



Sunday School Lesson for March 14, 2004
Released on March 11, 2004.

Study Luke 22:7-23. The Lord's Supper
Questions and answers below.

TIME: A.D. 30
PLACE: Jerusalem

Luke 22:7-23

7 Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed.
8 And he sent Peter and John, saying, Go and prepare us the passover, that we may eat.
9 And they said unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare?
10 And he said unto them, Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house where he entereth in.
11 And ye shall say unto the goodman of the house, The Master saith unto thee, Where is the guest chamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?
12 And he shall show you a large upper room furnished: there make ready.
13 And they went, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.
14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.
15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:
16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.
17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:
18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.
19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.
20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.
21 But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.
22 And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom he is betrayed!
23 And they began to inquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.

Introduction

Priceless Times-

A major credit card company capitalized on how important special times are. In its TV ad everything was priced, except one-tickets to the game, sixty dollars; game program, ten dollars; hot dogs and drinks, fifteen dollars; autographed baseball, forty dollars; an evening with your son, priceless!

There are indeed times that have infinite meaning. A chaplain once told me that the greatest fear of a child facing death is that Mom or Dad might not be there. With Mom or Dad there, a child can face the most threatening time confidently. Times together are priceless.

Jesus had looked forward to one of those priceless times with His disciples. In the face of terrible danger He longed to be with the men in whom He had invested so much of Himself. He also longed for one final time to provide instruction and guidance.

How To Say It

Nisan. Nye-san.

Abib. A-bib.

Lesson Background

God commanded the Jewish people to observe the Passover feast in memory of their dramatic deliverance from bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-32). As a result, Passover became a national spiritual holiday that called on God's people to remember their birth as a nation. God had commanded it to be celebrated in Jerusalem on the fourteenth day of the first month (Leviticus 23:5). This was the month of "Nisan" (formerly called "Abib") in the Hebrew calendar, which is late March and early April. It was an event that the spiritually minded anticipated with enthusiasm.

Jesus knew that His whole life pointed to a final Passover that would be the most eventful of all. This particular Passover would not be merely an act of faithful observance, but one of ultimate obedience. He would be preparing Himself to fulfill His mission as the perfect Passover Lamb (John 1:29; 1 Corinthians 5:7; Revelation 5:12; 13:8) in giving His life in sacrifice for the sins of humanity. One last Passover with His closest friends would mark the beginning of a new Lord's Supper that galvanizes Christian worship to this day.

Supper Preparation (Luke 22:7-13)

1. What was the significance of the Passover Feast (v. 7)?

Technically, the feasts of "unleavened bread" and Passover are separate festivals, with Passover occurring on the fourteenth of Nisan, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread running from the fifteenth to the twenty-first (Leviticus 23:5, 6; Numbers 28:16, 17). This would be late March and early April on our calendar.

On the fourteenth day Nisan, the celebration begins. A lamb was to be slain in remembrance of that night long ago in Egypt when the Israelites were spared from the final plague and delivered from their oppressors.

2. Why might Jesus have chosen Peter and John to make preparations for Passover (v. 8)?

The disciples have asked Jesus where He wants them to prepare the passover meal (Mark 14:12). Jesus knows that Judas is looking for a time and place to report His whereabouts to the authorities, but Jesus undoubtedly doesn't want His Passover celebration interrupted (we shall see why later). So perhaps He delegates the work of securing a place to Peter and John, two leading men among His disciples He knows He can trust.

An important transition from law to grace was about to take place, and it began with the accomplishment of their assigned mission.

3. What kind of sensitivity do we see in the disciple's response to the Lord's command to "Go and prepare us the Passover" (v. 9)?

Sometimes the opportunity to show one's true colors comes through a willingness to take care of the details. Peter and John express their desire to do just that. Moreover, their devotion to the Lord and sensitivity to His desires cause them to seek His leading even in the small things. "We should always ask the Lord of all, to lead in everything, big and small!"

4. We see in the disciples a willingness to take care of details. Why is this still important, even in an age of advanced technology?

Our parents used to tell us, "Anything worth doing is worth doing right!" That is especially true in our church programming. It's tempting to lean on technology as a crutch-eye-catching PowerPoint® presentations, mesmerizing music videos, etc. But these things will be superficial if they are used as a substitute for true preparation. When planning an outreach program, a special worship service, a class for children, etc., we need to give careful attention to the details.

But sometimes we get careless; we plan in generalities and then "wing it" when time comes for the actual event. Sometimes that seems to work, but often we sweat through it and run frantically to-and-fro trying to keep the program together. How much better to plan ahead and then execute a well-designed plan to give to the Lord that which is excellent.

5. Why would the man carrying the pitcher of water stand out (v. 10)?

Jesus' omniscience reveals itself again as He gives the disciples a sign. A man . . . bearing a pitcher of water will certainly stand out, even in a large crowd. Women, not men, almost always carry such jars. Even more telling is the fact that Jerusalem is flooded with visitors at Passover. That the disciples will meet this man at an exact place and time in such a crowd points to Jesus' divine guidance. Thus Jesus gives Peter and John what they need to know, perhaps without providing Judas an exact address where he can report the Lord's whereabouts to the Jewish authorities.

6. What were the disciples instructed to say to the "goodman of the house" (v. 11)?

The two disciples made contact with the "good-man," or owner, of the house. They had been instructed to tell him that they had a message from the Master asking where the "guestchamber" was in which He might eat the Passover meal with His disciples.

Matthew 26:18 adds that Jesus said to tell the man that His time was at hand, implying that this man knew what He meant. If that was the case, this man may have been more discerning than Jesus' own disciples, for they seemed to overlook His prophecies about His coming suffering and death.

7. What is the significance of the "upper room" (v. 12)?

"The upper room in which Jesus kept the Passover with His disciples was like other sites in His ministry: each is significant, not in itself, but in the fact that a very important act of God took place in that location. That particular upper room was no more holy than any other upper room in the city of Jerusalem that evening.

What was significant is what Jesus did there: He established the table of the Lord as a memorial to the offering of His life on the following day. We honor Him by our participation in the Lord's Supper each time it is served. -Charles. R. Boatman

Peter and John find everything just as Jesus "had said unto them" (v. 13). Personally, are we surprised to find things in life as Jesus has told us they will be, including His gracious provision for us?

Even with Jesus' promise, however, the disciples have their own work to do. The room is "furnished" (v. 12), but this probably refers only to the presence of a low table surrounded by pallets for reclining. The furnishings do not include food, which the disciples will have to provide.

Supper Fellowship
(Luke 22:14-18)

Jesus' Desire (vs. 14, 15)

8. Why did Jesus long for fellowship with His chosen few (Luke 22:14-16)?

It was evening ("the hour was come" v. 14) when Jesus and His disciples gathered together in the upper room (Matt. 26:20; Mark 14:17). As they were seated, in a remark recorded only by Luke, Jesus revealed that with great desire He had anticipated eating this Passover meal with His disciples before He entered into His period of suffering. He said that His reason was that He would not participate in eating it again until what it represented had been given its full meaning in "the kingdom of God".

By saying this, Jesus was signaling the coming of a tremendous change in God's dealings with mankind. Believers were about to move out from under the Mosaic law and enter the era of grace. All of the animal sacrifices that had been offered up in propitiation for sins under the law and by the patriarchs who preceded the law would now be superseded by the sacrifice of Christ Himself. Even the offering of the Passover lamb would end.

9. In what order does the Passover celebration normally follow (v. 17)?

The Passover celebration normally follows a set order. After the opening prayer comes the first of four cups of fruit of the vine and a dish of bitter herbs and sauce. The Passover story is recited, Psalm 113 is sung, and the second cup is introduced.

Grace is then offered and the participants eat the main course of roast lamb and unleavened bread. Next comes another prayer followed by the third cup, called "the cup of blessing." After singing Psalms 114-118 (Matthew 26:30), participants drink the fourth cup.

We can't be certain exactly which of the four cups Jesus takes at this point in the narrative, but it is probably "the cup of blessing." When Jesus gives thanks and instructs the disciples to "divide it among" themselves, He is providing them with a lifelong reminder to strengthen their faith.

10. Why did Jesus refer to "the kingdom of God" again in verse 18?

It would appear that the passing of the cup of Jesus to His disciples at this time was part of the Passover meal. He told them to take it and divide it among themselves. By declaring this to be the last time He would share the fruit of the vine, Jesus offers a solemn farewell to the Old Testament Passover ceremony. The fact that He repeated His statement on this matter shows that He considered it important.

Today we celebrate the Lord's Supper "till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). It is when that great event occurs that the kingdom of God will be fulfilled in its ultimate sense.

11. The disciples must have been startled when Jesus' Passover words were not what they were used to hearing. What changes in the normal worship routine make you uncomfortable? Which do you accept? Why?

Answers to these questions will be highly individual. But you might note that as a general rule adults get increasingly comfortable with routine as they age. Thus, the older your group, the more they will find change uncomfortable. Younger adults sometimes embrace change just for the sake of change.

With each specific item mentioned, try to get your learners to measure the change by Scripture and not by personal preference only. If a change violates the Word of God, then believers ought to resist it. But if the possible change is in harmony with God's Word, then the church ought to consider whether implementing it can help to reach out to others and lead them to Christ.

Supper Institution
(Luke 22:19, 20)

Jesus Remembered (v. 19)

12. What does the bread of the Lord's Supper represent (v. 19)?

The Passover meal is nearly complete. With the Old Covenant within hours of passing away, Jesus is inaugurating the supper that will symbolize the New

Covenant. Receiving the bread of Communion calls for prayers of thanks yet today as we remember what Christ has done for us.

