



## The Last Meal with Jesus (Luke 22:1-38)

We've come to the eve of the Passover, the night of Jesus' betrayal. This is the account of His last night on earth. Jesus really wanted to share the last meal with His disciples, knowing He would soon suffer terribly and die. It was not a nice cosy meal for the disciples, but a night full of drama and stress. And here Jesus was giving them the very last lesson on how to follow Him as He inched closer to the cross. He taught them how to go all the way with Him.

### A. Judas's Plot (22:1-6)

The Pharisees were Jesus' chief opponents throughout His ministry. But towards the end, the high-priestly party who had the political power took over the job of killing Jesus. They wanted to avoid creating a scene of carrying out an open arrest and public trial because Jesus was had the support of the huge Passover crowd (v2). So, when Judas took the initiative and came to them (v3-4), it simplified their task.

- 1) How was Judas going to betray Jesus? Judas was an 'inside-man'. He knew Jesus' movement. He could look for an opportune time to quietly hand Jesus over at night.
- 2) Why did Judas betray Jesus? Love of money. Out of the twelve, Judas was the only one from the south near Jerusalem. Iscariot means 'a man of Karioth'. The rest were from the Galilee region. Judas was the treasurer, and he often helped himself from the offering bag. And Judas was the only one with enough sense to get it. Jesus was going to let Himself get killed. (c.f. Mark 14:8-11) He realised he spent three years following Jesus and he was going to get 'nothing' out of it. He probably thought 'I better take whatever I can.' Jesus tells Judas to do it quickly and he does. (Jn 13:27) Thirty pieces of silver were the price of a slave! Judas was one of the twelve, chosen by Jesus. He followed Jesus for three years, preached and healed in Jesus' name. In the Old Testament, the tribe of Dan out of the twelve tribes of Israel became a traitor tribe. The tribe of Dan disappeared from history and was replaced by another.

### B. The Passover Preparation (22:7-13)

- 1) Peter and John were sent by the Lord to get a place for them to celebrate the Passover. Passover was the highlight of every year, and the Jews still observe it. They celebrate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt when the angel of death slew all the firstborn in Egypt but passed over the Jewish households under the blood. Jesus pre-arranged everything carefully. The location was kept hidden. The password was 'man carrying a jar of water'. In the Middle East only women carried jars. Peter and John were to follow this man and ask for a place in the upper room.
- 2) Why the secrecy? Jesus was buying time. He longed to eat the Passover meal with His disciples before He suffers. The night before, Judas had gone to the priests to arrange for the arrest of Jesus away from the crowd. Judas was now looking for an opportunity (Mk 14:1, 10), but he doesn't know where they will eat the Passover meal.
- 3) Leonardo Davinci's painting of the Last Supper is all wrong! They didn't sit on chairs but reclined on cushions on the floor. Their feet were in somebody's face. That's why washing of the feet was important. So that was what Jesus washed the feet of the twelve, including Judas (Jn 13:4-5).

### C. The New Covenant (21:14-20)

*'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.'* (v15) Jesus established the New Covenant with the disciples. We call this 'Communion' or 'Eucharist, Gk. *eucharisto*.' 'Eucharist' means saying, 'Thank you to God.' When we eat the Lord's Supper, we give thanks for what the 'bread' and 'wine' mean to us.

#### Three Aspects of Our Thanksgiving

- 1) Looking back to God's work of redemption at the Exodus. Jews observe it every year even to this day.
- 2) Looking at the greater Exodus of Jesus at Mt of Transfiguration. *'Moses and Elijah talked about the 'Exodus' which Jesus was about to accomplish in Jerusalem,' (Luke 9:31)* from the slavery to sin for all humanity!

What was unusual about this Passover meal? (i) They were eating the Passover meal a day early. The next day at 3pm thousands of Passover lambs were slaughtered in Jerusalem. (ii) The 'roasted lamb was missing from the table.' They just had bread and wine. Why? Jesus was the sacrificial lamb. 'Jesus our Passover Lamb has been

sacrificed.’ (1 Cor 5:7) We look to Jesus Christ, that is enough. The ‘bread’ and the ‘wine’ represented Jesus’ broken body and His shed blood (v19-20).

