

Monday Week 41 The Passion of Christ

Bible Reading: Luke 22:14-23

Q 161 What was the last Supper?

A. The Last Supper was the Passover meal Jesus ate with his disciples before he was crucified.

A little boy sat in a church pew. The ushers were doing something different. Usually they passed a plate and took up a collection. This time they were passing a plate with little pieces of bread and a tray with little cups of grape juice. The boy didn't understand why he couldn't get any of the bread or juice. When he grew older, he understood what the bread and juice stood for. They were a reminder of the last supper Jesus ate with his disciples.

Jesus took bread and told the disciples to remember how his body was broken for them when they ate it. He took a cup and passed it to the disciples to drink. He told them they were to remember how he shed his blood for their sins. This Passover meal was a time for Israel to remember how a lamb was killed and its blood put on the doorposts during the tenth plague of Egypt. The Lord would pass over that house and not kill the firstborn, making a difference between Israel and Egypt. Jesus showed his disciples that in his death, he would keep them from dying for their sins.

When Christians take communion, this is what they remember.

Thinking Deeper

One of the major church scandals of the last several years had to do with priests who abused people in their parishes. The disgrace that the priests were immoral was compounded by what they did every week—serve communion to the people. Like Judas, who ate the last supper with Jesus, then went out and betrayed him, their actions betrayed the Christ they were supposed to be serving. Jesus said of Judas, “Good were it for that man if he had never been born.”

Serving communion with a wicked heart is evil. But so is partaking in communion with unconfessed sin. Paul the Apostle gave a warning to those who take communion unworthily. They eat and drink damnation to themselves.

Remembering the Last Supper and the suffering of Christ in communion is a time of blessing, worship, and reception of grace to those with faithful honest hearts. But it is also a time of betrayal and tragedy for those who take communion unworthily. Make sure your heart is right with God when you take communion.

Tuesday Week 41 The Passion of Christ

Bible Reading: Luke 22:39-48

Q 162 What did Jesus pray just before he was betrayed?

A. Jesus asked his Father if the cup could be removed from him.

Once there was a beautiful queen in a kingdom where the king was very stern. No one, not even the queen, could visit the king unless he gave an invitation. But the queen's family was in great danger. Her cousin asked her to visit the king. "But I could die if he doesn't welcome me," answered the queen. Her cousin told her it was her place to go to the king. No one else had a chance. "Who knows," he said. "You may have been brought to the kingdom for such a time as this." The queen agreed to go see the king. He welcomed her, and she convinced him to save her family.

Jesus came to earth to be the savior of mankind. But it was going to cost him his life. He prayed if it was possible, that the Father would remove the cup from him. Could mankind be saved if he didn't die? Then he said, "Not my will, but Thine be done." Even though it was hard, Jesus was willing to do the Father's will and save mankind.

Thinking Deeper

The Bible speaks of Jesus as the Son of God and also as the Son of Man. The ancient Christian creeds decreed that Jesus is wholly God and wholly man. Here we see the human side of Jesus facing the prospect of dying for man – taking on the sin of the world, becoming sin for us. The Second Adam came to fix the problem the first Adam had caused. In his humanity, the prospect of receiving the penalty of sin seemed to Jesus to be almost overwhelming. "If it be possible, let this cup pass..." Jesus saw the great difficulty of the work that must be done. He saw the agony that awaited him. Indeed, he already agonized. And sweat drops of blood.

"Nevertheless." What a word in such a time! "Nevertheless." What a statement of submission to his Father! "Nevertheless." What a model for all of us who face difficulty in following in his steps! "Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done."

"Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand" (Isaiah 53:10).

Thank you Jesus, for doing the Father's will.

Wednesday Week 41 The Passion of Christ

Bible Reading: Luke 22:63-71

Q 163 What two questions did the council leaders ask Jesus?

A. The council leaders asked Jesus if he was the Christ and if he was the Son of God.

It was a quiet night and the family was asleep in their house. Suddenly there came a loud knock on the door. The father woke up and went to the window. Below at his doorstep he saw a man. He opened the window. "Who are you, and what do you want?" The figure at the door answered. "I'm your neighbor and I need your help. A visitor came to my house and I don't have any bread to serve him. Please give me some bread." It took some convincing, but the man finally gave his neighbor some bread. To be safe, the father needed answers to his questions first, though, so then he knew he should go to the door.

The council leaders asked Jesus two questions. When Jesus answered, they should have believed him. They missed their chance to know who Jesus was and find salvation.

