

# THE LORD'S SUPPER AS A COVENANT MEAL

All Saints Presbyterian Church

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Austin, TX

April 16, 2023

Taught by Bill Laughlin

**HARD STOP AT 11:10 AM**

**SPANISH SERVICE SET UP  
FOR 11:30**

# THE BIG DEAL ABOUT MEALS

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What are some of the big roles that meals play in our lives?

- **Wedding feasts, Birthday Dinners, Wedding Anniversaries**
- **Graduation banquets, Memorial Dinners for great events**
- **Holiday gatherings like Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter**
- **Hard to imagine some great event in our lives in which a meal is not included**
- **What do we spend a lot of time doing at gatherings around a meal? We remember ...**

# THE LORD'S SUPPER AS A COVENANT MEAL

## MOTIVATIONS FOR THIS TOPIC

- Moving over to All Saints almost two years ago  
Weekly Lord's Supper / Eucharist
- Book recommended by Tim Frickenschmidt  
*Heavenly Participation*, by Hans Boersma,  
chapter on Eucharist (2011)
- Follow-up conversation with Tim – another book  
*The Lord's Service: The Grace of Covenant Renewal Worship*,  
by Jeffrey Meyers (2003)
- ThM Thesis – *The Lord's Supper as a Covenant Meal in  
1 Corinthians 11:17-34* (1983) by \_\_\_\_\_

## **WHAT WE *ARE* TALKING ABOUT TODAY**

- **God's Covenants with Israel in the Old Testament**
- **Covenant Meals in the Old Testament**
- **Covenants in the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper**

## **WHAT WE *ARE NOT* TALKING ABOUT TODAY**

- **Contracts vs Covenants – Craig began discussion of this last week and will complete next week.**
- **Covenant Theology and Pre-Abrahamic Covenants – Craig will continue this next week.**

# COVENANTS IN BIBLICAL TIMES

- Bible divided into major sections called “Covenants”: Old & New *Testaments* – better translated “Old & New *Covenants*.”
- From the earliest Biblical times, covenants were formal, binding agreements between two parties, especially between a king and his subjects.
- These covenants established the relationship of those parties. They almost always contained several common elements.

# COVENANTS IN BIBLICAL TIMES

**The pattern of a Covenant between King and subjects:**

- 1. Title/preamble – How great the king is**
- 2. Historical prologue – Remember what the king has done for his subjects**
- 3. Covenant stipulations – The obligations of the subjects to the king, especially that they remain loyal to him *alone***
- 4. The sacred treaty document – Where it is deposited (Temple) for regular reading to the subjects for renewing their loyalty**
- 5. Witnesses – gods, mountains, heavens, earth, heap of stones**
- 6. Blessings and Curses – What happens if the people obey or disobey**



# COVENANTS IN BIBLICAL TIMES

**Covenant Practices to ratify (“cut a covenant”) and maintain the covenant:**

- 7. Formal Oath -- uttered by the subjects to obey the king. Often this was accompanied by the slaughtering (“cutting”) of an animal with the oath-taker identifying himself with the animal should he disobey.**
  
- 8. Ratification Ceremony -- included the sharing of a common meal which includes eating part of the sacrificial animal. In this way the parties of the covenant partake in a tangible fashion in the making of the covenant.**
  
- 9. Annual Feasts -- commanded by the king in which the subjects would gather to re-read the covenant treaty (remembering the great acts the king did for the subjects, etc.) and renew their covenant vows to the king. These usually included a remembrance and renewal meal or feast.**

# GOD'S COVENANTS WITH ISRAEL IN THE OT

## 1. The Abrahamic Covenant (Genesis 12:1-3)

**12 Now the Lord said to Abram,**

**“Go forth from your country,**

**And from your relatives**

**And from your father's house,**

**To the land which I will show you;**

**2 And I will make you a great nation,**

**And I will bless you,**

**And make your name great;**

**And so you shall be a blessing;**

**3 And I will bless those who bless you,**

**And the one who curses you I will [d]curse.**

**And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.”**

# **GOD'S COVENANTS WITH ISRAEL IN THE OT**

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**God makes three promises to Abraham**

**(1) Land**

**(2) Seed (a great nation)**

**(3) Blessing**

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**2. The Mosaic/Sinai/Land Covenant – Expansion of the Land Promise (Exodus, Deuteronomy) in which God will bring Israel into the Promised Land.**

