



Luke 22a: The Theology of Communion

Opening Question: When was the first time you ever shared in communion? What is your memory of that moment? How did you process or view what was taking place?

- **[1] Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread drew near, which is called the Passover. [2] And the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how to put him to death, for they feared the people.**
 - This was a fear of loss of control. The Chief priests and scribes were the ones actually in charge.
 - Legalists always fear the loss of control. You are not allowed to function outside their controllable box, and neither is God.
- **[3] Then Satan entered into Judas called Iscariot, who was of the number of the twelve. [4] He went away and conferred with the chief priests and officers how he might betray him to them. [5] And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. [6] So he consented and sought an opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of a crowd.**
 - When did Judas begin the process of betrayal? The answer speaks to the covenant God made with Adam and Eve in Gen. 3. It was a covenant promise to redeem Adam's descendants through the second and final Adam, Jesus Christ. It was also a promise to crush Satan for what he had done. Satan couldn't help but fulfill God's purposes, so he entered Judas' mind and convinced him to betray Jesus. **Satan literally aided God in his promise and plan to crush Satan. Satan didn't understand that he was bound by God's sovereignty.**

Question: Why is it both important and encouraging to know that Satan can not operate outside of God's sovereign plans and purposes?

- Judas needed to lead the temple authorities to the garden at night, away from the crowds because the priests feared what the crowds would do.
- Jesus knew what was about to take place, and he chose this moment to teach his most important lesson to his disciples.

- [7] Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. [8] So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it.” [9] They said to him, “Where will you have us prepare it?” [10] He said to them, “Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters [11] and tell the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?’ [12] And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there.” [13] And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.
- Jesus once again exercised his sovereignty in preparation for this moment. He had already sovereignly arranged a donkey as his mode of transportation to fulfill prophecy. Now he sovereignly arranges a room, ready and waiting, for this important passover meal.
- The notes on this verse in the Reformation Study Bible indicate that it was uncommon for men to carry water jars, so this man would have stood out as easily identifiable.¹

Question: What are some things we could deduce about Jesus’ care of this moment in his sovereign preparations?

- [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. [21] But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. [22] For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!” [23] And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this. (ESV)

¹ Reformation Study Bible, Ligonier Ministry Pub.

- The passover lamb represented so many things, probably the greatest of these was the foreshadowing of Jesus as our passover lamb, but why was this concept so important. Well, this is one of those theological concepts that has separated the protestants from the Catholics since the time of the reformation. In fact, let me read to you from The Heidelberg Catechism, The Second Part: Of Man's Redemption.²

Practice Catechism: take a moment to have one person read each question, and respond as a group by reading the answer out loud together. Once you are done, discuss how reading these truths out loud together impacts the group and why. Why is this similar in some ways to communion and worship?

- Question 12. *Since then, by the righteous judgment of God, we deserve temporal and eternal punishment, what is required that we may escape this punishment and be again received into favour?*
 - Answer: God wills that His justice be satisfied; therefore we must make full satisfaction to the same, either by ourselves or by another.³
- Question 13. *Can we ourselves make the satisfaction?*
 - Answer: By no means: on the contrary, we daily increase our guilt.⁴
- Question 14. *Can any mere creature make satisfaction for us?*
 - Answer: None: for first, God will not punish, in any other creature, that of which man has made himself guilty; and further, no mere creature can sustain the burden of God's eternal wrath against sin, and redeem others therefrom.⁵
- Question 15. *What manner of mediator and redeemer them must we seek?*
 - Answer: One who is a true and sinless man, and yet more powerful than all creatures, that is, one who is at the same time true God.⁶

² quoted from *The Heidelberg Catechism or Method of Instruction in the Christian Religion* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust) 15-16

³ Exodus 20:5; Deut. 24:16; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:14-15

⁴ Job 9:2-3; 15:14-16; Matt. 6:12; Isa. 64:6

⁵ Ezek. 18:20; Rev. 5:3; Psa. 49:7-9; 130:3

⁶ I Cor. 15:21; Rom. 8:3; Rom. 9:5; Isa. 7:14

- The whole passover meal was filled with Gospel imagery for who the Christ was, and this was intentional!

Discussion: discuss each of these passover symbols and why they are significant to your own reflections in worship during the celebration and practice of communion.

- The Lamb -

- Exodus 12 articulates the passover instruction.
 - The lamb was to be without blemish. Vs 3-5 (Jesus was sinless.)
 - The lamb was to be slain and the blood painted on the door posts. Vs 6-7 (Jesus was hung on a cross, his blood being shed visibly)
 - The lamb's bones were to remain unbroken. Vs 46. (This was fulfilled on the cross.)
 - The death angel would “passover” the homes that had the blood applied. Vs 13. (Those who place their trust in the shed blood of Jesus the Lamb, will preserved unto eternal life.)
- John 1:29 [29] The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! (ESV)
- 1 Corinthians 5:7 [7] Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (