

# You Must Remember This

From “Into the Danger Zone: Stories from the Life of Christ”  
by Ron Johnson

It is the Feast of Weeks, and Jerusalem is packed. There are Jewish people visiting from all over the empire, from as far east as India and as far west as Libya. There are even Jews from Rome and from the Isle of Crete. With so many languages being spoken, people just shake their heads and joke about the Tower of Babel. There’s a lot of pushing and shoving out on the street, and some of what’s said is best left untranslated.

But in a spacious room above the milling crowd, an urgent meeting is in session. One hundred and twenty people are joined in prayer, asking for direction and empowerment. Simon Peter and the rest of the apostles are at the front of the room. Jesus’ mother and brothers are there, too, as well as many others whose lives have been touched by the Master.

Fifty days have elapsed since Passover, fifty days since Jesus’ body was laid in a tomb. Although the disciples have been under close surveillance since the crucifixion, they have not stopped meeting together. On the contrary, their numbers have increased. True, the apostles returned home to Galilee for a while, and some of them even went back to their former vocation of fishing. But now they have returned to the Danger Zone in response to a summons. God has called them back to Jerusalem on a mission.

As they assemble now in prayer, the apostles think back to that dreadful night: the night in which Jesus was betrayed. They were all so confused that evening. Thomas even said so: “Can you tell us again where you’re going, Lord, because we’re clueless.”

A little later, a remark by Philip prompted Jesus to say, “After all this time, don’t you know me yet, Philip?” It just kept getting worse and worse, and they couldn’t make sense out of it. Simon had tried to bring some sanity to the proceedings by promising, “I’ll stand beside you no matter what happens tonight, Lord.” But Jesus shocked even him by saying, “Don’t be too sure about that, Rocky.” It was a perplexing, agonizing experience.

But this morning, as the apostles are leading this large group in prayer, it is as if they can hear the voice of the Master telling them, “You must remember *this*. . .” Above the din of the festivities outside, above the noise of their own conscience, they hear his voice. And in response, the minds of the apostles go back to that awful night, trying to recall what he had told them.

***You must remember this. . .***

They remember that he washed their feet. There wasn’t anybody on hand to do it for them that night, and this was an important meal. Everybody agreed that somebody ought to do it, but nobody volunteered.

Then Jesus came in the room and did it.

That was where the trouble began that night. They were all really embarrassed after that, and none of them recovered. But Jesus wasn’t trying to make them uncomfortable. There was a lesson to be learned from this, he told them. “Do you understand what I’ve just done?” he asked. “Do you get what I’m trying to teach you?”

*You must remember this. . .*

They remember that he gave them a new commandment.

“Oh, great,” one of them muttered at the time. “One more rule to remember.”

“I’m giving you a new commandment,” he said again, “that you love one another, as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my followers, that you love one another.”

It seemed superfluous at the time. There was already so much about “love” in Jesus’ teaching, they didn’t understand why it was necessary for him to say that. But they didn’t realize *how much* he loved them until what happened that night.

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They remember that he broke bread and gave it to them. “This is my body broken for you,” he told them. They each took a piece of it and put it in their mouths, but it tasted like sawdust. What was going to happen tonight? What was the Master trying to tell them?

They remember that he gave them a cup of wine and said, “Take and drink.” Then, as the cup made its way around the table, he added, “This is my blood.”

Bartholomew was horrified. He had just taken a big mouthful of it and he looked around wildly for a place to spit it out. Peter eyed him sternly and whispered, “Swallow it.”

Gulp!

He handed it to Andrew, who tried to pass it off to James the son of Alpheus.

“You first.”

“No! After you.”

“This is the blood of the New Covenant, shed for many,” Jesus said. “As often as you eat this meal and drink of this cup, do it in remembrance of me.”

The disciples stared at him, then at each other. They had just lost their appetite.

***You must remember this. . .***

They remember that he said he was the vine, and they were the branches. It was the closest possible identification they could have with one another. It was like they were all of one body: inseparable, even by death.

