

Luke 22:1-23 Planning The Last Supper

This time of year, many of us are involved in planning or arranging various upcoming events. Thanksgiving is not far off, and then Christmas after that, and these holidays often require a good bit of planning.

One of the key themes in our text today is planning or arranging. As Judas is plotting with the leaders of the Jews to betray Jesus, Jesus and the disciples are making plans for their final Passover meal together. Behind the scenes, God is orchestrating all of these events according to his sovereign plan. All the arrangements, for both good and evil, are falling into place to guarantee the desired outcome. Just a few hours after the Last Supper, Jesus would be arrested, tried, and crucified.

Today we'll be considering a text in which Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper.

Christian churches of different persuasions disagree about a lot of things. But one thing you can expect in almost every Christian church is that the congregation will observe the Lord's Supper. There's a great variety of understanding about what the Lord's Supper does for the one partaking of it, but there is almost universal agreement among all Christians that believers in Jesus should observe the Lord's Supper.

On Thursday evening of the passion week, Jesus met with his disciples for the Passover meal, what we often call the Last Supper. This was a very important event. It was Jesus' last meal with his disciples, and it set the pattern for a very important ritual of the Christian church—the Lord's Supper/Communion. At the Last Supper, Jesus explains some important details regarding his imminent death and establishes a ritual to commemorate his death. It's important for us to understand the meaning of this event and how it pertains to us today. And it gives us an occasion to examine whether we are genuine disciples of Jesus.

Let's take a look at the planning or arrangements we find in this text.

- I. .1-6 The Jewish leaders arrange with Judas to betray Jesus.
 - A. .2 The Jews were actively scheming/planning to kill Jesus. He was in Jerusalem for the Passover, and so they were plotting to kill him while he was in the city.

We should review what the Passover was all about: The Passover was the annual celebration of Israel's exodus from slavery in Egypt. Each Jewish family killed a lamb and spread its blood on the lintel of the door, thereby allowing the angel of death to "pass over" them. God spared the Israelites and punished the Egyptians, resulting in the escape of the Jews from slavery. The nation of Israel celebrated the Passover every year.

Passover itself was a one-day event, but it was followed by the Feast of Unleavened Bread, a seven-day feast. Sometimes all eight days were called "the Passover" (Luke 2:41; 22:1; Acts 12:3–4) or the seven days were the "Passover Week" (John 19:14).¹

The chronology of these events is a bit difficult. My understanding is that this meal was conducted on Thursday evening, after sundown. This would have been on the 15th of Nisan (March-April), the same day that the Passover lambs would have been slaughtered for the Passover feast. Jesus and the disciples had this meal on Thursday night, whereas most of the Jews would have observed the feast on Friday. But for the Jews, a day extended from sunset to sunset, so this Thursday evening meal was conducted on the same day as the Friday meal.

Regarding the Passover meal, the Jews observed it according to a rather strict traditional order. The meal consisted of prayers, eating various kinds of food, singing, and drinking wine.

Quote: The Passover was a carefully ordered ritual in which each element of the meal reminded the participants of their redemption from Egypt.²

During this holy season, while many thousands of Jews were planning their Passover celebration, Judas and the leaders of the Jews were plotting Jesus' murder.

- B. .3 Judas was under Satanic control. This tells us one reason why Judas betrayed Jesus.

¹ John A. Martin, "Luke," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*, ed. J. F. Walvoord and R. B. Zuck, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1985), 258–259.

² Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 540.

1. Satan himself apparently possessed Judas, showing that Judas never was a genuine follower of Christ.

John 13:2 ... *the devil ... put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him;*

2. This implies that Satanic/demonic possession is a real thing. We see demonic possession many times in the NT, but I think this is the only time the Bible states that Satan “entered” into someone.
3. Does the fact that Judas was possessed by Satan clear him of personal responsibility for this sin? No—note vs. 22.
4. This also shows that Jesus’ death was not due simply to human conspiracies. Our enemy, the devil, the accuser of the brethren, was deeply involved in the plot to kill Jesus. Even so, it was not Satan that put Jesus on the cross, nor was it Judas or even Pilate. Jesus went to his death willingly, as a voluntary sacrifice for our sins.

C. .4 Judas initiated the betrayal; he actively sought to betray Jesus to the Jewish leaders. Judas went to the Jewish authorities and volunteered to betray Jesus to them at a convenient time and place without a public disturbance.

