

Remembered

Jesus' costly sacrifice should be remembered by believers.

The capacity for memory is one of the most amazing features of God's design for the human brain. The ability to recall past information and experiences is an important component of daily life and evaluation of mental health. Some memories evoke emotions that range from pleasant to sorrowful. Other memories provide the foundation for our interactions with others and the development of skills we need to work or simply enjoy life. The loss of memory capacity is often the result of brain injury or aging. Everyone wants to retain their ability to remember and fears the consequences of losing that faculty.

Because forgetting can have negative consequences, many of us depend on reminders to help us recall important events. The development of computers and smartphones has provided powerful tools to help us remember important appointments or anniversaries. Long before the modern age, however, God provided and encouraged reminders in His relationship with His people. One ancient reminder God gave was the rainbow following the flood in Noah's day. The rainbow was a promise God made that He would never again destroy the entire earth with a flood. Still later, God designated the building of monuments, celebrating of festivals, and performing of rituals for His people to remember important events and truths of the covenant. The written Word of God remains a powerful and accurate reminder of who God is and what He expects of us.

It is no surprise, therefore, that Jesus would establish a ritual reminder so that believers could regularly commemorate His death on the cross for our sins. The reminder He established and commanded His followers to perpetuate was a transformation of the Passover into what Christians commonly refer to as the Lord's Supper.

In this session, we will focus on the passage in Luke's Gospel that describes the origin and meaning of the Lord's Supper. Whenever believers celebrate this ordinance, it gives a powerful reminder of the substitutionary atonement of Christ that allows us to have a right relationship with God. We will also examine the past, present, and future implications of the Lord's Supper for believers.

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

LUKE 22:1-28

In Luke 22:1-6, the Gospel writer reported that Jewish religious leaders in Jerusalem plotted the death of Jesus. They found an accomplice in one of Jesus' own disciples—Judas Iscariot. Judas agreed to betray Jesus and hand Him over to them for a price.

Luke 22:7-13 reveals that Jesus instructed Peter and John to prepare a place for the group to celebrate the Passover meal together. The two disciples were told to find a man carrying a water jug, follow him to the house where he was going, and request the use of a room in the house for the Passover meal. Jesus further instructed the two disciples to prepare for the meal in a furnished, upstairs room.

In Luke 22:14-20, Jesus spoke to His disciples about His impending suffering. He used elements of the Passover meal to signify His death. The bread represented His body that would be given for them, and the cup represented His blood that would establish a new covenant between them and God. Jesus urged the disciples to continue to commemorate His death in this way as a remembrance of His sacrifice.

In Luke 22:21-23, Jesus revealed that one of the disciples at the table would betray him. The disciples argued among themselves concerning the identity of the traitor.

In Luke 22:24-28, an argument broke out among the disciples about who was the greatest among them. Jesus rebuked the disciples and warned them not to act like Gentile leaders by abusing their authority over others for personal gain. Jesus urged His followers to be servants of one another as He had been—and continued to be—to them.

EXPLORE **THE TEXT**

PREPARED (Luke 22:7-13)

Jesus greatly desired to share His final Passover meal on earth with His disciples. During the meal, He previewed His atoning death on the cross and established a remembrance of that sacrifice. The Lord's Supper, along with Christian baptism, are the two ordinances that Jesus commanded believers to observe. We will see the necessity of believers preparing both physically and spiritually whenever churches partake of the Lord's Supper.

VERSE 7

Then the Day of Unleavened Bread came when the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.

The **Day of Unleavened Bread** technically referred to the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread (see Luke 22:1). Traditionally, this festival began the day after the Passover and lasted seven days (see Ex. 23:15; Deut. 16:1-8). It commemorated the haste required in leaving when the Israelites were delivered from slavery in Egypt. Thus, when Luke referred to the overlap of the *Day of Unleavened Bread* and the day **when the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed**, he was simply using a popular way of referring to them as one celebration.

Passover was the first of three annual festivals for which all Jewish males were expected to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. According to Deuteronomy 16:6, the Passover sacrifice was to be offered only “at the place where the LORD your God chooses to have his name dwell”—that is, at the temple in Jerusalem. The first-century Jewish historian Josephus reported that in AD 66 more than 250,000 Passover lambs were sacrificed at the temple. Extrapolating from the number of sacrifices, some Bible students estimate that a throng of around two-and-a-half million pilgrims could have crowded into the city and the surrounding region. More importantly, however, Jesus chose the Passover to signify the meaning of His atoning death on the cross: He became the believer’s Passover sacrifice (see 1 Cor. 5:7).

VERSE 8

Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.”

Luke emphasized the initiative of Jesus in preparing for the Passover meal. Only Luke specifically named **Peter and John** as the disciples Jesus tasked with making **preparations**. Presumably these two were to confirm the use of a place large enough for Jesus and the disciples **to eat the Passover**. They may also have been responsible for obtaining the food items and wine for the meal. The presence of large crowds of pilgrims in Jerusalem at this time would have necessitated that such preparations be made in advance.

Peter and John, along with John’s brother James, served as a kind of inner circle among Jesus’ disciples (see Matt. 26:37; Mark 9:2; Luke 8:51). They continued to serve in primary leadership roles in the early church. Peter and John’s willingness to do preparation tasks would be followed with major spiritual responsibilities in the church. As in the case of securing a particular donkey for Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem (see Luke 19:29-30), no task done in service to Jesus is menial or unimportant.

VERSE 9

“Where do you want us to prepare it?” they asked him.

The two disciples may have assumed that Jesus had already arranged for the use of a room or had a preference in regard to the location. In any case, they asked Jesus for more information. In regard to Luke’s account of the event, the disciples’ question (“**Where do you want us to prepare it?**”) reveals that Jesus was in control of every aspect of His final week. He would fulfill the Father’s plan of salvation in every detail.

These subtle indications of Jesus’ calmness in the face of His impending suffering also reveal God’s sovereignty in what would soon appear to be an out-of-control situation. The passage reminds us as believers that God is always in control. Nothing can or will happen to us that is beyond His awareness or His power to use for our eternal benefit (see Rom. 8:28).

VERSE 10

“Listen,” he said to them, “when you’ve entered the city, a man carrying a water jug will meet you. Follow him into the house he enters.

Jesus instructed the two disciples to enter **the city** and then look for **a man carrying a water jug**. While this might not seem to be a very noticeable distinction, especially in a bustling city, this particular chore typically was performed by the women of a household. In addition, Jesus indicated that the man with the water jug would **meet** the two disciples, suggesting the possibility that Jesus had prearranged the encounter and the man knew what Peter and John were tasked to do. The main point of the narrative is the same whether or not there had been prearrangements made.

In any case, the disciples were instructed to **follow** the man **into the house he enters**. This detail, plus the specific identification of “the owner of the house” in the next verse, may indicate that the man with the water jug was a house servant. Speculation by some Bible commentators that Jesus was purposely being secretive in His instructions to hide the location from Judas Iscariot does not seem likely, since Judas was later present with the group in the upper room (see Luke 22:21).

VERSE 11

Tell the owner of the house, “The Teacher asks you, “Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover with my disciples?””

Jesus then told Peter and John to speak to **the owner of the house** and say that **the Teacher** wanted to know the location of **the guest room**

“guestchamber,” KJV) where He could **eat the Passover** meal with His disciples. Evidently, the house owner was a follower of Jesus, although perhaps a secret disciple like Joseph of Arimathea (see John 19:38). Luke did not specify the owner’s name, but his knowing Jesus as **the Teacher** would have revealed deep respect if not an expression of faith (see Matt. 8:19; Mark 13:1; John 1:38; 3:1-2).

VERSE 12

Then he will show you a large, furnished room upstairs. Make the preparations there.”

Presumably, the **large, furnished room upstairs** was in the owner’s house. The room needed to be of sufficient size for at least thirteen people (Jesus and His twelve disciples). The furnishings probably included one or more low tables and cushions around the tables for guests to recline as they ate the meal. Perhaps a wash basin and towel were also part of the furnishings (see John 13:4-5). Peter and John were assigned to **make the necessary preparations** for the group to eat the Passover meal in this room.

VERSE 13

So they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

When Peter and John entered Jerusalem to complete their assignment, events happened **just as** Jesus **had told them**. That is, they were met by a man with a water jug. They followed the man into a house and then spoke with the owner of the house concerning the location of a large, furnished upstairs room. There the two disciples **prepared the Passover**.

Verses such as Luke 22:13 assure readers of Luke’s Gospel that God was in control of events surrounding Jesus’ mission. Just as Jesus gave His disciples careful instructions for preparing the Passover, we as believers are to prepare our hearts for participating in the Lord’s Supper (see 1 Cor. 11:27-28).

EXPLORE FURTHER

Read the article titled “Festivals” on pages 564–569 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. What was the origin of the Feast of Passover? What were the requirements for the Israelites in celebrating the Passover? Why did Paul refer to Jesus as “Christ our Passover lamb” (1 Cor. 5:7)?

LOOKING FORWARD (Luke 22:14-18)

While eating the Passover meal with the apostles, Jesus declared His desire to do this with them before He suffered. He then explained that He would not eat the meal again until it was fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

VERSE 14

When the hour came, he reclined at the table, and the apostles with him.

