



The Last Supper

Summary and Goal

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with His disciples, the meal by which His followers would remember and re-enact the price He paid with His life for ours. Luke emphasized the connections between the Passover meal of the old covenant and the first meal of the new covenant.

Main Passages

Luke 22:14-23; 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

Session Outline

1. The Significance of the Supper (Luke 22:14-23)
2. Worthy Recipients of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:27-32)
3. The Purpose of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

Theological Theme

The Lord's Supper is to be observed as a remembrance of Christ's death to confirm the faith of the saints and to bring to mind all the benefits of Christ's death.

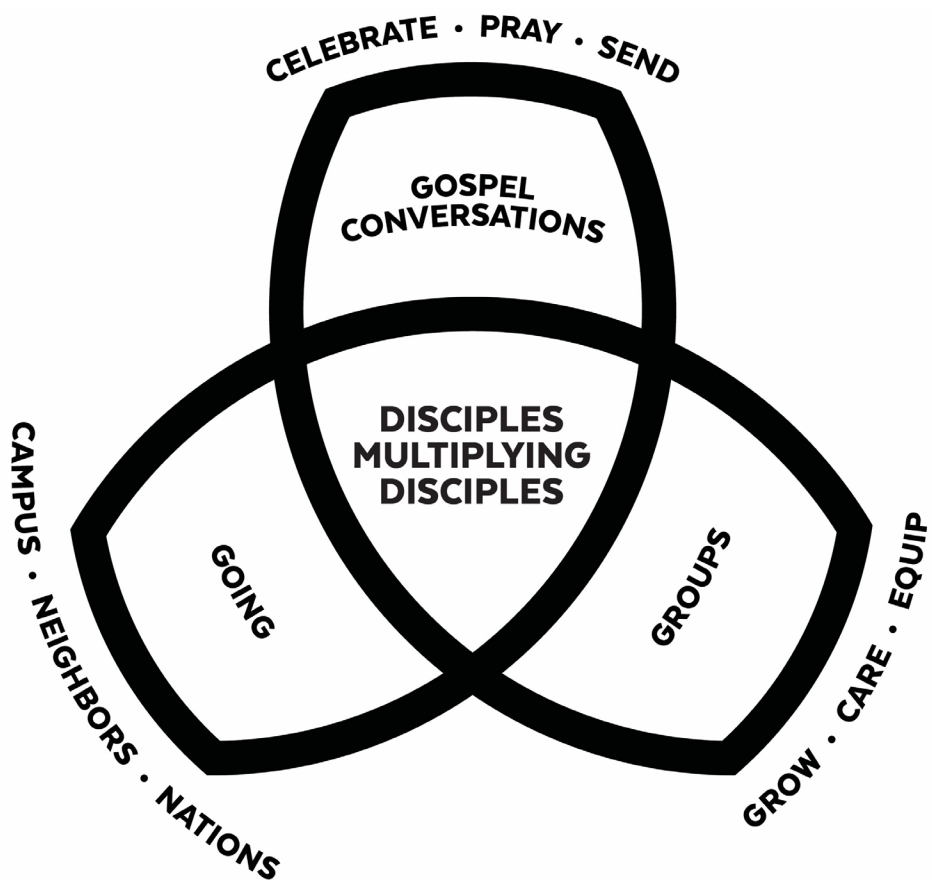
Christ Connection

The death of Christ on the cross is retold when Christians partake of the Lord's Supper. The bread symbolizes His body that was broken; the cup signifies His blood that was shed.

Missional Application

When Christians partake of the Lord's Supper they aren't only built up in faith and spurred on to joy, but they are also reminded of their commission to go and make Christ known among the nations.

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



DxD This Week

For the Leader

Pre-enlist a member to share how they engage the Bible daily—their daily devotional habits.

3

Session Plan

The Last Supper

? Ice Breaker

Share some words that describe a typical meal time in your home when you were growing up.