D. .5 Judas agreed to a certain payment (30 pieces of silver—Mt 26:15). We know that Judas was the treasurer of the group, and that he used some of the money for his own purposes. But Judas had already decided to betray Jesus before the Jews offered him any money. I think Judas was greedy, but I don’t think his greed was the main reason he betrayed Jesus.

E. .5 “they were glad” – they rejoiced (*χαίρω*); they were delighted. These wicked men were plotting the murder of an innocent man, and it made them happy that Judas was willing to help them in their plot.

App: We should not be surprised that sin and evil, betrayal and murder, make wicked people happy. People rejoice in their drunkenness and adultery. They delight in abortion, homosexuality, and destructive riots. There is pleasure in sin, but there is also great costs and consequences involved with sin, as Judas found out.

F. .6 Judas sought an opportunity to betray Jesus when a crowd was not present. Jerusalem would have been filled with Jewish people celebrating the Passover, and many of them believed that Jesus was the Messiah. The religious leaders of the Jews wanted to arrest Jesus without causing a riot.

Cf. vs. 2 “they feared the people,” and vs. 6 “in the absence of the multitude” – These corrupt, murderous Jewish leaders represented a minority of the Jews. It was not the people’s will to kill Jesus, it was the will of the leaders of Israel. It was not the general public who rejected Jesus; it was the official leaders of the nation. And Judas was plotting with them to get rid of Jesus.

Trans: While Judas is arranging his betrayal of Jesus...

II. .7-13 The disciples arranged the Last Supper for Jesus.

The details of the story show that Jesus was in full control of everything that happened. He is actively putting into motion a plan that will result in his death just a few hours later. All of this was unfolding according to his divine, sovereign plan.

A. .7 The Passover arrived.

For the Passover meal, a lamb would be slaughtered, its blood would be sprinkled on the altar at the temple, and then the lamb would be roasted and eaten with unleavened bread, other condiments, and wine.

B. .10-13 Jesus sent Peter and John to make arrangements.

1. These arrangements were made on Thursday afternoon, before sunset.

2. It seems as if *only* Peter and John knew about these arrangements. Had Judas known ahead of time about the group meeting in this quiet upper room, he perhaps may have used that occasion to bring the authorities to arrest Jesus.

3. .12 This “large upper room” would have been a second-story room accessible by an outside stairway. The owner of the place had prepared for everything they needed for their supper.

4. .13 The fact that Jesus knew all these facts and what would happen shows his control of all these events. God is sovereign even over these minor details; all of this is going to plan.

Trans: After all of these arrangements are made, ...

III. .14-23 Jesus fulfilled his plan to have the Last Supper with his disciples.

A. .14-15 Jesus reclined at the table with his disciples.

If you've ever seen a picture of DaVinci's *Last Supper*, you may think that the disciples were sitting on chairs around a table. But the words "sat down" (KJV) (ἀναπίπτω) literally means, "to lie back, to recline at a table." They were not sitting on chairs but lying on cushions around a low table. That was their normal practice/tradition.

And the tables likely would have been set up in a U/horseshoe shape. Jesus would have been situated at the head of the table with the inner disciples closest to him.

1. .14 When "the hour was come" – i.e., sunset, the official beginning of the next day—the Passover. Note that all twelve of the apostles are there, including Judas.

2. .15 "With desire I have desired..." – i.e., I have greatly/eagerly desired... Jesus had been looking forward to sharing this last meal with them. This was their final fellowship meal together before his crucifixion. And the language here shows that this is a very significant occasion. Jesus saw it as very important.

3. "before I suffer" – Jesus had always avoided the previous plots to arrest him; but now the hour had come for him to suffer, and Jesus willingly submitted to the plot.

B. 16-18 Jesus will not participate again until "the kingdom of God" comes.

1. Jesus participated in *this* supper, but it would be the last time he observed the Passover until the kingdom comes to the earth.

2. Note the language: "until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God." The Passover is a picture of how God saves his people, and the coming kingdom would "fulfill" that OT picture. Just as the blood of the lamb saved the Jews from the death angel at the original Passover, so Jesus would shed his blood to save his people from spiritual death. Just as God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt, Jesus will save his people from slavery to sin.

3. This also shows that Jesus knew that his coming death would not be final. He knew that he was about to die, but he also planned to enjoy fellowship with his disciples after his death, in the kingdom.
4. What “kingdom of God” did Jesus have in mind here? This is obviously the coming kingdom of the Messiah, in which Christ reigns over the nations from the throne of David. This is the Millennium.

Cf. vss. 29-30—that does not seem to be referring to the church.

