

PASSOVER WITH THE KING

DEVOTIONAL READING: [Matthew 26:17-30](#)

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: [Matthew 26:17-30](#)

MATTHEW 26:17-30

¹⁷ On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

¹⁸ 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.’” ¹⁹ So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover.

²⁰ When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ And while they were eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me.”

²² They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, “Surely you don’t mean me, Lord?”

²³ Jesus replied, “The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ 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.”

²⁵ Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?”

Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

²⁷ Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

³⁰ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.



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KEY TEXT

I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.—**Matthew 26:29**

GOD FREES AND REDEEMS

Unit 2: Liberating Gospels

LESSONS 5–8

LESSON AIMS

After participating in this lesson, each learner will be able to:

1. Summarize what Jesus said at the last supper.
2. Explain the historic significance of the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover.

3. Suggest a way to improve his or her church's observance of the Lord's Supper.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

- A. Memory Food
- B. Lesson Context
- I. Readyng the Passover (Matthew 26:17–19)
 - A. Preparations (v. 17)
 - B. Instructions (vv. 18–19)
- II. The Passover Plot (Matthew 26:20–25)
 - A. Fellowship (v. 20)
 - B. Betrayal (vv. 21–25)
 - Dinner Party*
- III. Passover and the Kingdom (Matthew 26:26–30)
 - A. Bread and Body (v. 26)
 - B. Cup and Blood (vv. 27–29)
 - Remember and Do*
 - C. Closing Song (v. 30)

Conclusion

- A. The Lord's Supper
- B. Prayer
- C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Aviv	A-bib.
Hallel (Hebrew)	Ha-layl.
Nisan	Nye-san.

Introduction

A. Memory Food

What makes a great chef? Training is often required—to acquire excellent knife skills and other techniques, knowledge of flavor profiles and world cuisine, and so on. But one episode of each season of *Top Chef* highlights the passion behind a meal as the real genius of fantastic

food. The episode in question is always a variation on creating a meal based on memory: a traditional holiday menu, the favorite dish of a deceased parent, the national food of one's home country... Those who succeed in this challenge allow their memories to build the meal, and the love they feel translates onto the plate. Both chefs and judges might cry, because a meal is an opportunity to show one's self, celebrate one's heritage, and draw others into friendship.

The Passover meal commemorates the struggles that began in Egypt. When eating it together Jesus and his disciples not only remembered what had happened to their people but also anticipated what was to come.

B. Lesson Context

Our lesson takes us about midway into the week of Passover, after Jesus and many others had arrived in Jerusalem for the feast. (Other accounts of the meal are found in [Matthew 26:26–29](#); [Mark 14:22–24](#); [Luke 22:17–20](#); [John 13:1–30](#); compare [1 Corinthians 11:17–34](#)). God commanded the Jewish people to observe the Passover Feast in memory of their dramatic deliverance from bondage in Egypt ([Exodus 12](#)). Passover became a national spiritual holiday. God had commanded it to be celebrated in Jerusalem on the 14th day of the first month ([Leviticus 23:5](#); [Numbers 28:16](#)). This was the month of Nisan (formerly called Aviv in the Hebrew religious calendar), which is late March and early April.

During Jesus' time, groups of pilgrims slew their lambs at the Jerusalem temple, where the blood would be sprinkled on the altar. Then they went to celebrate the meal with their families or other companions in groups of at least 10 people. Despite the lamb's centrality to this feast, the bread and fruit of the vine play much larger roles in the accounts of Jesus' last supper (see [Mark 14:12–26](#); [Luke 22:7–38](#); contrast [John 13:1–30](#)). The symbolism of the animal's absence from the story should not be lost on us. As our lesson begins, the sacrifice was already present.

I. Readyng the Passover

([MATTHEW 26:17–19](#))

A. Preparations (v. 17)

17. On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread, the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Where do you want us to make preparations for you to eat the Passover?”

Jewish tradition made Jerusalem the ideal destination for passover celebrations. The number of pilgrims arriving to celebrate *Passover* in Jerusalem in Jesus' time likely exceeded 85,000, or several thousand more Jews than lived in Jerusalem. In this severely overcrowded

environment, finding a room in which to observe the meal could be difficult.

Because of the long journey, pilgrims had taken to purchasing sacrificial animals in Jerusalem instead of traveling with the beasts. This was not considered problematic until the merchants moved inside the temple, making the prayerful space into a commercial market (see [Matthew 21:12–13](#)). Jesus did not own a house or livestock ([8:20](#)), so his disciples would have purchased a lamb.

The Festival of Unleavened Bread lasted a full week immediately following the night of the Passover meal ([Deuteronomy 16:1–8](#)). Baking bread with yeast was a slow process. A piece of dough was set aside and allowed to rise; before the next meal, the leavened dough was worked into a new batch of dough so that it too would rise. The speed of unleavened bread's preparation reminded Jews of the haste of the flight from Egypt ([Exodus 12:39](#)).

What Do You Think?

How do you prepare yourself to eat the Lord's Supper?

Digging Deeper

How does your preparation honor Jesus?



Visual for [Lesson 6](#). Before closing with prayer, encourage the class to reflect on this promise throughout the week.

B. Instructions (vv. 18–19)

18–19. 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.

The city refers to Jerusalem. Jesus and his disciples approached from the neighboring village of Bethany (see [lesson 5](#) commentary on [Matthew 21:1a](#)). It seems that Jesus had made arrangements with *a certain man* before the festival was upon them. Mark and Luke specify that the disciples were meant to find a man carrying “a jar of water” ([Mark 14:13](#); [Luke 22:10](#)). Fetching water was typically woman’s work, so his carrying the pitcher would make the man easy to spot.

Jesus was called *Teacher* throughout the Gospel of Matthew ([8:19](#); [12:38](#); [22:16](#); etc.). In the mouths of those who respected him, the term acknowledged Jesus’ wise teaching. Others called him this with sneering contempt. In either case, the term was appropriate of Jesus, but

any speaker using it didn't necessarily have a full understanding of Jesus or his ministry and mission.

A form of the word here translated *time* echoes Judas's search for an "opportunity [appropriate time] to hand [Jesus] over" ([Matthew 26:16](#)). The Greek word is not uncommon. Still, the linguistic echo hints that God would use Judas's betrayal to bring about his purposes in Christ.

[Mark 14:13](#) tells us that Jesus sent two *disciples*. [Luke 22:8](#) reveals that they were Peter and John.

What Do You Think?

How does your congregation honor believers who serve behind the scenes?

Digging Deeper

What does this recognition (or lack thereof) communicate about the importance of many different ways to serve?

II. The Passover Plot

([MATTHEW 26:20–25](#))

A. Fellowship (v. 20)

20. When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve.

Judas already had agreed to the contract on Jesus' life ([Matthew 26:14–16](#)), but none of the other disciples knew that. Therefore, *when evening came* for them to share the Passover, it was easy for Judas to join as one of *the Twelve* with his plan undetected.

In Jesus' time, the seating for special meals like this involved reclining on low couches. Participants leaned on the left elbow with their heads toward *the table* and their feet away from it, and they would eat with their right hands.

B. Betrayal (vv. 21–25)

21. And while they were eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me."

Prophets introduced what they heard from the Lord with "this is what the Lord says" and close variations (examples: [Joshua 7:13](#); [Isaiah 28:16](#); [Zechariah 8:2](#)), while apostles often grounded similar statements with "it is written" (examples: [Acts 1:20](#); [13:33](#); [15:13–18](#)). Jesus did not appeal to any authority but his own whenever he said *truly I tell you* (examples: [Matthew 5:18, 26](#); [6:2, 5, 16](#)). In this subtle difference, Jesus asserted his place as God's Messiah, not just a prophet or teacher.

After Peter's confession of Jesus as the Son of God, the Lord had begun to reveal that he would be rejected by the Jewish leaders, suffer, and be killed ([Matthew 16:21](#); [Luke 9:22](#)). This is the first time, however, that they had heard him say *one of you will betray me*.

22. They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely you don't mean me, Lord?"

Jesus' comments hit the group with maximum force. They were extremely distressed. They never dreamed that the cancer of betrayal could infiltrate their group. Judas conducted his charade so flawlessly that no one suspected him.

Out of emotional anguish and with personal urgency, each asked, *Surely you don't mean me, Lord?* Judas had already arranged to betray Jesus ([Matthew 26:14–16](#)), but none of the other disciples suspected him. Each man trusted the others, so the only place to look was inward. Each one wondered if some fatal character flaw would be exposed to his own shame and disgrace. Still, each one worded the question with the expectation that Jesus would answer in the negative.

23. Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me.

