

Our Atonement

JESUS CAME TO DIE ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS.

Matthew 26:17-30

17 On the first day of **Unleavened Bread** **A** the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the **Passover?**” **B** **18** “Go into the city to a certain man,” he said, “and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: **My time is near**; **C** I am celebrating the Passover at your place with my disciples.’” **19** So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. **20** When **evening** **D** came, he was reclining at the table with the Twelve. **21** While they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will **betray** **E** me.” **22** Deeply distressed, each one began to say to him, “Surely not I, Lord?” **23** He replied, “The one who **dipped his hand with me** **F** in the bowl—he will betray me. **24** The Son of Man will go just **as it is written** **G** about him, but **woe** **H** to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for him if he had not been born.” **25** Judas, his betrayer, replied, “Surely not I, Rabbi?” “You have said it,” he told him. **26** As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take and eat it; **this is my body.**” **I** **27** Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them and said, “Drink from it, all of you. **28** For this is **my blood of the covenant**, **J** which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. **29** But I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until **that day** **K** when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” **30** After singing a hymn, they went out to the **Mount of Olives.** **L**

Exploring Key Words

- A** The first of three annual feasts commemorating Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. (See Ex. 23:15; Deut. 16:16.)
- B** By Jesus’s day, this feast was a part of Unleavened Bread. It recalls how God spared Israel through the blood of lambs in Egypt.
- C** His impending betrayal and crucifixion. Jesus also referred to this as His “hour” (John 7:30; 8:20; 12:23; 13:1; 17:1).
- D** The Passover meal was eaten after sunset on the fourteenth day of Nisan, the first month of the Jewish calendar. This would correlate roughly to late March or early April today.
- E** The Greek word (*paradidomi*) means to “hand over” and implies intimacy. The Gospel writers use it to describe the treachery of Judas, while also emphasizing God’s sovereign purposes.
- F** Not an exact identification, but an affirmation that the betrayer was present at the meal.
- G** A reminder that Jesus’s sufferings were foretold in the Old Testament (see Isa. 52–53; Ps. 22).
- H** Judgment (see also Matt. 11:21; 18:7; 23:13–16). While Jesus’s death was ordained by God, Judas was accountable for his actions.
- I** Jesus established the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. The bread represents His body. Luke added that His body was “given for you” (22:19).
- J** The wine in the cup represents His blood, which initiated a new covenant between God and His people (see Jer. 31:31–34).
- K** Jesus established God’s kingdom at His first coming. It will be completed when He returns.
- L** A hill just east of Jerusalem. This was the site of Gethsemane, where Jesus would be betrayed by Judas and arrested.



NOTES

Coming Betrayal (Matt. 26:17-25)

- On the day of Passover, the disciples approached Jesus to inquire about preparations for the Passover meal. Jesus instructed them to go to a certain man's home where they would celebrate the meal that night.
- During the Passover meal, Jesus revealed that one of the disciples present would betray him. Each disciple, including Judas, denied that he could be the one.

Coming Atonement (Matt. 26:26-30)

- During the Passover meal, Jesus gave new symbolic meaning to the bread and the wine.
- Jesus described the breaking of the bread as His "body." This symbolized His coming crucifixion and death. The cup of wine symbolized His blood that would be poured out for the forgiveness of sins, sealing the new covenant.
- When Jesus and His disciples finished the meal, they sang a hymn and departed Jerusalem for the Mount of Olives.

Summary Statements

Jesus came to die on the cross for our sins.

- Believers must recognize their own capacity to betray Jesus.
- We find forgiveness by accepting Jesus's death as the payment for our sins.

Memory Verse

Matthew 26:28

Key Doctrine

The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming. (See 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-29.)



For additional commentary, see the Leader Guide or Adult Commentary, available for purchase at [goExploreTheBible.com](https://www.goExploreTheBible.com).

ENGAGE

How does death sometimes sharpen our focus on the things that really matter in life? (PSG, p. 114)

- None of us knows the precise time and date of our death. We do know, however, that death is a certainty for all.
- Consider this scenario: you know the exact day of your impending death, but no one else knows. You throw a dinner party for your family and friends, knowing this will be the last meal you will have with them.
- What emotions do you think you would experience if this scenario played out in reality?

Bonus: What thoughts come into your mind when you think about death?

Bonus: Is death always an occasion for mourning? Why or why not?

EXPLORE

COMING BETRAYAL (MATT. 26:17-25)

Bonus: When have you felt betrayed? When have you felt like a betrayer?

- Thursday of Passion Week also was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This was the designation for an eight-day festival that began with Passover. By the first century, the terms “Unleavened Bread” and “Passover” were used interchangeably to speak of a season of remembering Israel’s exodus from Egypt.
- Preparations for the Passover included buying various items for the meal. According to Exodus 12:3, the lamb for the Passover sacrifice was bought on Sunday. It would be sacrificed on Thursday. Luke 22:8-13 indicates that Peter and John were entrusted with the preparation.
- Worshipers would lead the lamb to the temple, where a priest would cut its throat. The blood would flow out into a bowl and be poured at the base of the altar. Peter and John would then carry the carcass to the meal site and roast it.
- During the meal, Jesus announced that His betrayer was present. Each disciple, including Judas, denied being the one. What made this statement even more devastating was the fact that sharing a meal with someone in Jewish culture was an expression of friendship. The Passover meal was also sacred. So, for someone to reveal a betrayal in this setting added to its horrific nature.
- While the impending death of Jesus fulfilled both prophecy and God’s plan, the actions of Judas arose from his own willful choice. Jesus was not a victim of political intrigue, and Judas was not a pawn. Because of this, Judas would suffer the consequences for his decision.