Introduction

- ? What's the longest you have ever gone without food?
- ? What were the circumstances surrounding this situation? How did you feel? What did you finally eat?

If we don't feed our souls with the sustenance they need, then we will experience spiritual weakness and lethargy. The Lord has provided several sources of nourishment for our souls. Daily worship through Bible reading and prayer are critical. Gathering together with the saints to sing, pray, and receive the Word is a central avenue of nourishment. Also, the Lord's Supper has been given to us for the strengthening of our faith and the nourishment of our souls.

1. The Significance of the Supper (Luke 22:14-23)

All Christians should gather together in their local assemblies to eat the bread and to drink of the cup in grateful reflection on Christ and His death. The Supper is a celebration of the presence of God in their midst. It ushers them into communion with the Father and with their brothers and sisters. It feeds and nourishes their souls as well as anticipates the day when they will dine with Christ in the Kingdom of God.

- ? Why is it significant that Jesus told His disciples that His body and blood would be given "for you"?
- ? What benefit does this retelling have for Christians?
- ? Application: In what ways is the gospel preached when the Lord's Supper is observed? Have you viewed the Lord's Supper in this way or is this a new perspective for you?

2. Worthy Recipients of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:27-32)

The text says that Jesus' close disciples, the apostles, were with Him to celebrate the first observance of the Lord's Supper. An important, practical

question that pastors and church members must consider is the question of who should be permitted to take the Lord's Supper today.

- ❓ According to the passage, who was reclining at the table with Christ? Who partook of the Lord's Supper? Why is this significant?
- ❓ In 1 Corinthians 11:27-32, what did Paul say about the manner in which a person should partake of the supper?
- ❓ Application: How do you seek for the unity of the church and actively work against division, gossip, and complaining? What can you do to grow in communion with fellow church members?

3. The Purpose of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26)

Jesus told the disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me." (v. 19) The Lord's Supper is a central element in the lives of Christians, especially their formal worship in their local assembly. Jesus Christ died once for all for those who would believe upon him. The Lord's Supper is a celebration of Christ's atoning work as well as a means of fortifying our faith in Him.

- ❓ What did Jesus say about the purpose of the Lord's Supper? Why were His followers to continue to take it? Does the Lord's Supper add anything to Christ's atoning work? Explain.
- ❓ According to Paul's account of the Lord's Supper, Jesus referred to the bread as His body. How has this idea been interpreted throughout Christian history?
- ❓ Application: When do you tend to approach worship or a part of the worship experience, such as the Lord's Supper, too lightly? What are some ways we can help each other guard against those complacencies and habits?

Conclusion

- ❓ As you reflect on what Christ has done for you, what are your feelings? What is an appropriate response to His sacrifice?
- ❓ What will you do this week to reflect the change Christ has made in you? How should this impact your relationships with others, both inside and outside of the church?
- ❓ How can you use the story of the Last Supper and its elements to share Jesus with someone?

❓ For Further Discussion

What lessons can we learn from the Corinthian church's poor example? Who should take the Lord's Supper today?

❓ Closing

Offer Brentwood's daily devotional page as a way to continue the experience of the Lord's Supper by spending time with Jesus daily in the Bible.



Expanded Session Content

The Last Supper

? Ice Breaker

Share some words that describe a typical meal time in your home when you were growing up.

Introduction

- ? What's the longest you have ever gone without food?
- ? What were the circumstances surrounding this situation? How did you feel? What did you finally eat?

We need food. We enjoy food. Food can be a hobby, but the bottom line is that we must have food to live. If you have ever gone without food for any length of time, you have no doubt experienced things like dizziness, headaches, weakness, stomach pains, and tiredness. Isn't it amazing how quickly our bodies begin to betray us if we don't provide the sustenance they need to function?

Just so, our souls need nourishment. If we don't feed our souls with the sustenance they need, then we will experience spiritual weakness and lethargy. The Lord has provided several sources of nourishment for our souls. Daily worship through Bible reading and prayer are critical. Gathering together with the saints to sing, pray, and receive the Word is a central avenue of nourishment. Also, the Lord's Supper has been given to us for the strengthening of our faith and the nourishment of our souls. Let's consider together how the Lord's Supper accomplishes that in our lives.


Session Summary

The Scriptures teach us how we are to approach God in corporate worship. We are told explicitly what to do. Consider, for example, when a child sees something on the kitchen counter that looks interesting. His curiosity is piqued, and he would like nothing more than to get his hands on it and see what it does. Now, this is when the idea occurs to him: "Well, my father never said that I couldn't play with this." In this scenario, the child justifies his actions based on the fact that he has never been explicitly prohibited from something. The lack of prohibition, for him, is tantamount to permission.

This line of thought is something that Christians must be wary of as they consider how they ought to worship God when the church gathers together for formal worship. Christians are on safe and secure ground when they stick to activities that have been explicitly commanded in Scripture. One of the activities that God has positively commanded in Scripture is to observe the Lord's Supper. Let's look at the Scriptures together to gain a better understanding of this ordinance.


1. The Significance of the Supper (Luke 22:14-23)

All Christians should gather together in their local assemblies to eat the bread and to drink of the cup in grateful reflection on Christ and His death. The Supper is a celebration of the presence of God in their midst. It ushers them into communion with the Father and with their brothers and sisters. It feeds and nourishes their souls as well as anticipates the day when they will dine with Christ in the Kingdom of God.

 Why is it significant that Jesus told His disciples that His body and blood would be given “for you”?

Jesus said, “This is my body, which is given for you,” and, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.” The key phrase there is for you. Jesus' body was beaten, lashed, pierced, struck, and broken for you. Jesus' blood poured forth from His body from the crown of thorns, the three nails, and the soldier's spear for you.

The Lord's Supper is a reenactment of Christ's reconciling work. The Lord's Supper is a retelling of that old, old story upon which Christians have hung all of their hopes. When Christians take the Lord's Supper, they are reminded of God's promises about what would happen to the Messiah: “You will strike his heel” (Gen. 3:15), and, “But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed” (Isa. 53:5).

 What benefit does this retelling have for Christians?

The Supper strengthens and refreshes the souls of believers. It benefits them because when they preach the gospel to themselves and to each other they are edified and unified. Even Christians need to hear the gospel. Consider the fact that Paul always rehearsed the gospel message in his letters when he wrote to churches. This reminds us that the gospel message isn't only necessary for salvation, but it is also necessary for sanctification.

The New Covenant

The mention of the new covenant related to Christ's shed blood means that the prophesied new covenant (Jr 31:31–34) would be ratified by Jesus's death on the cross.

When Christians participate in the Lord's Supper, their faith is nourished, their souls are encouraged, and their hearts are humbled. Furthermore, when they participate in the Lord's Supper, these things happen alongside their brothers and sisters in Christ, and they are knit together with them with the stitches of gospel truths.

- Application: In what ways is the gospel preached when the Lord's Supper is observed? Have you viewed the Lord's Supper in this way or is this a new perspective for you?

2. Worthy Recipients of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:27-32)

- According to the passage, who was reclining at the table with Christ? Who partook of the Lord's Supper? Why is this significant?

The text says that Jesus' close disciples, the apostles, were with Him to celebrate the first observance of the Lord's Supper. An important, practical question that pastors and church members must consider is the question of who should be permitted to take the Lord's Supper today. Is participation in the Lord's Supper a personal thing that should be decided in one's own heart, or should church leadership take an active role in encouraging some to take it while prohibiting others?

- In 1 Corinthians 11:27-32, what did Paul say about the manner in which a person should partake of the supper?

The key phrase in this passage is, "Let a person examine himself" (v. 28a). Paul explained to the Corinthian church that it was possible for Christians to eat in an "unworthy manner" (v. 27). He said anyone who ate in an unworthy manner was sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. This is a very serious thing. Indeed, a bit later he said that it was because of this unworthy eating that some had died (v. 30).

In verses 17-22, Paul explained in detail what he meant by eating in an unworthy manner. Apparently, some of the church members in Corinth were abusing the Lord's Supper. First of all, he pointed out the divisions that were among them. And, it seems, that these divisions were leading to chaos, selfishness, and offense when they observed the Lord's Supper. We must keep in mind that the Lord's Supper was more like a full meal at this time. Paul said, "When you come together, then, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For at the meal, each one eats his own supper. So one person is hungry while another gets drunk!" (1 Cor. 11:20-21).



What lessons can we learn from the Corinthian church's poor example? Who should take the Lord's Supper today?

Factions had grown up in the church and cliques had formed. Offense, attacks, lies, rumors, backbiting, and hatred ran rampant in the Corinthian church. Gospel driving love and forgiveness was in short supply apparently. These immature Christians were nursing hurts and were allowing seeds of bitterness to take root. This sort of atmosphere is hard on pastors, but they must work diligently to deal with sin and lead Christians to reconcile and to love one another with the love of Christ.

Further, the Lord's Supper is intended for Christians only. It is a farce and a mockery if someone who remains an enemy of God participates. Therefore, pastors must protect the integrity and purity of the Lord's Table by humbly and gently prohibiting unbelievers from partaking in the bread and the cup.

Paul later wrote to the Corinthian church: "Do not be yoked together with those who do not believe. For what partnership is there between righteousness and lawlessness? Or what fellowship does light have with darkness? What agreement does Christ have with Belial? Or what does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?" (2 Cor. 6:14-15). Unbelievers are unfit and unable to enjoy communion with Christ and are therefore unworthy of the Lord's Table. As long as a person remains in a condition of rebellion against God, he or she should not be permitted to partake in the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper.



Application: How do you seek for the unity of the church and actively work against division, gossip, and complaining? What can you do to grow in communion with fellow church members?


3. The Purpose of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-26)



What did Jesus say about the purpose of the Lord's Supper? Why were His followers to continue to take it? Does the Lord's Supper add anything to Christ's atoning work? Explain.


Jesus told the disciples, "Do this in remembrance of me." (v. 19) The Lord's Supper is a central element in the lives of Christians, especially their formal worship in their local assembly. However, the Lord's Supper isn't effective to supplement Christ's work on the cross. First Peter 3:18 says that Christ "suffered for sins once for all." Jesus Christ died once for all for those who would believe upon him. The Lord's Supper is a celebration of

Christ's atoning work as well as a means of fortifying our faith in Him. However, it cannot save. In fact, those who participate in the Lord's Supper with unrepentant hearts eat and drink judgment on themselves.

 According to Paul's account of the Lord's Supper, Jesus referred to the bread as His body. How has this idea been interpreted throughout Christian history?

Jesus' expression, "This is my body," has been widely interpreted throughout church history. Roman Catholics claim the bread and wine literally become the body of Christ (transubstantiation), while Lutherans claim that the body and blood of Jesus are "in, with, and under" the bread and wine (consubstantiation). Most Protestants take the phrase to mean that Jesus is present symbolically, though present spiritually with the believer as well.

Before we partake of the Supper, we should examine our attitudes and motives. For example, do we hold a grudge against someone? Since Jesus taught reconciliation with a fellow Christian as a precondition for offering a gift to God (see Matt. 5:23-24), we can do no less before we participate in the Lord's Supper. What is our motive for participating? Is the act an empty ritual that we perform just to keep from being different from those seated around us? Are we afraid of what others may think if we fail to partake? Paul's instructions regarding the Lord's Supper apply to all kinds of corporate worship. We always need to approach God in worship with humility and sincerity of heart.

