



Our Atonement

JESUS CAME TO DIE ON THE CROSS FOR OUR SINS.

MATTHEW 26:17-30

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?

 **How does death sometimes sharpen our focus on the things that really matter in life?**

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

MATTHEW 26:1-75

The extensive narrative of confrontation in Jerusalem that began in chapter 21 reaches its conclusion with the arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus. Matthew 26:1-46 sets the stage by recounting several preparatory events leading to the arrest and the beginning of the trials of Jesus. Each incident plays an important part in the preparation for Jesus's atoning death. The events in chapter 26 are not necessarily presented in chronological order. For instance, the narrative of the woman anointing Jesus's body with costly perfume in verses 6-13 took place on Saturday evening according to John's Gospel. John also identified this woman as Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha (see John 12:1-3).

Matthew began chapter 26 with the fourth prediction of Jesus's death (see also 16:21; 17:9,12,22-23; 20:18-19; 26:2). With the mention of His impending death, Jesus gave a clue as to the time these events took place. Passover began on Thursday evening at sundown. Therefore, Jesus most likely spoke these words on Tuesday, the same day of His Olivet Discourse (chaps. 24-25). Also on that day, or perhaps a day earlier, the chief priests met to initiate Jesus's arrest (26:3-5). Sometime that afternoon, while Jesus spoke of end times under the olive trees on the Mount of Olives, Judas the betrayer sold Him out (vv. 14-16).

Sometime on Thursday, Jesus sent John and Peter to prepare for the Passover celebration (see Luke 22:8). Following the Passover meal, Jesus returned to the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, where He spent an agonizing time in prayer as He faced the coming event of the crucifixion (vv. 36-46).

During the short journey to the garden of Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives, Jesus predicted the denial of Peter (vv. 30-35). The fulfillment of this prediction would take place following Jesus's arrest while Jesus was undergoing an informal trial before Caiaphas, the high priest (vv. 69-75).



Read Matthew 26:17-30 in your Bible. What emotions do you think the disciples felt at this “final meal” with Jesus, especially considering the statement about betrayal?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

COMING BETRAYAL (MATT. 26:17-25)

¹⁷ On the first day 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 “Go into the city to a certain man,” he said, “and tell him, ‘The Teacher says: My time is near; 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 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 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 in the bowl—he will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him, but woe 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.

VERSES 17-20

The week known as Holy Week reached Thursday, the *first day of Unleavened Bread*. This was the designation for an eight-day festival that began with the *•Passover* and continued for seven days after *Passover*. The terms *Unleavened Bread* and *Passover* were used interchangeably to speak of this festival remembering the event that began the exodus from Egypt.

Preparations for eating the Passover meal included buying the various items needed 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.

Jesus gave Peter and John specific instructions about *where* they were to *make preparations*. Luke indicated they would encounter a man carrying a water jug. They were to follow him (Luke 22:10). Some scholars have speculated the upper room was in a house belonging to the parents of John Mark, the cousin of Barnabas and writer of the second Gospel.

The cryptic instructions likely were designed to hide the location of the Passover meal from Judas, who may have jumped at the

chance to pass on its location to the soldiers of the chief priests. Judas, just like the other nine disciples, would not know the location of the upper room until they entered the room with Jesus.

Preparing the Passover involved leading the animal into the temple precinct through the Nicanor gates. Here a priest would cut the throat of the lamb, allowing its blood to flow out into a bowl and then poured it at the base of the altar. Peter and John would then carry the carcass of the sheep on two staves to the house where the upper room was located and roast it for the Passover meal.

VERSES 21-25

While Jesus had spoken several times about His upcoming arrest and crucifixion, this was the first time He mentioned a traitor among His followers. Eleven of the disciples were devastated by the statement of Jesus. **Each one** began to say, **Surely not I, Lord?** Each disciple was hoping for a negative answer from Jesus: “No, you are not the one.”

The Passover meal included several instances when each participant would dip a piece of unleavened bread in the bowl on the table. Even so, Jesus assured them that only one of them would betray Him. What made this statement even more devastating was the fact that in that culture, sharing a meal with someone was an expression of friendship. The Passover meal was also very sacred. For someone to reveal a betrayal during such an occasion added to the horrific nature of the betrayal.

While the impending death of Jesus was the fulfillment of both prophecy and the plan of God, the actions of Judas arose from his own willful choice. There is no conflict between God’s sovereign will and Judas’s free will. Jesus was not a victim of some political process but the center of God’s plan for the salvation of humanity. Judas was not merely a pawn in God’s plan but someone who acted out of his own decisions and perhaps flawed thinking. Because of this, Judas would suffer the consequences for his decision.

Notice how Judas’s question to Jesus was similar to that of the other disciples with one exception. Instead of calling Jesus *Lord*, as in verse 22, Judas called Him **Rabbi**. In the Gospel of Matthew none of the other disciples ever called Jesus *Rabbi*. This was a term used by others as they addressed Jesus. This perhaps points to the fact that Judas no longer was a part of these men who followed so closely to Jesus.

While there is much speculation on the motives of Judas for his willingness to turn Jesus over to the chief priests, the only

clue comes from John's Gospel. John tells us Judas was a thief (John 12:6). No doubt, however, there was more to Judas's thinking than just greed. Was there an attempt to force Jesus's hand and make Him begin His revolution against Rome? Was this His attempt to bring in a literal kingdom on earth?

 **What can we do to resist becoming immune to the dangers of sin?**

 **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.)

COMING ATONEMENT (MATT. 26:26-30)

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."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, 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 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.

VERSES 26-29

At this point in history, the Passover had been celebrated for over 1,500 years. Now Jesus was going to change everything. In God's plan of salvation, this evening in Jerusalem would be the last officially sanctioned Passover. Jesus would soon be the once-for-all sacrifice to bring deliverance from the penalty of sin.

The Passover meal included prayers, blessings, and sharing a variety of dishes with different meanings. One of those dishes was the *matzah* bread, a flat, unleavened piece of **bread** that

represented the bread eaten in haste in Egypt as the Israelites prepared to flee. Jesus broke and gave this *bread* to each disciple with the instructions to ***take and eat***. With this action, Jesus changed the meaning of this bread. The breaking of the bread pointed to His death. No longer was this a reminder of the exodus event; now it would serve as a reminder of Christ's atoning death.

Four cups of wine were used in the Passover ceremony. The sharing of each cup was accompanied by prayers and blessing. ***After giving thanks***, Jesus gave one of these cups to the disciples with the instructions to ***drink from it***. Most likely this was the third ***cup*** of the Passover, called the cup of redemption. This was based on the promise in Exodus 6:7 that God would redeem His people from slavery. Jesus transformed this *cup* into the cup of remembrance. Instead of a cup that looked forward to a promised redemption, the cup became a remembrance of Jesus's sacrifice that paid for our redemption.

Jesus called this cup ***my blood of the covenant***. A covenant is a binding agreement or an oath-bound promise between two parties. God's covenants in the Old Testament were ratified through blood sacrifices. In the death of Jesus, a new covenant was instituted through His blood, giving the pathway to a right relationship with God.

Verse 28 is perhaps the watershed verse in the Gospel of Matthew. This statement from Jesus—***my blood . . . is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins***—is the reason behind everything narrated in this Gospel. Jesus came for one purpose. Everything He taught, all He endured from His enemies, led to this purpose of shedding His blood so that sins could be forgiven. Jesus spoke of His *blood* being *poured out*, a phrase that echoes Isaiah 53:12, where God spoke of His servant voluntarily pouring out His life in death. The Old Testament declared that the life is in the blood (see Lev. 17:11). Thus, the picture of Jesus pouring out His blood on the cross was a statement that He poured out His life unto death to grant forgiveness of sin. This was done *for many*. This includes all who place their trust in Him.

Jesus's words, ***but I tell you***, were spoken emphatically to emphasize the statement to follow. In this statement about not drinking ***from this fruit of the vine from now on***, Jesus was speaking of His departure from this earth. While this statement of Jesus might convey hopelessness, Jesus didn't leave the thought there. He also spoke of drinking it ***new with you in my Father's kingdom***. This was a word of hope. His death would not

be the end. He would return to bring in the *Father's kingdom*. This statement of Jesus was both a looking back in remembrance of His sacrificial death for the sins of the world and a looking forward to His return and the establishment of His earthly kingdom.

VERSE 30

The Hallel psalms or Hallelujah psalms, Psalms 113–118, were used extensively in the Passover celebration. These psalms would have been sung by the temple singers during the time when John and Peter were sacrificing the Passover lamb in the temple that afternoon before the Passover meal. The Hallel psalms were sung throughout the Passover meal. Now, as Jesus and the disciples concluded the celebration, a final psalm was sung, most likely Psalm 118. As they finished, Jesus and His disciples returned to the area on the **•Mount of Olives** where they had spent much time during the final week (see Luke 21:37).



Why is it important for believers to remember Jesus's sacrifice on the cross?



BIBLE SKILL: *Compare multiples 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?

APPLY THE TEXT

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

 **According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, Christians are to approach the Lord's Supper with care and examination. Discuss with your group some helpful approaches to using the Lord's Supper observance for personal examination. Share ways to prepare for participating in the Lord's Supper that have been meaningful for members of your group.**

 **While we will never know the mind of Judas as he betrayed Jesus, we can know our own mind. How might you be tempted to betray Jesus and deny Him as Peter did? What steps might you take to eliminate these false steps from your life?**

 **Memorize Matthew 26:28.**

Prayer Needs