What can we do to resist becoming immune to the dangers of sin? (PSG, p. 118)

COMING ATONEMENT (MATT. 26:26-30)

Why is it important for believers to remember Jesus’s sacrifice on the cross? (PSG, p. 120)

- At this point in history, Passover had been celebrated for more than 1,500 years. But Jesus was going to change everything because soon He would become the ultimate Passover Lamb.
- The Passover meal included prayers, blessings, and a variety of symbolic dishes. These included the *matzah* bread, a flat, unleavened piece of bread that represented the bread eaten in haste as the Israelites prepared to escape Egypt. However, Jesus changed the meaning of this bread. The breaking of the bread pointed to His broken body. It now stood as a symbol of His atoning death.
- Four cups of wine were used during the meal, and each included its own blessing. Jesus used one of these cups (possibly the third) to highlight His sacrifice. Jesus called this cup “my blood of the covenant.” By His blood, Jesus instituted a new covenant, creating a new pathway to “forgiveness of sins” and a right relationship with God.
- Jesus noted that He would not celebrate this kind of meal again until He returned to earth. His words suggested a departure that would cause grief, but also included the hope of a future reunion in the kingdom. After the meal, Jesus and His followers sang a hymn (probably a Hallel from Psalms 113-118). Then, they left for the Mount of Olives, where He would be betrayed and arrested.

Bonus: What emotions does the Lord’s Supper stir up in you? What makes it significant?

CHALLENGE

As a group, discuss how believers are called to approach the observance of the Lord’s Supper.

Share ways to prepare for participating in the Lord’s Supper that have been meaningful for members of your group. (PSG, p. 121)

Challenge individuals to consider Judas and how they may be tempted to “betray” Jesus at times.

What steps might you take to eliminate these false steps from your life? (PSG, p. 121)

FURTHER DISCUSSION



Scan here for additional discussion questions for this week’s study.

BIBLE SKILL (PSG, P. 120)

Compare multiple passages to get a better understanding of a biblical truth.

Compare Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20; and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Consider what each passage teaches about the Lord's Supper. ***What makes the passages unique? What elements did each writer seem to emphasize in their description? How did the writers encourage us to reflect on the past and look to the future? Which Gospel writer did Paul follow more closely?***

Write “bread” on a large sheet of paper. Encourage them to share what this word brings to mind. Write “cup.” Allow adults to share how adding this word affects their response. Affirm the connection to the Lord's Supper. Direct adults to complete the Bible Skill activity (PSG, p. 120). After a few minutes, review the questions. Challenge adults to consider these truths next time your congregation shares the Lord's Supper.

OBJECT LESSON: BREAD

Bring an unsliced loaf of bread to the session.

Encourage adults to share things they know about the Lord's Supper. Point out that Jesus established the Lord's Supper during the Passover meal in today's focal passage. Pass adults the loaf of bread and allow each person to pinch off a small piece. Say: *Jesus also used this occasion (and some bread) to explain that the one who would betray Him was present. His betrayer had dipped bread in the bowl just as Jesus had done.*

Note that this did not provide an exact identification for the betrayer because each of the disciples had done this. Point out that while Judas was the betrayer, Jesus would die for the sins of every person in the room.

Emphasize that our sins played a role in Jesus's betrayal and crucifixion as well. Challenge adults to examine their lives for sins that might be hindering a closer relationship with Jesus.

THE LAST SUPPER

Matthew's Gospel makes it clear that the last supper was a Passover meal. However, John wrote that Jesus was crucified on the day of preparation for the Passover (John 19:14). A few points help explain this difference.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all refer to the day before the Feast (Nisan 14) as the “First Day of Unleavened Bread.” Mark clarified this as “when they sacrifice the Passover lamb” (Mark 14:12). John 19:31 notes that “preparation” refers to preparation for the Sabbath. Thus, Jesus ate the Passover on Thursday evening, which, by Jewish reckoning, would have been considered the beginning of Friday. Later on Friday—before the Sabbath—Jesus was crucified.

So, what is the significance of the last supper being a Passover meal? Passover meals followed a four-part structure, each marked by sharing a cup. After the opening blessing, the story of deliverance was told (Deut. 26:5-9). Then came a benediction over symbolic foods—bitter herbs, unleavened bread,

and lamb. This was followed by the meal. Finally, the evening ended with the singing of Psalms 116–118 and the fourth cup.

During one of the cups, Jesus gave new meaning to the elements used. The bread became a symbol of His body, while the cup became a symbol of His blood. Both pointed to His sacrificial death as the true fulfillment of Passover. We now celebrate this fulfillment (and the anticipation of Jesus's return) during the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

The Gospels make no mention of a lamb on the table. Why? Because Jesus is the Lamb. As Paul later wrote in his explanation of the Lord's Supper, “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (1 Cor. 5:7). The last supper was not only a Passover meal. It also validates God's saving grace through Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb.