

## The Last Supper

Luke 22:14-23

Manuscript and Discussion Guide for May 26, 2024

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How do you remember Jesus? There are lots of ways we remember meaningful and important figures in our lives and in history. Maybe we keep their photograph on our shelf, or in a locket we wear as a necklace. Maybe our society names a school or road after a person, build a statue of them, or even a monument—like the Lincoln Memorial or the Washington Monument. But how do you remember Jesus? He told His disciples—and us—exactly how He wanted to be remembered: through communion. Stephen Davey explains the significance of communion in this lesson.

Memorial Day was originally established on May 30, 1868 to commemorate the soldiers who died in the American Civil War.

Later, it was broadened to honor United States military who have died during wars throughout American history. We've broadened it even further in our tradition to honor both those who've died and those living who have served or are currently serving our country.

Creating some kind of ceremony for the sake of memory is not unique. In fact, not too long ago, excavations in England discovered documents outlining ancient memorial ceremonies for Viking warriors who died in battle.

One of the most famous memorials in our country is the Lincoln Memorial, dedicated to the memory of Abraham Lincoln.

It was designed as a Greek temple, with 36 columns representing the 36 states at the time of Lincoln's death. The memorial was constructed with materials from these states to signify the unity that Lincoln gave his life to preserve.

Inside the Memorial is a 29-foot-tall statue and pedestal of Lincoln, who is seated, as if to signify that his work was accomplished. The interior ceiling features a massive mural, depicting an angel of truth freeing a slave.

One side wall is inscribed with Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. On the opposite wall is his second inaugural addresses etched in stone, along with Scripture verses he recited.

I'm glad it's all etched in stone, so that somebody can't sue the government to have it erased.

A mile away, across the reflecting pool on the National Mall, sits a towering obelisk—the Washington Monument—remembering our first president.

If you were to walk up all 897 steps to the top, there are 50 landings where you can take a break.

At those landings are memorial stones inscribed with different messages from different events donated by different people:

- One memorial stone is a prayer offered by the political leaders of Baltimore.
- Further up is a memorial stone presented by Chinese Christians.
- Another landing features a memorial stone presented by Sunday School children from New York. **Proverbs 10:7** is carved into the stone: "***The memory of the righteous is blessed.***" The last half of the verse wasn't inscribed, and that part reads: "***but the name of the wicked will pass away.***"

How's that for a reminder.

Then there's that small aluminum capstone on the very top of the monument that no one can even see. The architect wanted every sunrise to reflect first off that capstone and the words that were inscribed on it: "Laus Deo," which is Latin for "Praise be to God."

Adapted from David Jeremiah, [What in the World is Going On?](#) (Thomas Nelson, 2008), p. 119

I'm glad it's too high up for a protester to scale a ladder and take it down.

Some memorials are nearly impossible to remove, and that's a good thing.

There is one memorial that is absolutely impossible to remove. And that's because it's a divinely ordained memorial. In fact, Jesus said that it would continue being observed in the coming Kingdom of God.

- We call it the **Lord's Supper**, because of the meal—the supper—when the Lord instituted this ordinance for His followers.
- It's referred to as the **Communion Table**, because the body of Christ finds *here at this table* our communion with each other and our Savior.

- It's also referred to as the **Eucharist**, which is Latin for "the giving of thanks," because not only did the Lord give thanks, but believers cannot participate in this ordinance without profound thanksgiving for our redemption.

This table is the emancipation proclamation for those whom the Lord has liberated from the kingdom of darkness

This communion table is the capstone of our faith which leads us to say, "Praise be to God."

Now let's go to that signature event where this ordinance was first established.

### ***We're in Luke's Gospel at chapter 22.***

Now as you're turning there, let me tell you ahead of time that Luke isn't as interested in the order of events as he is in the significance of the elements.

It's difficult if not impossible to parallel what Luke writes here with the traditional seder meal, the Passover meal.

For instance, the traditional seder meal has four cups of wine, **Luke** only mentions two cups, and the other gospel writers mention only one cup. Years later, the apostle **Paul** describes what happened in the upper room in **1 Corinthians 11**, and he refers only to one cup as well.

Some of what Jesus does here in the upper room will be unique to this event; an attempt to tie everything in the upper room to a traditional seder meal is not Luke's objective.

Now don't misunderstand: I believe Jesus is eating the Passover meal with His disciples; we saw earlier in **verse 8** that Jesus clearly tells *Peter and John to prepare the Passover lamb* so that—**verse 11**—*He might eat the Passover with His disciples.*

But it's as if Luke doesn't want us to focus on certain traditions; he wants us to focus on certain truths, and especially how Jesus is about to use this meal to create a lasting memorial for His followers to remember the gospel.

