

June 2

Lesson 1 (NIV)

JESUS INSTITUTES THE NEW COVENANT

DEVOTIONAL READING: Jeremiah 31:31–

34

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Mark 14:12–

31; Hebrews 8

MARK 14:17–25

¹⁷When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. ¹⁸While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.”

¹⁹They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely you don’t mean me?”

²⁰“It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me. ²¹The 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.”

²²While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”

²³Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them. ²⁵“Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

HEBREWS 8:6, 7, 10–12

⁶But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

⁷For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for another.

¹⁰“This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord.

I will put my laws in their minds
and write them on their hearts.

I will be their God,
and they will be my people.

¹¹No longer will they teach their neighbor,
or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’

**because they will all know me,
from the least of them to the
greatest.**

**¹² For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no
more.”**

KEY VERSE

*In fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.—**Hebrews 8:6***

COVENANT IN GOD

Unit 1: A Fulfilled Covenant

LESSONS 1-4

LESSON AIMS

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

1. Quote from memory Jesus' words regarding the bread and cup of the last supper.
2. Explain how the lesson texts from Mark and Hebrews interrelate.
3. Develop a plan to make observance of the Lord's Supper more meaningful.

LESSON OUTLINE

Introduction

A. A Monumental Explanation

B. Lesson Context

I. Covenant Anticipated (MARK 14:17-25)

A. Enacted Through a Betrayal (vv. 17-21)

B. Celebrated as a Passover (vv. 22-25)

Food for the Holidays

II. Covenant Described (HEBREWS 8:6, 7, 10-12)

A. Fulfilling Israel's Covenant (vv. 6, 7)

B. Making a New People (vv. 10-12)

Carry It with You

Conclusion

A. How the Lord's Supper Defines Us

B. Prayer

C. Thought to Remember

HOW TO SAY IT

Abraham	Ay-bruh-ham.
Corinthians	Ko-rin-thee-unz (<i>th</i> as in <i>thin</i>).
Deuteronomy	Due-ter-ahn-uh-me.
Gentile	Jen-tile.
Isaiah	Eye-zay-uh.
Jeremiah	Jair-uh-my-uh.
Leviticus	Leh-vit-ih-kus.
Sinai	Sigh-nye or Sigh-nay-eye.

Zechariah *Zek-uh-rye-uh.*

Introduction

A. A Monumental Explanation

Monuments need explanations. Sometimes a monument has a plaque or inscription that tells us what it commemorates. Always, though, a monument means that an important event took place, one to be remembered in joy or in sorrow. Customs can serve as monuments, reminding people who observe them of great events. Annual holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries include special ceremonies or meals to commemorate events that are important to us. We celebrate these together as families, communities, and nations to share the events' importance.

What Do You Think?

What are some ways to use secular "monuments" to enhance our commitment to Christ? Or is that even possible? Explain.

Digging Deeper

Consider physical monuments (example: tombstone of a famous national leader) as well as those of a nonphysical nature (example: days on the calendar).

Israel's greatest monuments were its annual feasts, celebrating God's mighty

acts of salvation ([Leviticus 23:2-43](#)). Passover was especially notable, commemorating God's bringing Israel out of slavery in Egypt ([Exodus 12:1-13:16](#); [Deuteronomy 16:1-8](#)). As time went on, it became customary to begin that feast with a question to introduce the epic story of Israel's deliverance: "Why is this night different from all other nights?" The head of the family would then explain, telling the story of Israel's deliverance.

B. Lesson Context

The story of Jesus eating the Passover meal with his disciples before his death is a turning point in the gospel story. After Peter's confession of Jesus as the Messiah in [Mark 8:29](#), Jesus began warning his disciples of his coming death and resurrection ([8:31](#); [9:31](#); [10:33, 34](#)). Yet they did not understand these warnings ([9:32](#)). For them, the Christ must triumph over his foes militarily, replacing the rule of the Gentile nations with the rule of God ([Acts 1:6](#)). Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, when he was given the welcome of a king before the Passover, must have been a high mark of that expectation. Surely Jesus was to be the one to renew David's kingdom ([Mark 11:7-10](#))!

The Passover that followed a few days later must have been tinged with this expectation. But Passover observances

were always both joyous and solemn. Each of its elements was intended to remind participants of God's triumph over Egypt. For example, bread made without leaven (yeast) was a reminder of the haste with which the meal was prepared in anticipation of leaving the land of slavery ([Exodus 12:15, 17–20, 33, 34](#)). The annual celebration of Passover affirmed for Israel that God had liberated them and made them his people ([12:42](#)).

