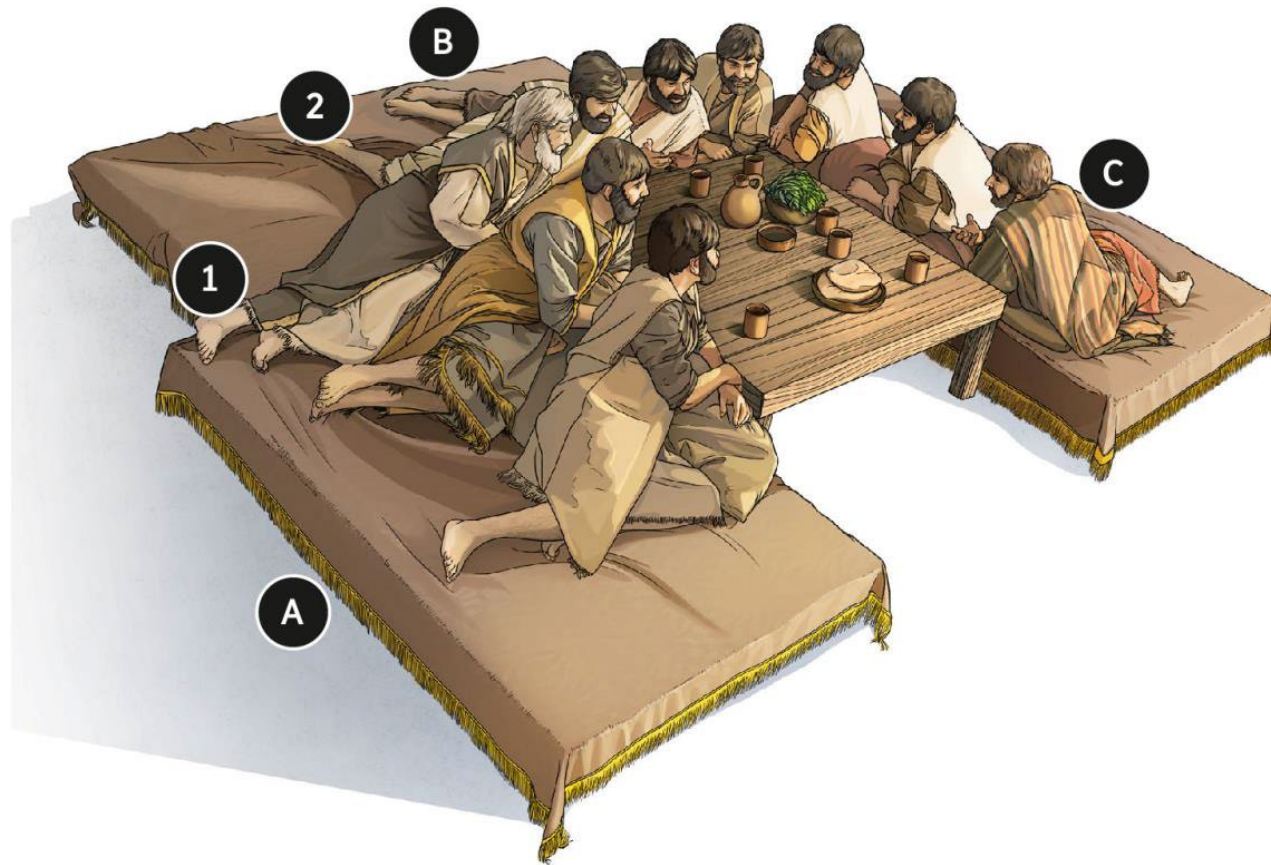


## Prominent Places at Evening Meals



In the first century, a common way of dining was to recline at the table. Each person would rest his left elbow on a cushion and eat using his right hand. According to the Greco-Roman custom, a typical dining room had three couches set around a low dining table. Although this arrangement traditionally accommodated nine people, three to a couch, it became common to use longer couches to accommodate even more people. Each position in the dining room was traditionally viewed as having a different degree of honor. One couch was the lowest place of honor (A), one was the middle (B), and one was the highest (C). The positions on the couch differed in importance. The person dining was considered to be above the one to his right and below the one to his left. At a formal banquet, the host typically sat at the first position (1) on the lowest couch. The place of honor was the third position (2) on the middle couch. Although it is not clear to what extent the Jews adopted this custom, it appears that Jesus alluded to it when teaching his followers the need for humility.