



*Leonardo da Vinci, The Last Supper, 1495–1498, tempera on gesso, 460 x 880 cm, Santa Maria della Grazie Church, Milan. Image via Wikimedia Commons.*

# MATTHEW 26; MARK 14; LUKE 22; JOHN 13

## JESUS'S LAST SUPPER, PART 1

---

LYNNE HILTON WILSON

The last night of Jesus's mortality was perhaps the most important night of His life. The evening included a symbolic meal, new ordinances, and announcements of Jesus's death. In this chapter, I have organized the four Gospels' overlapping events according to the time frame of Jn 13.

The Gospel accounts of the Lord's Last Supper contain significant differences. The Synoptic Gospels remembered the meal as a Passover feast, but they record it on different nights. John alone puts the meal the night before the Passover feast and has Jesus dying as the Passover lambs were slaughtered.<sup>1</sup> Likewise, John's Gospel is the only one to record Jesus washing His disciples' feet, sharing a beautiful sermon, giving a new commandment, and offering the Intercessory Prayer. John omits the introduction of the sacrament during the evening (possibly because he introduced the theology in Jn 6), but each Synoptic Gospel includes it.

Table 1. Parallels in the four Gospel accounts of the Last Supper

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Plot to kill Jesus	26:1–5	14:1–2	22:1–2	
Jesus anointed by Mary in Bethany	26:6–13	14:3–9		12:1–8
Judas’s betrayal	26:14–16	14:10–11	22:3–6	
Passover	26:17	14:12	22:7	13:1 (day before Passover)
Preparations for Last Supper	26:17–20	14:12–17	22:7–14	31:1
Washing the disciples’ feet				13:1–20
Jesus foretells His betrayal	26:21–25	14:18–21	22:22–23	13:21–30
Sacrament instituted	26:26–29	14:22–25	22:14–21	
Discussion of who is greatest			22:24–27	
The new commandment of love				13:31–35
Peter’s denial predicted	26:30–35	14:26–31	22:31–34	13:36–38

## Plot to Kill Jesus

*Jewish leaders plot against Jesus—Mt 26:1–5; Mk 14:1–2; Lk 22:1–2*

**Mk 14:1 (Mt 26:2; Lk 22:1).** “*After two days was the feast of the Passover, and of unleavened bread.*” As discussed previously, the Jews came to Jerusalem for three pilgrimage feasts each year—Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Each recalled different miraculous events in the redemption of the children of Israel from Egypt under Moses. The most important was Passover since it commemorated God’s destroying angels passing over the firstborn Israelites. Each feast also typified something about the promised Messiah that we will discuss with Jesus’s Passion. The week after the Passover feast was known as the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention.

**Mt 26:4 (Mk 14:1; Lk 22:2).** “*consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill him.*” The growing animosity against Jesus as a “false prophet” reached a fever pitch. With the help of Caiaphas, who was the high priest, a significant number of chief priests, scribes, and elders plotted Jesus’s death.

**Mt 26:5 (Mk 14:2).** “*Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar.*” The scheming leaders planned to act secretly in hopes of not triggering the masses who believed Jesus was a prophet or the Messiah.

*Jesus is anointed by Mary in Bethany—Mt 26:6–13; Mk 14:3–9*

**Mt 26:6–7 (Mk 14:3).** “**When Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto him a woman.**” As discussed in the commentary on Jn 12:2, the Gospel texts suggest that Simon the leper may have been a family relation of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Matthew and Mark do not name the generous woman who spent approximately a year’s salary on the precious anointment to honor the Lord. John alone identifies her as Mary of Bethany.

Mark’s Gospel claims the anointing took place two days before Passover, while John places it six days before (Mk 14:1; Jn 12:1). Matthew records an anointing of Jesus’s head only, and John and Mark record that His feet were anointed as well. Luke does not include the anointing. (For more discussion, see my comments on Jn 12:1–11).

*Judas joins plot to kill Jesus—Mt 26:14–16; Mk 14:10–11; Lk 22:3–6*

**Mk 14:10 (JST; also Mt 26:14; Lk 22:3).** “**Judas . . . went unto the chief priests, to betray Jesus . . . for he turned away from him, and was offended because of his words.**” The KJV implies that Satan possessed Judas, but the JST includes Judas’s motivation. Some theologians have debated the possibility that Jesus directed Judas to betray Him. This false idea comes from a Gnostic attempt to honor Judas for putting in motion the Savior’s salvation of humankind, and it spread in “the apocryphal Gospel of Judas, . . . without historical basis.”<sup>2</sup> That Judas and the other Apostles were infallible is a false doctrine that can be traced from Augustine and Calvin down to nineteenth- and twentieth-century theologians.<sup>3</sup> John’s Gospel describes Judas as a greedy thief, a devil, and a son of perdition.<sup>4</sup> Elder James E. Talmage penned, “Before Judas sold Christ to the Jews, he had sold himself to the devil; he had become Satan’s serf, and did his master’s bidding.”<sup>5</sup>

**Mt 26:15 (Mk 14:11; Lk 22:5).** “**What will ye give me . . . thirty pieces of silver.**” Satan uses the love of riches to motivate selfish humans. Only Matthew includes the price that tied back to two Old Testament scriptures: Zech 11:12 says, “They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver,” and according to Ex 21:32, if someone killed a slave, they were required by law to pay thirty pieces of silver. Some slaves may have been sold for that price, but the price varied dramatically depending on the person’s age, gender, and skill level.<sup>6</sup> Thirty pieces of silver was the value of thirty days of unskilled labor.