### ***Now with that, Luke writes here in verse 14:***

*And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him.  
And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you  
before I suffer."*

*Luke 22:14-15*

Jesus is indicating that this is His last meal, at least it is before His crucifixion. Which is why we refer to this event as the Last Supper.

Now unfortunately, thanks to Leonardo da Vinci, we have this image of the last supper where Jesus and his 12 disciples are facing the camera. They're sitting in chairs, all in a row, at a table like the ones you might have in your dining room.

But in these days, they didn't sit on chairs, but on the floor—often on small rugs—and they didn't use spoons and forks—they ate with their hands.

Adapted from Charles R. Swindoll, *Christ's Agony and Ecstasy* (Insight for Living, 1982), p. 5

This is your child's dream meal; a lot of it ends up on the floor anyway, so why not just start down there!

I've been to several countries that even in modern times don't use forks and spoons and knives; in one country I visited, the plate was a large green leaf. We scooped up the food with our fingers, or we used bread like a little shovel; this would have been how the disciples ate in the first century.

Now Luke tells us here that in the upper room was a table, a low table, because the men are reclined around it, either sitting, or propping themselves up on one elbow.

Now that they're seated, Jesus delivers two prophecies to them, which evidently went right over their heads. **Verse 15 again:**

*"I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."*

*Luke 22:15-16*

Now skip down to verse 18 where Jesus repeats this second prophecy:

*"For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."*

*Luke 22:18*

Now with that, Jesus delivers brand new meaning to this unleavened bread and diluted wine. We know this from historical records. **Go back up to verse 17:**

*And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves."*

*Luke 22:17*

Now this would be surprising to the disciples. It would have been highly unusual for the host to pass around a common cup; everyone had their own cup to drink from.

By the way, at this point, with this cup, the Lord is not instituting what we would call the communion cup. In fact, Judas is still in the room, and he won't leave until the meal is nearly over.

We know that because during dinner Jesus will hand him what John's Gospel calls "**the sop,**" that's a piece of bread dipped in special relish or sauce during the meal.

It will be after Judas leaves the room that Jesus will move to another cup of wine, which Luke will mention a few verses later. We'll get there in a moment.

Now this unusual act where Jesus has them all drinking from His cup is an invitation to partner with Him, to be in close communion with Him.

Years ago, when I played team sports—primarily soccer—you may remember as I do that we didn't have bottled water back then. We had one water jug, and you'd just pass it down the bench, from one sweaty player to the next. You never thought a thing about it, although you didn't want to be the last guy on the bench.

If you drank out of somebody else's water bottle today, they'd probably sue you.

In his exegetical commentary, David Garland writes that having the disciples drink from His cup would have made a profound impression on the disciples. Giving His cup to them would have been understood as an invitation to enter into His life and share His destiny, no matter what it might be.

Adapted from David E. Garland, *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 854

Even more profound is the implication Jesus is making, which is taken from Jewish culture.

In early Jewish tradition, when a young man wanted to propose marriage, he would formalize it by offering her his cup of wine. He was effectively saying, "I am offering you my life—my destiny—no matter what it might be."

The girl had the option to refuse the cup, or to take it and drink from it, signaling that she was accepting his marriage proposal.

You can see how this Passover meal is taking a unique turn as Jesus symbolically imitates a proposal; He's offering Himself to them—and us—as the bride of Christ.

When you partake of the communion cup, you are effectively saying that you have accepted the marriage proposal of Jesus, you are willing to share in His destiny, His life—whatever it might be.

Now at some point, we know from other gospel accounts that the meal is finishing up, Judas has left the room, and Jesus now shifts into instituting this lasting memorial. **He's going to reach over and take a flat piece of leftover unleavened bread. Verse 19 says:**

*And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

*Luke 22:19*

Jesus takes this bread and does something He's never done before. You didn't do this when eating the traditional Passover meal; Jesus stops and bows his head and gives thanks for this bread.

Adapted from Swindoll, p. 5

To the Jewish people, this bread represented affliction; it represented their years of suffering in Egypt.

The disciples were no doubt familiar with the words of the Passover liturgy from **Deuteronomy 16:3** that said, ***"This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate when they came from the land of Egypt."***

Dale Ralph Davis, [Luke: The Year of the Lord's Favor](#) (Christian Focus, 2021), p. 164

But Jesus gives this bread new meaning. He relates it to the affliction He will suffer on the cross.

