

THE KING OF KINGS: A STUDY OF MATTHEW

The King's Commission: A Study of Matthew 21–28

STUDY THIRTEEN

Soul-Searching during Supper

Matthew 26:17–30

When Jesus gave Judas the bread dipped in the bowl, it was Jesus' way of saying, "It isn't too late. I know what you've been doing. This is My last offer for you to repent."

—Pastor Charles R. Swindoll

PASSOVER commemorates God's rescue of the Hebrews after 400 years of slavery in Egypt. On the night God delivered His people, He sent a plague of death upon the land. To spare His people, God told them to smear the blood of a sacrificed lamb on the doorposts of their homes. God would pass over the Hebrews' homes, but the firstborn of the Egyptians whose homes were not marked by the blood would perish (Exodus 12:1–30).

As darkness fell that night, the Hebrews ate a meal of the roasted lamb they slaughtered, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. Dressed, packed, and ready to flee, they ate in haste because their deliverance was near. Devastated by this terrible plague, Pharaoh released the Israelites the next morning. Freedom at last! "This is a day to remember," the Lord told Moses, instituting Passover as an annual festival to be celebrated "from generation to generation" (Exodus 12:14).

Each year, thousands of Jews from around the world crowded into Jerusalem to sacrifice their Passover lambs in the temple and prepare their meal of deliverance. For many, this ritual fulfilled a lifelong dream. They came to bask in the temple's purifying light. To hear songs of praise sung in a dozen languages. To sip the cup of freedom with their fellow Jews. To pray that, maybe this year, God would send the next Moses—their divine deliverer, the Messiah.

This year, their prayers were answered.



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Committed to Excellence in Communicating Biblical Truth and Its Application

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PREPARE YOUR HEART

Imagine joining the disciples gathering in the room with Jesus to celebrate Passover. Little did they realize that the fulfillment of all the ancient symbols and traditions was reclining at the table with them! Ask God to reveal the meaning of Passover as it is fulfilled in Jesus.

*“In my distress I prayed to the LORD,
and the LORD answered me and set me free.” (Psalm 118:5)*



TURN TO THE SCRIPTURES

The previous passage left off with Judas pocketing his blood money and “looking for an opportunity to betray Jesus” (Matthew 26:16). Judas’ evil deed formed a dark backdrop for the events surrounding Passover, although the disciples knew nothing about the secret treachery. Jesus, on the other hand, knew everything.

Read *Matthew 26:17–30*, noting the sub-text woven throughout the passage—the unstated message of Jesus’ words that only He and Judas (and Matthew’s readers) perceived.



Observation: The Soul-Searching Interplay between Jesus and Judas

In the observation phase, we examine the details of a biblical passage like a detective might look for clues.¹ Read Matthew 26:17–30 again, and this time look closer at the questions asked by the disciples. What do you notice about them?



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The disciples didn't know where they would eat the Passover meal, perhaps because Jesus wanted to keep the location hidden from Judas. How did Jesus move from a general statement to the group in [Matthew 26:21](#) to a specific indictment in [26:25](#) that only Judas heard?

Continue observing the text closely, looking for repeating concepts. In what ways did Jesus refer to His death, both directly and indirectly?

How might you outline the passage?

While Jesus spoke to the whole group, He was appealing to Judas to confess his sin and repent. “Woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!” (26:24 NASB). John's account notes that “Jesus was deeply troubled” (John 13:21). Jesus' warnings overflowed with feelings of compassion and grief.



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At about the time Jesus reached out to this sinner, He unveiled a new phase in God's plan of redemption for all sinners, memorialized in the Lord's Supper. Let's examine the layers of meaning of this fascinating passage as we dig into the interpretation phase.

I believe Judas expected Jesus to overthrow Rome. Judas was the type who was just waiting for the moment for Jesus to take over. But Jesus didn't. —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



Interpretation: Freedom from Slavery and Redemption from Sin

The context of this passage and its interpretation is the Passover meal. Use your resources to list the main elements of the meal and their symbolism. Read page 240 in Pastor Chuck Swindoll's commentary, *Insights on Matthew 16–28*, for a description. Summarize the basic outline of the ceremony.

Jesus made two important statements, “While they were eating” (Matthew 26:21) and “As they were eating” (26:26). This “eating” point in the ceremony probably occurred after Jesus had led the disciples in the first and second cups of wine with their corresponding blessings; after they had partaken of the bitter herbs dipped in the bowl of *haroset* and eaten the unleavened bread; and after they had recalled the Israelites' bitter bondage in Egypt and deliverance.

The Sin of Betrayal

At the point in the ceremony in which they were free to enjoy the meal, Jesus interjected: “One of you will betray me” (26:21). “Surely not I, Lord,” the disciples retorted (26:22 NASB). Then Jesus added, “One of you who has just eaten from this bowl with me will betray me” (26:23).



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They had all “eaten from this bowl” during the meal. What did Jesus mean? He was probably alluding to a psalm of David, specifically, *Psalm 41:9*. What do you think Jesus was saying to Judas by referencing this verse?²

In what ways do you think the Israelites’ bondage in Egypt compared to Judas’ bondage to sin?

Judas must have realized that he could hide no dark secrets from the Light of the World, who, after exposing Judas’ sin, showed the way to redemption to all who follow Him in faith.

The Remedy of Redemption

“As they were eating” (26:26), Jesus broke from the Passover liturgy to institute a completely new memorial for His followers. What meaning did He give the bread and the cup of wine, according to *26:26–28*?



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Jesus gave a piece of bread and offered a sip of wine to each person. What does the disciples' eating and drinking represent?

On the night of the Israelites' deliverance from Egypt, God's plague of death *passed over* the Israelites' homes, allowing the Israelites to *pass through* their blood-stained doorways into a new life of freedom.

How does this ancient deliverance compare with the redemption Jesus offered all people through His body and blood, "poured out as a sacrifice to forgive the sins of many" (Matthew 26:28)?

Jesus' confronting Judas' terrible sin in the context of the Passover meal creates a beautiful picture of redemption memorialized in the Lord's Supper. Let's take a look at how other New Testament authors explained this deeply meaningful institution.

For the first time, the disciples came to terms with their Savior whom they've always had with them. Jesus was saying, "When you observe these elements, My body and My blood, you'll remember My death on your behalf." —Pastor Chuck Swindoll



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Correlation: Further Teaching on the Lord's Supper

What additional information about the Lord's Supper does Paul offer in *1 Corinthians 11:23–26*? What is the purpose of the Lord's Supper?

The writer to the Hebrews elaborates the meaning of the new covenant in *Hebrews 9:15*. What is Christ's role in the new covenant? How does the new covenant complete the old?

According to *2 Corinthians 3:6*, what is our role in the new covenant, and how does the Holy Spirit enable us to fulfill this role?



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Application: Celebrating the Lord's Supper

Having joined the disciples at the Passover meal with Jesus, we have tasted the bitter herbs of Israel's suffering and eaten the sacrificial lamb, while across the table reclined the Lamb of God Himself. We have taken the broken bread from Him whose body was offered for us. We have received the cup from the one whose blood was poured out for the forgiveness of our sins. Now we are left with the memory of Christ's willing sacrifice on our behalf.

Pastor Chuck Swindoll summarizes the meaning of the Lord's Supper to each believer:

With the Lord's Supper, then, we have a sacred symbol that serves as a frequent reminder—both a solemn and a joyful celebration—of who Jesus is and what He has done to save us. And in this symbol, . . . Jesus gave us something we can not only see, but also touch, taste, smell, and hear. It's a confession and commemoration of the gospel that involves all five senses. What a powerful practice the Lord has left us!³

What do you think about as you survey the communion table at your church? Based on our study of Judas' betrayal, the Passover, and the Lord's Supper, what images can you dwell on to make your communion experience more meaningful?

The Lord's Supper memorializes Christ's sacrificial love for all sinners, even Judas. How can you carry the memory of Christ's love symbolized by the bread and cup throughout your day?



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Christ still offers us His morsel of love from the Passover meal. Take it. Eat it. Receive His grace, and He will set you free.



A FINAL PRAYER

Dear Father, thank You for the invitation to sit at the table to partake in the Lord's Supper. May I always cherish the grace Christ offers sinners who come in need of deliverance from the taskmaster of sin. As I celebrate communion and sing hymns of consecration and praise, draw me nearer to You than I have ever been before. I pray in Jesus' name, amen.

ENDNOTES

1. Learn more about Pastor Chuck's *Searching the Scriptures* method on the Web page, "[How to Study the Bible for Yourself](https://www.insight.org/how-to-study-the-bible-for-yourself)" at insight.org.
2. In the ancient tradition, Jesus and His disciples reclined at a low table to eat their meal, resting on their left side with their feet outward. Situated on Jesus' right side, according to John's account, John leaned back "on Jesus' bosom" to ask Jesus the identity of the betrayer (John 13:25 NASB). Jesus then dipped a piece of bread in the bowl and gave it to Judas, who was likely reclining to the left of Jesus. Situated at Jesus' back, Judas occupied the place reserved for the host's most trusted friend.
3. Charles R. Swindoll, *Swindoll's Living Insights New Testament Commentary: Insights on Matthew 16–28*, vol. 1B (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House, 2020), 245.

