

The Lord's Supper

Mark 14:17–31

Today we come to the final Passover meal. The Lord inaugurates a radical change — a new covenants at the meal in the upper room. The Passover meal was instituted in **Exodus 12** as a solemn celebration of God's deliverance from Egyptian slavery and death. Israel's slavery was a type, a metaphor for sin and death. They were not free to worship as God had called them to, and they were being beat down and killed. The Passover feast was instituted to commemorate what God was doing in delivering them from Egypt. And it was a pointer to what God would do to bring his children out of the ultimate deadly slavery to sin. That is our real enemy. The chains of sin's slavery are enduring, holding in a death grip those enslaved to sin. In Exodus 12, the blood of a sacrificed lamb was to be smeared on the door posts of their houses. God sent the death angel to judge the Egyptians and told him to pass over the houses with the blood of the lamb on the door. Everything about this points to Christ. Note that either they would die for their sin, or a substitute would die — an unblemished, innocent Passover lamb. Either way, sin brought death — with or without a substitute. The wages of sin is death — and we are all sinners under that penalty. We will either pay for our own sins, or the innocent Lamb of God will die as our substitute and pay for our sin. Let's see how he pictures his life-giving death as we transition from the Passover to the Lord's Supper.

Mark 14:17–31 — ¹⁷ And when it was evening, he came with the twelve. ¹⁸ And as they were reclining at table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." ¹⁹ They began to be sorrowful and to say to him one after another, "Is it I?" ²⁰ He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who is dipping bread into the dish with me. ²¹ For the Son of Man goes as it is written of him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been better for that man if he had not been born."

²² And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." ²³ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. ²⁴ And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. ²⁵ Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

²⁶ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. ²⁷ And Jesus said to them, "You will all fall away, for it is written, 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered.'

²⁸ But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee." ²⁹ Peter said to him, "Even though they all

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fall away, I will not.”³⁰ And Jesus said to him, “Truly, I tell you, this very night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny me three times.”³¹ But he said emphatically, “If I must die with you, I will not deny you.” And they all said the same.

PRAY

As they are gathered in room prior to the Passover meal making its official start, let’s note that **the Lord’s Supper is for those who belong to Christ**. We know that from John 13 that Judas departs between v 20 and v 21. The Supper did not until Judas left. He was not in Christ — therefore he would not receive the feast of Christ. Those who are satisfied in Christ — in other words, those who are Christians — they are the ones who come to be fed at the Lord’s Supper. Being satisfied with anything other than Christ makes no sense at the Lord’s table. Judas was satisfied with 30 pieces of silver. He did not belong at the table. So for all time, those who belong to him and walk in obedience to him, which is evidence of their belonging — they symbolize their union with him at the meal. We fence the table in the same way. Only those who have trusted Christ may come to his table. To come in unbelief not only makes a mockery, since you are not satisfied in Christ, but with the world, but it also heaps up your judgment. We will get there in a moment, but that brings us to the next point.

Self-evaluation is appropriate. vv 18–19

When Jesus prophesied that he would be betrayed, they were sorrowful and began to ask, “Is it I?” Having been warned of sin, they are concerned about their own hearts. Indeed, they appear to feel the weakness of their own hearts. They should. Judas gets the headlines, but they all bail when push comes to shove. Self-examination is appropriate when coming to the Lord’s Supper.

His table that dramatically points to his death to pay for sin. Imagine coming to the Lord’s Supper while cherishing the very sin that cost him his life. Coddled sin, comfortable sin, secret sin — it is unthinkable in light of what it cost him. Jesus died to pay for sin. We cannot come to his Sacred Supper still harboring what he died to free us from.

The Apostle Paul addresses this problem directly in 1 Corinthians 11. The church in Corinth tended to be libertine, and outright unloving at times. They were engaging in the very act of sin as they shoved to eat at the table. Because they did not discern the body of the Lord — they did not live in light of what Christ did in dying for sin, God judged them physically for their arrogance — some were sick, and some had died. In vv 28–31, the Apostle warned, **Let a person examine himself, then,**

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and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.

Well, as I examine myself and find some cherished sin, what do I do with my sinful heart? This: Repent and believe the Good News that Christ has died to pay for sin. Repentance and rightness with God are one repentant prayer away. The Lord's Supper is not instituted to separate you from Christ's grace in the moment, but to draw you away from what is separating you from him. There is no clearer picture of how God loves us, and the grace that flows freely to us than in this ordinance. Therefore, rather than holding or ignoring sin and saying, "Well, I guess I can't come to His table because of **x** sin," we must say, "I am turning immediately from **x** sin and fleeing in repentance to Christ, who is my life." Those are not magic words; that is a response of a heart that is desperate for Christ and serious about turning from what brings death to the One who is the Bread of Life.