This clearly shows that we are *not* now living in the kingdom of God; it is yet future. Every time we observe the Lord’s Supper, we look forward to Jesus’ return and to the establishment of his kingdom. We continue to observe the Lord’s Supper “until he comes” (1 Cor 11:26).

C. .19-20 Jesus institutes the Lord’s Supper.

1. Regarding the elements of the Lord’s Supper: bread and wine were very common food items in that culture, and they were part of the Passover meal. Jesus takes these common elements and charges/fills them with unique spiritual meaning. From this point on, the bread and the cup have enormous significance for Christians.

BTW, the “cup” was filled with the “fruit of the vine,” i.e., wine. The Passover meal typically included four glasses of wine. At that time, wine was only slightly alcoholic, and it was normally mixed with water. No one got drunk drinking four cups of wine.

2. .19 “This is my body.” The broken bread *symbolized* Jesus’ body that was sacrificed for the forgiveness of sin. The bread does not *become* the body of Jesus, it represents it.
3. .20 “This cup is the new testament/covenant in my blood.”
 - a) As we see throughout the OT, the blood of an animal was shed to cover/atone for the sin of the sinner. The innocent would die for the guilty. The life of the animal was an adequate payment to satisfy God’s wrath against sin.
 - b) The OT Passover points *forward* to Christ, and the NT tradition of the Lord’s Supper points *back* to Christ. He fulfills both pictures.

1 Cor 5:7 ... *Christ our passover is sacrificed for us:*

The Passover lamb is a picture of Christ's final sacrifice on the cross.

- c) Note vs. 19 "given for you..." and vs. 20 "shed for you." Jesus gave his body and blood for us, on our behalf. This is what we call the vicarious/substitutionary atonement. His death satisfied God's wrath against sin for those who believe in him.
- d) Forgiveness is *available* for all, but *applied* only to those who believe in Jesus.

Since Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, Christians have been following this example. They pass out bread and wine/juice and commemorate Jesus' death and remember what it means.

Quote: We may understand Jesus as instructing his followers not only to continue sharing meals together, but to do so in a way that their fellowship meals recalled the significance of his own life and death in obedience to God on behalf of others.³

Various Christians have different ideas regarding the meaning of these words—"this is my body...this is my blood." What did Jesus mean by that? I won't take the time to go through all the options.

[The RC view is...

We should note that the OT clearly and repeatedly prohibited the drinking of an animal's blood (Lev 3:17, 7:26-27, 17:14). There's no way any of these Jews would have drunk this liquid if they thought it actually became blood—either animal or human—in a literal sense. They recognized the symbolism involved here.

The Lutheran view is... "in, under, with"]

What seems obvious here is stated very clearly: Vs. 19—"this do in remembrance of me." This is a memorial supper. The bread and the fruit of the vine *represent* Jesus' body and blood. He's using symbolic language here—the broken bread and poured out wine symbolize/represent Jesus' bloody, sacrificial death on the cross.

³ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1997), 762.

We take the *memorial* view of the LS. We don't take the LS as a *sacrament*—i.e., a means of saving grace, a channel through which we are saved. We take it as an ordinance to be observed by those who are already saved. We do it to remember, not to be saved.

D. .20 Jesus establishes a new covenant (“testament” KJV) in his blood.

A covenant is a contract or an agreement; and often in the OT, covenants were ratified/inaugurated with the shedding of the blood of a sacrifice. The shed blood of Jesus ratified/established a new covenant between God and his people.

The book of Jeremiah tells us about this new covenant.

Jer 31:31-33 *“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers [when I led] them out of the land of Egypt, ... But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.*

When Jesus died on the cross, he ratified/initiated this new covenant or agreement, a new arrangement between himself and his people. From that point on, it's Jesus' sacrificial death that provides the payment necessary for our forgiveness, not the blood of bulls, goats, or lambs.

I don't believe that this new covenant is merely an extension or renewal of the Old Covenant (cf. “not according to the covenant that I made”); it is something new. It has stipulations different from the OC. Jesus' death initiated something new and different. So we no longer live under the stipulations of the old covenant—the OT—unless they are repeated in the NT.

We know that the full implementation of the new covenant awaits the 2nd Coming of Christ and the earthly kingdom. But believers today are still covered by the new covenant, not the old one. We are not bound by the rules of the old covenant; we are bound by the rules of the new covenant, aka “the law of Christ.” We are NT believers; we are not the nation of Israel.

