

## Lesson 25

# The Gospel of John

## Crucifixion and Death



History of the Early World	Patriarchs	Israel in Egypt	Conquest of Canaan	Judges	United Kingdom	Divided Kingdom Exile	Exile	Return	Maccabean Revolt	Jesus the Messiah	Church
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### Introduction

The Passion of Jesus now reaches its awesome climax in the Gospel of John as Jesus endures the agony of the Cross and fulfills the sacrificial offering of himself that he has begun in the Passover celebration. John makes clear to us that Jesus is the true Passover Lamb. And Jesus gives to us, his beloved disciples, a Mother who is the New Eve, just as he commends us to her care. In his final act of receiving the sour wine, he finishes the Passover celebration of the New Covenant and gives up his Spirit for all who believe.



### John 19:17-42

17 So they took Jesus, and he went out, bearing his own cross, to the place called the place of a skull, which is called in Hebrew Golgotha. 18 There they crucified him, and with him two others, one on either side, and Jesus between them. 19 Pilate also wrote a title and put it on the cross; it read, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.” 20 Many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, in Latin, and in Greek. 21 The chief priests of the Jews then said to Pilate, “Do not write, ‘The King of the Jews,’ but, ‘This man said, I am King of the Jews.’” 22 Pilate answered, “What I have written I have written.”

23 When the soldiers had crucified Jesus they took his garments and made four parts, one for each soldier; also his tunic. But the tunic was without seam, woven from top to bottom; 24 so they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it to see whose it shall be.” This was to fulfil the scripture,

“They parted my garments among them,  
and for my clothing they cast lots.”

25 So the soldiers did this. But standing by the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, “Woman, behold, your son!” 27 Then he said to the disciple, “Behold, your mother!” And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.

28 After this Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), “I thirst.” 29 A bowl full of vinegar stood there; so they put a sponge full of vinegar on hyssop and held it to his mouth. **30 When Jesus had received the vinegar, he said, “It is finished”; and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.**





## John 19:17-42 (cont.)

31 Since it was the day of Preparation, in order to prevent the bodies from remaining on the cross on the sabbath (for that sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. 32 So the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first, and of the other who had been crucified with him; 33 but when they came to Jesus and saw that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. 34 But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water. 35 He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth—that you also may believe. 36 For these things took place that the scripture might be fulfilled, “Not a bone of him shall be broken.” 37 And again another scripture says, “They shall look on him whom they have pierced.”

38 After this Joseph of Arimathea, who was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus, and Pilate gave him leave. So he came and took away his body. 39 Nicodemus also, who had at first come to him by night, came bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds’ weight. 40 They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as is the burial custom of the Jews. 41 Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb where no one had ever been laid. 42 So because of the Jewish day of Preparation, as the tomb was close at hand, they laid Jesus there.

**Please Note:** *One of the best ways to meditate on God’s word is to take it deeply into your life through memorization; hence, a suggested memory verse is always highlighted in the text of the Scripture passage.*

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## Study Questions

1. The sign posted over Jesus was written in three languages. Why? Why does John make note of it in his Gospel?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Why did Pilate refuse to change the inscription on the sign? What is the irony in this?







## Study Questions (cont.)

8. Read Exodus 12:43-50. In this section, God gives detailed instructions to the Israelites regarding the sacrificial Passover lamb. What connection do you see between this and John 19:33?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Read paragraph 1225 of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The blood and water that flowed from the side of Jesus are types of what two Sacraments?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. John twice mentions that it is the Jewish Day of Preparation (verses 31 and 42). For what feast day were they preparing? Why do you think John chose to emphasize this in his Gospel?



## Questions for Reflection

1. Imagine the soldiers at the foot of the cross, dividing up Jesus' clothes and throwing dice to determine who would get his tunic. Have you ever ignored someone else's suffering while selfishly pursuing your own interests? Has another person ever suffered on your behalf? Have you ever suffered on someone else's behalf?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. John records the scene at the foot of the cross between Jesus, Mary and the "beloved disciple" for a theological purpose. He wishes all Christians, who are beloved disciples as well, to see Mary as their mother, too. Do you have a devotion to our Blessed Mother?





## Questions for Reflection (cont.)

3. When you see all that God has done for your salvation, does it make you realize that he indeed has a plan for each of us—a plan that involves not only eternal life with him but also our daily lives here on earth? Have you asked God to help you fulfill his will for your life? Where do you see God calling you? What cross are you being asked to bear?



## Opportunities for Additional Study

### Points to Ponder

#### It Is Finished!

For the people of Israel, Passover celebrated the central event of their history, the Exodus that delivered them from Egypt and slavery. While all the first-born of Egypt died in the first Passover, Israel preserved their first-born by sacrificing a lamb without spot, blemish or broken bones (cf. John 19:36) and by putting the lamb's blood on the doorposts and lintels of their houses (Exodus 12). Immediately after the Passover, Moses led the people of Israel through the Red Sea (with the attendant destruction of Pharaoh's forces) and on to Mount Sinai, where the Ten Commandments were given and the covenant between God and Israel was sealed.

A covenant is not the same thing as a contract. A contract is a "50/50" arrangement in which each party is obliged to honor the agreement only if the other does. You pay \$10 to the gas station, and they have to give you the gas. If they don't give you the gas, you keep the \$10; and if you don't pay the \$10, they don't have to give you the gas. In a covenant something very different is taking place, for a covenant is a sacred bond of kinship establishing family relationships and family bonds. It is more like a "100/100" arrangement. If one side fails to honor the covenant, the other still may, if he chooses. The covenant established through Moses between the people of Israel and God is called the Old Covenant, and it was understood as establishing a family bond between God and his people. Thus, the language describing their relationship is expressed in familial terms such as "father" and "son" (Exodus 4:22; Deuteronomy 1:31) and "husband" and "wife" (Hosea 2:18-20). The feasts established by God were intended to strengthen this family bond.

Significantly, there is only one place in the Gospels where Jesus uses the term "covenant": at the Institution of the Eucharist. Jesus takes the unleavened bread of the Passover meal and declares, "This is my body" (Matthew 26:26). Notice that here Jesus uses very precise language: "This *is* my body"—not this "represents," "is sort of like," or "reminds you of" his body. Then Jesus takes a cup, and when he has given thanks, (*eucharistasas*), he gives it to his disciples, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; for this is my blood of the *covenant*, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28, emphasis added).





## Opportunities for Additional Study (cont.)

There are several important things happening in this passage, beginning with the way in which the Passover Seder meal traditionally was celebrated. In Hebrew, the word “todah” means a “thank offering”, an Old Testament sacrifice involving unleavened bread as part of a meal offered in thanks for God’s merciful deliverance from a mortal threat. Curiously, the rabbis before Christ had a very interesting saying: “In the coming messianic age, all sacrifices will cease, except the todah, which will continue on into the ages.” “Todah” translated into Greek is “Eucharist,” which means “Thanksgiving.” So the rabbis spoke more truth than they knew.

Jesus not only celebrates, he fulfills the Passover. As we have seen, the original Passover involved two deaths: the death of the first-born son (for the Egyptians) and death of the Passover lamb (for Israel). Jesus is both. Like the Passover lamb, Jesus’ blood is poured out for the salvation of others. Like the Passover lamb, Jesus’ body is consumed. But Jesus’ death is not only for the children of Israel. As the first-born son, he dies for “Egypt” that is, for Gentiles as well as Hebrews—indeed, for all people in all times and all places. And he does so voluntarily. As he says in John 10:17-18, “I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.” And so, before any Romans laid hands on him, Jesus laid hands upon himself by taking bread and wine, blessing it, changing it into his own body and blood, and giving it to his disciples. In so doing, Jesus transformed his death into an irrevocable gift of love.

