

Week of April 9 – 15

The Plot to Arrest and Kill Jesus (Matthew 26:1-5, 14-16; Mark 14:1-2, 10-11; Luke 22:1-6)

The Passover Feast was two days away when Jesus told his disciples, “The time for the Son of Man to be betrayed and crucified is fast approaching.”

Meanwhile, Caiaphas, the Head Priest, secretly gathered the priests and administrators who were in charge of the Temple to conspire against him. They were afraid to take him by force openly amid the festivities because it might incite a rebellion.

As they agonized over their dilemma, Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, entered their meeting. He followed an evil impulse and agreed to help them capture his leader and close friend for twenty silver coins, and from that time forward, Judas was intent on turning Jesus over to the priests when a convenient time arose, and there wasn't a crowd around.

The hostility between Christ and the Pharisees became so open and irreversible that action could not be delayed. Now Christ had come as God's Passover Lamb to free men from bondage to their sin and bring new life to them. He had to be sacrificed on the appointed day, and he knew the schedule God had predetermined for him. He now informs the disciples when that sacrifice would take place.

The Sanhedrin accepted the high priest's recommendation to execute Christ, and now they plotted the best way to kill him. To put him to death wasn't the question; their concern was the best way to accomplish this. The plot to kill Jesus became easier when Judas offered to betray Jesus. We don't know Judas' motive, but John describes him as a thief and his willingness to follow Satan shows his moral complicity.

Jesus' Last Supper (Matthew 26:17-32; Mark 14:12-28; Luke 22:7-30)

On the Day of Unleavened Bread that marks the beginning of the Passover celebration when the Passover lamb is customarily killed, Jesus' disciples asked him where they should go to prepare for the feast. Knowing the time had come for him to leave those he had come to know and love and return to his father, he told Peter and John to go into the city and find a man carrying a pitcher of water. They were to follow him home and ask if they could use his guestroom to share a Passover banquet with their Master. He added that the host would show them a large furnished upstairs room already set up. They were to get the room ready for them to use.

That evening Jesus dined with the twelve and told them he longed to share this dinner with them before he had to suffer. “This is the last Passover meal I will participate in until I dine in the kingdom of God,” he said. And he lifted his cup to propose a toast, saying, “Share this with me. I won't drink the fruit of the vine again until God's kingdom prevails.

As they conversed over dinner, the disciples squabbled over who among them would ascend to what leadership ranks in their group. “The kings of the Gentiles exercise authority over them,” Jesus interrupted. “They tell their subjects what they can and can't do. But you won't follow them. Whoever rises up among you will be the most humble and least demanding. He who would be your chief must become the ultimate servant. You have shared in my trials, and I bequeath a kingdom to you like my father appointed to me. You will dine at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones supporting the people of God.”

Jesus picked up a piece of bread and gave thanks for it. Then he said, "This represents the body I surrender on your behalf. When you eat it, think of me." And he expressed concern for the one who would betray him, saying, "The Son of Man's course is determined. Pity the one who proves to be disloyal. He's going to wish he had never been born."

The Lord's Supper is celebrated by believers to remind themselves of the significance of Jesus' death and renew their hope of his return.

The mood became heavy as each one of the disciples considered his own level of commitment and reflected on which one could possibly be unfaithful. Peter motioned across the table to John, who was leaning on Jesus as they reclined around the table, urging him to ask Jesus who he had in mind. Jesus dipped his bread in broth and gave it to Judas Iscariot, who sat on the other side of him and said, "Hurry up and do what you have to do." Immediately Judas was compelled to leave the table and go out into the night. Those who remained had no idea what Jesus meant or why Judas left. Most of them thought that since Judas was the group's treasurer, Jesus sent him out to buy something they needed for the feast, or that he was going to make a customary holiday donation to the poor.

Luke says the Last Supper took place before Judas was identified as the one who would betray Jesus. Matthew and Mark place the Last Supper afterward. Luke didn't always follow chronological sequences.

Then Jesus picked up a cup of wine, and after he again expressed his thanks, he said, "This represents my blood that is spilled to establish a new covenant with those whose sins are forgiven. Drink it up! I won't drink it again until I drink with you in my father's kingdom."

When they finished eating, they sang a song together and went back to their camp in the olive orchard. "You will all be troubled tonight on account of me," Jesus shared. "It has been written, 'I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep will scatter.' But after I am restored, I will go to Galilee ahead of you. It's time for the Son of Man to be revealed and to reveal God. I won't be with you much longer. Like I told the Jews, you can't come where I am going, but you will follow later."

Peter Defends Christ (Matthew 26:33-35; Mark 14:29-31; Luke 22:38)

"Where are you going that I can't follow?" Peter asked. "Others might be offended, but I could never be embarrassed on your account. I would die for you." And they all insisted that they too would die for him.

"Simon, Simon," Jesus replied, "Satan intends to sift you like wheat. I've prayed that your faith will endure, so when you come through, you will inspire your brothers. You can't follow me now, but you will later. Before the cock crows to announce the dawn this morning, you are going to deny you even know me three times. When I sent you out without any money or papers or change of clothing, did you lack anything?" Jesus asked. When they acknowledged that they lacked nothing, he continued, "Take your money and your papers and sell your extra clothing and purchase a sword if you don't own one. What has been written about me will indeed come to pass. I'll be convicted like a criminal that I might conclude my mission.." Noting they only had two swords among them, he said, "That is all we need."

Now that he would be absent from them after his death, he told them to make provision for their needs by providing a purse, bag, and sword for personal protection.

