

# The Powers of Hell, the Schemes of Man, and the Sovereign Grace of God (Part 2)

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## Introduction

### The Text

<sup>1</sup> Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. <sup>2</sup> And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.

<sup>3</sup> Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. <sup>4</sup> He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. <sup>5</sup> And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. <sup>6</sup> So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.

<sup>7</sup> Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." <sup>9</sup> They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" <sup>10</sup> He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters <sup>11</sup> and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' <sup>12</sup> And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." <sup>13</sup> And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. (Luke 22:1–13)

### Sinking Ships and Crashing Planes

A. I don't know how you're feeling about your life lately.

1. My guess is there's a lot of us that maybe feel like things are a bit out of control—a little uncertain, a little crazy, a little scary.
2. Maybe for some of you it's not just things are a little out of control, it's things are crashing and burning. The ship is sinking, the plane is going down—the warning lights are flashing, the sirens are going off, it's a disaster.
  - a. Maybe your marriage, maybe one of your friendships, maybe your finances, maybe your career or job, maybe your health. It's just going down. It feels out of control.

B. Well, listen, if that's you—and again I suspect that may be many of us in one way or another given the year we've just been through—there's great hope for you in this text we have before us.

1. You see, on the surface, Jesus' life and ministry here looks like a plunging ship, like a nose-diving plane. Everything seems to be going wrong.
  - a. The religious leaders there in Jerusalem are scheming His murder.
  - b. Judas, one of His own disciples, has it already in his heart to betray Him to them under the cloak of night . . . for a sum.

- c. And, of course, Peter would soon deny Him, three times in fact.
- d. And the rest of His disciples would soon abandon Him.
- e. Satan, it would seem, is just having his way in all this . . . or is he?

## The Sovereign Grace of God!

A. This is now our second week considering this text.

- 1. Last time we looked the first two headings: (1) The Powers of Hell; and (2) The Schemes of Man.
- 2. But this week we come to consider that third heading I gave us: namely, (3) The Sovereign Grace of God.

- a. And by this I mean to say: Oh sure it seems all is lost, it seems as if everything Jesus had been working towards was coming down around Him, it seems as if the evil of devil and men would win out . . . but, in and through it all, truly God was on the move for good!

B. I had been flipping through C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* to draw out an illustration a couple sermons ago, and as I did so I noticed the chapter titles and found them a fitting illustration for this sermon now.

- 1. Chapter 13 is titled "Deep Magic from the Dawn of Time" and, if you've ever read the book, you remember that it's in this chapter that the white witch, leverages this magic to put Aslan to death. And as you read on it looks as if evil is triumphing and all the children and woodland creatures are devastated.
- 2. But then comes chapter 15, which Lewis aptly titled: "Deeper Magic from before the Dawn of Time"—and here is where the stone table cracks and Aslan resurrects and we learn that he's had a plan all along, that something deeper, something more profound had been taking place, that good would win out in the end.

C. And so it is in our text this morning!

- 1. The Powers of Hell, The Schemes of Man, and now . . . The Sovereign Grace of God!

## (3) The Sovereign Grace of God

A. All I want to do with this this morning is bring out three indicators in our text of sovereign grace—that God is not out of control here, but on the move for good.

- 1. I'll give them to you up front here: (1) Indicator #1: The Festival; (2) Indicator #2: The Culprit; and (3) Indicator #3: The Upper Room.