Jesus’ declaration concerning “my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” is reminiscent of Exodus 24, where Moses ratifies the Old Covenant between the people of Israel and God, making Israel the family of God. This occurs following the Passover and the Exodus. In the Gospel of John Jesus is the new Moses bringing about the new Exodus for the new Israel, through the New Passover and the New Covenant. Yet Jesus doesn’t abolish the Old Covenant; rather, he fulfills and transforms it. It becomes, as Luke relates in his Gospel, a “new covenant” (Luke 22:20). The kinship that could only be symbolized by the blood of goats and bulls under the Old Covenant becomes a divine kinship when the blood of God himself unites us with him in the body of Christ. Therefore, every time we celebrate the Mass, we renew that “new and everlasting covenant.”

After his sufferings on the cross are complete, John tells us that “Jesus, knowing that all was now finished, said (to fulfill the scripture), ‘I thirst.’” This is more than simply a statement about Jesus’ physical dehydration. Due to sheer blood loss, Jesus would have been thirsty throughout the crucifixion. But he waits—for a spiritual reason—until this moment to speak of his thirst “to fulfil the scripture.” Then, at last, he receives a drink of sour wine. It is noteworthy that John is careful to mention that Jesus is handed over at the sixth hour, because the sixth hour is the time appointed for the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb (John 19:14). John also makes a point of telling us that Jesus is wearing a seamless linen garment just like the one the high priest wears when he offers the Passover Lamb in the Temple (verse 23), thus Jesus is seen as our “true priest”. And John is careful to note, too, that Christ’s legs were not broken and that this “fulfills” Exodus 12:46, which declares that the Passover Lamb’s bones are not to be broken. John further notes that the sponge holding the sour wine that Jesus





## Opportunities for Additional Study (cont.)

received was held up to his lips on a hyssop branch, the very same kind of branch used to sprinkle a lamb's blood on the doorposts at Passover. Therefore, when Jesus declares that "It is finished", we are seeing the consummation of the New Passover liturgy. The sacrifice of Christ does not begin when he is scourged, crowned with thorns, and crucified: It begins with the sacrificial separation of his body and blood in the Institution of the Eucharist. But it is finished with the death of Christ on the cross. Calvary begins with the Eucharist; the Eucharist ends with Calvary. They are one act, not separate events. With that consummation, not only the Passover liturgy but the transformation of the Old Passover into the New, was finished.

### Catechism Connection

For further information on how the passage from this lesson relates to the teaching of the Church, please read paragraphs 613 and 614 in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*.

### Rome to Home

A papal quote relating to the lesson:

"She cooperated, as the Second Vatican Council teaches, with a maternal love. (129) Here we perceive the real value of the words spoken by Jesus to his Mother at the hour of the Cross: 'Woman, behold your son' and to the disciple: 'Behold your mother' (*Jn 19:26-27*). They are words which determine Mary's place in the life of Christ's disciples and they express—as I have already said—the new motherhood of the Mother of the Redeemer: a spiritual motherhood, born from the heart of the Paschal Mystery of the Redeemer of the world. It is a motherhood in the order of grace, for it implores the gift of the Spirit, who raises up the new children of God, redeems through the sacrifice of Christ that Spirit whom Mary too, together with the Church, received on the day of Pentecost" (Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mater*).





## Summary

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#### In this lesson, we observed that:

1. Jesus is crucified under the ironic title “King of the Jews.”
2. Jesus commends Mary to John, the “beloved disciple” (who stands for all believers), and he commends the “beloved disciple” to Mary.
3. Jesus’ death finishes the sacrificial Passover offering begun in the celebration of the Eucharist, since he is the true priest and Passover Lamb.
4. The blood and water from Jesus’ side are the signs of the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist (1 John 5:6-8).
5. Jesus was truly dead and was buried.

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