 Application: When do you tend to approach worship or a part of the worship experience, such as the Lord's Supper, too lightly? What are some ways we can help each other guard against those complacencies and habits?

Conclusion

All Christians ought to be committed to a local church that practices the Lord's Supper regularly. The Lord's Supper is a special and unique activity that local churches ought to observe continually because the Scriptures command it. Along with baptism, the Lord's Supper is an ordinance of positive command from God Himself. In other words, local churches are obligated to observe the Lord's Supper. It isn't a suggestion. It isn't optional. Local churches should continue to practice this ordinance until Jesus returns.

The Lord's Supper is included in the short list of positive commands given to the church in regards to formal times of worship. Since the time of the Reformation, the churches and denominations that have sought to live as

closely to the Bible as possible have taken a “regulative” approach to public worship. Those that hold to this view are careful about what activities they permitted in formal times of worship. In the Bible there are several activities commanded in public worship: the preaching of the Word, the public reading of the Word, praying, singing, baptizing, and observing the Lord’s Supper.

The importance and place of the Lord’s Supper in the life of the gathered church has rarely been in question. All churches that hold to the Bible as their standard observe it. It is undeniable that Jesus instituted this practice as a means for His people to regularly remember His saving work on their behalf.

- ❓ As you reflect on what Christ has done for you, what are your feelings? What is an appropriate response to His sacrifice?
- ❓ What will you do this week to reflect the change Christ has made in you? How should this impact your relationships with others, both inside and outside of the church?
- ❓ How can you use the story of the Last Supper and its elements to share Jesus with someone?

❓ Closing

Offer Brentwood's daily devotional page as a way to continue the experience of the Lord's Supper by spending time with Jesus daily in the Bible.

Prayer of Response

Give thanks to God for the clear direction to worship Him through the Lord's Supper. Ask God to give you a clear picture of what the Lord's Supper means and the benefits that are yours if you will participate in it with faith, repentance, and humility.

Additional Resources

- *Understanding the Lord's Supper* by Bobby Jamieson
- *40 Questions About Baptism and the Lord's Supper* by John S. Hammett
- *What Is the Lord's Supper?* by R.C. Sproul

For Next Week

Session Title

- To Seek and Save

Main Passages

- Luke 19:28-44 (Luke 10)

Session Outline

1. He Came (Luke 19:10, 28-37)
2. To Seek (Luke 19:10, 38-40)
3. To Save (Luke 19:10, 41-44)

Memorize

¹⁹ *And he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to them, and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."*

²⁰ *In the same way he also took the cup after supper and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."*

- Luke 22:19-20

Daily Readings

- Monday - Luke 22:1-6
- Tuesday - Luke 22:7-13
- Wednesday - Luke 22:14-23
- Thursday - Luke 22:31-34
- Friday - Luke 22:39-46
- Saturday - Luke 22:54-62

Historical Context of Luke

Purpose

The Gospel of Luke is a carefully researched (1:3), selective presentation of the person and life of Jesus Christ, designed to strengthen the faith of believers (1:3–4) and to challenge the misconceptions of unbelievers, especially those from a Greek background. Its portrait of Jesus is well balanced, skillfully emphasizing his divinity and perfect humanity.

Author

The author of the Third Gospel is not named. Considerable evidence points to Luke as its author. Much of that proof is found in the book of Acts, which identifies itself as a sequel to Luke (Ac 1:1–3). A major line of evidence has to do with the so-called “we” sections of the book (Ac 16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–37; 28:1–16). Most of Acts is narrated in third-person plural (“they,” “them”), but some later sections having to do with the ministry of the apostle Paul unexpectedly shift to first-person plural (“we,” “us”). This indicates that the author had joined the apostle Paul for the events recorded in those passages. Since there are no “we” passages in the Gospel of Luke, that fits with the author stating that he used eyewitness testimony to the life of Jesus (1:2), indicating he was not such an eyewitness himself.