The resulting covenant was the expression of God's actions, promises, and expectations for his people. God's covenant with Israel had begun with Abraham (then known as Abram; see [Genesis 15:18–21](#)) and was affirmed for the entire nation at Sinai ([Exodus 24:1–8](#)). But that covenant ended up being broken time and again. A new one was needed.

I. Covenant Anticipated ([MARK 14:17–25](#))

Jewish leadership schemed to arrest Jesus while he was out of the public eye. As our text opens, they have enlisted Judas to help find Jesus at such a time ([Mark 14:1, 2, 10, 11](#)).

A. Enacted Through a Betrayal (vv. 17–21)

17. When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve.

The Twelve disciples have accompanied Jesus from early days ([Mark 3:13–19](#)). It appears likely that Jesus deliberately chose 12 disciples to evoke the regathering of the scattered 12 tribes of Israel, a symbol of God's bringing the promised new covenant. These 12 show themselves faithful but are often slow to understand or believe Jesus' words ([4:40](#); [8:31–33](#); [10:35–45](#)). Yet Jesus intends to eat his final meal with these men, and only them, during Passover.

18. While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me."

The disciples' failure now approaches a climax in one of their own. Jesus begins solemnly with *truly* (a translation of the Greek word *amen*), an expression he uses when announcing warnings or promises ([Mark 10:15, 29](#)).

Jesus' words reveal that the secret plot against his life is no secret to him. Throughout the story of his arrest, trials, and death, Jesus is in control of events, willingly submitting and never taken by surprise ([Mark 14:35–38](#); [John 19:11](#)). Repeatedly he has warned of his death ([Mark 8:31](#); [9:30–32](#); [10:32–34](#)). Now he anticipates a betrayal that is all too common in Israel's history (compare [Genesis 4:1–12](#); [37:12–36](#); [Judges 16:18](#); [2 Samuel 15](#); [1 Kings 21:8–10](#); etc.). In this

way, he again enters into the fullness of human experience, sparing himself no pain that can be experienced by a person ([Philippians 2:8](#)).

19. They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely you don’t mean me?”

The disciples perceive themselves to be faithful to Jesus regardless of their prior lapses. Their repeated question reflects bewilderment. It is asked in a way that indicates the disciples expect the answer to be no.

20. “It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me.

In Mark’s Gospel, Jesus’ answer to the disciples’ question leaves all uncertain. Sharing the Passover meal at a common table, they all dip pieces of unleavened bread in the common bowls. [John 13:26–30](#) makes clear who the traitor is, but Mark’s account seems to underline the idea that all of them are potential betrayers.

21a. “The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him.

VISUALS FOR THESE LESSONS

The visual pictured in each lesson (example: page 348) is a small reproduction of a large, full-color poster included in the *Adult Resources* packet for the Summer Quarter. That packet also contains the very useful *Presentation Tools* CD for teacher use. Order No. 4629119 from

your supplier.



Visual for Lesson 1. Start a discussion by pointing to this as you ask, “What connection do you see between these transitions and the Lord’s Supper?”

Jesus refers to himself as *the Son of Man* more than 80 times in the Gospels. It appears that he uses the phrase to connect his work to the figure in the vision of the prophet Daniel. There “one like a son of man” establishes God’s rule and destroys the evil kingdoms that have dominated his people ([Daniel 7:13, 14](#)).

The phrase emphasizes Jesus’ authority and power as well as his humanity and humility (compare [Philippians 2:6–11](#)). Nearer the beginning of his ministry, Jesus used the phrase primarily when asserting his authority as the divine king ([Mark 2:10, 11, 28](#)). But after Peter confessed him to be the Christ, Jesus began to use the phrase to warn of his coming suffering and death ([8:31; 9:12, 31; 10:33, 34, 45](#)).

Those predictions are about to be realized. This is in keeping with the prophets who spoke of one who was to be rejected and suffer as God's servant ([Isaiah 52:13–53:12](#); [Zechariah 13:7](#)). This, says Jesus repeatedly, is the climax and fulfillment of God's plan.

21b. “But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born.”

God's purpose does not absolve the betrayer of guilt (see [Acts 1:15–25](#)). Judas is not compelled by God to do what God's plan requires. Even so, the all-knowing, all-powerful God can use Judas's evil act for good (compare [Genesis 50:20](#)). The betrayer, like all humans, remains fully responsible for his actions and so fully subject to God's judgment.

But that holy judgment stands alongside God's loving mercy. One disciple will betray Jesus, but all will abandon him ([Mark 14:27–31](#), [50](#)). Those willing to receive his mercy can be welcomed back—and will be after the resurrection ([16:7](#)). The faithful are those who seek and receive Christ's forgiveness, not those who never need it, as if such people even exist ([2:17](#)).