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## **2. The Mosaic/Sinai/Land Covenant – Expansion of the Land Promise (Exodus, Deuteronomy)**

**3. The Davidic Covenant – Expansion of the Seed Promise (2 Samuel 7, esp. vv. 8-17) in which God promises David's descendant (seed) will rule over God's Kingdom forever.**

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# GOD'S COVENANTS WITH ISRAEL IN THE OT

## 4. The New Covenant – Expansion of the Blessing Promise (Jeremiah 31:31-33)

**31 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. 33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”**

*Jeremiah 31:31-34*

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## 1. Parity Covenants between roughly equal partners (two examples)

### •Abimelech and Isaac (Genesis 26:26-33)

- They made ('cut') a covenant with oaths to maintain mutual peace (28-29).
- A feast was made and "they ate and drank" (30).
- They exchanged oaths (31).

### •Jacob and Laban (Genesis 31:43-55)

- "Let us make ('cut') a covenant, you and I" (44)
- They stated witnesses to their covenant (God – 50; heap of stones -- 52)
- Stipulations of the covenant were stated (49,52)
- Jacob made a formal oath (53)
- Jacob offered a sacrifice (54a)
- They ate a meal (54b).



# COVENANT MEALS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## 2. The Mosaic Covenant – Best example of the Covenant form in OT

- **Historical Prologue -- “I ... brought you out of Egypt, out of slavery” (Exodus 20:1; Deuteronomy 5:6)**
- **Covenant Stipulations -- 10 Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17; Deut 5:7-21); detailed laws (Exodus 20-23; Deuteronomy 6ff)**
- **Treaty deposited in Tabernacle (Exodus 40)**
- **Curses and Blessings – Israel on Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim (Deuteronomy 27-28)**
- **Covenant Ratification**
  - ▶ **Annual feasts (Exodus 23:14-17; Deuteronomy 16)**
  - ▶ **Covenant oaths (Exodus 24:7-8; Deuteronomy 29)**
  - ▶ **Covenant ratification meal – “they ate and drank” (Exod 24:9-11)**

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## 2. The Mosaic Covenant – After pattern of Hittite Covenant Form

### ▶Covenant oaths (Exodus 24:7-8)

7 Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!” 8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made (‘cut’) with you in accordance with all these words.”

### ▶Covenant ratification meal – “they ate and drank” (Exod 24:9-11)

9 Then Moses went up [a]with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, 10 and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet [b]there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. 11 Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, and they ate and drank.

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## 3. The Mosaic Covenant – The Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1-6)

### *Exodus 32:1-6*

**32** Now when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down from the mountain, the people assembled about Aaron and said to him, “Come, make us a god who will go before us; as for this Moses, the man who brought us up from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.” **2** Aaron said to them, “Tear off the gold rings which are in the ears of your wives, your sons, and your daughters, and bring them to me.” **3** Then all the people tore off the gold rings which were in their ears and brought them to Aaron. **4** He took this from their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool and made it into a molten calf; and they said, “This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.” **5** Now when Aaron saw this, he built an altar before it; and Aaron made a proclamation and said, “Tomorrow shall be a feast to the Lord.” **6** So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## 3. The Mosaic Covenant – The Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1-6)

- For those who remember, what impression did the movie, “The Ten Commandments” and Charlton Heston, give you regarding the Golden Calf incident? What was going on there?
- What stipulation was being violated?
- What was the worse thing the people did? Drunkenness? Orgies? Something else?

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

## 3. The Mosaic Covenant – The Golden Calf (Exodus 32:1-6)

The worst thing ...

Israel was actually ratifying a covenant with a false god as they ate a covenant meal, a direct and formal breach of the First Commandment.

Exodus 32:6 “So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink and rose up to play.”

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## 1. Covenant backgrounds in New Testament times

- Thesis devotes a whole chapter on these covenant forms, covenant ratification meals, and remembrance feasts going on in the times of Jesus and the apostles :
  - Dead Sea Scrolls
  - Book of Jubilees
  - Pagan religions of the Greek world (e.g., Dionysius, god of wine)
- These covenant forms were very much alive in the world of Paul's missionary journeys, especially in Corinth and Ephesus, major locations of pagan temples.