## Indicator #1: The Festival

- A. Our text begins with a timestamp, as it were—with a note about where we are in the Jewish calendar. So Luke says, [v. 1](#): “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover.”
- B. It may seem to us at first but a minor detail, but I assure you this is Luke’s way of signaling towards the very sovereign grace of God I’ve been going on about.
  - 1. It’s His way of reminding us that we are not now somehow outside of God’s plan but truly right in the center of it. Let me show you what I mean . . .
- C. The Feast of Unleavened Bread and the Passover, were technically, in the OT, two separate festivals that dovetail into each other. But, in popular idiom and conception, they could really be conflated into one as they are here.
  - 1. We are talking now, then, about one of the great pilgrimage festivals for the Jews where thousands upon thousands of the faithful would pour into Jerusalem from all over.
- D. The point of all the festivities was to celebrate and remember God’s deliverance of them from Egypt back in what’s been called the Exodus. Allow me to recount some of this now for us . . .
  - 1. You remember, perhaps, how the Israelites had come to Egypt with Jacob and Joseph during a severe famine and all was well until Pharaohs transitioned one to the other until finally the Pharaoh in power no longer favored the people of Israel but came to disdain them. They were too numerous in the land, they were a threat he perceived, so he enslaved them and ordered that they be treated harshly, and he even began to have their newborn sons thrown into the Nile.
  - 2. And one day, as the people of Israel were groaning under the weight of all this, we’re told that God heard, that God knew ([Exo 2:23-25](#)) . . . and we watch as God then intervenes.
  - 3. With a series of plagues administered through His representative Moses, YHWH would inflict Pharaoh and the Egyptians. But Pharaoh’s heart is hard and he will not let God’s people go.
  - 4. The whole ordeal climaxes in the tenth plague where, just as Pharaoh had once determined to kill any male children born to the Hebrew women, now God would turn that back on him and the firstborns in all of Egypt would die in the night.
  - 5. But God would spare the firstborn of His own people, only on one condition. He says each household must take an unblemished lamb from the flock, a male a year old, kill it at twilight, and spread its blood over the front door of their house. And when He passes through that night and sees the blood of the sacrifice He shall pass over that house and all within it shall be spared.
  - 6. So the Jews go ahead with it, and night falls, and the Lord comes in judgment, and we’re told in [Exo 12:30](#) that “Pharaoh rose up in the night, he and all his servants and all the

Egyptians. And there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where someone was not dead.” And Pharaoh says: “Go! Get out!” And they drive them out in haste lest something worse befall them.

7. So the people of Israel flee, they are thrust out so quickly we’re told that their dough hasn’t had time yet to rise—“it was not leavened” (Exo 12:39). But they grab it anyways as they had not prepared any other provisions for themselves.
  8. Now, as they’re going, you may recall, Pharaoh has a change of heart, he pursues them to his own demise. In a blind rage, he chases, even following them into the Red Sea. God makes a way for Israel to pass through the waters on dry ground, but He brings it all down upon Pharaoh and his army.
  9. At last, Israel is free and on her way to the land of promise!
- E. And God says to the people, remember this day. Every year, remember this day!
1. In the first month of the year, on the 14<sup>th</sup> day, sacrifice your unblemished lambs, and in the evening of what would then be the 15<sup>th</sup> day (their new days begin at sunset, remember), eat a meal with your families, and remember what God has done to redeem you!
  2. And for the week after, just like Israel as they came out of Egypt, eat unleavened bread. Celebrate your deliverance and God’s mercy to you as His people!
- F. And then Luke says here: as Jesus is preparing to die, Jerusalem is preparing to celebrate the Passover, they’re getting the lamb’s ready for sacrifice, to remember God’s gracious redeeming of them! Coincidence?
- G. What does this mean? Well, I’ll tell you what it means . . .
1. It means all of this is happening on God’s timetable and according to His sovereign plan.
  2. It means that everything that seems of chaos and shipwreck is truly falling right into place.
  3. It means that, while Satan and Judas and the chief priests and the scribes are cooking up their rebel plots, our sovereign God is on the move for good!
- H. You see the Exodus, while certainly significant in itself was still yet a picture and pointer towards a greater Exodus which YHWH would accomplish in and through Jesus:
1. We are enslaved to something much worse than Egyptian overlords. It’s sin that has us in chains and we can’t break free.
  2. We’re facing an enemy so much more fearsome and ferocious than a mere man, Pharaoh. It’s Satan that like a lion or a dragon is making war on us.
  3. And we have an unblemished Lamb whose blood is so much more precious than that of any animal. Jesus! As Paul says explicitly in 1 Cor 5:7, He is “our Passover lamb.”
    - a. For my sin, I deserve judgment and wrath and death, but He takes my place on that cross, and when I by faith put His blood over the front door of my heart, as it were, God passes over me and instead of judgment, wrath, and death, I get mercy, redemption, and life!

- i. And, listen, just as Pharaoh, insane, even suicidal, in his rage, followed after Israel to his own demise, so too Satan is here in our text setting the noose that shall snag his own neck. When he puts his gun to the head of Christ and pulls the trigger, it's his own brain that he blows through.

(1) And we go free and we're on our way to the land of promise!

