His** ultimate act of redemption![1380]