**Mt 26:16 (JST; also Mk 14:11; Lk 22:6).** “**from that time he sought opportunity to betray Jesus.**” Judas’s heart changed and he left His apostleship and His Master. Satan became Judas’s new master, and sadly, Judas obeyed him.<sup>7</sup>

## **Introduction to the Last Supper**

Jesus and His closest disciples left the crowded streets of Jerusalem to gather in a private room. The Gospels mention only Jesus and the Twelve in attendance at the Last Supper. However, every meal required

servants or other people to help with serving the meal. Kent Brown posits that the seven or more women who had been traveling with Jesus and the Twelve (Mary the mother of Jesus, her unnamed sister, Salome, Joanna, Susanna, Mary of Magdala, Mary the wife of Cleophus, and the “other women”) were probably in the room and contributed to the meal.<sup>8</sup> As further evidence, these women also knew exactly where to find the Apostles and “all the rest” on Sunday morning (Lk 23:49; 24:9). If the female disciples were in the same room, it also explains why the Apostles would go outside in the dark to find a place to sleep under the stars rather than stay in their rented room.

### *Synoptic preparations for Passover—Mt 26:17–20; Mk 14:12–17; Lk 22:7–14*

The Feast of Unleavened Bread recalls the children of Israel’s exodus from Egypt.<sup>9</sup> Traditionally, Jews had a ritualized meal, called a seder, filled with many symbolic details that looked back to their miraculous redemption from slavery and looked forward to the promised redeeming Messiah. Even the manner of seating was symbolic: each person faced the table and reclined on their left sides on pillows or sofas, with their head propped on an elbow and their feet stretched out. Unlike most artists’ depiction of the Last Supper, including Leonardo da Vinci’s, that show chairs around a table, Israelites ate their Passover reclined on pillows as a celebration of their freedom. They were free and were no longer obligated to stand as slaves.

***Lk 22:7 (Mt 26:17; Mk 14:12). “Then came the day . . . when the passover must be killed.”*** Symbolically, Jesus is the Passover Lamb that will be killed (1 Cor 5:7). The requirements that the Passover lamb or goat be a “male of the first year” (that is, at the prime of life) “without defect” or broken bones all pointed to Jesus’s death for over a millennium (Ex 12:5, 46).

***Lk 22:8 (Mt 26:18; Mk 14:13). “he sent Peter and John, saying . . . prepare us the passover.”*** Luke specifies that Jesus sent Peter and John to help with the arrangements for the group’s Passover seder. Their actions contrasted with those of Judas, who acted in the opposite direction and betrayed Jesus. It appears that the women who traveled with Jesus from Galilee and who are mentioned at both Jesus’s cross and tomb were involved in preparing and serving the Passover meal.<sup>10</sup> In Jerusalem, respectable women were discouraged from leaving their homes, but at the Passover feast, the city was full of families—including women—who journeyed from around the Roman Empire to worship together.

***Lk 22:10 (Mk 14:13). “enter the city, there shall a man meet you, bearing a pitcher of water.”*** Some Greek texts specify that the pitcher was a ceramic water jug. In the Greco-Roman world, carrying water jugs may have been a job for men as well as for female slaves and servants.<sup>11</sup> But in Jerusalem at this time, this would have been a man’s job, or possibly a female slave’s. Pharisaic oral laws mandated that women did not go out in public or even leave their homes.<sup>12</sup> Seeing a man carrying water was thus a common sight in Jerusalem. The two disciples did not need to identify which male servant to follow because Jesus prophesied that the man would approach them.

**Mk 14:14 (Lk 22:11). “the goodman of the house.”** The goodman is the owner of the house and probably a fellow disciple of Jesus. He may not have been the man carrying the water pot, especially since that man may have been a servant of the owner (the average middle-class home employed eight servants or slaves).<sup>13</sup>

**Mk 14:14 (Lk 22:11). “the guestchamber.”** The underlying Greek *katalyma* refers to rented lodgings and is the same word used when Joseph and Mary are looking for space in an inn in Bethlehem (Lk 2:7, 11). It is one of the parallel points between Jesus’s birth and death—Jesus relied on a rented room. He who was born in the stable of a *katalyma* was content to eat His Last Supper in a *katalyma*.<sup>14</sup>

**Mk 14:15 (Lk 22:12). “a large upper room furnished.”** This means that the room had pillows, rugs, or pads strewn throughout for the group to rest on while eating.<sup>15</sup> The upper or second floor often had exterior stone or interior wooden stairs leading to it and was the family’s living area.

**Mk 14:16 (Lk 22:13). “found as he had said.”** Both Mark and Luke underscore that Jesus’s predictions were fulfilled.

## The Last Supper in John 13

**Jn 13:1. “before the feast of the Passover.”** For John, this is the night before the Passover, as the Lord is killed at the same time as the pascal lambs the following afternoon. Jesus knew “that his hour was come that he should depart.” The symbols and timing here align beautifully with the sign of His sacrifice for the sins of the world as the “Passover lamb” (1 Cor 5:7 NIV). The miracle of God’s timing is precise.

The timing of events in John’s Gospel is also different from the traditional Good Friday timing. John places Jesus’s Last Supper on Wednesday in the late afternoon or evening.<sup>16</sup>

The Jewish calendar marked three special holy days as part of the Passover celebrations: Nisan 14 (Passover), Nisan 15 (the first of seven days of the Feast of Unleavened Bread), and Nisan 16 (when Jews offered the firstfruits). Each is mentioned in the New Testament. The Passover and the last day of Unleavened Bread were treated as additional Sabbaths (Lev 23:7–8). In addition to these special days, the Old Testament also defines a day to select the Passover lambs. The table below shows the calendar of Holy Week and the accompanying scripture references.

**Jn 13:1. “he loved them unto the end.”** In a commentary preceding the Last Supper, John introduces one of the themes that Jesus will expound in the next three chapters: Jesus’s perfect example of love.

**Jn 13:2 (NIV). “The evening meal was in progress, and the devil had already prompted Judas . . . to betray Jesus.”** The underlying Greek text explains that Judas had already started his plan and was just now going to complete it. *Betray* in Greek means “to give into the hands of” or “hand him over.”

**Jn 13:3. “He was come from God, and went to God.”** This verse synthesizes the cycle of Jesus’s life. It echoes the message of John’s introduction (Jn 1:1–4).

Table 2. Traditional events of Passover week and those of Holy Week

	<b>Sun–Tuesday</b> <i>(Nisan 10–12)</i>	<b>Wednesday</b> <i>(Nisan 13)</i>	<b>Thursday</b> <i>(Nisan 14)</i>	<b>Friday</b> <i>(Nisan 15)</i>	<b>Saturday</b> <i>(Nisan 16)</i>	<b>Sunday</b> <i>(Nisan 17)</i>
Traditional events	Select Passover lambs	Preparation	Passover lambs offered at sunset	First day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread	Sabbath	Firstfruit offering <sup>17</sup>
NT References		Jn 13:1, 29; 19:14	Jn 18:28, 39	Mk 14:1; Lk 22:7	1 Cor 5:20, 23	Jn 21
OT References	Ex 12:3	Num 9:3, 5, 11	Lev 23:5; 33:3	Ex 12:15–17; Lev 23:6	Lev 2:1–3; 23:7–15	Lev 23:11
Events of Holy Week	Triumphal entry, teaching at the temple	Last Supper and Gethsemane	Trial, death, and burial	Tomb	Tomb	Resurrection

### *Jesus washes the Apostles’ feet—Jn 13:1–20*

**Jn 13:4–5. “took a towel, and girded himself. . . [He] began to wash the disciples’ feet.”** In the middle of the meal, Jesus stood up and did something quite appalling. He laid aside His outer cloak (probably a wrap like a toga) and tied a towel around His waist like the apron of a servant. He also would have gathered a water container and some sort of cloth as He performed a slave’s task of washing the men’s feet. Over the past three years, Jesus regularly shocked His followers by talking to women, healing on the Sabbath, walking through Samaria, and telling the disciples to eat his flesh. Jesus had already taught, “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister” and “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be . . . servant of all” (Mk 9:45; 10:45). Yet, the disciples were still stunned when He took on the role of a slave or child and began to wash their feet.

The Jewish tradition of washing hands and feet was not new. The law of Moses laid out the need for personal cleanliness (Lev 15:11; Deu 23:12–14). Priests washed their bodies before temple service and then washed their hands and feet periodically during the service (Ex 30:18–21; 40:31). After the Jews’ return from Babylon in the second temple period, rabbis added many elaborate ritual washings to their daily life—washing before meals, worship, and other events. Each occasion had detailed instructions for washing, from simple hand washings to complete immersions in a mikvah bath.<sup>18</sup> It was a child’s or servant’s job to help the head of the house with their washing, dressing, and eating.

With daily travel in sandals on dusty roads and thorny pathways, washing one’s grimy feet before entering a home was the cultural custom. The task of washing someone else’s feet was a task left to slaves,

***Servitude.*** To understand what it meant for Jesus to take on this role as the slave or child, it helps to understand the culture of indentured servitude at the time. In the Judeo-Greco-Roman world, social hierarchy delineated every aspect of life. The lowest social class was made up of “slaves, women and children.”<sup>41</sup> In AD 47, a census across the Roman Empire documented that one-third of the population was enslaved or worked as servants. That number rose significantly in cities like Jerusalem, where half of the population was indentured servants.<sup>42</sup> A normal middle-class citizen owned eight slaves, though that number was not as high in poorer villages across the Palestinian countryside.<sup>43</sup> Because many impoverished families did not have enough servants to keep up with the work, wives and children had to take over the work typically performed by servants. Even in cities, the head of Pharisaic homes considered women and children servants. Philo of Alexandria, a Jewish contemporary of Jesus, recorded that women lived “in the rank of a servant.”<sup>44</sup> Consistent with this protocol, in Jewish homes that followed rabbinic oral laws, children and wives called their fathers and husbands “master.”<sup>45</sup>

Servitude took on a unique twist in an educational setting. In the student-teacher relationship (often referred to as disciple-teacher), if a student wanted to spend more time with his teacher, he could volunteer to take over the servant’s job and feed, wash, or dress his master teacher.<sup>46</sup> One rabbinical axiom includes an exclusion: “A disciple might offer any service to his teacher which a slave did for his master, *except that of unfastening his shoes*, which was counted as a menial’s duty.”<sup>47</sup> Other historical writings claim that people could wash their masters’ feet out of respect.<sup>48</sup> In either case, Jesus’s actions are startling to His disciples. He turned their social structure upside down.

children, or women. It was so demeaning that even male Jewish slaves did not have to do it.<sup>19</sup> If a hospitable host invited guests to his home, he would provide water for them to wash their own feet or provide a slave to wash them (Lk 7:44).

***Jn 13:7. “What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter.”*** When Jesus attempted to wash the disciples’ feet, they did not realize that He was also introducing an ordinance.