B. Celebrated as a Passover (vv. 22–25)

22. While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given

thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take it; this is my body.”

In Jesus' time, the host customarily takes the bread and distributes it to the others at the table. But Jesus does so with an unexpected declaration: *this is my body*. The dividing of a body suggests the cutting up of an animal offered as a sacrifice on the altar of the tabernacle or temple (see [Leviticus 1:6](#), [12](#)). Jesus is thus identifying himself as the supreme sacrificial offering for sins. He takes the place of the sacrificial lamb (compare [Exodus 12:3–10](#), [21–23](#)).

Jesus' actions also echo his miraculous feeding of great crowds in the wilderness. As at this Passover meal, Jesus had taken the loaves and fish to bless or give thanks before feeding the people ([Mark 6:41](#); [8:6](#)). Those events in sparsely populated areas served as reminders of God's provision for Israel when he sent manna to feed them in the wilderness ([Exodus 16](#)). Jesus' actions also recall Israel's expectation of a great feast that celebrates God's reclaiming the world for himself ([Isaiah 25:6–9](#); compare [Matthew 8:11](#)). Now all these events are tied together in Jesus' impending death and resurrection.

23. Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it.

Jesus repeats his actions, this time with a *cup*, the content of which is “the fruit of the vine” (see [Mark 14:25](#), below). At Passover, the host invokes God’s blessing on the guests’ drinking of this in celebration of Israel’s deliverance from Egypt. Previously, Jesus had used the word *cup* as a figure of speech for his impending death. In so doing, he asked the disciples if they were ready to drink of the same cup ([Mark 10:38](#)). Now he offers them a literal cup, and the imagery is that they will receive the benefit of his death and follow him in self-sacrificial service ([8:34–38](#); [10:43–45](#)).

What Do You Think?

What are some ways your church can help people better understand and appreciate the significance of the Lord’s Supper?

Digging Deeper

As you consider historical and doctrinal points to emphasize, think also of how to spot false analogies.

24. “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” he said to them.

We easily imagine the disciples are startled as Jesus identifies the contents of the cup with his own *blood*. Hindsight tells us that *poured out for many* indicates blood to be poured out as that of a sacrificial animal (compare [Leviticus 4:7](#); [1 Peter](#)

[1:18, 19](#)). This represents the animal’s life being given to make atonement ([Leviticus 17:11](#)). Thus does Jesus frame his looming death in terms that remind us of God’s promise in [Isaiah 53:11, 12](#).

Blood is associated with the covenant that God made with Israel at Mount Sinai. Moses took a basin of blood from a sacrificial animal and sprinkled it on the assembled people of Israel as a sign of God’s covenant ([Exodus 24:8](#)). Now Jesus announces a *covenant* that fulfills the intent and promises of the earlier covenants God made with Israel (compare [2 Samuel 7:5–16](#); [Ezekiel 37:24–25](#)). This intent concerns, above all, the forgiveness of sin ([Jeremiah 31:34](#)). That forgiveness results in the promised restoration of God’s blessing and the establishment of his rule. All God’s promises converge here (compare [Isaiah 2:2](#); [42:6](#); [49:6](#); etc.).

FOOD FOR THE HOLIDAYS

Holiday celebrations often include specific foods as a part of the observance. For instance, in Great Britain on Guy Fawkes Night, British citizens light bonfires and snack on bonfire toffee. Americans eat pumpkin pie almost exclusively at Thanksgiving. In the Philippines, a traditional Christmas dinner includes a whole roasted pig. Some Christians celebrate Shrove Tuesday, the day before the

fasting associated with Lent. Depending on where one is celebrating, pancakes, omelets, and various soups might be part of the local culinary tradition.

The Passover meal in first-century Judaism also required specific foods. These included lamb, bitter herbs, fruit of the vine, and unleavened bread. Jesus and his disciples certainly knew the meaning of the food eaten at his final Passover meal. But when Jesus took the bread and the cup, he replaced old significance with new. Are we sure we grasp the full import of that change?

—J. E.

25. “Truly I tell you, I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”

Jesus again summarizes the significance of his actions with the solemn invocation *truly* (see commentary on [Mark 14:18](#), above). To forego *the fruit of the vine* suggests a significant interruption. What seems hidden from the disciples is clear enough to us in hindsight: Jesus is pointing to his impending death.

Further, Jesus is pointing beyond his death to the establishment of God’s promised rule of justice and peace over the world. Only then will he celebrate again: *in the kingdom of God*, with all his disciples. Jesus’ actions at Passover are pointing to the celebration in the future

when God’s victory is complete and all his people are gathered in celebration (compare [Isaiah 2:1–5](#); [Micah 4:1–5](#)).