As with many cultures still today, the custom was for food to be shared by everyone out of large serving dishes rather than individual place settings. *The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me* could refer to anyone in the room, for all of them were sharing in that activity during the evening meal. In Matthew's telling, Jesus did not narrow down the list of suspects (contrast [John 13:26–28](#)). This emphasized a sentiment expressed by the psalmist's lament, "Even my close friend, someone I trusted, one who shared my bread, has turned against me" ([Psalm 41:9](#)). Jesus knew that the betrayal would indeed come from within their group.

24. "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."

The phrase *Son of Man* evokes Jesus' connection with fragile humans as well as with Daniel's prophesied messianic figure. This one received authority and glory from God, and all nations worship him forever ([Daniel 7:13–14](#)). In using the title of himself, Jesus chose a phrase that was known but did not have the expectations of *king* or *messiah*. Thus the phrase was more enigmatic, not something that people immediately associated with earthly rule or authority.

Jesus acknowledged his willing intent to fulfill God's plan *as it is written about him* in the Old Testament (example: [Isaiah 53](#)). He never dodged the work of giving his life to pay sin's price for our eternal salvation.

But Jesus sternly warned that his betrayer would not be allowed to dodge the consequences of his rebellion either. (See also [Acts 1:15–20](#).) In the terrible judgment he would

face, Judas could not argue, “I wasn’t warned!” Jesus lamented Judas’s choice and the loss of his beloved friend.

What Do You Think?

What scriptural warnings do you find difficult to remember or obey?

Digging Deeper

In what situations would remembering these warnings change your actions?

25. Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, “Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?” Jesus answered, “You have said so.”

Judas addressed Jesus with the same form of question as the other disciples, except that he used the title *Rabbi* rather than Lord (see [Matthew 26:22](#), above). While this was an honorary title for exceptional teachers of the law ([23:7–8](#)), when applied to Jesus it missed the heart of his identity. Judas is the only disciple in the Gospel of Matthew to refer to Jesus this way (see also [26:49](#)). Judas may have believed that Jesus was a wise teacher, but there is no record that he confessed Jesus as Lord.

Judas maintained his charade of loyalty to the very end. Knowing full well that he was the one, he still asked, *Surely you don’t mean me?* In true prophetic fashion, Jesus threw off the cover to reveal Judas’s wicked betrayal. If Judas thought he had successfully hidden his evil work, he found out what he should have known all along: nothing can be hidden from the Lord.

But the Lord’s reply fell on deaf ears. Although Jesus made it clear to Judas that he knew about the nefarious plan, Judas would betray him anyway. The chief priests and elders had previously planned to wait until after the weeklong feast in order to avoid any riots ([Matthew 26:5](#)). Perhaps Judas, feeling exposed, accelerated his plans to betray Jesus that very night ([26:45–47](#)).

What Do You Think?

Who knows you well enough to point out your spiritual blindspots that can become sinful action?

Digging Deeper

What heart changes are required for you to better heed your wise friend’s warnings?

DINNER PARTY

What ingredients are required for a dinner party? Although many items could be included—background music, table linens and silverware, lighting, flower arrangements,

and so on—only two things are really necessary: food and people. And a *successful* dinner party combines good food and great company.

Imagine your ideal dinner party. Who is around your table? What food do you prepare to share with them? Your group might mirror mine, with best friends who have stuck by your side in the hills and the valleys. We might both include family, spiritual mentors, friends of friends, out-of-town visitors, and so on.

Christ’s final dinner party included those who walked with him and learned from him. The success of the party was in question, though, once Jesus revealed that he would be betrayed. And yet we celebrate this meal and remember him. How might Judas’s presence at Jesus’ last supper cause you to reevaluate who a dinner party should include?

—L. P.

III. Passover and the Kingdom

(MATTHEW 26:26–30)

A. Bread and Body (v. 26)

26a. While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it

Traditionally in the Passover meal, God was blessed (gave *thanks* to) as the one who delivered Israel from Egypt and provided their bread. The original Greek is less clear about whether *Jesus* blessed the *bread* or the Father here. (A similar issue comes up in [Matthew 14:19](#).) Giving thanks for the meal comes closer to later Christian practice of blessing the bread and the fruit of the vine in their own Lord’s Supper remembrances (example: [1 Corinthians 10:16](#)).

26b. and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.”

The Passover meal was infused with symbolic significance. Eating the bread called for the explicit reminder of God’s deliverance. This encouraged feelings of continuity with ancestors—with Jewish participants’ knowing that they were part of that same people God had saved.