It was not until December 27 and 28, 1832, when the Prophet Joseph Smith received D&C 88:138–141 that we learned that the ordinance of washing of feet cleansed one from the blood and sins of their generation. A few weeks later, on January 23, 1833, the Prophet Joseph restored the ordinance at a conference in Kirtland, Ohio:

We again assembled in conference, when, after much speaking, singing, praying, and praising God, all in tongues, we proceeded to the washing of feet (according to the practice recorded in the 13th chapter of John’s Gospel), as commanded of the Lord. Each Elder washed his own feet first, after which I girded myself with a towel and washed the feet of all of them, wiping them with the towel with which I was

girded. . . . At the close of the scene, Brother Frederick G. Williams, being moved upon by the Holy Ghost, washed my feet in token of his fixed determination to be with me in suffering, or in journeying, in life or in death, and to be continually on my right hand; in which I accepted him in the name of the Lord.<sup>20</sup>

The ordinance is also recorded in the original hymn sung at the dedication of the Kirtland Temple:

We'll wash, and be wash'd, and with oil be anointed  
Withal not omitting the washing of feet;  
For he that receiveth his Penny appointed,  
Must surely be clean at the harvest of wheat.<sup>21</sup>

This may not be a saving ordinance like baptism, but the washing of feet is administered by modern prophets in temples. The Prophet Joseph administered it to three hundred “official members” in conjunction with the sacrament.<sup>22</sup>

**Jn 13:8. “Thou shalt never wash my feet.”** Peter adamantly refused to have the Lord serve him as a slave. Peter’s spontaneous nature shows the goodness of his heart. He wanted to serve the Lord, not to be served by the Lord. But I assume he would have been on the verge of tears as the Lord corrected him: “If I do not wash you, you have no share with me” (Jn 13:8 ESV). In the preceding verse, Jesus had already warned Peter that he would not understand it until “hereafter” (Jn 13:7).

**Jn 13:9. “not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.”** Peter changed his heart and mind immediately to align his will with Jesus’s. Peter’s confusion crumbled into humility.

**Jn 13:10. “He that is washed . . . is clean every whit . . . but not all.”** Jesus’s reference to washing speaks of inner cleanliness through repentance. Jesus symbolically washed the disciples’ feet, but that would not spiritually cleanse them if they had not repented. The Lord already knew Judas had arranged to betray Him, and yet Jesus chose to minister to him too. Perhaps this sealed Judas’s fate over to “the buffetings of Satan until the day of redemption.”<sup>23</sup> Later, Jesus referred to Judas as the son of perdition (Jn 17:12). After Judas left, Jesus introduced the new commandment as well as the sacrament.

**Jn 13:14–15. “ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example.”** Jesus taught masters how to serve, which runs counter to the instincts of the natural man and woman as well as to society’s view of hierarchy. Jesus introduces a new means of social interaction that requires a huge paradigm shift.

**Jn 13:16. “The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent is greater than he that sent him.”** This takes on even more meaning in Greek because the word for “sent” is *apostolos*, the same word translated as “apostle”: “Neither he that is sent [*apostolos*] greater than He that sent [*pempo*] him.” An Apostle is one sent by God to witness of Him. The Catholic scholar John Perry defined an Apostle as “one who has seen the resurrected Lord and been sent by Him to witness.”<sup>24</sup>



**Jn 13:18.** “*eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me.*” Here Jesus fulfills Ps 41:9. Mark also quotes this verse in his Passion narrative. It is the first of only four verses that John and Mark have in common (John cites nine Old Testament scriptures that are fulfilled in Jesus’s Passion, and Mark cites seventeen). This verse describes an ancient insult: “To show the bottom of one’s foot to someone in the Near East is a mark of contempt. Such an action was especially grave on the part of a friend who had shared one’s table.”<sup>25</sup>

Lifting up the heel also evokes the curse given to the serpent in the Garden of Eden: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen 3:15). Judas takes on Satan’s role to bruise the Lord’s heel (Jesus is the only one who truly is the “seed of woman”). Yet He will crush Satan’s head through His Atonement and Resurrection.

**Jn 13:19.** “*I tell you before it come, that . . . ye may believe.*” Jesus’s prophecy was fulfilled that very night. Jesus explained that He wants us to recognize the fulfillment when it comes, which will strengthen our faith.

**Jn 13:20 (BSB).** “*whoever receives the one I send receives Me, and . . . the One who sent Me.*” This verse thematically ties back to verse 16 and “one sent.” The reciprocal message is synergistic and receives a second witness in D&C 1:38: “Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same.”

## **Last Supper Conversations and Institution of the Sacrament**

### *Who shall be greater?—Lk 22:24–30*

Similar conversations are recorded as happening elsewhere in Jesus’s ministry.<sup>26</sup> Only Luke includes it at the Last Supper. Placing it here emphasizes hierarchy as a pervasive problem, even among the Apostles. This is also one of the first topics Jesus teaches the Nephites: “He that hath the spirit of contention is not of me, but is of the devil, who is the father of contention” (3 Ne 11:29).

**Lk 22:26 (JST).** “**it ought not to be so with you.**” Jesus pled with the disciples to do away with social hierarchy and competitive feelings. Luke again emphasizes—for the last time—the need for leaders to serve. This is repeated in Mk 10:41–45.

**Lk 22:27 (NIV).** “*who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? . . . I am among you as one who serves.*” Jesus’s last message became “the capstone that lays emphasis on service.”<sup>27</sup> Unlike in the Roman Empire with its social strata, in Jesus’s kingdom, the greatest are those who serve. A major part of Jesus’s ministry was teaching masters how to serve, and He set a clear example as the greatest servant.

### *Betrayer announced—Mt 26:21–25; Mk 14:18–21; Jn 13:21–30*

**Jn 13:21 (Mt 26:21; Mk 14:18).** “*he was troubled in spirit . . . one of you shall betray me.*” Jesus’s announcement shocked this close group of friends. They could sense, to some degree, the effect

the announcement had on Jesus too. The KJV “troubled” means “to strike one’s spirit with fear and dread; to render anxious or distressed.” Jesus’s consternation is not only at losing a friend but also at the consequences for Judas.