What Do You Think?

What are some ways we can deepen our awareness of God’s present and future reign while we participate in the Lord’s Supper?

Digging Deeper

Consider further how that deepened awareness should influence your walk with Christ daily.

II. Covenant Described ([HEBREWS 8:6, 7, 10–12](#))

The book of Hebrews was written to urge Jewish Christians not to abandon their faith in Jesus as God’s promised king. The book demonstrates how the new covenant in Jesus does greater things than God’s covenant with Israel could do.

A. Fulfilling Israel’s Covenant (vv. 6, 7)

6. But in fact the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, since the new covenant is established on better promises.

To say that Jesus has a ministry that is *superior* is to compare him favorably with those who ministered before. He is the

true *mediator* between God and humanity, a priest who is free from sin and so able to make an effective sacrifice of his own life for others ([Hebrews 9:11-14](#)).

Therefore, Jesus establishes a *covenant* that is *superior* to what had come before. He does not merely point forward to God's salvation; Jesus' *covenant* actually accomplishes salvation ([Hebrews 9:15](#)). The promises fulfilled are thus greater as well. God's people are led not just by God's king or prophet but by God's own Son ([2 Samuel 7:11-14](#); [Hebrews 7:17-25](#)).

Lasting rest is now possible (see [Revelation 14:13](#); [21:1-4](#)). Such rest is not possible in earthly cities such as Jerusalem. But it is guaranteed in the heavenly Jerusalem, a city built by God. There God will dwell with his people forever ([Revelation 21:9-27](#)).

What Do You Think?

How will your understanding of the benefits of God's covenant promises help you overcome temptations to abandon the Christian faith?

Digging Deeper

Consider various contexts in which that temptation might occur (examples: relationship crisis; health crisis; church conflict).

7. For if there had been nothing wrong with that first covenant, no place would have been sought for

another.

God did not make a mistake in giving the *first covenant*. Neither did Moses or the other prophets who delivered and affirmed it. Rather, the old covenant's problem was that by design it could not rescue people permanently from sin (compare [Ezekiel 11:17-20](#)). It was partial, pointing to something greater.

Israel's failure to keep the old covenant demonstrates that it could not prevent the people from sinning and falling away from faithfulness. Because of their wayward hearts, the Israelites found themselves not blessed by the covenant but instead under the curse of exile ([Deuteronomy 11:26-28](#)). The greater covenant to come, brought by Jesus, carries the perfect fulfillment of God's blessings. It provides the power by which people can genuinely fulfill his purposes in the world ([John 14:12-17](#); [17:1-5](#)).

B. Making a New People (vv. 10-12)

10. "This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.

Having introduced the concept of a greater covenant, the author of Hebrews quotes from [Jeremiah 31:31-34](#). This text promised Israel that after its exile, God

would establish a better covenant. By it we can experience the fulfillment of his purposes.

Jeremiah prophesied of laws written not on stone like the Ten Commandments but on *hearts*, internalized by covenant members. The lives of his *people* under the new covenant demonstrate that God is fulfilling his will in them. Christians are a people who show God's light in a dark world that does not know him (compare [John 1:9-13](#)).

CARRY IT WITH YOU

The early 1990s saw the release of a pocket-size resource titled *The U.S. Constitution & Fascinating Facts About It*. This booklet became a best-seller. In the weeks preceding the 2016 U.S. election, the demand for pocket-size copies of the Constitution was so great that over 100,000 free copies were distributed by a nonprofit organization. A college went a step further, offering not only free pocket editions but also a free online class on the U.S. Constitution.

As vital as the U.S. Constitution is to American citizens, words of greater importance exist: those of the new covenant. In the new covenant, God did more than make a small version of his laws available for us to carry in our pockets. He promised to write them on our hearts. How do you remember that you

carry his covenant with you?

—J. E.

11. “No longer will they teach their neighbor, or say to one another, ‘Know the Lord,’ because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.

Membership in Old Testament Israel was primarily, though not exclusively, a matter of family ([Numbers 15:14-16](#)). One was born into the covenant people, and the sign of the covenant, circumcision, was applied to male children eight days after their birth ([Genesis 17:10-14](#)). Though they were made covenant members by birth and especially by male circumcision, Israelites still required instruction in their faith ([Deuteronomy 6:6-9](#)).