E. .21-23 Jesus reveals his betrayer's plan.

1. .21 Judas was present for at least part of the Passover meal—his “hand” was with them “on the table.” We know that Judas left the supper and went to conspire with the Jews to arrange the betrayal. But he was there for the supper.
2. .23 No one had suspected Judas of being the betrayer. Jesus had apparently not treated Judas differently from any of the other disciples. It’s quite amazing that Jesus would allow one he knew would betray him into this group.

App: Judas’ presence among the disciples shows us that within a group of believers, there may be one or more who are not saved, who are putting on a show. They are not truly followers of Christ, and given the right opportunity, might do great damage to the cause of Christ. Maybe that’s true of you this morning.

One of the main things we should do when participating in the Lord’s Supper is to ask ourselves whether we are genuinely disciples of Jesus. Some who participate are not. Before we participate, we should examine ourselves to make sure we are genuine and sincere in the faith.

Further, we know that participation in the Lord’s Supper is for believers, but it does not make you are a genuine believer. Many unbelievers observe the Lord’s Supper regularly. It does nothing positive for them; in fact, it adds to their condemnation.

3. .22 This is a very important statement because it shows us the connection between human responsibility and divine sovereignty.
 - a) The Son of man will go “as it was determined.” So there is Someone determining the outcome of events here. Jesus is not the victim of random circumstances. He’s not merely the victim of a conspiracy. He’s following a plan.
Quote: Jesus death was not a surprise or tragedy but the fulfillment of God’s purpose and plan.⁴

⁴ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 544.

b) The word “determined” (ὁρίζω) refers to God’s providential rule in and over history. Jesus’ death fulfills God’s plan and purpose. Even Judas’ betrayal of Jesus was part of the plan.

c) When was this plan determined? Did this plan go into operation because the Jews did not accept Jesus as their Messiah? Was this “plan B” when plan A didn’t work out?

No, the Bible refers to Jesus as the lamb “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8). So in the mind of God, this plan had been in place from creation. Even before man committed the first sin, God had a pre-determined plan to provide forgiveness of sin.

d) .22b “but woe...” Even though Jesus’ betrayal is part of God’s sovereign plan, what Judas is about to do is wicked and liable to God’s judgment. Judas did both what he wanted to do and what God determined beforehand for him to do. Judas is accountable/culpable for his actions. God’s sovereignty does not cancel human responsibility.

The other Gospel writers include this statement: “it would have been better for him if he had not been born.” That shows that Judas was fully responsible and accountable for his actions, and he would pay dearly for them.

e) Once again we see the intersection of human responsibility and divine sovereignty. God carries out his plan, and he does so using human agents. But those human agents are acting according to their own desires. God will hold people accountable for what they do, even if they are acting under God’s sovereign plan.

Quote: The desire of the chief priests, teachers of the law, the decision of Judas, and even the role of Satan were seen by Luke as serving the divine purpose. God is in control.⁵

⁵ Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, vol. 24, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 547.

4. .23 The disciples looked at one another and began to question among themselves who would do such a thing.
 - a) The betrayal of a friend and colleague, especially one sitting at the table eating a meal with you, was almost unheard of in ancient Jewish culture. The disciples wonder who could commit such a horrendous act of disloyalty.
 - b) The other Gospels tell us that each one asked, “Is it I?” Peter spoke to John, who was nearest to Jesus, to ask who it was. Jesus said that the one to whom he gave a piece of bread after dipping it in the sauce would be the betrayer. Judas then asked, “Is it I?” and Jesus affirmed that it was him.
5. According to the other Gospels, Jesus told Judas to do what he intended to do “quickly.” No one else at the table understood why Jesus said this. After Judas received the bread, he went out into the night.
6. And that’s a fitting place to leave Judas for the time being and to end our consideration of this passage.

This text is full of arrangements/plans.

Judas had made arrangements to betray Jesus, and we’ll see how those plans were fulfilled just a few hours after the Last Supper.

Jesus and the disciples made plans to eat the Passover meal together, and during that time, Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper.

Jesus initiated a new covenant, a new arrangement/plan between God and his people. Jesus’ death on the cross validated that new covenant. Our forgiveness is based on the sacrificial death of Jesus on our behalf.

Are you a part of the new covenant? Or are you more like Judas, one who seemed to be a disciple, but proved himself to be an enemy of God?

God’s sovereign plan for everyone involved here is being fulfilled. Judas is playing his part, the Jews are playing their role, the disciples are doing what is expected of them, and of course Jesus is fulfilling his role. All of this is leading to the climactic, predetermined, inescapable result—Jesus will die on the cross for our sins.