- I. So Luke is here saying in not so many words: "The time for this greater Exodus has come!"
  1. This is why we see him zeroing in on the day and the hour of the Passover feast. He won't let us miss this connection. Did you notice?
    - a. In v. 1, the day of the Passover feast is drawing near.
    - b. In v. 7, he tells us the day has come.
    - c. And then, drilling down even more, in v. 14 (which we'll come to in a later sermon) he says the hour to partake of the meal arrives.
    - d. In Matthew's account of this, Jesus Himself gets even more specific: "My time is at hand. I will keep the Passover . . . with my disciples" (Matt. 26:18). "This isn't just the time of the Passover . . . this is 'My time'!"
- J. So, no, things aren't spiraling out of control here. Even though on the surface there is much evil and scheming, and it is horrible and it is real, there is still deeper down beneath it all, a "deeper magic" still, the sovereign grace of God!

## Indicator #2: The Culprit

- A. At first blush, the fact that Judas, one of the twelve disciples, one of Jesus' closest friends, is going to betray Jesus here, might seem to be an indicator not of Jesus' sovereignty or something, but of His stupidity.
  1. After all, how dense do you have to be, to have this guy stealing from your moneybag, plotting your demise, hiding in plain sight, and Jesus doesn't even notice it . . . or does He?!
    - a. What appears to be stupidity on the surface of things here, upon closer investigation, is, indeed, found out to be sovereignty. Jesus is no helpless victim. He is willing sacrifice. He knows what Judas is up to and He permits it . . . for our good!

## Rifling off the Evidence

- A. I've got a number of texts that make this plain. Let me just rifle them off quickly here with a little commentary along the way.
  1. The first comes back in Luke 6, where Jesus first selects Judas as one of His twelve disciples whom He gave the special title of apostles.

- a. You remember, this wasn't some haphazard, impulsive, shoot-from-the-hip sort of decision on the part of Jesus. No, we're told in [v. 12](#) that He only came to the selection of these men after spending all night out alone on a mountain "in prayer to God." This was God's will being done here.
      - i. Judas, the traitor, being folded into the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, was done prayerfully, intentionally, with full knowledge of what he'd become.
- B. If you doubt me on this, John's gospel makes the matter abundantly plain . . .
  - 1. [John 6:63-64](#), Jesus says to His disciples: " <sup>63</sup>The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. <sup>64</sup>But there are some of you who do not believe." [And then John adds this little parenthesis:] (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him [namely, Judas!].)"
  - 2. Or later in the same chapter, Jesus gets even more explicit and pointed. [John 6:70-71](#): " <sup>70</sup>Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.' <sup>71</sup>[And the John writes:] He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him."
    - a. There's no wool over our Savior's eyes here. He's fully aware. Imagine if you knew such a thing about one of your friends, that he/she would turn on you, betray you. What you do? Well, I'll tell you what Jesus does: He walks and talks and engages with Judas anyways. Three years.
- C. And then as this betrayal is really being set in motion, Jesus continues to make it clear, it's not proceeding without His full knowledge and permission.
  - 1. So [John 13:10](#), while washing His disciples' feet, yes even Judas' feet (let that sink in), He turns and says to them: " <sup>10</sup>The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you.' <sup>11</sup>[And then again John's note:] For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, 'Not all of you are clean.'"
- D. To make the matter even more indisputable—that God is sovereign over these horrible things and somehow moving in them even for good—Jesus in numerous places talks about how all is happening not just with His knowledge, but in fulfillment of Scripture:
  - 1. So [John 13:18-19](#): " <sup>18</sup>I am not speaking of all of you; I know whom I have chosen. But the Scripture will be fulfilled, 'He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me.' <sup>19</sup>I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he."
  - 2. Or [John 17:12](#), when He's praying to God in Gethsemane: "While I was with them, I kept them in your name, which you have given me. I have guarded them, and not one of them has been lost except the son of destruction, that the Scripture might be fulfilled."

- E. And finally, right here in the vicinity of our text, [Luke 22:21-22](#), Jesus just says it point blank: “<sup>21</sup> [B]ehold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table.<sup>22</sup> For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!”
- a. “I see you Judas. I know what you’re up to. You’re not off the hook just because it’s been permitted, it’s been prophesied, it’s been determined. Woe to you for choosing this evil! But no your wickedness will not win out. It’s God’s sovereign grace that shall have the last word.”

## Paradidōmi

- A. You know, there’s one more thing on this I want to bring out, because it captures the profundity and the mystery of divine providence and our salvation. You see, the Greek word translated “betray” in our text, [Luke 22:4, 6](#), is this word paradidōmi.
1. “Betray”—it’s what Judas is doing, right? Yes, of course.
  2. But the word is also elsewhere translated “deliver up, give over,” this sort of thing. And, intriguingly, it’s used in many places to speak not just of Judas’ delivering up of Jesus, but of God the Father’s delivering up of Him!
- B. Here, then, in a single Greek word, we are confronted with the mystery of the gospel and sovereign grace! For at one and the same time it is Judas delivering up Jesus as an act of sin and evil and God the Father delivering Him up, only as an act of mercy and love!
1. So Paul writes in [Rom 4:25](#) that Jesus was “delivered up [Gk. paradidōmi] for our trespasses and raised for our justification.”
    - a. Delivered up, by who? Judas? Listen, Judas delivered Jesus up for thirty pieces of silver. Only God could deliver Him up “for our trespasses”. This was God’s doing . . . for our good!
  2. Or [Rom 8:32](#), it’s made even plainer: “He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up [Gk. paradidōmi] for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”
- C. One commentator sums all this up well: “The narrative of the Passover preparation is laden with irony in which elements of free will commingle with divine providence. . . . God works his sovereign and saving plan not only in the current of faith, but also in the countercurrent of evil. Judas ‘hands over’ Jesus to the Sanhedrin, yet God ‘hands over’ Jesus for the salvation of the world” (PNTC). We needed a Lamb, and God provided it!
- D. But we could go just one step further, couldn’t we? You see, it’s not just that men are giving up Jesus, nor is our understanding complete when we recognize that the Father also has a role. For we come to realize that in all of this it is also Jesus Himself who is personally and willingly giving up His life in love for you and me.
1. [Eph 5:2](#): “Christ loved us and gave himself up [Gk. paradidōmi] for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”

- E. Oh, brothers and sisters, He could have stopped it. With just a snap of His fingers the angels would have descended and brought swift destruction to His betrayers. He could've stopped, I tell you, but He didn't want to.
1. Love compelled Him. Compassion for sinners constrained Him. Sovereign grace held Him on course.
    - a. Was it Judas? Yes. Was it the Father? Yes. Was it Jesus Himself? Yes. Was it sovereign grace? Yes!

### Indicator #3: The Upper Room

- A. One last thing to bring out here. In v. 7, as Luke tells us that “the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed” had arrived. So Jesus sends out Peter and John with instructions as to how to go about securing a place for them to celebrate and eat the meal together.
1. Remember, the city here would have been swelling to capacity with all the pilgrims coming, so finding a place could prove quite a challenge. But I suppose it does help to be the Son of God. I imagine that comes with certain perks and connections.
- B. But look at vv. 7-13 again, and I'll bring out just a few things: <sup>7</sup>Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.” <sup>9</sup>They said to him, “Where will you have us prepare it?” <sup>10</sup>He said to them, “Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters <sup>11</sup>and tell the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ <sup>12</sup>And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there.” <sup>13</sup>And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

### Divine Foreknowledge

- A. The first and most important thing to make note of is that last line there, because I think it smacks of sovereignty: “And they went and found it just as he had told them . . .” (v. 13).
1. Now there are some who look at this and think it's the result of some secret prearrangement between Jesus and this man with an upper room to spare.
  2. But I'm not sure why so many commentators immediately go there. After all, Jesus on countless occasions displays His divine foreknowledge of unfolding events.
    - a. So He says about Judas: “[B]ehold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table” (Luke 22:21).
    - b. Or about Peter: “I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day, until you deny three times that you know me” (Luke 22:34).
    - c. Or concerning all His disciples: “You will all fall away because of me this night” (Matt. 26:31).



- d. And, of course, He's been foretelling this all the way back since [Luke 9](#): "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised" (v. 22).
- B. I for one am inclined to read [Luke 22:7-13](#) in this light as well—as a display of Jesus' prophetic foreknowledge and sovereign superintendence.
- 1. I think He is here again trying to reiterate to His disciples the fact that He goes in His own time, on His own terms, with full knowledge, and in total control. He is under and over the events that are about to unfold, however horrible and hopeless they may appear to the naked eye. As I keep saying, God is one the move in them for good.
    - a. It's the same sort thing we read about back in [John 13](#): "I am telling you this now, before it takes place, that when it does take place you may believe that I am he" (v. 19). I think that's why He's sending them out like this, and that's why things are exactly as He said. It's to help them believe.