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## 2. The Last Supper as the Ratification Meal of the New Covenant (Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20)

**15 And He said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; 16 for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” 17 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, “Take this and share it among yourselves; 18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.” 19 And when He had taken some bread and 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 in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.**

***Luke 22:15-20***

# WHAT HINTS TO THE NEW COVENANT DO YOU SEE IN THE LAST SUPPER?

## The elements of a Covenant:

1. Title/preamble
2. Historical prologue
3. Covenant stipulations
4. The sacred treaty document
5. Witnesses
6. Curses and blessings

## Covenant Practices

7. Formal Oath
8. Ratification Ceremony
9. Annual Feasts

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*Luke 22:15-20*



# COVENANT MEALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## 2. The Last Supper as the Ratification Meal of the New Covenant (Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20)

- Last Supper occurred at the Passover (Luke 22:15) which is the remembrance meal of the Old Covenant.
- In the Passover meal, an animal (lamb) was slaughtered – one part for sacrifice, one for a meal.
- Jesus uses language of sacrifice: This is My body, this is My blood.
- In all three, He says the wine is His blood of the covenant.
- In the Luke account, He specifically recalls the NEW Covenant announced in Jeremiah 31.
- In the Matthew account, His blood is “for the forgiveness of sins,” the point of the New Covenant in Jeremiah 31.
- The disciples/apostles are sharing the New Covenant ratification meal like the elders did for the Old Covenant (Exodus 24).

# **COVENANT MEALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

- 2. The Last Supper as the Ratification Meal of the New Covenant  
(Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20)**

**WHAT IS MISSING AT THIS MOMENT FOR  
COMPLETING THE NEW COVENANT?**

# **COVENANT MEALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT**

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(Matt 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:15-20)**

**WHAT IS MISSING AT THIS MOMENT FOR  
COMPLETING THE NEW COVENANT?**

**THE SACRIFICE FOR THE NEW COVENANT  
JESUS GIVING HIS BODY AND BLOOD ON THE  
CROSS INTAKING ON HIMSELF THE CURSES  
OF THE OLD COVENANT IN ATONEMENT FOR  
OUR SIN.**

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## 3. Paul's warnings against Pagan feasts

- These covenant forms were very much alive in the world of Paul's missionary journeys, especially in Corinth and Ephesus.
- Paul devotes most of chapters 8-10 of 1 Corinthians in warnings to Gentile believers who were consuming food in the Pagan Temples during covenant renewal feasts.
- As one example, Paul issues a warning against idolatry in Chapter 10 by quoting Exodus 32: 6, the verse we looked at earlier about the Golden Calf covenant meal:  
1 Cor 10:7 "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were, as it is written, 'The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.'"

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## 4. Paul's instructions in taking the Lord's Supper

**NOTE: The Lord's Supper – Communion, The Eucharist – is supremely about our encounter with the Spiritual Presence of the body and blood of our crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.**

***1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (almost same words as Luke 22:15-20)***

**23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which 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 He took the cup also 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.**

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## DISCUSSION

1. Do covenants matter much in our age of expressive individualism? Why or why not?
2. What is the value of participating in the Lord's Supper with the Church gathered? Why not just take it individually?
3. Have you ever thought of the Lord's Supper as a time of renewal of your vows to God? How would that be helpful in your walk?
4. What runs through your mind when you receive the bread/body and wine/blood in the Eucharist?
5. What are we as the Body of Christ saying to God, to the world, and to ourselves when we take the elements of the Lord Supper/Eucharist?

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## DISCUSSION

**5. What are we as the Body of Christ saying to God, to the world, and to ourselves when we take the elements of the Lord Supper/Eucharist?**

**1. We proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor 11:26)**

# COVENANT MEALS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

## 34 Paul's additional instructions in taking the Lord's Supper

### *1 Corinthians 11:27-32*

**27** Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. **28** But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. **30** For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. **31** But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. **32** But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

**Bonus:** What is Paul getting at in the second part of his instructions (verses 27-32)?



# THE TAKEAWAY

**THE LAST SUPPER – THE RATIFICATION MEAL OF THE NEW COVENANT**

**THE LORD'S SUPPER – THE RENEWAL MEAL OF THE NEW COVENANT**

- **As a community, we remember God's salvation through Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross.**
- **As a community, we reaffirm our loyalty to our King, the Lord Jesus Christ.**
- **Supremely, we encounter the mystery of the spiritual presence of Christ's Body and Blood in bread and wine.**