**Mk 14:19 (JST).** “*they all began to be very sorrowful . . . is it I?*” The JST speaks of the Apostles’ humility and faith in Jesus’s words. Disciples still must ask if our words and actions may betray our Lord.

**Jn 13:23.** “*leaning on Jesus’ bosom one . . . whom Jesus loved.*” This verse becomes important in identifying the authorship of John’s Gospel. John the Beloved did not mention his name in his Gospel (in the same way that he did not ever give the name of Jesus’s mother, Mary, nor of her sister). Instead, he refers to himself as the disciple “whom Jesus loved” at least six times. At the very end of his Gospel, in Jn 21:20, he identifies himself as the one who leaned on the bosom of Jesus. Conversely, John’s Gospel begins with Jesus in the bosom of the Father (1:18). In this scene, John the Beloved appears as the antithesis of Judas Iscariot, who has just been announced as the betrayer.

**Jn 13:24–25.** “*Peter . . . beckoned to him . . . Lord, who is it?*” Peter nodded or somehow signaled to get John’s attention. Peter must have been sitting farther away from Jesus and didn’t want to interrupt. Especially after his misunderstanding with the washing of feet, Peter may have been reticent to question the Lord again. Those who study ancient Jewish table arrangements see the text as describing three couches placed in a squared horseshoe figure, probably arranged around a central table. John sat in the place of honor to Jesus’s right with Judas not too far away (perhaps on His left). Did Judas feel that the treasurer deserved a place of importance?

**Mt 26:23 (Mk 14:20; Lk 22:21; Jn 13:26).** “*He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.*” In Jewish culture, it was an honor for two friends to dip from the same dish, and it was an even greater show of respect for one friend to dip for another as Jesus did for Judas. John’s word “sop” means “morsel.” By offering it, Jesus extended friendship and love to Judas, knowing full well what would happen. Judas feigned his loyalty by receiving the shared sop—yet he had rejected Jesus to follow Satan. John alone shares this detail, so perhaps he alone heard it. Ironically, the betraying hand is at the same table as the covenanting hands in the first sacrament.

**Jn 13:29.** “*Judas had the bag.*” The bag was the money bag or box that Judas held as treasurer for the Apostles. John included that the Apostles did not realize what was happening because they briefly thought that Jesus instructed Judas to go shopping for the Passover feast or for other needed supplies for the long weekend. Also, Jews customarily gave something to the poor on Passover night.<sup>28</sup> We do not know what the Apostles thought.

**Mt 26:24 (Mk 14:21; Lk 22:22).** “*woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed!*” Only John does not include this woe.

**Mt 26:25 (NIV).** “*Surely you don’t mean me, Rabbi?*” Jesus answered, “*You have said so.*” Jesus’s answer to Judas’s hypocritical question can also be translated, “You would know.”

**Jn 13:30.** “*he . . . went immediately out: and it was night.*” In the Synoptic Gospels, Judas leaves before the introduction of the sacrament. The main meal was normally eaten in the afternoon, but this meal appears to have taken place at night. John intentionally added the time of day since he often juxtaposed light and dark.<sup>29</sup> The night symbolizes the darkness or the hour of Satan. His darkness is about to close in on the light, but only with Jesus’s permission.<sup>30</sup>

With Judas dismissed, Jesus could move on and teach more freely. In most group settings, everyone present has an impact on the spirit of the room, on what is taught and felt, and on how much inspiration is received. Notice that John no longer records anything about Jesus feeling troubled but rather says that He is filled with the Spirit, wisdom, and love.

*Synoptics introduce the sacrament—Mt 26:20–29; Mk 14:17–25; Lk 22:14–20*

**Mt 26:20 (Mk 14:17; Lk 22:14).** “*when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.*”

The Gospels use the phrase “the twelve” as a means of differentiating a particular group of disciples or Apostles. If this were a Passover dinner, the women who traveled with Jesus and the Twelve would have shared the meal with them (though possibly eating at a separate table and serving the meal). Josephus tells us that a minimum of ten people were required per Passover lamb to avoid waste.<sup>31</sup>

**Lk 22:15.** “*With desire I have desired.*” Surprisingly, only Luke, the native Greek speaker, includes this Aramaic or Hebrew phrase (Aramaic was a Semitic language brought back by the Jews after their Babylonian captivity). This suggests that Luke’s eyewitnesses passed on the information to him in Aramaic or Hebrew before the New Testament was drafted in Greek. Most likely, Aramaic was the Galileans’ mother tongue. The phrase expresses Jesus’s heartfelt prayer that He might share a last meal with His closest disciples.

**Lk 22:16 (JST).** “*which is written in the prophets concerning me. Then I will partake with you, in the kingdom of God.*” Jesus connected the Last Supper with the prophesied messianic banquet.<sup>32</sup> There Jesus will again lead the discussion with His disciples.

**Lk 22:17.** “*Take this, and divide it among yourselves.*” Ritualized Passover seders now have four cups, and Luke mentions only two. Significantly, the group of disciples shared the same cup. The cups would have been full of Passover wine (which was diluted with three parts water to one part wine—substantially stronger than the common eight-to-ten parts water to one part wine dilution).<sup>33</sup>

**Mk 14:22 (JST; also Mt 26:26; Lk 22:19).** “*Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it . . . Behold this is for you to do in remembrance of my body; for as oft as ye do this ye will remember this hour that I was with you.*” Only the three Synoptic Gospels include Jesus introducing the sacrament at His Last Supper.<sup>34</sup> Jesus instituted the sacrament with unleavened bread, which was not puffed up or prone to rot. It was used at this feast to represent the Israelites’ haste in leaving Egypt. “Jesus transforms the bread from a remembrance of affliction in bondage to one that points to himself (1) as the messianic deliverer from sin, (2) as the bringer of the kingdom of God in the end-time, and (3) as

the one who suffers vicariously for all.”<sup>35</sup> Jesus taught the Apostles the meaning of His death as a symbol to remember the new covenant, or testament.

During the traditional Passover seder, the last bread eaten is the bread that was hidden (the afikomen). In modern seders, the children at the meal usually hunt for the hidden bread, and the one who finds it is promised a gift. Some Jews hold the tradition that the child who finds the piece of hidden bread is given the hope that “you will find the Messiah in your day.” The lost bread represents the hidden Messiah. Interestingly, instead of hiding the bread at the Last Supper, Jesus held it up and said, “This is my body.”

**Mk 14:23 (JST; also Mt 26:27; Lk 22:20).** “**he took the cup . . . This is in remembrance of my blood which is shed for many, and the new testament which I give unto you.**” Luke has this as a second cup after supper. Traditionally, this cup is known as the cup of redemption. Jews still recite a prayer in their Passovers before drinking from the cup: “Blessed are you, O Lord our God, king of the universe, who creates the fruit of the vine.” Jesus gave the cup a symbol similar to the one Moses gave as he sprinkled the children of Israel when they covenanted at the base of Mount Sinai (as recorded in Ex 24:5–8):

[He] offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words.

Jesus identified the wine as a sign of His blood. It was a gift with a blessing as well as a sign of the new testament or covenant (“covenant” and “testament” come from the same word in Greek, *diathekes*). Jesus’s new symbol also corresponded to the last of Isaiah’s Suffering Servant passages: “He that poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors” (Isa 53:12).

### *The new commandment to love as Jesus loves—Jn 13:31–35*

Jesus begins His last discourse—the most masterful discourse recorded in the Bible. “The last discourse is best understood when it is the subject of prayerful meditation. . . . It is the greatest composition in religious literature. The one who speaks here speaks as no man has spoken.”<sup>36</sup>

**Jn 13:31. “Now is the Son of man glorified.”** Jesus continued to rise in glory as He prepared the way to glorify God and all humankind. I interpret these two verses through the perspective of Mose 1:39: “This is my work and my glory—to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man.” This means that through Jesus’s work (the Atonement), God is glorified. Everyone can obtain glory through Jesus’s great and last sacrifice.

**Jn 13:33. “Little children, yet a little while I am with you.”** The phrase “little children” becomes a favorite for John; we find it seven times in his first epistle. Jesus refers to the eleven Apostles

(and probably the women in the room) as meek and mild little children. They were also, in a sense, ignorant like children about what was about to take place.

**Jn 13:34. “A new commandment I give unto you.”** Jesus’s farewell gift to His disciples was the new commandment. In John’s record of Jesus’s last discourse, we find seven—the number John uses most often in his Gospel—references to commandments. Throughout his Gospel and epistles, John discusses commandments twenty-nine times. By using the word “new” Jesus pointed out that this law was different from the lower law given to Moses to “love thy neighbor as thyself” (Lev 19:18). For our Lord, obedience and the new commandment of love go together.

**Jn 13:34. “love one another; as I have loved you.”** Jesus asked us, His disciples, to love others more than we love ourselves—or at least more than we loved ourselves in the past, because now we must also learn to love ourselves and others as Christ loves us. The highest form of human love reflects divine love in the same way that the moon reflects the sun’s light. Jesus’s life and sacrifice became “the pure prism through which the Father” reflected His love.<sup>37</sup>

Christlike love becomes a gift of the Spirit that we must work for (1 Cor 12; Moro 10). Disciples’ need for charity is mentioned ten times in the Doctrine and Covenants. Whenever John refers to Christlike love, he uses the Greek word *agapao*, just as Jesus does here. Elsewhere in the KJV, Christlike love is called charity. Disciples can develop charity by asking God to help us see people as He does, by treating others as we would treat Jesus. Jesus wants us to feel His love so that we, too, can love perfectly.

**Jn 13:35. “men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love.”** We read in 1 Jn 4:12, “If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.” If we fill our lives with divine love, we are filled with God. One reason Christ loves us perfectly is that He knows us well. Ministering to our fellow human beings allows us to really know them and thus love them more like Christ does.

*Jesus warns Peter and prophesies of his denial—Mt 26:30–35; Mk 14:26–31; Lk 22:31–34; Jn 13:36–38*

**Mt 26:31 (Mk 14:27). “All ye shall be offended because of me.”** I presume this warning was not just for ancient Christians and that we also need to be on the alert, as the very elect will be deceived in the latter days (Mt 24:24).

**Lk 22:31–32 (JST). “Satan hath desired to have you. . . . I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not.”** The Lord’s protection extended beyond His love for Peter. Jesus’s prayer is that our faith will not fail us. When we want to pray for what is most important, let us pray that our faith not fail us.

**Lk 22:32. “when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”** Elder D. Todd Christofferson enumerated the elements of conversion as increasing our “desire, submissiveness to God, study, prayer, service, repentance, and obedience. From these, coupled with your worship and activity in Church, will come testimony and conversion.”<sup>38</sup>

**Jn 13:37. “Lord, why cannot I follow thee now?”** Peter does not understand the Lord’s future (alluded to in Jn 13:33), and he was frustrated at the prospect of not being with Him. Peter expressed his earnest desires by volunteering to lay down his life for the Lord. One certainly cannot fault Peter for enthusiasm.