## Kataluma

- A. One final note on this that I'll just throw in for free here, seeing as it is Christmas time and all . . . the Greek word translated "[guest room](#) [Gk. kataluma]" there in [v. 11](#), interestingly, only shows up in one other context in the NT—back in those verses we read for Advent: [Luke 2:7](#).
- 1. There we're told, you remember, that, as the city of Bethlehem was then also swelling with people due to the registrations called for by Caesar Augustus, even though Mary was going into labor with Jesus, still there was "[no place for them in the inn](#) [Gk. kataluma]."
- B. And now here's why I find this compelling.
- 1. People thought the Christ would arrive as a King, right? Powerful, majestic. But Jesus had come first to lay down His life as a Servant, as a sacrifice. So, in Bethlehem there, He's out with the animals. He's laid as a newborn in a manger. There's no room in the kataluma.
  - 2. But then here at the close—the final hours of His life, really—now suddenly He gets the full spread, now, even though Jerusalem would be stuffed to the gills with people, the kataluma is prepared just for Him, fully "[furnished](#)" ([Luke 22:12](#)).
- C. Why? Is He abandoning His Christmas calling? No, you see. He's about to fulfill it.
- 1. Interestingly, the reason there was no room for Him at the beginning is the very same reason there is space set aside for Him here at the end.
    - a. There was no room in Bethlehem because He's not come to flaunt His power but to lay His life down as a sacrifice for sin.
    - b. And, likewise, here now there is room in Jerusalem because He's not come to flaunt His power but to lay down His life down as a sacrifice for sin.

- D. Because, you see, in this upper room, there's not a throne, there's not a couch for lounging in luxury . . . there's a table—a table around which Jesus and His disciples can sit and partake of a meal where the very centerpiece of it all is a lamb slain . . . as a sacrifice for sin.
1. You see, that's why there's a room set aside for Him here. This is not a contradiction of His Christmas mission but the culmination and climaxing of it!
    - a. Before He had a manger among the animals.
    - b. Now He's got a table around which He can sit with His disciples and declare: "I am the bread broken, I am the wine poured out, I am the Lamb slain . . . for you! You will eat and drink this meal in remembrance of Moses and the Exodus no longer, but in remembrance of Me!"

## Conclusion

- A. So what does this mean for you?
1. Well, for one, it means God in Christ has made a way for your redemption! Receive and rejoice in Jesus this morning!
  2. But, for two, it means, however much you feel like your life right now is spiraling out of control, believe it or not, God is up to good in it for you.
- B. You know, some of you may have caught the fact that I ripped the first two headings in these sermons from the hymn *In Christ Alone*. You remember this? "No power of hell, no scheme of man, can ever pluck me from His hand."
1. Why? How? Well, the answer's found in the lyrics that came a little earlier: "For I am His and He is mine, bought with the precious blood of Christ." He's not going to let you go. He's bought you with His own blood—the blood of the New Covenant.
    - a. Let devil and man do their damndest, God in Christ will turn it for our blessing!
- C. I'd like to end by giving you another image. You know, I mentioned at the beginning how your life may feel a bit like a sinking ship or a nose-diving plane. It's going down. You're panicking.
1. But in Christ I'd invite you to see your life more like a roller coaster. Let me explain what I mean.
    - a. If a plane drops in the sky, you're freaking out, because it's not safe, there's no guardrails, something's gone wrong.
    - b. But when you go to a theme park, you're looking for the craziest roller coasters to ride on aren't you? The drop is actually part of the thrill, part of the fun, because you know you're safe. You try to get brave and put up your hands and enjoy the ride.
      - i. And sovereign grace makes life kind of like that.

- D. Now, I'm not saying it's not going to be hard and even horrible at times. It was for Jesus, no doubt, we'll see that in Gethsemane.
1. But I am saying soon and very soon that coaster's going to slide into the station and you'll step out into glory and you'll see how every up and down in your life had a good and gracious design.
    - a. So let go a bit, lift up those hands, trust Him, and try to enjoy the ride!