

Revisiting the Upper Room Joon Park Sermon Transcript of March 12, 2023

"On the first day of the Feast 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 upper room, 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." (Mark 14:12-16)

There was no room for Jesus at his birth. The inn in Bethlehem was filled up so Joseph and Maria were inevitably guided to a humble stable outside for Jesus to be born. 33 years passed and Jesus' public ministry is now coming to an end. He needed a room, not for his birth as the Son of Man but for the birth of discipleship and church. Not a room to be filled up with anonymous guests except for Jesus's family but a room that can embrace and welcome all who come to the Lord and His table.

The room, we now know, is the upper room, a guest room especially prepared for Jesus, our Messiah, to come and make it the most important room in the Christian church history. That's why, even in the 21st century we live in, this upper room is a much sought-after destination for Christians who travel on pilgrimage to the Holy Land.

What really happened in the upper room just for a few hours before he was arrested and proceeded to his passion to the cross?

This is the upper room where Jesus' disciples' feet were washed and Jesus' body and blood were broken and shed, symbolizing Jesus' ministry of loving service. This is the upper room where Thomas's obsessive suspicion was hinted: "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (John 14:5) This is the upper room where Philip provided Jesus the opportunity to teach his disciples about the unity of the Father and the Son by questioning, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." (John 14:8) This is the upper room where Jesus' farewell discourse was followed as said in John 14 to 17, introducing Jesus' loving friendship with his disciples. This is the upper room where we can have a glimpse into Jesus' beautiful prayer life in the book of John, "That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me." (John 17:21)

By tradition, this is the upper room where Jesus appeared when Jesus' disciples were together in fear after Jesus' dishonorable death. This is the upper room where Jesus' wounds were seen and touched, and Thomas' seminal confession was pronounced, "My Lord and my God! (John 20:28)," and disciples' disbelief was dissolved. And this is the upper room where the resurrected Jesus gave his sending commandment to his disciples, breathing on them the Holy Spirit (John 20:21-22).

The importance of this holy space never ends here.

Also, by church's tradition, this is the upper room where Jesus' disciples stayed after they returned to Jerusalem following Jesus' ascension (Acts 1:11-12). This is the upper room where Jesus' disciples along with the women and Mary Mother of Jesus prayed constantly (Acts 1:14) and were filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. (Acts 2:4). So this is the upper room where church was birthed and the concept of Christian community was introduced. This is the upper room from which the apostles went forth with boldness, sharing the Good News.