***You must remember this. . .***

They remember that he prayed alone in the garden. They couldn't fight off sleep, and that greatly disappointed him. But every once in a while they managed to crack their eyes open a slit and they kept hearing him saying the same thing: “Father, grant that they may be one, as You and I are one.” He kept repeating that same request, that his disciples may be one. That seemed to be the thing he wanted most.

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Simon Peter opens his eyes and looks broodingly at the rest of the Twelve. They, too, rouse from their reverie.

“I think I get it now,” John announces. “I think I understand what he was trying to tell us that night.”

He glances at the others, then he stands and speaks to the larger congregation. “He chose us for a reason. He wasn’t looking for preachers or scholars. He chose people like us because he thought he could trust us to spread the Love of God. That was the one thing he was counting on us to do.” He turns and looks at his fellow apostles. “That’s the one thing he’s asking us to commit to doing now. If we promise to spread the Love of God, God will do the rest.”

John returns to his seat, and there’s a long silence.

Simon Peter rises and clears his throat. “I think you’re right, John. And I solemnly swear before God and all of you that I will --”

Matthew interrupts. “Now Simon, you know what the Master would say about that. I realize this is a big moment, but he never wanted us to ‘solemnly swear’ anything.”

“You’re right,” Peter admits. “I forgot about that. A simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ is all the Master ever wanted from us.” Peter thinks a moment then looks challengingly around at everyone in the room. “John has asked us if we will spread the Love of God, in Jesus’ name. *I* say ‘Yes.’ What do *you* say?”

He sits down, and the crowd stirs.

“Yes,” replies Thomas. He smiles contentedly. Who would’ve guessed that he’d be the first to say it?

“Yes,” says Matthias, the new guy.

Down the line the apostles declare themselves one by one.

“Yes.”

“Yes.”

“Aye-aye.”

Everybody laughs. “You can tell there are some fishermen in the house,” says Peter. “Glad to have you aboard, shipmate.”

“Yes. . .” the apostles continue. “Yes. . . yes. . .”

They all realize what they’re doing. They’re not just agreeing to serve the cause of Christ. They know what happened to Jesus. They saw the ripped flesh, the splattering blood. That will be their destiny, too.

Now the affirmation spreads to the larger group. “Yes,” they keep saying, all around the room. One hundred and twenty times: “Yes!”

When they have finished, nobody says a word. But one thought is foremost in their minds. How can they bring the peace of Christ to a world always at war? How can they carry God’s love to a human race that’s so full of hate? And how can they preach Jesus’ message when they don’t even know how to speak?

There is a moment’s hesitation as the congregation listens to the sounds of the festival outside. Suddenly the floor beneath them shakes and the air in the room begins to circulate. The men and women look around at one another, alarmed. But Peter is jubilant. As the intensity of it increases, he rises to meet what’s coming. The others follow his example. His hair blows behind him and a peculiar radiance comes upon him.

Now the sound is deafening. The room trembles and quakes until it can no longer

endure the strain, and the doors blast off their hinges! But still the blowing increases.

People from the street below come running to see what's happening. They flood the doorway, with many more waiting behind them on the stairs and in the street. The festival has come to a standstill. The curious number in the thousands.

It's like a mighty wind! And as the crowd watches, the congregation takes a deep breath of it.

Questions for Reflection:
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1. Do you see any significance in the fact that Pentecost occurred in an international environment?
2. Why do you think Christ's disciples were so confused on the night he was betrayed? Do *we* ever get confused about God's activity in *our* lives?
3. What was Jesus trying to teach his disciples when he washed their feet?
4. Was the command to "love one another" redundant? Why or why not?
5. When you partake of communion, do you consider the ramifications of eating Christ's flesh and drinking his blood?
6. What would it be like to live each day conscious that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches?
7. Do you think God cares whether Christians are one in spirit? What can we do to make this happen?
8. Would we practice our faith any differently if we placed the love of God above everything else?

9. Do you believe that God can save the world through people like us if we say “Yes”?
10. We don’t live in the days of Caesar Augustus. But could bad things happen to us today if we say “Yes” to Jesus? Really bad things? If so, are you willing to say it?
11. Have you taken a deep breath of the Spirit lately?