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# Reference Point

## December 2014

### **Last Christmas**

*“When the hour came, Jesus and His apostles reclined at the table. And He said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.’”*  
Luke 22:14–16 (NIV)

One of the Christmas traditions of the J. R. R. Tolkien family were his fictional letters from “Father Christmas,” written to his children from 1920 until 1943. The final letter to his daughter Priscilla begins,

A very happy Christmas! I suppose you will be hanging up your stocking just once more: I hope so for I have still a few little things for you. After this I shall have to say “goodbye”, more or less: I mean, I shall not forget you.

This was Tolkien’s way of telling his daughter this would be the last Christmas with a letter from Father Christmas.

Recently, on a visit to my aging mother, I was taken aback by a certain posting on her refrigerator door. There in plain sight was the signed “no resuscitation order.” Mom is blessed to still be independent enough to live at home, though a weakening heart limits her in certain ways. However, this year it has been easy to see the changes time has brought across her brow. She speaks of the shortness of her time and her readiness. Still, seeing such a posting of it was startling.

It left me thinking about the last Christmas. Not the Christmas of last year. I mean the Christmas that really is the last. This might be my mother’s last Christmas. Save for the grace of God, this could be mine as well. What is a gift fitting for a loved one’s last Christmas? How would I wish to celebrate my last Christmas? Should the last Christmas be different from any other Christmas? What about your last birthday, ballgame, fishing trip, or any other last of this or that? Why do so many speak about the last holiday of a loved one who has passed on?

Though we would not typically read Bible passages of Jesus last meal as a Christmas text, I do see some application for the questions raised. It was, after all, the last of a most significant tradition for this band of Hebrew brothers. Notice in Luke’s account where he makes special note that this is Jesus’ last Passover with his disciples. He will not eat it again... at least not until the Passover finds its fulfillment in the kingdom of God.

At this “last supper” Jesus gives a gift that keeps on giving--the gift of Himself as symbolized in the cup and the bread. He also gave a new tradition as a means of remembrance. We would do well to give such gifts to our loved ones at any Christmas, for it may be the last.

—Steven L. Baker

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