

The 'Lord's Supper'

Key Verse:

“For whenever you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

1 Corinthians 11:26

Extra: Can you find 3 other 'metaphors' Jesus used concerning Himself?

Level 5 lesson 33

Read: Matthew 26:26-29

Further: John 14:1-6

A NEW FEAST

In our reading today, the Lord establishes what Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 11:20 as “The Lord’s Supper.” Many misunderstand this simple yet important feast, so let’s look carefully at some of the details and the true meaning of it.

While Jesus and His disciples were keeping the Passover, we read, “He took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples.” We should note the three simple acts of giving thanks, breaking the loaf and giving it to the disciples. It is also worthwhile noting this was a feast for the Lord’s disciples to share, not for those who do not belong to Jesus.

A NEW TEACHING

Next, the Lord told them, “Take and eat; this is My body.” Now, what does the Lord mean, when He says the piece of bread is His body? Does He mean that the piece of bread has been changed or converted into His actual body? Has the substance of the bread become (in some miraculous way) His body, as a result of His words? Certainly not! The Lord was standing there in His body, using His hands to break and pass the bread, and His mouth to speak the words mentioned!

All He means is that the piece of bread represents His body. This is important. This is a figure of speech called a ‘metaphor’. In English, the word ‘is’ often means ‘represents’ or very simply, ‘is like’ and there are many examples of this in Scripture. “The field is the world,” says the Lord in Matthew 13:38; “Your word is a lamp to my feet,” says the Psalmist in Psalm 119:105. If you put the word ‘represents’ in place of the word ‘is’ in these two passages you will see how suitable it is. “This is My body” simply means, “this represents My body.”

Next, the Lord took the cup of wine and spoke in a similar way of it. “This is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many, for the forgiveness of sins.”

Here again the word ‘is’ means ‘represents’, not that the wine has somehow changed into the actual blood of Christ. Obviously, at the time Jesus spoke these words, His blood was still circulating through His veins!

The breaking of the bread and the pouring out of the wine at the supper are merely symbolic, pointing to the sacrifice of our Lord on the Cross - which would take place in less than twelve hours’ time! There His actual body was broken for us, and His actual blood was shed for our redemption. When we take part in the Lord’s Supper, reverently eating the bread and drinking the wine; we are remembering Jesus’ substitutionary death on our behalf, at Calvary.

Read what Paul says about the Supper in I Corinthians 11:23,24. I’m sure if you love the Lord, you’ll want to remember Him in the simple way taught here.

A NEW HOME

Turn now to John 14. Do read it right through, although we only have room to discuss the first 6 verses. There, the Lord comforted His disciples, knowing He was soon to leave them and return to Heaven. He exhorted them not to be troubled, but to believe in Him just as they believed in God. He told them about the many mansions in His Father’s house, and that He was going to prepare a place for them.

He promised that if He went away and did this, He would come again and receive them unto Himself, so that they would all be together again. What amazing comfort this must have been to them, and it has continued to bring comfort and assurance to Christians down through the years since then, too!

Thomas wasn’t sure what the Lord meant when Jesus spoke about knowing the way to this wonderful home in Heaven. In response, Jesus made this great statement, “I am the Way, the Truth and the Life; no man comes to the Father except through Me!” (v6) Friends, never forget that apart from our Lord Jesus Christ there is no way to the Father or to His house. To know the Way - we must know Jesus!

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What do the words “This is My body” mean?

.....

2. Who is entitled to take part in “The Lord’s Supper”?

.....

3. What do we do when we share in this “Supper”?

.....

4. Write out one thing that the Lord said to His disciples, as recorded in John chapter 14:1-6

.....

5. How can we ‘come to the Father’?

.....

My Name is: _____ Age: _____

Agony In Prayer

Key Verse:

“Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross....”

Hebrews 12:2

Extra: What areas of your life could be affected if you prayed “Not my will, but yours, God”?