As Jesus breaks the bread and gives it to the disciples, He does all He can to communicate its spiritual and symbolic import. With Jesus physically present, the bread is symbolic for His body. The bread of Communion will be a tangible symbol of that fact and a concrete remembrance of the death of Christ for our sins from this time forward. His body will not be taken against His will; rather, it is given freely for our salvation.

13. What does the cup of the Lord's Supper represent (v. 20)?

The cup Jesus returns to after supper is packed with so much significance! A testament or "covenant" refers to a formal, solemn, and binding agreement. Here the agreement has the force of a will, which can be approved only at death, or as Jesus said, by the shedding of His blood. One of the better-known references is Hebrews 9:22, which states that "without shedding of blood is no remission" of sins.

This reminds us of the prophecy of the Lord's suffering "servant" who poured out "his soul unto death" and "bare the sin of many" (Isaiah 53:12). The horrible prospect of a violent, lingering, unjust death cannot stop Jesus from dying in our place. Through the power of His blood we discover the forgiveness of sins (Romans 3:25; 5:9; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 9:22; 13:20; 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5; 5:9). The result is that we can relate to God on the basis of the New Covenant of grace revealed in the New Testament.

14. Why is partaking of communion a very serious matter?

Believers need to partake of the bread and cup in a most reverent and serious manner. We have been given additional things to consider by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 11:27-30. Whoever partakes of communion without self-examination and repentance will be guilty of mistreating the body and blood of Christ. He or she could be condemned and consequently suffer weakness, sickness, or even death, which is called "sleep" in verse 30.

Prophecy
(Luke 22:21-23)

15. Was Judas still in the upper room during the institution of the Lord's Supper (v. 21)?

This passage in Luke seems to suggest that Judas Iscariot was still in the upper room during the institution of the Lord's Supper. The other Gospels, however, seem to indicate that he was there only for the Passover meal and went out before this first communion service. If that is the case, Luke is not presenting the events in strict chronological order and Jesus' announcement that His betrayer was present with Him at the table was a flashback in the narrative.

16. Did Judas ever have a chance to turn from his sinful path (v. 22)?

God's sovereign plan had "determined" that the Son of man must go to face unjust trial, persecution, and crucifixion. The preaching of the first-century church recognized God's foreknowledge and predetermined plan that led to Jesus' betrayal (Acts 2:23). It was important to let the world know that the events of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection are not mere coincidence or freak accidents of history.

Even so, God's plan never overrode Judas' free will. He "betrayed" the Lord by choosing freely his sinful path. In a final effort to turn him around, Jesus warned Judas of the woe to come-God's extreme displeasure and hellish penalty that Judas would suffer (Acts 1:25). But Judas refused to listen.

17. What were the disciple's reactions after Jesus announced the existence of a betrayer (v. 23)?

On this same evening the disciples bicker over who is the greatest, and who will get the chief seats in God's kingdom (Luke 22:24). Here they find themselves doing the opposite-wondering who is the worst among them. But even as Judas carries out his sinful charade, nothing in his behavior makes them suspect him over anyone else (John 13:27-29). This thing thus results in both history's greatest injustice and the gateway to our eternal life.

CONCLUSION

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper as a regular observance in worship, He gave us exactly what we need. In Communion we remember His sacrificial death and look forward to the time when He will come back (1 Corinthians 11:26). In that moment we also rely on Him to help us fulfill our destiny as witnesses of His love and great salvation.

We marvel that the Lord designed this event in which He invites us corporately into His presence. The Guest of honor wants the honor of our presence. What a great reminder of how many ways He loves us!

Moreover, the bread that represents His broken body and the cup that signifies His blood call us to cherish our participation in a New Covenant. The Old Covenant, for all of its strengths, could never have broken the stranglehold of sin nor delivered us from eternal judgment. The loaf and cup remind us that we are the recipients of grace through a death that satisfied God's wrath. This in turn motivates us to greater service for Jesus Christ.

"Forgiveness for our sins is free, but it ain't cheap." The only price we can put on this priceless spiritual feast is the one that Jesus Himself paid in dying for our salvation.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we praise Your holy name for the love You have shown us in Your Son Jesus Christ. When He poured out His blood for our forgiveness, He also poured on us His love. Lord, we ask You to form in us an unending desire to fellowship weekly with You and Your people during the Supper that You have given us. For this divine Communion with You, Your Son, Your Spirit, and Your people, we give thanks! In Jesus' name, amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Participate faithfully in the loaf and cup, priceless reminders of Christ's sacrificial love.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Our next lesson takes us to the garden where Jesus prayed before His arrest. It comes from Matthew 26:36-50.

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