Jesus didn’t do away with that ancient symbolism. He magnified and expanded it, bringing God’s salvation to fulfillment. The broken bread took on new significance as the *body* of Christ, a new symbol of God’s miraculous salvation to be remembered and shared by the community of believers. Though the *disciples* apparently obeyed Jesus, this symbolism would lead to horrifying rumors in the Roman world that Christians were cannibals.

B. Cup and Blood (vv. 27–29)

27a. Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks,

It's unclear which *cup* of four drunk at Passover Jesus referred to here. The regulations regarding these cups are found in the Mishnah, an ancient rabbinic text that was finalized around AD 200. Each cup is associated with promises God made in [Exodus 6:6–7](#): “I will bring you out ... I will free you from being slaves to [the Egyptians] ... I will redeem you ... I will take you as my own people.”

The third cup (associated with “I will redeem you”) was typically a benediction. Jesus likely offered his own *thanks* in place of a more traditional blessing with the third. The “cup of thanksgiving” named in [1 Corinthians 10:16](#) further suggests that the third cup is in view.

27b–28. he gave 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.

The blood of the Passover lamb had protected the Israelites from God’s final plague ([Exodus 12:13](#)), and blood was later sprinkled on the people as they entered a new relationship with God ([24:5–8](#)). However, nowhere was it suggested that the people should drink the blood; quite the contrary, this practice was explicitly forbidden for *any* animal ([Leviticus 17:10–14](#)). The command to *drink from it, all of you* intensified the jarring symbolism of eating Jesus’ body (compare [Matthew 20:22–28](#)).

While symbolism of being covered in the blood of the Lamb persists, ingesting the *blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins* speaks to an inner change, not only an outer show (compare [Isaiah 53:11–12](#); [Romans 5:15](#)). This may remind the reader of God’s promise to “remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh” ([Ezekiel 11:19](#); compare [36:26](#))—a promise of spiritual renewal, which is fulfilled through faith in Christ. The covenant in Exodus required obedience to God and strict loyalty to him alone ([Exodus 20:1–6](#)), which the Israelites proved unable to do. The prophesied new covenant would be different from the one their ancestors entered into at Sinai (see [Jeremiah 31:31–34](#)). This new covenant was enacted by the shedding of Jesus’ blood.

29. “I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

The fourth Passover cup traditionally looked forward to the coming kingdom, which differed greatly from earthly kingdoms (consider descriptions from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in [Matthew 5–7](#) regarding his Father’s kingdom ethics). Jesus either abstained from the final cup or declared that this was his last time drinking it ... for now. In doing so he declared by word and deed that the *Father’s kingdom* was coming, and Jesus would celebrate in that kingdom with the disciples. This was in keeping with various depictions of God’s kingdom being or centering around a feast (examples: [Isaiah 24:23](#); [25:6–8](#); [Matthew 22:1–14](#); [Luke 13:29](#); [Revelation 19:7–9](#)).

What Do You Think?

What memories of Christ do you focus on when eating the Lord's Supper?

Digging Deeper

What promises come to mind as you anticipate drinking the cup with Jesus?

REMEMBER AND DO

As a young child I knew I could count on Grandpa Ray. He taught me what love is by demonstrating the importance of building and keeping trust, acting humbly, and caring deeply for others.

One day we were downtown together. Grandpa Ray saw a man curled up across the street. This man seemed very distressed. I remember vividly my grandpa going out of his way to get this man some food and pray with him. Grandpa stated afterward, "The best way to remember Christ's love for us is to be Christ's love for others." To this day, Grandpa Ray's words call me to demonstrate that I remember Jesus' love for me through my service to others in obedience to him.

When we participate in the Lord's Supper, we remember Jesus' sacrifice for us. But we also look forward to sharing the cup with Jesus. Our lives must reflect this expectation. How does your daily life demonstrate your memory of Jesus' work and your hope in his promises?

—L. P.

C. Closing Song (v. 30)

30. When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The Passover meal ended with singing, traditionally from the Hallel, [Psalms 113–118](#). These songs extol the Lord as the one true God of all the nations, among other praises.

The Mount of Olives lay to the east of Jerusalem. Its elevation gave an excellent view of the city, including the temple. It was here, specifically at Gethsemane, that Jesus would be betrayed and his disciples scattered ([Matthew 26:36, 47–56](#), not in our printed text); he then faced the trials that sent him to his death on the cross ([26:57–68; 27:11–26](#)).