Level 5 lesson 34

Read: Matthew 26:36-46

Further: Luke 22:39-46

SILVER’S PRIORITY

Finally, Jesus left the guest room and walked with His beloved disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane; situated at the foot of the Mount of Olives, about 3km from Jerusalem. Finally the time had arrived for Him to deliver Himself into the hands of His enemies. He knew that thanks to the traitor, Judas Iscariot, they would be seeking Him there very shortly.

As they walked, the Lord spoke the words recorded in chapters 15, 16 and 17 of John’s Gospel. Even as the Lord entered the Garden with the eleven other disciples, Judas was making arrangements with the priests to betray His divine Master, for a measly 30 pieces of silver - the price of a common slave. Think of it. That’s all Judas thought the Lord was worth! What is He worth to YOU? He ought to mean everything to us; more precious than silver, or money, or any earthly possession.

SUFFERING AND PRAYER

Just inside the Garden, Jesus told eight of His disciples to wait, while He went on a bit further with Peter, James and John, to pray. Jesus then began to reveal His terrible anguish and distress. He explained to the three friends, “My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death!” His anguish was almost more than He could endure. “Stay here and keep watch with Me,” He asked them, then went on a little further to pray quietly alone.

Notice He didn’t ask the disciples to pray for Him (He never asked anybody to do that), but to show Him their sympathy, support and fellowship by watching with Him. Then, lying prostrate on the ground, He prayed this earnest prayer, “My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from Me. Yet not as I will, but as You will.” In that simple prayer, He portrayed for us all, the humble attitude of submission to the Father’s will which all Christians should have. But what was this ‘cup’ which He asked His Father to remove from Him, to not make Him ‘drink’ - if possible? There can be only one answer. It was the suffering He was about to endure on the cross of Calvary.

This suffering for man’s sins (including yours and mine) was so dreadful, so horrifying, that as He thought of it approaching, humanly it appalled Him, and brought this awful dread to His soul. But notice that even knowing the dreadful punishment ahead and all it involved, He asked that the ‘cup’ only be removed, if it were possible; only if there was another way to accomplish our salvation.

SLEEPY PARTNERS

His prayer completed, Jesus returned to the three disciples, only to find them asleep. He said to Peter, although it was really to them all, “Couldn’t you keep watch with Me for one hour?” Then He encouraged them to, “Watch and pray (for themselves) so that you do not fall into temptation.” He excused their weakness, knowing that it was not due to indifference but to sorrow for Him, as Luke explains in verse 45. Again Jesus prayed earnestly to His Father. Luke tells us that in our Lord’s humanity, the mental conflict and anguish was so extreme, an angel came to help and strengthen Him in His hour of need (v43).

SALVATION PROCURED

Once more, Jesus returned to find the disciples sleeping. Returning to pray for the third and last time, Luke records that the thought of the suffering and torment ahead was so intense and terrible that “His sweat was like drops of blood falling down to the ground!” (Luke 22:44). If the mere thought of the cross was so dreadful - we cannot begin to imagine what the actual experience of it must have been!

Returning to His sleeping disciples, He allowed them to sleep on for a time - His great struggle is now over. The question had been asked and answered; the ‘cup’ could not pass from Him! It was not possible for the Lord to be spared the cruel suffering and death of Calvary’s cross; this was the only way our salvation could ever be procured!

Shortly after, He awoke them with the words, “Look the hour is near and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.” Judas was entering the Garden with the soldiers, and Jesus knew He must deliver Himself into their hands.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What was Judas doing while our Lord was in the Garden?	.....
2. What words did our Lord pray in the garden?	.....
3. What is meant by the ‘cup’ that the Lord speaks about in His prayer?	.....
4. How do we avoid falling into temptation?	.....
5. What great truth do we learn from the Lord’s suffering and agony?	.....

Betrayal and Arrest

Key Verse:

“Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”

Psalm 41:9

Extra: Why did Jesus not call for help from the angels?