Since Luke wrote both the Third Gospel and the book of Acts (Ac 1:1–3), it is relevant to consider the dating of both books together. The events at the end of Acts occurred around AD 62–63. That is the earliest point at which Acts could have been written. If Acts was written in the early AD 60s from Rome, where Paul was imprisoned for two years (Ac 28:30), the Third Gospel could date from an earlier stage of that period of imprisonment. The other reasonable possibility is during Paul’s earlier two-year imprisonment in Caesarea (Ac 24:27). From that location, Luke would have been able to travel and interview the eyewitnesses to Jesus’s life and ministry who were still alive.

Setting

Traditionally, the Gospel of Luke is believed to have been written after both Matthew and Mark. Those who date Matthew and Mark in the AD 60s or 70s have tended to push the dating of Luke back to the AD 70s or 80s.

Special Features

The Gospel of Luke is the longest book in the New Testament. Focusing on the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, this Gospel is part one of a two-part history, the book of Acts being part two. Both were dedicated to “most honorable Theophilus” (Lk 1:3; Ac 1:1).

Extended Commentary

Luke 22:14-23

22:12–14. The willing owner led the disciples to the right place, and they prepared for Passover, setting out everything needed for the guests to recline at the table and eat. By such preparations, Jesus apparently protected his disciple family from intrusive outsiders. They celebrated the supper in private. The feast approached (22:1), the day of unleavened bread came (v. 7), and the hour arrived. At the mealtime hour, they gathered in the upper room, built onto a flat Palestinian house. Each person found a place around the table to stretch out to eat. The family was prepared for Passover, but were they prepared for this Passover?

22:15–16. Jesus wanted to share one last Passover with his disciples. Jewish religious leaders wanted to kill him and prevent him from doing any more teaching or performing any more miracles in Jerusalem. He knew what lay ahead of him in Jerusalem. But now, safely cloistered from his enemies, he had a final opportunity to prepare his followers for the events of the future. He needed one last time to give them a symbol to teach them the meaning of who he was and what he had done for them. Thus, he ate his final Passover with his disciples, knowing they would not share such a meal together until the great eschatological banquet around God's table in heaven. Then their redemption would be complete. Then Jesus' preaching that the kingdom had come near would be complete, and the kingdom would be fully present for eternity.

22:17–18. The Passover meal began with a cup of wine, which was blessed with thanksgiving for the meaning of the day. Jesus also took a cup of wine and blessed it. Often a host would give his cup as a special honor to a banquet guest. Jesus appears to share his own cup with all the family, rather than each drinking from his own cup. This symbolized their unity in facing what lay ahead and in looking forward to the final appearance of the kingdom of God. The Last Supper is a time of looking forward to two goals: the cross and the final heavenly banquet in the kingdom. Jesus underlined that this was his last supper. He would be with the Father at the final banquet the next time he partook of the wine.

22:19. Along with lamb, unleavened bread was also a central part of the Passover meal. The family, having recited the Exodus story through questions and answers and sung parts of the traditional Hallel collection of psalms in Psalms 113–118, would give a prayer of thanks over the bread and eat the Passover meal. Jesus apparently took the role of the father of the family and gave thanks for the bread. As he did so, he replaced the Passover celebration with a new celebration of unleavened bread. This one interpreted the bread not as representing what Israel had to carry out of Egypt but the body of Jesus broken on the cross for his followers.

It is difficult to know how the disciples would have reacted as Jesus spoke of his body given for them. Later they would realize what he had done and why he wanted them to repeat this rite again and again. No longer did they need to celebrate the Passover and look back to the Exodus redemption. Now they could celebrate the Lord's Supper or Last Supper and look back to what Jesus did for them by dying on the cross. Jesus would no longer drink and eat physically and visibly with them, but each generation of disciples could remember his desire to eat this last meal and the meaning he gave to it.