**Mt 26:35 (Mk 14:31; Lk 22:33). “Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.”** Peter’s boast was answered with another prophecy that Peter did not believe. But everything that Jesus says will happen did happen. When the Lord warns us, we need to trust Him—take His warnings seriously and avoid danger at all costs.

**Jn 13:38 (Mt 26:34; Mk 14:30; Lk 22:34). “The cock shall not crow, till thou hast denied me thrice.”** Jesus reined in Peter’s eagerness. It appears that Jesus knew of His next few hours in great detail. His foreknowledge did not change Peter’s agency, however. In John’s Gospel, Peter was *not* directed by Jesus to deny Him, nor did he understand Jesus’s warning.<sup>39</sup>

All four Gospels include Jesus’s warning to Peter and Peter’s denial of the Lord a few hours later, each with a slight variation. The very few items shared by all four Gospels are each incredibly significant to the history of Christianity.<sup>40</sup> Why did the apostolic Church carefully record this event? We can see a mighty change in Peter between this night and the events in the book of Acts. Peter’s example reminds all disciples, no matter how committed they are, to not be overconfident in the infallibility of their commitment. Better still, this may be the strongest example in the New Testament of repentance and forgiveness. It illustrates Jesus’s Atonement beautifully, and the irony of its timing makes it even more significant. It offers great hope for those times when disciples deny the Lord both unintentionally and intentionally. It also begs the reader to ask, “In what ways do I deny our Lord?”

## Notes

1 James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News, 1916), 618–619. To rectify this timing difference, Talmage suggests the Jews slaughtered lambs across two days, but I can’t find any evidence for this. It appears the Gospel writers remembered the timing differently.

2 S. Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2014), 977.

3 Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (New York, NY: Scribner, 1871), 1:152, 160. Robert Owen, *Evidences of Christianity: A Debate Between Robert Owen, of New Lanark, Scotland, and Alexander Campbell* [. . .] (Cincinnati, OH: Bosworth, Chase and Hall, 1929), 91–92.

4 Jn 6:70–71; 12:6; 17:12.

5 James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret News, 1916), 592.

6 Sandra R. Joshel, *Slavery in the Roman World* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 100, 105, 128.

7 Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 592.

8 Lk 24:10; S. Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2014), 982. The list of women is a compilation of the names of women at the cross and tomb across the Gospels.

9 See Lev 23; Ex 12; Num 28:16–25.

10 S. Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2014), 982.

11 Joel Marcus, *Mark 8–16* (New Haven, CT: Yale University, 2009), 945. “It is regularly asserted in scholarly literature that this would be an unusual sight. . . . This goes back to Lagrange (373), who lived in Jerusalem at the turn of the twentieth century, and is based on nothing more than his observation of Palestinian habits in his own day. . . . Greco-Roman artists regularly depict male slaves carrying jugs . . . of water . . . and there is no reason to think that Jewish custom was different.”

12 Philo Judaeus, *Special Laws III*, 7 vols. (London, UK: William Heinemann, 1967), 3:169, 171. Philo was a Jewish contemporary of Jesus. Two of his samples follow: “Marketplaces and council-halls, law-courts and gatherings, and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action—all these are suitable to men both in war and peace. The women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house. . . . A woman then, should not be a busybody, meddling with matters outside her household concerns, but should seek a life of seclusion.” Philo also wrote that women “were always kept in seclusion and did not even appear at the house-door, and their unmarried daughters, who were limited to the women’s quarter, women who for modesty’s sake shunned the eyes of men, even their closest relatives.” Pieter Willem van der Horst, trans., *Philo’s Flaccus: The First Pogrom* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2003), 70. Also see Ben Sira, *Ecclesiasticus* 42:11–12. Ben Sira lived a century before Jesus.

13 Junius P. Rodriguez, *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABD–CLIO, 1997), 1:555. Generally, Roman-era servants or slaves were more like serfs from the feudal system. They were often released by age thirty, thirty-five, or forty. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:545; Ken M. Campbell, ed., *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 135.

14 Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, 2 vols. (New York, NY: Longmans, Green, 1898), 2:483. Also see Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1999), 399–400.

15 K. Brown, *Testimony of Luke*, 985.

16 Jn 13:30. John carefully outlines his calendar, starting with “six days before the Passover,” as discussed in the commentary to Jn 12:1.

17 During the time of Herod’s temple, at sundown after Nisan 15 priests harvested the first barley crop just outside of Jerusalem (which had been designated early by the Sanhedrin). The next day, or “on the day after the Sabbath” a priest took the bundle or sheaf of barley and waved it over the altar (Lev 23:11). But which Sabbath do they mean? The Passover and first day of Unleavened Bread as well as the seventh day of each week were all Sabbaths. Nisan 16 is the usual day for this offering, but with the extra Sabbath, perhaps it was Nisan 17 just as the women came to the tomb when the Sabbath ended. This offering of firstfruits began the countdown of days before Pentecost.

18 Adele Berlin, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of the Jewish Religion* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), s.v. “cleanliness.” The Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmud, including the “Code of Jewish Law” or Shulhan Arukh, are filled with washing instructions (Orach Chaim 4:2; 4:18; 92:4–5; 158:1; 181:1; 233:2; and so forth). Jews took their washings very seriously, to the degree that if the handwashing was not done before a meal, excommunication was threatened. A mikvah immersion bath had seven steps down into a pool of running water (not stagnant water). Wealthy Jews had a mikvah in their homes; others used them in conjunction with their worship at a synagogue and temple. The Essenes used them daily, but most Jews used them only periodically as needed (that is, after childbirth, contamination, and the like).

19 Lev 25:39; Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 564. A commentary on Ex 21:2, Midrash Mekilta, gives the ruling that a master could not require a Jewish slave to wash his feet. I presume this was for male slaves since a concubine could wash feet.