Level 5 lesson 35

Read: John 18:4-9

Further: Matthew 26:47-57

Even as the Lord was experiencing the terrible agony we read of in the last lesson, Judas, the traitor, was busy arranging His betrayal with the priests. With the deal struck, a band of soldiers and officers was hastily readied to accompany him, equipped with lanterns, torches and armed with weapons. Then with Judas leading the way, this unnecessarily formidable group proceeded to the Garden, where Judas knew he would find Jesus and His disciples.

JESUS BETRAYED

Our Lord, seeing the approaching lights and knowing the enemy was near, stepped forward into the flickering glow of the flaming torches. “Who is it you want?” he asked. “Jesus of Nazareth!” was the stern reply. “I AM He,” said Jesus. Immediately, the crowd fell back, struck down by the divine power of those sacred words from our Lord. Was Jesus going to resist? No, it was merely another sign of His divinity. Again He asked them, “Who is it you want?” They gave the same reply, and Jesus told them, “I’ve already told you - I AM He.” Motioning to His disciples, He instructed the mob to “Let these men go.”

At this point, Judas Iscariot stepped from the shadows. Greeting Jesus with the words, “Greetings, Rabbi,” he then completed the pre-arranged signal of identification - a kiss of greeting to the face of Jesus. What was Jesus’ response to this act of treachery? “Friend,” He said, “Why have you come? Would you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?”

What a gracious response of love! We can only wonder at the look that passed between them at that moment. Perhaps then, seeing the Lord’s reaction, Judas began to realise he had done something terribly wrong. We know that shortly after, when Jesus was condemned to death, Judas regretted his actions. He found the priests and cried, “I have betrayed innocent blood!” “That’s your problem!” they replied callously. Judas threw the silver coins back at them, and overcome with terrible remorse, went out and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:1-5)

What a sad end for one who spent three years in the very presence of the Son of God, yet who was never truly His disciple. A sombre warning to us all!

PETER’S DEFENCE

Seeing the signal of the kiss, the soldiers “seized Jesus and arrested Him.” Peter was suddenly galvanized into action! His Master, whom he loved, and to whom he’d vowed to be faithful, was in peril. He drew out his sword and made a wild swing with it, cutting off the ear of the High Priest’s servant. Poor old impulsive, well-meaning Peter!

Jesus picked up the ear and healed the bleeding servant. Then He turned to Peter and gently rebuked him, telling him to sheath his sword and that “all who draw the sword will die by the sword.” He told Peter that if He’d wanted assistance He need only pray to His Father and thousands of angels would speed to His aid. “But what about the Scriptures that talk about My death?” asked Jesus, “How can they be fulfilled if I pray this prayer?” Jesus had wrestled with this question in prayer only hours before and resolved to do the Father’s will, to fulfil Scripture - no matter what it cost Him.

DISCIPLES DEPART

Next the Lord reproached the crowd with these words, “Am I leading a rebellion” He asked pointedly, “that you need to come out with swords and clubs to capture me? I sat daily with you in the Temple courts teaching, yet you did not arrest Me! This was done,” He continued, “that the Scriptures might be fulfilled.” At this point, the disciples ran for their lives!

You know, it’s easy to be brave when there’s no danger near. I think if I had been there I would have sprinted away as fast as any of them! Remember too, the Lord told them they would do this, and when He met them afterwards He never blamed them for it. Only Judas, it seems, will suffer eternal damnation for his actions that night. How sad that love of money brought him such a terrible fate! We also need to beware of this same sin! Events then began to move very rapidly for our Lord, as the procession moved out of the Garden and into the city.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What happened to the soldiers and officers when Jesus went forward and said who He was?
2. Why did Judas betray the Lord to His enemies?
3. How did Peter seek to defend the Lord?
4. Why did the Lord not need Peter’s help in this way?
5. What happened to all the disciples?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Peter's Denial

Key Verse:

“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall.”

1 Corinthians 10:12

Extra: What does Matthew 10:32-33 mean?

Level 5 lesson 36

Read: John 18:15-18

Further: Mark 14:66-72 & Luke 22:61-62

Peter was clearly a brave man - we saw that in the Garden at Jesus' arrest when he alone was prepared to defend his Master. Even after he'd panicked and run away with the other disciples, we read that he "followed at a distance" to the place where the Lord was to be tried. His subsequent fearful denial of Jesus, then, makes sad reading. Jesus had warned him that this would happen, but Peter confidently denied any chance of that happening.

FIRM DENIAL

Peter's biggest failure took place in the Palace of Caiaphas, where he and John had gone to observe what happened to their beloved Master. Being a cold night, Peter moved to the middle of the hall where the fire was, and sat with the servants warming themselves there. Immediately it seems, one of the maids recognised him and exclaimed loudly, "Hey, weren't you with Jesus of Nazareth, too?" Here was an opportunity for Peter to confess the Lord, but sadly he did the opposite and flatly denied Him. "I don't know what you're talking about!" he told the slave-girl firmly.

Poor Peter, what a fall! But worse was yet to come. With his words of denial still 'hanging in the air' - a sound was heard outside. We read, "and the rooster crowed" - a sign that in light of the Lord's warning, Peter should have immediately recognized! Instead, he retreated outside to the porch, to try and avoid being recognised again.

STRONG DENIAL

However, before long, another maid saw him and she too immediately called out to the others, "This guy is one of them too!" - meaning one of our Lord's disciples. Peter, as on the previous occasion, promptly denied it, even more strongly this time! Peter no doubt feared for his life at this point, and to be fair, it was a very human reaction in that hostile and volatile environment.

VEHEMENT DENIAL

A little while later, Peter was again challenged; a number of those that stood by said to him, "You are one of them for sure - your accent tells us that you are a Galilean."

Now Peter was really afraid! Cursing and swearing, he denied all knowledge of the Lord saying, "I don't know this man you're talking about!" Exactly at that moment, the rooster crowed again, just as Jesus had said, "Before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times." According to Luke, Jesus heard and saw it all, for we read there, at that moment, "The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter."

We can only guess at the look that passed between them as their eyes met; the terrible guilt that must have filled Peter's heart as he was literally 'caught in the act' of doing what he had so vigorously denied he would ever do! No words were necessary. Can you imagine how that must have felt? What a terrible thing to experience! The Lord had known all along that Peter would deny Him; He wasn't surprised.

But the Lord's look pierced Peter's very soul it seemed; he ran from it, out of the Palace into the dark, and there hot tears began to roll down that rough fisherman's face. Deeply ashamed of his sinful actions, he "wept bitterly" as he thought of his disloyalty to the One whom, in his heart, he really loved.

SOLEMN WARNING

How could Peter have denied the Lord, within a few short hours of strongly denying he would ever do such a thing? Remember his confident words, "Others may deny you Lord - but not me!" It seems Peter was too self-confident; he was satisfied that he could stand up for Christ in his own strength. It is good to recognise our God-given abilities, but it is good to also recognise our human weakness and limitations.

The Apostle Paul later wrote these words in Philippians 4:13, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength!" That should be our attitude too! Peter, trusting in human strength alone and without the enabling of the Holy Spirit, was quickly overwhelmed by his circumstances and failed miserably.

What a difference we find in Acts 4:8-12 though, where Peter boldly stands before the Sanhedrin and testifies of his Lord! Let us too, admit our frailty and weakness and seek God's grace and strength to tell of our love for the Lord, and share the Gospel in all the circumstances of life.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What proves that Peter was really a brave man?	.....
2. (a) How many times did Peter deny the Lord? (b) State one thing he said in doing this.	.....
3. What caused Peter to "weep bitterly"?	.....
4. What was the real cause of Peter's downfall?	.....
5. What have you specially learned from this study about self-confidence?	.....