The phrase **the hour came** may refer either to the time for the Passover meal or the designated time for Jesus to complete His mission. Likely, the term *hour* in this context does not refer to a sixty-minute period but to the beginning of a significant event that had been predicted (see Luke 22:53; John 13:1; 17:1). The phrase **reclined at the table** reminds us that important meals were eaten while reclining on cushions next to low tables.

VERSE 15

Then he said to them, “I have fervently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

Jesus’ statement in this verse is unique to Luke’s account. The phrase **I have fervently desired** reveals the importance that Jesus gave to this meal with His disciples. The words **to eat this Passover** may refer specifically to the Passover lamb. If that is the case, the lamb would be a picture and type of Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb of God. The Passover lamb would have been slaughtered earlier by a priest at the temple. Later in Scripture, the apostle John envisioned the resurrected Jesus as “a slaughtered lamb standing in the midst of the throne” in heaven (Rev. 5:6).

The phrase **before I suffer** confirms that Jesus was fully aware of what would follow this meal with His disciples. The meal would be the last time He would enjoy this fellowship with His disciples before He was arrested, beaten, and crucified.

Jesus’ suffering reminds us that suffering is often a part of God’s plan for His people and is not always a punishment for disobedience. The purposes for suffering are often complex and hidden, at least for a time, from those who experience the suffering. In this case, Jesus would be suffering intentionally for our sins and salvation (Isa. 53:4-6).

VERSE 16

For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”

The phrase **for I tell you** often introduces important statements by Jesus (see Luke 3:8; 10:24; 14:24; 22:18,37). In the statement **I will not eat it again**, the term *it* refers to the Passover meal. However, the term *again* implies there would be a future meal they would share together. The phrase **until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God** points to the end times and the messianic banquet when Jesus will once again gather believers for a fellowship celebration. This future banquet will occur after the second coming of Jesus when He rules victoriously (see Rev. 19:7-9). Until that time, believers celebrate the Lord's Supper in anticipation of that consummation of God's redemptive plan (see 1 Cor. 11:26).

This verse has important application as Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper today. The Lord's Supper has both past, present, and future implications. Looking to the past, it commemorates the death of Christ on the cross, making possible forgiveness of sin and right-standing with God. In the present, the Supper signifies not only the relationship believers have with God through Jesus Christ but also their relationships one with another as brothers and sisters in God's family. The future aspect of the Supper gives hope to believers that death is not the end but rather the transition to an everlasting kingdom that God has planned for His creation.

VERSE 17

Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he said, “Take this and share it among yourselves.

Verse 17 describes the partaking of “the fruit of the vine” (22:18) during the Passover meal. The text does not indicate whether Jesus also partook the elements of the meal, but it is likely that He did. The emphasis of the entire account focuses on Jesus' leading and interpreting the elements of the meal.

The term **a cup** refers to one of four cups of wine that were traditionally served to participants during or following the Passover meal. The four cups pointed to four truths the Lord God promised the Israelites regarding their deliverance from slavery in Egypt (see Ex. 6:6-7). Bible scholars differ on which of the four cups is referred to in Luke 22:17. Many believe it is the first cup, because it follows the blessing, or **giving thanks**, that began the formal celebration of the Passover meal. Verse 20 evidently points to a later cup, drank at a later point or after the meal proper.

The instruction to **take this and share it among yourselves** points to the shared experience the supper was designed to create. The Lord's Supper was not intended as an individual act of worship but as a shared communion among a family of believers—a local church congregation, for example. Of course, the Lord's Supper can be shared by believers in any setting.

The emphasis is on the community of believers sharing in their common faith and relationship with God through Jesus Christ. To demonstrate our love for God, we must also demonstrate love for one another in the body of Christ.

VERSE 18

For I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”

Again Jesus introduced an important declaration with the words **for I tell you**. The profound declaration was that He would **not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes**. Bible scholars point out that the phrase *until the kingdom of God comes* is not found in the Old Testament or Jewish writings before the first century AD. The coming of the kingdom is associated with the second coming of Jesus. We as believers anxiously await the fulfillment of these events when God brings in His eternal kingdom, bringing punishment to the wicked and salvation to those who are saved.

EXPLORE FURTHER

Read the article titled “Ordinances” on pages 1197–1200 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. What are the two ordinances commanded by Jesus for His followers? What does the Lord’s Supper commemorate? How does it strengthen your relationship with Christ when you participate in the Lord’s Supper?