Thinking Deeper

Hearings on political scandals often have two questions: What did you know? And when did you know it? Cover ups are often revealed when it comes to light that a politician knew about unethical dealings beforehand and did nothing to fix them.

The two questions the council leaders asked Jesus are revealing in that they are the questions upon which the claims of Christ rested. When Jesus came, John called him the Lamb of God. Jesus himself stated that the prophets spoke of him and his day and he referred to God as his Father, making himself equal with God. The whole controversy about Jesus was not about what he did, but was about who he was.

The questions are two edged swords. If Jesus was not Christ, nor the Son of God, then the council leaders were right in condemning him. But if he was in fact the Christ, the Son of the living God, then they condemned themselves.

So the questions the council leaders asked were the right questions. Sadly, they got the answers wrong.

Thursday Week 41 The Passion of Christ

Bible Reading: Luke 23:1-12

Q 164 At the trial of Jesus, who did Pilate send Jesus to?

A. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod.

President Truman had a special sign on his desk in the White House. The sign said “The Buck Stops Here.” When people didn’t want to make a decision about something, they would pass the decision on to someone else. That was called “passing the buck.” Harry Truman knew that as President he had to make final decisions. There was no one else that he could pass the decision on to.

When Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, he was “passing the buck.” He hoped that Herod would put Jesus on trial. But Herod sent Jesus back to Pilate. Pilate had to decide what to do with Jesus. Each of us must decide what we will do with Jesus. We must either accept him and follow him, or follow the ways of sin. Will you follow him?

Thinking Deeper

The record states that Pilate sent Jesus to Herod. Many things about the crucifixion of Christ are ironic – this one particularly so. That Pilate, a self-absorbed political opportunist whose large concern was keeping his post in this Roman outpost, could actually send Jesus, the Omnipotent Creator and Sustainer of the Universe who speaks and it is done and has all power in heaven and earth, is ironic. But the Bible says, “He sent him.” In a world that was right Jesus would have sent Pilate, who like the centurion that knew about an authority that “says go and he goeth,” would have certainly followed the command. But the world was upside down. Pilate sent Jesus.

The world hasn’t come right today either. People still “send Jesus.” Unbelievers send him away when he knocks at the doors of their hearts. Liberals “send Jesus” on their missions of government suppression. Liberation theologians and Black Theology proponents “send Jesus” into violent missions, claiming him as a leader of the purveyors of hatred. And professing Christians send Jesus to do their bidding as they “name it, and claim it.”

On the other hand, true followers of the resurrected Christ repeat with heartfelt devotion Isaiah’s humble offering, “Here am I, send me.”

Friday Week 41 The Passion of Christ

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Q 162 What did Jesus pray just before he was betrayed?

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Q 163 What two questions did the council leaders ask Jesus?

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Q 164 At the trial of Jesus, who did Pilate send Jesus to?

A. Pilate sent Jesus to Herod.

Church was over. The people who were visiting began walking outside. A small boy was in the church basement. He didn't know everyone else had gone. Suddenly the lights went out. Everything was dark. The little boy was alone in the darkness. He was scared. He began to scream. People heard him from outside. They opened the door. He ran to his family. He didn't like being left alone.

When Judas betrayed Jesus, the guards took Jesus from the garden to the council leaders. His disciples didn't go with him. They followed afar off to see what would happen, but Jesus was alone. He had to face his trial by himself. Part of the suffering of Jesus was that he was alone. Maybe that's why Jesus says to his followers, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He assures us that we are never really alone.

Thinking Deeper

C. S. Lewis wrote an essay entitled "God in the Dock." Being "in the dock" means being on trial. "Man is on the Bench and God in the Dock." This is the modern equivalent of what happened to Jesus. He was on trial. He was taken before the council leaders. He was to answer accusations. Lewis understood that modern man has lost the fear of God and would be God's judge. Consider the questions that often come as objections to Christianity. "What happens to the heathen?" The assumption of the question is that heathens cannot be rightly judged if they have never heard the Gospel, so God is not just in condemning them, therefore a God of justice does not exist. Or consider the question "How can a God of love allow suffering and evil in the world," which is an assault on either the power of God, since he cannot control evil, or the goodness of God, since if he has the power, he does not stop evil. In both cases, as in other objections to Christianity, God is on trial. Man thinks he has cleverly reversed the roles.

There are good answers to these questions that cannot be answered in this small space. But what can be said is that putting God on trial is not novel to modern skepticism. It was done openly when the Jews took Jesus to their council leaders and then sent him to Pilate. Consider the end, though, before you join those on the bench. Jesus arose and is now at the right hand of the Father in heaven, and will come again to judge the world.