

The Lord's Supper

Key Passage: Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-28

INTRO:

The Lord's Supper, also called Communion or The Sacrament, is an ordinance, or sacred ceremony, that Church's across the world do to remember the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. It looks different depending on the church and denomination, but it always includes eating a piece of bread or small cracker and wine or grape juice. Some churches may observe the Lord's Supper every Sunday, others on only a few select Sundays. It doesn't matter as much how often or the way the Lord's Supper is practiced as much as the meaning and reverence the Lord's Supper should have.

This is one of the few things Jesus directly said for his followers to do, that alone makes it important for Christians today. However, the Lord's Supper is not only meaningful just because Jesus said so. It is also meaningful because of what it represents, and this is why Jesus made sure we knew he wanted to practice it.

So today I want us to take a few moments to slow down and really consider what it is that we're doing when we take the Lord's Supper.

When was the Lord's Supper?

The day Jesus was arrested and crucified was also the day that the Jews would celebrate the Passover, more on that in a bit. This was literally the last meal Jesus would have with His disciples before he died. After the meal, Judas would leave to betray Jesus and He would be arrested later that night, setting in motion the events of Good Friday.

This is important because this is the last time Jesus would have to be with and teach his disciples before He went to the cross. These are some of Jesus' last words to them and He used them in a meaningful way.

What is the Lord's Supper?

Luke 22:14-20 pg. 514

14 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. 15 And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. 18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

The significance of Passover is very important. Passover was and is a major Jewish holiday that commemorates or remembers God's deliverance of His people from slavery in Egypt.

While the Israelites were slaves in Egypt, God sent Moses to stand before the Pharaoh, and deliver a message from God: "Let my people go."

Pharaoh was stubborn, refusing to set the Israelites free, so God sent a series of plagues upon Egypt, the final one was the death of the firstborn in all of Egypt. However people took the blood of a lamb and wiped it on their doorposts, their firstborn would not die.

So, in Exodus 12, we read about how the Jews slaughtered lambs and took the blood and wiped it on their doorposts, and when the Angel of Death came, it passed over their homes and their children were spared, but everywhere else in all of Egypt, the firstborn of every household died.

Finally after this, Pharaoh relented, and he let God's people go free.

Ever since then, the Jewish people have celebrated the Passover meal as a memorial of their redemption from captivity and God's faithfulness.

That's what Jesus and his friends did on this night, just before He was to be arrested and crucified. They were remembering. They were looking back.

But then Jesus did something interesting... He invited them to look forward.

The Lord's Supper is the New Passover

This Passover meal took a turn as Jesus twice mentioned the coming arrival of the "kingdom of God," which at this point He has been teaching about for three years. He spoke this intriguing statement that He would not eat it again until "it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God," what Jesus meant was that the Lord's Supper anticipates the future feast of the Messiah.

He hadn't done the work of the Messiah yet, but He was about to do so. And that work – His death and resurrection – would unleash or inaugurate the kingdom of God until He returns to make all things new and reigns over new creation.

So, Jesus focused the disciple's attention on this glorious future of the Messiah, and then He broke the bread and passed the cup and said, "do this in remembrance of me... this is a new covenant."

So, in a holy moment, Passover, where faithful believers gathered to look back and remember God's covenant promises and the faithfulness and redemption He had showed them in Egypt... Jesus announced a new covenant. There is new redemption. Now, when we take part in the Lord's Supper, we are to remember His body and blood given for us.

Yet again, Jesus shifted their perspective... and ours. He's took something old and reimagined it in Himself.

The Lord's Supper is about looking back, forward, and inward

So, in Luke we see how Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, but it's called "the Lord's Supper" because that's how the apostle Paul referred to it in 1 Corinthians 11:20, and his description of it a few verses later is an important thing for us to consider alongside this passage from Luke.

1 Corinthians 11:23-28 pg. 558

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. 27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

The Lord's Supper is not just about remembering. That's certainly an integral aspect of it, but in addition to looking back, we're also invited to look forward (as Jesus did in Luke 22), and this text from Paul also invites us to look within.

1. Look Back – In the Lord's Supper we are invited to look back. We are invited to remember and reflect on what Jesus has done for us. Redemption. Covenant. Faithfulness.

2. Look Forward – We are also invited to look forward in eager anticipation of the day when Jesus will come again and finish what He started. He will make all things new. And each time we gather at this table, verse 26 says, we proclaim that glorious future. This fragment of bread and taste of the cup are the first course of an eternal feast.

3. Look Within – And we are invited to look within. Paul said in verse 28 that we must examine ourselves so as not to come to the table in an unworthy manner. And we know that our worthiness is not found in anything we can do. Jesus makes us worthy. It's only by placing our faith in Him and offering our lives to Him as living sacrifices that we become worthy share in this meal.

It's not us. It's Him.

This is why we say at our church that the Lord's Supper is for believing and baptized followers of Jesus. We're not trying to exclude anyone. On the contrary, the Lord's table is open to everyone. But the table is in the dining room, and a believing faith in Jesus followed by baptism is the front door. You need to enter through the door in order to sit at this table. And the door is wide open.

CONCLUSION

So, here's that question again: What is the Lord's Supper?

"The Lord's Supper is an invitation to look back, to look forward, and to look within."

And when we do that, do you know what we see Jesus in each of those places.

- We look back and see all that He has done for us.
- We look forward and see the day when He will return.
- We look within and see His presence... the only thing that makes us worthy.

Small Group Questions

- How would spend your last day if you knew that was your last day? Who would you talk to you, what would say, and what would you do?
- Why would you spend your last day that way?
- How might your response be similar to the way Jesus felt and what He did on His last day?
- How does that show the importance of the Lord's Supper?
- Apart from God saying so, why do you think Jews would continue to celebrate the Passover?
- How is that similar to Christian's celebrating the Lord's Supper?
- How does the Lord's Supper help us to look back at what Jesus did?
- What does the Lord's Supper look forward to?
- Why should be looking forward to Jesus' return?
- When taking Lord's Supper Paul called Christians to examine themselves before they take it. Why do you think he taught this?
- What about ourselves should the Lord's Supper cause us to think about?
- Can anyone share in the Lord's Supper, why or why not?
- Why is the Lord's Supper only for those who believe in Jesus?
- In your own words, why is the Lord's Supper important to do on a regular basis?