In Jesus, by contrast, the gospel message is the means of incorporation. Those who belong to the covenant belong by faith in the Jesus who is proclaimed in the gospel ([Romans 3:21-24](#); [Galatians 2:15, 16](#)). All covenant members are those who already know the Lord. The book of Hebrews of course does not rule out additional instruction for Christ's followers. The letter itself is additional instruction! But the covenant promised through Jeremiah now has its fulfillment in the community of those who believe the gospel message. (Another viewpoint proposes that the statement *they will all*

know me points to an ultimate future in Heaven.)

What Do You Think?

Which should be more important to our walk with Christ: knowing God's laws in our mind, or feeling them in our hearts? Why?

Digging Deeper

In what ways, if any, should your response take into account personality differences and/or spiritual maturity? Why?

12. “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”

The grace that God has always exercised comes to full fruit in this new covenant ([Isaiah 43:25](#)). The sin of all humanity has its answer here. By God's mercy, made available through Christ's sacrifice, all people can find forgiveness in this new covenant ([Matthew 28:18-20](#); [Acts 26:18](#)).

Conclusion

A. How the Lord's Supper Defines Us

As Passover defined Old Testament Israel as God's covenant people, so the Lord's Supper defines Christians. This feast is a way of remembering how God covered our imperfect lives with his perfect mercy by Jesus' sacrificial death. It

represents the connections of mercy, love, and service we have with one another as God's people. It reminds us of the greater covenant by which we serve as God's light in the world.

B. Prayer

Lord God, we are filled with thanksgiving to be called your people! By your Spirit, empower us to live and serve as those who have been forgiven by the blood of our Lord Jesus. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

C. Thought to Remember

God's fulfilled promises call us to lives filled with Christlikeness.

INVOLVEMENT LEARNING

Enhance your lesson with [NIV Bible](#)
Student

Into the Lesson

Ask the class to name special observances and holidays that are important to them. Jot responses on the board. Then go through that list and ask the following of each one named: 1-What does this commemorate? 2-What elements of this holiday or observance are joyful and which are sorrowful? 3-Is this something celebrated with families, specific communities, or as a nation?

Alternative. Place copies of “A Jewish Holiday” activity from the reproducible page, which you can download, in students’ chairs before they arrive. Have students work individually to match the list of Jewish traditions to the list of Jewish holidays with which they belong. After a minute, have students share their answers with the class, including their knowledge of the significance of the holidays or traditions listed.

After either activity, lead into the Bible study by saying, “The Israelites themselves had greatly revered commemorations. But there was one in particular that Jesus took time to teach his disciples a new way to celebrate. To fully

understand this new celebration, we must first look at the Passover feast as originally instituted.”

Into the Word

Form learners into pairs and give each a handout (you create) of a blank Venn diagram. Explain that a Venn diagram consists of two large circles that overlap, with the overlapping area representing what the two circles have in common.

Ask one person of each pair to look up [Mark 14:17-25](#) and the other to look up [Hebrews 8:6, 7, 10-12](#). Ask learners to examine closely their texts as they fill in the Venn diagram. Instruct them to label the left circle “Passover” and the right circle “Lord’s Supper.” Explain that the Passover section that does not overlap should include elements that are unique to the Passover; likewise, the Lord’s Supper section that does not overlap should include elements that are unique to the Lord’s Supper. Stress that the overlapping middle section should include elements common to both.

Possible responses: *Passover*—celebrated annually, usually observed at home with the full family, includes bitter herbs and a retelling of the story of the exodus from Egypt; *Lord’s Supper*—observed regularly throughout the year, usually observed in a church

setting, expresses the foundation of the new covenant; *Overlapping*—joyful yet solemn, unites those who experience it together, the use of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine.

After pairs finish, create a larger Venn diagram on the board. Fill in each section as a class. Use the lesson text, commentary, and other passages to resolve misunderstandings.

Into Life

Close the class by having the students take a personal look at the Lord's Supper. Do this by encouraging students to finish this sentence: "The Lord's Supper is significant to me because _____." Then

ask students to finish this sentence: "Practical ways to add more significance to participating in communion include _____." (*Possible responses:* recalling

that this act reaffirms the new covenant; when taking the bread, remembering why the bread is without yeast; etc.)

Then say, "Be sure to implement the practical plans that promote the most biblical meaning the next time you participate in the Lord's Supper." Read [1 Corinthians 11:23-26](#) and allow a minute of reflection on the passage.

Alternative. Distribute the "The Lord's Supper" activity from the reproducible page. Have students take one minute to

reflect individually on how the elements of the Lord's Supper are significant. Then ask for volunteers to share their thoughts.

Close in prayer: "Lord, thank you so much for Jesus' sacrificial death. May our lives be defined by his sacrifice. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen."