

# The Lord's Supper

## Lesson 1: An Ancient Meal

Spring 2020

*Wherefore is this night distinguished from all other nights?*

—The Haggadah for Passover

Jesus introduced the Lord's Supper during Passover on the night He was betrayed. Around the Table were His twelve disciples, confident that they would never let Jesus down. All that would change quickly.

Have you ever felt the swing from confidence in Christ to despair with yourself? That's what hit the disciples on Passover night. What would Jesus do with such fickle followers? What would He do with people whose strength would soon give way? He instituted a Supper that would feed them His body and blood. Because their grip would soon give way, He would firmly take hold of them. That's grace in action!

1. In light of Jesus' actions that night, what do the words "Take, eat, this is My body; take, drink, this is My blood shed for you for the forgiveness of your sin" mean to you?

### **A Special Night**

We find the historical setting of the first Lord's Supper in Exodus 12. If we look closely, it tells us so much about human failings and God's grace to save. Jesus' gracious grip on the disciples doesn't slip, even as all "hell" breaks loose. The gracious character of Jesus' ministry is clearly evident on that night when He was betrayed—He willingly provided spiritual protection and forgiveness for those who did not deserve them.

2. Read Mark 14:12. When did the first Lord's Supper take place? Why is this so important?
3. How is the Lord's Supper like the Passover meal—but more? See also Ephesians 2:13; 1 John 1:7; and Revelation 1:5b.
4. Read Mark 14:17–31. What do these verses tell us about the disciples' strength of commitment to Jesus? Are we any different? Why or why not?
5. What do these verses tell you about Jesus' commitment toward the disciples? Toward you and me?
6. Read Mark 14:22–26. Jesus took bread and wine. Then He offered something unique to the disciples. What did He give them?

7. How was Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper an example of grace in action?

### **A Personal Meal**

8. Mark shows us that Jesus not only instituted the Supper but gave Himself in the Supper for the forgiveness of sins. Read Matthew 26:26-29. Matthew spells it out. What does this tell you about the Supper's purpose for you?

9. Many today call Holy Communion the "Christian's supper." How does Scripture teach us that this description is less than what the Supper truly is? Why must we say more?

10. Jesus welcomes sinners to the Lord's Supper. Explain the significance for your life.

### **The Certain Savior**

The Lord's Supper is a "grace event" created by a grace-giving Savior to forgive the sins of people who, even at their best, don't deserve forgiveness. In this event one sees the certainty of Jesus contrasted with the uncertainty of the disciples. One sees the forgiving, loving Savior contrasted with the treachery of the betrayer. One also sees the determination of a Messiah heading to the cross yet willing to strengthen His people before the storm of their disobedience.

11. Knowing this about Jesus, what can you do to make sure you receive the Lord's Supper often?

12. Think about a person who has offended or hurt you. Knowing why Jesus instituted the Supper, how does your receiving of the Lord's Supper cause you to treat her/him differently? Explain.

### **Comparisons**

During the Middle Ages most congregations of western Christendom celebrated the Lord's Supper four times a year. Influenced by the modern Liturgical movement, most Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper much more frequently today.

**Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic:** The Lord's Supper is celebrated each Sunday and on special feast days. Roman Catholics are encouraged to commune frequently, but expected to commune at least once a year.

**Lutheran and Reformed:** Practice varies from congregation to congregation, but most celebrate the Lord's Supper several times a month and on special feast days. In recent years, more congregations have celebrated the Lord's Supper weekly. Some Reformed congregations use grape juice instead of wine.

**Anabaptist:** Practice varies among Anabaptists. For example, most Mennonites celebrate the

Lord's Supper only twice a year. Other Anabaptists celebrate more frequently. Many congregations use grape juice instead of wine. Foot washing is an important part of their Lord's Supper service.

**Baptist:** The Lord's Supper is celebrated monthly in many congregations. However, congregations of the Restoration movement celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly (Disciples of Christ, Christian Churches, and Churches of Christ). Many Baptist congregations use grape juice instead of wine.

**Wesleyan:** Practice varies from congregation to congregation. Most celebrate the Lord's Supper quarterly or monthly. Many congregations use grape juice instead of wine.

### **Point to Remember**

On the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb, Jesus' disciples asked Him, "Where do you want us to go and make preparations for You to eat the Passover?" Mark 14:12

To prepare for "Miracle of Miracles," read Matthew 1:20–25; John 1:1–18.