

Luke Study 15 - The Last Supper

Lk 22:1-38

Introduction

Jesus' life is now heading to its climax. He has predicted he will be handed over to the Gentiles, tortured, and executed (18:32-33). Now, the time for that to happen has come. And yet Jesus is still totally in control of his circumstances. His death - which others mean for evil, and which his disciples don't understand - will save the world. Jesus explains this to his disciples at their last meal together, the Passover.

Read 22:1-6

1. There is a plot to kill Jesus. Who are the key players?
 - 22:2
 - 22:3
 - 22:4-6
2. We have seen demons in *Luke* quite a bit, but we haven't seen Satan since he tempted Jesus in the desert. Why is this? (See 4:13) What does this tell us about the time we've now entered in the story?

The leaders have wanted to kill Jesus for some time now, but the crowds have always stopped them: he is just too popular (19:47-48). But now in Judas they see their chance: they have an 'inside man' who can get Jesus on his own and lead him to them. It is not just the leaders who see their chance. Satan has been waiting for 'an opportune time' (4:13) to destroy Jesus since tempting him in the desert. Now, in Judas' willingness to betray Jesus, that time has come. All the forces of evil - the religious leaders, a false friend, and Satan himself - are arrayed against Jesus, and will kill him.

But Jesus is still in control. As we will see in the rest of this section, it is not Jesus who is playing into his enemies' hands, but his enemies who are playing into Jesus' hands.

Read 22:7-13

3. What day is it? What does Jesus tell Peter and John to do?
4. Read Ex 12:1-20. What is the significance of this day?

The Passover celebrated the time God freed the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. The Israelites killed and ate a lamb, and smeared its blood on their doorposts. When God saw the blood, he 'passed over' the house and did not kill its firstborn son (the destructive

plague referred to in Ex 12:13). But for Egyptian houses, which did not have the blood, God did not pass over them, and killed the firstborn son, forcing Pharaoh to free the Israelites the next day. From then on, every year the Israelites celebrated this event by re-enacting this meal. This is the meal Jesus and his disciples are sharing.

Read 22:14-20

5. What does Jesus say the bread represents?
6. What does Jesus say the cup represents? (See also Jer 31:31-34)
7. Given the background of the Passover feast, what do you think Jesus is saying?

Jesus takes the bread of the Passover meal and says, 'This is my body given for you.' He cannot mean it is literally his body: he says this meal is a 'remembrance' of him. The bread stands for his body. Yet it is 'given for you' (22:19): the bread stands for his body, which will be given for his disciples when he dies. Jesus takes the cup and says the same thing: it is the 'new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you' (22:20). The wine stands for his blood, which will be poured out for his disciples when he dies. Using the elements of the Passover, Jesus explains to his disciples what his death will be: a sacrifice that will bring freedom.

The leaders, Judas, and Satan have all plotted to bring Jesus to this point. But it is really Jesus who is in control. What they mean for evil, he means for good: to die for and set people free.

But does the fact the perpetrators are part of God's plan mean they're no longer responsible?

Read 22:21-23

8. What do these verses say about Judas' responsibility?
9. Before moving on, think of other situations where God seems to be out of control and evil seems to be winning. How does this story speak into that situation?

God has decreed Jesus' death, but that does not mean those who kill him are not responsible. They may be God's servants, but they're only unwittingly so, and so will be punished. We can trust that God is always in control, and will always be fair, even when evil seems to be winning. The conspirators are responsible for Jesus' death, but Jesus is in control.

But where Jesus is in control, the disciples are confused.

Read 22:24-30

10. What do the disciples argue about? (See also 9:46-48)
11. What does Jesus tell them in response?
12. What future responsibilities will they have that will make this important?
13. What does this tell us about our own leadership?

Jesus has just told the disciples he is about to be betrayed by one of them and, astonishingly, they start arguing about which one of them is the greatest. But maybe it is not so astonishing. They have argued about this before just after Jesus has told them he's going to die (9:46-48). And he has told them that his death will bring in a new kingdom in which they will have powers and responsibilities. Insensitive it may be, but, carried away by the promise of a new kingdom, the disciples want to know which of them will be the greatest in it, forgetting what Jesus will need to do to bring it in.

And so Jesus brings them down to earth. His kingdom won't be like earthly kingdoms. Rather, its leaders will need to be servants, like its king is a servant.

Read 22:31-34

14. What does Peter ('Simon,' his pre-discipleship name) say he will do for Jesus?
15. What does Jesus say Simon will do?
16. Can you think of times when you have misjudged your own bravery for Jesus?

The disciples are not just confused about leadership; they're also confused about themselves. Simon thinks he is much braver than he is: he promises to stick by Jesus, even to death. Jesus knows better: Simon won't stick by him even to the morning. Once again, where Jesus knows exactly what is happening and is in total control, the disciples don't know what's going on and are out of control, even of themselves.

Read 22:35-38

17. What does Jesus tell the disciples to do?
18. How do they interpret this when it comes to swords?
19. How does Jesus react? What do you think this means? (See 22:49-51)

The disciples show they are not just confused about leadership, or their own bravery, but also the nature of the kingdom. They think it is a kingdom that can be fought for with swords. They interpret Jesus' command to 'buy a sword' (19:36) literally. But Jesus can't mean that. When a disciple cuts an enemy's ear off with a sword, Jesus rebukes him (22:49-51). And two swords can't be 'enough' to defeat the Roman army! Rather, when Jesus says 'buy a sword,' he means 'be prepared for a new season of pressure,' because the disciples will now be persecuted (see 21:12-19). So when Jesus says, 'That's enough!' (22:38), he means, 'Stop it!' His kingdom will come peacefully, through the spread of the good news, not through force. As you finish, what consequences do you think this has for our lives?