Conclusion

A. The Lord's Supper

Jesus knew that his whole life pointed to a final Passover that would be an act of ultimate obedience. He would be preparing himself to fulfill his mission as the perfect Passover Lamb

(see [John 1:29](#); [1 Corinthians 5:7](#); [Revelation 5:12](#); [13:8](#)). His life was given in sacrifice for the sins of humanity, washing us clean in his blood so that our sins are forgiven, never to be brought against us. One last Passover with his closest friends would mark the beginning of a new Lord's Supper that galvanizes Christian worship to this day.

Themes of remembrance and thanksgiving have united Christians worldwide for nearly 2,000 years in a practice that honors our crucified Lord. All Christians are given opportunity to remember God's miraculous salvation—with a new ceremonial meal shared by a new family. We participate together, knowing that we are part of a body in a new covenant with God, forgiven of sins through the body and blood of Jesus. What the prophets dreamed of is the life that we today have been given in Christ.

At the same time, we long for the ultimate coming of the Father's kingdom when we will sit at the table with Jesus himself. We live in anticipation of this joy. Every bite of bread or sip of the fruit of the vine connects us to the past, present, and future of God's story.

B. Prayer

Father, thank you for sending Jesus as our perfect sacrificial Lamb and for inviting us to your table. Let the anticipation of sharing the feast with Jesus guide us daily. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

The Lord's Supper reminds us that we are part of God's past, present, and future story.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with NIV Bible Student (from your curriculum supplier) and the reproducible activity page (at www.standardlesson.com or in the back of the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary Deluxe Edition).

Into the Lesson

Bring a favorite snack that has special significance to you to share with the class. As the learners eat, tell the memory attached to that food. Ask volunteers to share what tastes trigger memories for them. *Option.* In the week before class, ask for volunteers to supplement your snack with their own and to be prepared to share their own memories.

Alternative. Ask for volunteers to share a memory of a special meal they ate, including the occasion, who was present, and what was eaten. After allowing time for responses, ask what

tastes (whether entire dishes, combinations of spices, etc.) can bring this memory to mind without other prompting.

Say, “Our sense of taste is a powerful link to our memories and emotions. In today’s passage, we will see how Jesus takes a traditional meal and gives new significance to it.”

Into the Word

Ask a volunteer to read [Matthew 26:17–19](#) aloud. Divide the whole group into pairs (or small groups). Have the pairs look up the following passages for more context regarding Old Testament regulations and accounts of Passovers: [Exodus 12:1–27](#); [Deuteronomy 16:1–8](#); [2 Chronicles 30](#); [35:1–19](#); [Ezra 6:19–22](#). Ask each pair to jot down notes about preparation, celebration, historical context, and anything else they find interesting. After about 10 minutes, ask the pairs to share their responses with the whole class. Supplement with information from the lesson [6 Lesson Context](#) and any pertinent commentary.

Ask a volunteer to read [Matthew 26:20–25](#). Have the pairs jot down any connections they hear in this second reading. Tell the pairs they are going to role-play the reactions of Judas and the apostles to Jesus’ declaration; both parties will take a turn as the apostles and as Judas. The pairs should consider how the emotional reaction differs between the apostles and Judas.

Ask a volunteer to read [Matthew 26:26–30](#). Have the pairs once again role-play, this time focusing on how the apostles and Judas would experience the meal, having *already* been told that one of them would betray Jesus. Following this exercise, bring the class together to discuss what they’ve found.

Alternative. Distribute to pairs “The Passover Lamb” exercise from the activity page, which you can download. Have them complete as directed before allowing groups to share their responses.

Into Life

Allow one minute for personal, private reflection on any sins Jesus would want learners to repent of in order to experience the joy of the Lord’s Supper more fully.

Ask a volunteer to read [1 Corinthians 11:17–34](#). As the class listens, have them jot down ideas that are important for Christians to keep in mind when eating the Lord’s Supper. Ask specifically for ideas to help both individuals and the congregation be better prepared to eat the meal together. Then discuss these observations.

Next, allow one minute for personal reflection on aspects of joy and gratitude to consider whenever they’re preparing to take the Lord’s Supper. Ask volunteers to share, but do not put anyone on the spot. Discuss the effect of remembering the future feast in which we will see

Jesus face-to-face.

Alternative. Distribute the “Remember!” exercise from the activity page. Encourage learners to complete the activity at home, as directed, and be prepared to share with the class at the start of next week’s time.

Close the class with a prayer of thanksgiving for Jesus’ sacrifice and for the meal that we still eat in his memory.