



session 7 group study guide

the last supper

message

In the last study, we looked at Jesus' triumphant arrival into Jerusalem. He was coming into the holy city of Jerusalem in order to participate in the sacred Passover celebration, an annual Jewish celebration commemorating the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and their deliverance from slavery. But this Passover would be different, as it would be the last time Jesus would gather together with all of His disciples before His death.

Read through the events of The Last Supper in Matthew 26:17-29. As you read, consider the following questions: (1) What events does Jesus foretell in this passage? (2) What might Judas have been thinking at the end of the evening?

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?" He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My appointed time is near, I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.' " So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."

They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"

Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."

While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:17-29).

dig

1. Why is this event commonly called “The Last Supper”?

2. Jesus was coming into Jerusalem in order to celebrate Passover. To gain a better understanding of what Christians call Communion, or the Eucharist, we must understand a little of the Passover meal eaten at the Last Supper of Jesus before His crucifixion. Read Exodus 12 in order to grasp what the Passover celebration is all about. What tasks were the Israelites instructed to do with the lamb?

3. Passover is also referred to as “the Feast of Unleavened Bread,” and in Exodus 12:15 we read that the Israelites were instructed to make bread without yeast for seven days. What is the symbolism of having bread without yeast?

4. How is the lamb used as a symbol in the Bible?

5. In the Old Testament, before God sent His Son, Jesus, to heal and forgive the world, people were commanded to uphold the Law of Moses in order to be right with God. We are often more familiar with (and would rather focus on) the God of the New Testament, a God who forgives us, a God with whom we have been made right through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. But this is not the God we see in Exodus 12:29-30. What are the consequences suffered by those who are not right with God?

6. Now reread Matthew 26:20-25. What does Jesus say about the person who will betray Him?

7. What do you think Judas was thinking?

8. What might the other disciples have been thinking?

9. In order to gain perspective on Jesus' accusation of Judas, read Luke 22:1-6. What do we learn about Judas based on these verses?

10. Imagine that you are Judas—that you are plotting to betray a man you have followed and worshiped for the last 3 years for 30 silver coins. A few days before your plan is to come to fruition, the very man you are going to betray, Jesus Himself, confronts you directly and says, “You, Judas Iscariot, are going to betray me.” Most people would imagine that their plans would have been foiled and would have canned the whole idea. Why did Judas go ahead with his plan of betrayal?

11. Finish the story by looking at the events that occurred next in Matthew 26:47-50 and Matthew 27:3-5. How does Judas ultimately feel about his decision to betray Jesus?

apply

1. How were Jesus Christ's words, as recorded in Matthew 26:26-29, a prophecy of His death? What does this tell you about Jesus?

2. What is the significance of the bread? The wine?

3. Why did Jesus choose such common symbols as bread and wine? Why wouldn't He have chosen special or rare foods?

4. Why is Communion (or the Eucharist) as special today as it was almost 2,000 years ago?

5. With any recurring event, the practice of taking Communion can become a mindless tradition. How can you keep the celebration of Communion a sacred and significant part of your faith?

6. Does Communion hold a personal significance for you? Or has it merely become a mindless monthly ritual you participate in with little thought? Why or why not?

reflect

We remember many of the events of Jesus' life throughout the year, but the Last Supper is one that is recreated and celebrated most frequently by Christians all over the earth. Participating in Communion is an act of remembrance that Jesus Christ's body was broken for us. He died so that we might live. It also means remembering that His blood was shed for us so that our sins would be forgiven. We are righteous before God only because of the broken body and shed blood of Jesus Christ.

1. What is the benefit or significance of knowing that thousands of Christians all over the world share the practice of Communion with you?

2. Judas had been a supporter and follower of Jesus and yet was still led to betray Him. Are there ways in your own life in which you betray Jesus? If so, in what ways?

3. Jesus told His disciples that the bread and wine symbolized His body and blood. Why did Jesus specifically want His disciples to remember His death every time they took Communion (as opposed to focusing on the Resurrection)?

4. Did Jesus forgive Judas? Explain your answer.

5. Communion is a time of reflection on what God has done for us and on His awesome demonstration of love. How has God demonstrated His goodness and love in your life?

6. Communion is a time of confession. When we stand in the presence of Christ, we must confess our sins and shortcomings. To confess our sins to God means to agree with Him that we miss the mark of His perfection and need Him to be our Savior. What sins do you need to confess to God today?

7. Communion is also a time of dedication. Whenever we are aware of the ultimate sacrifice of Christ's love, we are drawn to dedicate our lives to Him and to be reconciled to Him. What areas of your life do you need to rededicate to God?

8. Finally, Communion is a time of praise. We can praise and thank God for His unconditional love. Communion reminds us of His kindness and goodness to our sinful world. What things does God deserve praise for?

meditation



For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:26, *NKJV*