- 3) Looking forward to the completion of salvation. Jesus said, *‘I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’* (v18) Banquets figure prominently in Jesus’ introduction of heaven. Whenever Jesus talked about heaven, He would depict it in terms of a feast! This was another way for the disciples to remember Jesus - in terms of the future banquet in heaven. The fullness of heaven’s joy is still before them and before the Lord. He will not open the best wine until we meet all together as His family in heaven! Jesus reminds us that the full joy of heaven is deliberately withheld until our salvation is complete.

#### D. The Betrayer at the Table (21:21-23):

- 1) *‘Behold, the hand of My betrayer is with Me on the table.’* (21:21) Jesus’ statement must have raised the temperature in the room drastically. It was a greatly disturbing revelation after a great meal. Jesus repeatedly told them about the cross before, but nobody was too upset (9:22; 19:31-33). But this time they were shaken. Because Jesus said, *‘One of you will betray Me.’* Can you imagine what would have happened if Jesus exposed Judas openly or just pointed His finger at one of them?
- 2) The disciples asked the Lord one by one, *‘Is it I, Lord?’* Judas too asked brazenly. (Mk 14:9 c.f. Matt 26:25) Each of them wanted to hear Jesus say, *‘No. Not you.’* But Jesus didn’t answer them. He just said, *‘One of you will betray Me.’* That was Jesus’ last warning to Judas. Judas’ heart must have hardened to granite under Satan’s control. Judas went ahead with his plan to sell Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. Jesus said of Judas, *‘It would be better for him if he were not born.’*

#### E. Who is the Greatest? (21:24-30)

- 1) The incredible truth is that all twelve were capable of betraying Jesus. Listen to their conversation. The conversation which started with self-defence, *‘Why I can’t be the betrayer’* became a contest, *‘Why I am the best among us.’* *‘But there was also a rivalry among them, as to which of them should be considered the greatest.’* (v24) Jesus just told them He will be put to death by one of them betraying Him! And they just turned around and argued *‘Why I am the best and greatest among you.’* What was their problem? There was too much ‘self’ in each of them, which made them very vulnerable to Satan’s attack.
- 2) Who knows how many times they argued who was the greatest among them? (i) They argued about this in the early days in Galilee (Mark 9:33-34; Luke 9:46-48); (ii) It continued through their journey to Jerusalem (Matt 18:1-5; Mark 10:35-45); (iii) Even now, just a few hours before Jesus’ arrest and trial they continued to fight. ‘It seems every time Jesus talked about the cross, they were thinking of glory.’ They figured when Jesus sits on the throne, He would need a whole lot of new cabinet ministers. James and John even had their ambitious mother lobby Jesus to push her two sons over the other ten disciples (c.f. Matt 20:20-28 c.f. Mark 10:42-45). Parents must be careful not to instill carnal ambitions into their children. It can trip them up in their walk with God. Jesus patiently repeated the same lesson He went over many times for the one last time, *‘This is a sort of conversation found outside in the world. The world loves this kind of talk: Who would be in charge over whom, the prestige, the status, who will be on top of the organisational chart. But you? No, not so among you.’* (v25-26)
- 3) Jesus gives them two reasons why they should drop such a talk. (i) If you want to be My disciple and pledge to go with Me all the way, then why don’t you get your cues from Me? Jesus had just washed their dirty feet at the Passover meal (Jn 13:4-5) and said, *‘I am among you as one who serves.’* (v27) He said, *‘Let the oldest among you think of himself as the youngest because in My kingdom the greatest among you is the one who is most contented to serve without recognition.’* (v26) The true greatness in heaven is contrary to the popular understanding of greatness in this world. (ii) *‘In the next world, I will reposition everyone. You don’t need to grasp for prestige now because you will one day sit on the thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel.’* (v28-30) *Why grasp now? You just wait. This is the kindness of Jesus. The twelves may be disappointing, but they are never disowned.*

#### F. Jesus’ Prayer for Simon (21:31-34)

- 1) *‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you (plural), that he may sift you as wheat.’* (v31) ‘Simon’ means ‘reed’ and Jesus changed his name to ‘Peter’ (rock). Jesus calls him ‘Simon’ here, easily shaken in the wind. *‘Satan has asked to sift you as wheat’* just like separating the empty husk from the grain, to blow Simon off like an empty husk. ‘All big talk and no substance.’ Simon talks big again, replying with vigorous energy, *‘Lord, I am ready to go*