22:20. Passover included four cups of wine drunk at specific intervals. The last two came after the meal and were separated by the reading of the rest of the Hallel Psalms. Jesus took the occasion of one of these cups to again transform the meaning of Passover, transforming the Jewish celebration into the Christian Easter. The cup they drank served as an eternal reminder that Jesus had spilled his blood for them. Passover celebrated the old covenant ratified on Sinai (Exod. 19–24). The Lord’s Supper celebrates the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31 written on the hearts of the people rather than on tablets of stone. As blood sacrifices sealed the old covenant (Exod. 24), so Christ’s blood would seal and ratify the new covenant.

No longer would they need to look back to Egypt and Sinai for their redemption. No longer would they need to celebrate a yearly day of atonement. Now they looked to Jesus and his death on the cross as the sole and sufficient means for their atonement. Jesus would no longer celebrate Passover. His followers would no longer need to celebrate Passover. Now they would celebrate the Lord’s death until he came again.

22:21–24. Quickly Jesus changed the topic. The betrayer is here at the table, he declared. What a shock for the apostles. Who could he be?

Jesus emphasized that the betrayer had not forced Jesus’ hand. The betrayer did not control history. Neither did the one who had entered in to possess him. God had determined that Jesus must pass on. He would go just as God had planned it. Still, for being Satan’s accomplice and choosing to reject and betray Jesus, the betrayer stood under judgment. Everyone should grieve and mourn for him, Jesus said. He would face God’s wrath.

The disciples had not formed a complete fellowship of trust. They argued over which of them might betray Jesus. Deep down, they knew each one of them was capable of such betrayal.

The argument spread from who was the worst among them to who was the best. The implication of this argument rested on who would receive the highest offices in Jesus’ kingdom, as the following response shows.¹

References

1. Butler, Trent C., and Max Anders. *Luke*. Holman New Testament Commentary. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2000.

Author Bio

Trent Butler (Luke)

Trent C. Butler is a freelance author and editor. He served ten years on the faculty of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Ruschlikon, Switzerland, and for twenty-two years as editor and editorial director for Holman Bible Publishers and LifeWay. He wrote the Word Biblical Commentary volume on Joshua, the Layman's Bible Book Commentary on Isaiah, the Holman Old Testament Commentaries on Isaiah and Hosea through Micah, and the Holman New Testament Commentary on Luke. He served on the editorial Board of the Holman Christian Standard Bible, and edited the Holman Bible Dictionary. Dr. Butler has a Ph.D. in biblical studies and linguistics from Vanderbilt University, has done further study at Heidelberg and Zurich, and has participated in the excavation of Beersheba.

Max Anders (Luke)

Dr. Max Anders is the author of over 25 books, including the bestselling *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, and is the creator and general editor of the 32-volume Holman Bible Commentary series. He has taught on the college and seminary level and is a veteran pastor. Max provides resources and discipleship strategies at www.maxanders.com to help people grow spiritually.

Bobby Jamieson (Understanding the Lord's Supper)

Bobby Jamieson is a Ph.D. student in New Testament at the University of Cambridge. He previously served as assistant editor for *9Marks* and is the author, most recently, of *Going Public: Why Baptism Is Required for Church Membership* (B&H, 2015).

John S. Hammett (40 Questions About Baptism and the Lord's Supper)

John S. Hammett (Ph.D. in philosophy, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; D.Min., Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary) is professor of systematic theology at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He has written several articles for journals and magazines and was a pastor and missionary before becoming a professor.

R.C. Sproul (What is the Lord's Supper?)

R.C. Sproul (1939–2017) was founder of Ligonier Ministries in Orlando, Fla. He was also copastor of Saint Andrew's Chapel, first president of Reformation Bible College, and executive editor of *Tabletalk* magazine. His radio program, *Renewing Your Mind*, is still broadcast daily on hundreds of radio stations around the world and can also be heard online.