Let's be candid and honest. There are sins that cut deep into the character and rhythm of the soul. The deeper the sin, the longer it has been practiced, the more likely you need the prayer and practical help of godly brothers and sisters in Christ. The circle of confession of sin may need to broaden in a way that reflects difficulty of the burden of that sin. I have an old piano in my home office. It no longer holds a tune, so it's essentially unplayable. I don't want it anymore. Frankly, it needs to go to the dump. But that thing is so heavy I can't carry it out by myself. When I get serious about getting it out of my house, I'm going to call you brothers to come over for a pizza and piano night. When you get serious about getting some old, heavy sin out of your heart, you may well need to call the brothers for help. How do you do that? Every week we take 2 to 3 minutes at the close of the sermon before we come to the table to examine ourselves in light of the Scriptures we have just heard. What a sweet and precious time it would be if members of the body of Christ would get up and go to someone else in the room and say, brother, pray with me and help me. Sister, pray with me.

The Sacred Supper is for Christians who evaluate themselves, and, **the Supper establishes the new covenant.** This is radically new. It is not the law that maintains our favor with God, nor a sacrifice that takes away my sin. Christ fulfills all of that by his covenant. We are **held** by his covenant, not a contract built on mutual merit. We have none. Jesus alone does the meritorious work. He serves. He lays down his life; he redeems. He keeps. Salvation is of the Lord. The Lord does not say, "All right, I will go to the Cross to pay for your sin, and in return you will go as a missionary to

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Africa.” God may send you to Africa as a missionary, but it won’t be because you are paying off a debt. It will be because you delight to serve him in love and freedom and want the world to know about the Good News of salvation in Christ.

There is no way that his payment for sin is conditioned on some work on our part. That simply cannot be based on the bookend events. This sacred supper is surrounded by traitors. At the beginning, a massive betrayal by one; at the end we learned that there will be a defection by all the rest. If it were a contract contingent on their faithfulness, they would all be roasting in Hell at this moment.

Christ cuts the covenant unilaterally through the means of his broken body and shed blood.

He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows... he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace; with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (from Isaiah 53:4–6)

Oh, lay hold of this! We are not kept by our efforts, but by his sustaining grace. This is transformative!

5 Observations from the First Lord’s Supper in vv 22–24

1. The Lord’s Supper uses **physical elements to express spiritual realities**. The bread tore and was eaten as bread because it was bread. The wine they drank tasted like wine and went down like wine because it was wine. No one would argue that when Jesus said he was **the Door** that he meant he was made out of wood and had hinges. At the supper he is helping us understand that he is the source of spiritual life and refreshment, just as bread and wine provide physical life and refreshment. There is no infinite recreating or re-crucifying of additional body and blood of the Lord in order to pour down the gullets of believers who come to his table.

2. It symbolizes the full expression of his love and grace — an expression, not an effusion, as though it pours out in new measures. We do not eat the supper to receive new grace, as though some measure of grace has been held back from us. God is not “chintzing out” additional measure of grace as though we used up our supply and he says, “Oh! Better pour out some fresh stuff. I didn’t anticipate he’d use all that up.” We are not going to the **Grace Station** to receive more grace as we take our car to the gas station to receive more gas. The fullness of God’s grace has been poured out. Salvation is portrayed in the symbols of the supper; but salvation is completed in the peace-making

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work of his blood shed on the cross. (Col. 1:22) The fullness of redemption is found there. It is finished. We have received all there is to receive. And all that we have received is all that we need.

3. The Lord's Table portrays our unity in Christ. They all ate, and they all drank. They were unified, and that they were in the Lord, and their unity was the Lord. They were not unified by national origin, by background, or socioeconomic level. You may remember earlier in the gospel from we dealt with the calling of the disciples that they are vastly different in background and political alignment. When we come to the table, all of the things that are rooted in the world drop off. We need to remember that in the coming year. Our unity is in his body. We drink from one cup. We are all adopted into him. We have no claim to alternate avenues of salvation. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. We have nothing other than his blood and body to commend us to the Lord. Nothing.

4. The Lord's Supper should stir up profound gratitude in us in an almost unparalleled way. The redemptive sacrifice of Christ that is pictured is the difference between us being eternally under the wrath of God, or being eternally adopted into Christ as beloved children and joint heirs with Christ. It is all his work. Should we not give thanks even as the Lord did in v 23. Even that statement is remarkable, is it not? The Lord, who is on his way to die, gave thanks for the symbols that pointed to his sacrificial death to save us from our sins.

I will deal with Peter's denial next week, but let's look at the unfinished nature of the Supper and wrap things up for today.

5. The Lord's Supper is not only transitional, but temporary.

The new covenant is the transition. V 25 tells us it's not the final stop — Jesus says "I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." A cup left on the table as they sing and depart. That cup points to our future in the New Creation. The table of innocence and communion with God in Genesis becomes a table of bloody sacrifice on the altar at the tabernacle and the temple. That altar of sacrifice transitions to a table of communion for **this** season. We are back at God's table, but it's just a foretaste. The new creation is not yet here. We have an invitation to a Supper greater than anything we can imagine. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is coming, and Jesus will again pick up this cup, as though he were saying, "Now, let's see, where were we?" The Lord's Supper is a pointer to the ultimate Supper where what was lost in Genesis is fully recovered. Behold what manner of love the father has given us, that we should be called sons of God; and that is what we are. Because of our covenant keeping Savior.