LOOKING BACK (Luke 22:19-20)

Jesus presented the unleavened bread to the apostles, proclaiming that it represented His broken body. He called on the disciples to eat the bread as a way of remembering His suffering and sacrifice. He also presented the cup and proclaimed it to represent the new covenant established in His shed blood.

VERSE 19

And he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to them, and said, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”

Before distributing food and drink to His disciples, Jesus **gave thanks**. The Greek verb used here to describe the giving of thanks is the basis for

the English term *Eucharist*—a term some Christian groups use in reference to the Lord’s Supper. Thanking God for the provision of food at mealtimes was a standard practice in first-century Judaism. The reference to giving thanks also became a standard part of the formula used by the early church in observing the Lord’s Supper (see 1 Cor. 11:24).

The first of two elements of the Lord’s Supper was **bread**. In the context of the Passover meal, the bread was made without any yeast. This practice recalled that the Israelites were to be ready at a moment’s notice for their deliverance from slavery in Egypt (see Ex. 12:39). Jesus **took bread, broke it, and gave it** to His disciples. Each disciple was given a part of the whole, emphasizing their acceptance and unity.

Jesus then referred to the bread as His **body, which is given** for sinners. Over the centuries, Christian groups have differed in their interpretation of Jesus’ statement. Generally speaking, evangelical Christians affirm Jesus was teaching that the broken bread represented the brokenness of His physical body from the beatings and crucifixion He would suffer. He did not mean that the bread used in the Lord’s Supper would somehow become His literal body before, during, or after the believer ingested it.

Jesus’ use of bread to symbolize His physically broken body was unprecedented in Judaism. In other words, Jesus transformed the Passover elements with new meaning designed to commemorate the new covenant He would inaugurate with His death and resurrection. The Greek verb rendered *given* implies sacrifice (see Mark 10:45; Gal. 1:4). God the Father sent His Son as a sacrifice, and Jesus surrendered His life to be that sacrifice. The phrase **for you** emphasizes that Jesus took our place as sinners and provided forgiveness of our sins as a substitutionary atoning sacrifice.

The final words of Luke 22:19, **do this in remembrance of me**, were used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25 to give instructions regarding a church’s observance of the Lord’s Supper. Importantly, the statement underscores the nature of the Lord’s Supper as a memorial event for believers.

VERSE 20

In the same way he also took the cup after supper and said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Jesus then took **the cup after supper** (probably the third in the sequence of four cups of wine served during the Passover celebration) and served it to the disciples. The phrase **in the same way** demonstrates the close association of the cup with the mention of the bread in the previous verse. The cup, according to Jesus, represented His **blood ... poured out** for sinners. The drinking of blood—human or animal—was forbidden in the Mosaic law,

because the blood represented the very life of the animal or person (see Lev. 17:14). The law's prohibition of drinking blood is further evidence that the elements of the Lord's Supper are to be understood as representative, not literal. Just as the bread symbolized Jesus' broken body, the cup represented Jesus' very life given as an atoning sacrifice. Again, the phrase **for you** emphasizes the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death (see Isa. 53:4-6).

Jesus said further that the cup represented the establishment of the **new covenant**. This is a clear reference to an amazing prophecy in Jeremiah 31:31-34. In the sixth century BC, Jeremiah prophesied that one day the Lord would establish a new covenant in which He would write His law on people's hearts rather than on stone tablets. Moreover, He would "forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin" (31:34). Jesus, in effect, was declaring that His atoning death on the cross would establish this *new covenant*. Then later in the first century AD, the writer of Hebrews went to great lengths to explain the deep and abiding meaning of the new covenant for believers (see Heb. 8:1-9:28).

No instructions are given in the New Testament regarding how frequently Christians are to observe the Lord's Supper. Paul's instructions to believers in 1 Corinthians 11:24-28 simply emphasize that as often as churches observe the ordinance they are to do so in remembrance of Christ and His atoning sacrifice. A danger of repeated worship rituals is that they can become rote rather than meaningful and transformational. The early disciples no doubt observed the Lord's Supper many times in the years following Jesus' death and resurrection. Their remembrances of that night and what followed would be seared into their memories.

Today, we too as believers can personalize our observance of the Lord's Supper by soberly reflecting on what Jesus did for us on the cross. The bread and the cup should remind us that Jesus loved us to the extent that He gave His perfect life for our imperfect and profoundly sinful lives. No one else could have paid the price that would redeem us from our sins and condemnation. We can also remember that the Lord's Supper looks forward to the return of Christ and the establishment of His eternal kingdom.

EXPLORE FURTHER

Read the article titled "Covenants" on pages 355-360 in the *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Revised and Expanded*. What are some differences between covenants made between people and covenants made between God and people? What made the new covenant possible? What are some of the blessings of the new covenant for believers?