R. Kent Hughes, [Luke: Volume Two](#) (Crossway Books, 1998), p. 317

Jesus now says that His body will take on that symbol of affliction, of suffering, for the sake of our redemption.

This bread now represents His body suffering on the cross.

Jesus often used literal terms to describe figurative truths. Jesus called Himself "the door; the light; everlasting water; the vine, and the bread of life."

Bruce B. Barton, [Life Application Bible Commentary: Luke](#) (Tyndale House, 199), p. 496

And yes:

- We are grafted into the vine.
- We walk through a door.
- We drink water.
- We turn on a light.
- And we eat bread.

However:

- Jesus isn't a liquid.
- He isn't made of wood with hinges and a doorknob.
- He isn't a vine planted in the soil.
- He isn't a lightbulb we turn on.
- He isn't bread to be eaten.

These are metaphors that reveal different aspects of our relationship with Christ.

- When we follow Him, we walk through a door, leaving the old world behind.
- When we walk with Him, we no longer walk in darkness, the light's turned on.
- We're no longer thirsty and hungry for the things of this world; we've been satisfied with the Bread of Life, the Lord Himself.

Now Jesus uses the present tense here in **verse 19** to **continue doing this in remembrance of Him**. Eating this bread is a way to *continually remember* that He alone satisfies our souls.

The Lord's supper is not a sacrifice, it's an ordinance of remembrance.

J.C. Ryle, [Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Luke](#) (Evangelical Press, orig. 1879; reprint, 1975), p. 342

The mass of the Roman Catholic church would teach that communion is a miraculous re-sacrificing of Jesus, even though Scripture clearly teaches that **Jesus was sacrificed once, for all time (Hebrews 7:27)**.

The organized church in the early centuries before the Reformation strayed from the simplicity of the gospel, and developed traditions and ceremonies and liturgies that eventually obscured the gospel of faith in Christ alone.

The mass today is a re-sacrificing of Jesus.

I call it "job security" for the priests because it requires the hand of a priest to turn these elements into the body and blood of Jesus.

According to them, you will need a priest to receive Jesus. Let me tell you, you don't need a priest to receive Jesus.

This ordinance is not for Jesus to be *re-sacrificed*. This ordinance is for Jesus to be *remembered*.

**Now Luke records here in verse 20:**

*And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.*

*Luke 22:20-23*

We can interpret Luke's comment here that Jesus is emphasizing how hypocritical His betrayer was to have shared at this meal, to have ***his hand at this table***.

According to the other gospel accounts, Judas is gone, but he had played out his deception so well that he had fooled everyone but Jesus.

Now Jesus says here that ***this cup represents the new covenant in His blood***.

Jesus is not suggesting we drink His blood. This again is figurative language for a literal truth.

The Lord is reminding the disciples of Jeremiah's prophecy of a new covenant which will forever atone for sin (***Jeremiah 31***).

Let's go back for a moment to the institution of the Old Covenant when the Ten Commandments were delivered by Moses.

It was literally a blood-saturated event. Moses offered sacrifices and took half of the blood from the sacrificial animals and, ***Exodus 24*** tells us, sprinkled it on the altar; then Moses took the other half of all that blood and sprinkled it on the Old Testament scroll that had been read, and then on the people as well.

The altar, the scroll, and the people dripped with blood. It was not a pretty sight, except in its symbolism; they were under a fountain of blood, so to speak.

Hughes, p 318

***One author writes:***

The Old Covenant was launched on an ocean of blood to emphasize the seriousness of sin and that sin demanded death. The weakness of this Old Covenant was that it depended on mankind keeping the law, which they couldn't do for even one day.

But the glory of the New Covenant in Christ's blood is that it is dependent on Christ alone. He does it all! Our salvation rests on the ocean of His divine blood.



R. Kent Hughes

Ibid, p. 318

And that's what the Lord is communicating here in the upper room; this is the critical phrase of our assurance, here ***in verse 20, Jesus says:***

*"This cup that is poured out for you"*

*Luke 22:20*

That can be translated "on your behalf"; this cup is poured out for your benefit"; "in your place."

Davis, p. 169

**Poured out** is a passive verb connecting it to Old Testament sacrifices. To pour out the blood of a person was language used for murdering someone and the plot to murder Jesus is well under way.

Garland, p. 856

So, Jesus is saying here that He is our substitute; He has taken our place; He will be murdered, but He is, in reality, a willing sacrifice.

After this statement, Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 11** that Jesus repeated the phrase, "**Do this in remembrance of me.**"

This is a memorial; do this; remember Me:

- Visit here often.
- Spend time here.
- Contemplate the meaning.
- Remember its costliness.
- Recall with thanksgiving your freedom.
- And of course, remember the Lord.

Sort of like visiting the Lincoln Memorial; you're not just going there to read the Gettysburg address that's carved into the wall. You're not just there to read his inaugural address.

You're not even there just to remember the emancipation proclamation he signed.

You are there to remember *him*.

I find it fascinating that Jesus never commanded that the church build a monument for Him, something majestic to remember Him by. There's no Washington Monument stretching hundreds of feet into the air. There's no 29-foot-tall statue of Him seated under a beautiful mural with the words of His Sermon on the Mount carved into a granite wall around Him.

This is it; this is all. A piece of bread and the juice from a crushed grape. That's it.

Bread to remember His body given for us; juice from a crushed grape to remind us that His blood flowed freely to establish this new covenant.

Jesus effectively says, "This is all you need, ***partake of this in remembrance of Me.***"

The word ***remembrance*** comes from the Greek word *anamnesis*. That gives us our word amnesia.

But the Greek word has that little alpha prefix, which means no: so, ***to remember*** means, "no amnesia."

Every time you partake of the Lord's Supper, the communion table, every time you eat and drink these simple elements, you recover from chronic spiritual amnesia.

We tend to forget the One who gave everything for our freedom.

So, we come back to this memorial today. We remember *Him* today.

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# Study Guide

## Sermon Summary

The Lord's Supper is a call to remember Jesus, to recover from our spiritual amnesia, and to reflect on the immense cost of our freedom. The bread symbolizes His body given for us, and the juice represents His blood shed to establish a new covenant. This act of remembrance is not just a ritual; it is a profound spiritual exercise that reconnects us with the core of our faith. Every time we partake in this ordinance, we are reminded of the One who gave everything for our redemption.

Jesus' choice of these elements is deeply symbolic. The bread, representing His body, signifies the affliction and suffering He endured for our sake. The wine, symbolizing His blood, points to the new covenant that offers eternal atonement for sin. This new covenant, unlike the old one established through the blood of sacrificial animals, is based entirely on Jesus' sacrifice. It is a covenant of grace, dependent solely on Christ's finished work on the cross.

The Lord's Supper is not a re-sacrificing of Jesus, as some traditions might suggest. It is an ordinance of remembrance, a way for believers to continually recall the sacrifice that secured their redemption. By partaking in this meal, we are reminded of our union with Christ and our communion with one another. It is a time to give thanks, to reflect on the cost of our freedom, and to renew our commitment to follow Jesus.

## Key Takeaways:

- The act of partaking in the Lord's Supper helps us recover from our tendency to forget the One who gave everything for our freedom. It is a spiritual exercise that reconnects us with the core of our faith and the immense cost of our redemption.
- Unlike the old covenant, which depended on human effort, the new covenant established by Jesus' blood is based entirely on His finished work on the cross. This covenant offers eternal atonement for sin and is a testament to God's grace and mercy.
- The Lord's Supper is a time to reflect on our union with Christ and our communion with fellow believers. It is a reminder that we are part of a larger body, united by our faith in Jesus and our shared commitment to follow Him.
- As we partake in the Lord's Supper, we are called to give thanks for the redemption secured by Jesus' sacrifice. It is also a time to renew our commitment to follow Him, to live in a way that honors His sacrifice, and to continually remember the cost of our freedom.

## Discussion Guide

### Bible Reading

### Luke 22:14-20 | 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

#### Observation Questions

1. What elements did Jesus use during the Last Supper to symbolize His body and blood?
2. According to Luke 22:19-20, what did Jesus instruct His disciples to do in remembrance of Him?
3. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, what does Paul say is proclaimed every time the bread and cup are taken?

#### Interpretation Questions

1. Why do you think Jesus chose simple elements like bread and wine to represent His body and blood?
2. What is the significance of Jesus referring to the cup as the "new covenant in my blood"?
3. How does the act of partaking in the Lord's Supper help believers "recover from spiritual amnesia"?

#### Application Questions

1. Reflect on the last time you participated in the Lord's Supper. How did it impact your understanding of Jesus' sacrifice?
2. What are some practical ways you can prepare your heart and mind before partaking in Communion to ensure it is a meaningful experience?
3. How can you incorporate the practice of remembrance into your daily life to stay connected with the core of your faith?
4. Think of a specific moment this week when you can express gratitude for the redemption Jesus secured for you. How will you do it?
5. Identify one area in your life where you need to renew your commitment to follow Jesus. What steps will you take to make this renewal evident?