20 “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 270, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/276>. Joseph performed the ordinance at the School of the Prophets and for the priesthood quorums.

21 Elwin C. Robinson, *The First Mormon Temple: Design, Construction, and Historic Context of the Kirtland Temple* (Provo, UT: BYU Press, 1979), 182.

22 “Journal, 1835–1836,” p. 187, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/journal-1835-1836/190>.

23 “History, 1838–1856, volume A-1 [23 December 1805–30 August 1834],” p. 466, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-a-1-23-december-1805-30-august-1834/472>. The quotation is not directed toward Judas, but it is still instructive in this context nonetheless.

24 John Parry, in a New Testament class discussion at Cardinal Stritch University in 2002.

25 R. Brown, *John XIII–XXI*, 554.

26 See Mt 18:38; 20:20–28; Mk 10:35–45.

27 S. Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2014), 1005.

28 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 576.

29 For example, John chapters 1, 2, and 3.

30 Raymond Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John: A Concise Commentary* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 74.

31 Josephus, *Jewish Wars*, 6.423. Also see Talmud, *Pesachim* 64b.

32 For example, Isa 25:6–8; Mt 8:11–12; 22:1.

33 Babylonian Talmud, *Pesahim* 108a; cf. *Shabbath* 77a. Pliny, *Natural History* XIV, vi.54.

34 As mentioned in the commentary on Jn 6 and 13–17, John includes the symbols of body and blood in Jesus’s Bread of Life Sermon (Jn 6:35–59).



35 S. Kent Brown, *The Testimony of Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies, 2014), 993.

36 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1966), 582.

37 Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scriptures*, vol. 5, *The Gospels* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 419.

38 D. Todd Christofferson, “When Thou Art Converted,” April 2004 general conference, online at churchofjesuschrist.org.

39 This topic has been debated by biblical readers since the early Gnostics, as mentioned above. Some interpret this conversation as Jesus directing Peter to deny Him (at least by a possible reading of the Greek in the Synoptics). The defense stems from those who think Apostles are infallible—a belief that can be found in many factions of Christianity. Even in our faith, some approach President Spencer W. Kimball’s talk “Peter, My Brother” (Brigham Young University devotional, July, 13, 1971), speeches.byu.edu, with this perspective. I disagree. In defending Peter as a sincere human that is trying his best, President Kimball never suggests this Augustinian doctrine. The argument is inconsistent with agency and prophecy.

40 All four Gospels share only four events between Jesus’s baptism and Last Supper: (1) The cleansing of the temple, (2) healing the official’s son, (3) feeding the five thousand, and (4) the triumphal entry. Yet these four events take place at different times, are recorded in a different order, and include different details.

41 Jacob Neusner, *The Economics of the Mishnah* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 27. “One should train for the job all those who are employed on the estate, whether slaves or children or women.” Others from this time also used this phrase, including Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.25; and Philo of Alexandria, *A Volume of Questions and Solutions to Questions which Arise in Genesis*, 1.29.

42 Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988), 4:420. Tim G. Parkin, *Old Age in the Roman World: A Cultural and Social History* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2003), 183. Across the Roman Empire, at different times, estimates of the number of people that were enslaved range between six and sixty million. Junius P. Rodriguez, *The Historical Encyclopedia of World Slavery*, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABD–CLIO, 1997), 1:548.

43 Heshey Zelcer, *A Guide to the Jerusalem Talmud* (Irvine, CA: Universal Publishers, 2002), 92: “The middle class citizens often owned eight slaves, the rich from five hundred to a thousand, and an emperor as many as twenty thousand”; Bonnie Thurston, *Women in the New Testament: Questions and Commentary* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1998), 15–16. Ninety percent of Jews living in Palestine at the time of the New Testament had a vocation that supported farming or fishing villages. We do not have their records, though; we have records only from the literate aristocracy. Also see Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ’s Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA: Good Sound Publishing, 2015), chapters 7–8.

44 Philo of Alexandria, *A Volume of Questions and Solutions to Questions which Arise in Genesis*, 1.29: “The woman, being in the rank of a servant, is praised for assenting to a life of communion.” David Sedley, ed., *Oxford Studies in Ancient Philosophy*, vol. 15 (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2003), 213.

45 Robert H. Charles, ed., *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1913), 2:134: “The Lord said: . . . thy wife shall tremble when she looketh upon thee.” This account

comes from the Jewish pseudepigrapha, written by professional Jewish scribes sometime between 200 BC and AD 100. Also see Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1969), 367–369.

46 Judith R. Baskin and Kenneth Seeskin, *The Cambridge Guide to Jewish History, Religion, and Culture* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 313. “The intentional community of the Rabbis was centered on the master-disciple relationship; through this link between teacher and student, the full import of life according to the Torah of Moses could be appreciated and acquired. . . . Students would apprentice with a master, often for many years, learning direct teachings and observing how a rabbinic Jew was to behave. These explicit and inferred rules governed all aspects of human life, from ritual matters and legal rulings to ethical maxims and daily behaviors.”

47 John Bernard, *The International Critical Commentary on the Gospel according to St. John*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1953), 1:41; emphasis added. I think it is significant that untying the shoe strap is exactly what John the Baptist said he was not worthy to do for Jesus in Jn 1:27.

48 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII–XXI* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 564. We have an example of a loved one washing feet as a sign of devotion dating from 100 BC to AD 100. It comes from an Old Testament apocryphal book about Joseph of Egypt’s betrothed wife, Asenath, who offers to wash Joseph’s feet. Joseph protests that a servant girl could do it, but Asenath exclaims devotedly, “Your feet are my feet . . . another shall not wash your feet.”