*with You, both to prison and to death!’ (v33) Perhaps Peter was upset Jesus did not clear him from the list of betrayers. Jesus’ response was shocking, ‘I tell you, Peter, the rooster will not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me.’ (v34)*

- 2) This is the second time Satan is mentioned in this chapter. Satan is very active in the background, trying to pick off all twelve one by one. ‘You’ here is plural. Satan has already taken control of Judas through greed. He was going after the rest by targeting Peter. He would have destroyed Peter if it hadn’t been for the Lord’s prayer for him. What was Satan’s strategy against Peter? Use his ‘self-confidence and self-reliance’. Among the twelve, Peter had outstanding zeal, but equally he was blind to his ‘self-confidence.’ This was glaringly obvious for Satan to exploit. Jesus is saying, *‘Peter, you may feel strong right now, but your strength is no match for Satan if you depend on your own zeal and dedication. But I have prayed for you, Peter, that your faith will not fail.’ (v32)* We need to remember that Jesus is praying for us even if nobody else is. That’s why even though we fail the Lord so many ways, our faith in Him will still stand today.
- 3) Jesus continued, *‘and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brothers.’ (v32)* Those who have their self-confidence shattered are the people most able to strengthen others who are weak. Our self-confidence discourages weaker people because we are busy letting everyone know how dedicated and strong we are. Just in a few hours, Peter’s self-confidence will be shattered. Only then he could become the first pastor of the early church.

## G. The Imminent Conflict (21:35-38)

- 1) Now we come to the final conversation in the upper room, which is strange and disturbing. Jesus asked them, *‘When I sent you in mission two years ago without money bag, knapsack and sandals did you lack anything at all?’ (v35) ‘No, Lord. We lacked nothing,’ they replied. Jesus said, ‘From now on when you go out take your bag, knapsack, and sword if you can get hold of it because the situation is now changed.’ (v36)*

In just a few hours Jesus will be framed as a criminal, and His disciples too will be hunted down. Jesus reminded them from the Scriptures, ‘He was numbered among the transgressors.’ (c.f. Is 53:12) And His disciples too will be counted among the criminals along with their master. Jesus was preparing them for the tough time ahead. They will need courage to fight through tough times. They will be chased out of town instead of being welcomed as before, and nobody will support their ministry. So, the disciples need to be prepared for their own ‘provision’ (money bag) and ‘protection’ (sword).

- 2) Suddenly they proudly pulled out two swords. *‘Lord, look, we have already thought about everything. Here are two swords.’ (v38)* By this point, Jesus just had enough. (v38) Even now the disciples were still ‘self-directed. They thought they were going to fight the Roman soldiers with two swords. Peter would slice someone’s ear in just a few hours, and Jesus would rebuke Peter and put back the ear (22:51). Maybe Peter was thinking of going down with Jesus fighting valiantly like the Brave Heart? But Jesus wasn’t gathering an army. Jesus’ battle was not about fighting the Romans. It was drinking the cup from the Father. He fought this battle in the garden of Gethsemane. No one understood and no one stood with Him in His hour of need. But Jesus rose from the place in victory, *‘Not My will, but Yours be done.’*
- 3) Self-direction is one of the hardest things to overcome for zealous Christians. Jesus’ instruction to His disciples differed from situation to situation. So, we have to listen to His voice continually and follow Him. Nothing will change the will of the Father – Jesus came to die. This is the most important mission Jesus came to accomplish. Nobody would understand the significance of Jesus’ death until after He rose again.

## H. Reflection

1. What is the significance of the New Covenant Jesus established with His disciples? In what ways does it parallel the past, and in what ways is it different? Do you fully receive and enjoy the New Covenant as a child of God?
2. How does greatness in heaven differ from greatness on earth? How did Jesus encourage His disciples who wanted to be great?
3. Consider ‘self-importance’, ‘self-confidence’, ‘self-direction’. How did these things get in the way of the disciples in following Jesus all the way? How do they affect your personal walk with the Lord?