

Culham / REEP Easter Calendar 2003

<http://www.reep.org/resources/easter03/>

THE LAST SUPPER

BREAD AND WINE

Why do Christians continue to share bread and wine in church? Because Jesus told them to! By joining in this meal Christians believe they are taken into the presence of Jesus. They look backwards in time to this first meal in Jerusalem and they also look forwards to sharing the meal again with Jesus in Heaven. They are also celebrating their fellowship with Jesus and each other.

The eating of bread and wine in church has all sorts of names – Holy Communion, the Eucharist (from a Greek word meaning *'thanksgiving'*), or the Lord's Supper.

LAMB

The story of the first Passover is told in Exodus chapters 12-13. The lamb shank that is always part of the Passover plate represents the Passover sacrifice.

But many of the very earliest pictures of the Last Supper show a fish on the table! There are different explanations for this. Maybe it was because fish were the only animals to survive outside Noah's ark and were sometimes eaten by priests at religious banquets. Maybe it was because of the story of the 'Feeding of the Five Thousand' (Mark 6:30-44), which involved eating bread and fish, was thought of as a kind of dress-rehearsal for the Last Supper. Maybe it was because a fish was a symbol for Jesus in the early church – the letters of the Greek word for fish, *Icthus*, were thought to spell out the phrase *Iesous Christos Theou Uios Soter* – "Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour". Take your choice!

JOHN

As this passage makes clear, Jesus and the disciples would not have sat at chairs for their meal. Instead they reclined, lying back on couches. This was the common practice among Romans, Greeks and Jews.

JUDAS

Thirty silver coins wasn't worth much! Some see this amount as the fulfilment of another prophecy in the book of Zechariah: "*So they paid me thirty pieces of silver ... So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord to the potter ..*" (Zechariah 11:12-13) Matthew gets it wrong when he quotes this strange passage and says it comes from the book of Jeremiah (Matthew 27:9)! He adds that later Judas commits suicide and the money is taken back by the chief priests and used to buy "the potters field".

In John's Gospel, Jesus is asked who will betray him. He replies '*It is the one whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish*'. Then he dips the piece of bread and gives it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread '*Satan entered into him*' – a very dramatic moment!

DRAGON

Why did Judas betray Jesus? All sorts of ideas have been suggested – see, for example, his jealousy in the footwashing scene. What do you think?

There is a long tradition of seeing the crucifixion as the final battle between the powers of darkness and the light and life of God. In a sense that battle continues in the life of all us – Christians pray, in the Lord's Prayer, '*lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one*' (Matthew 6:13).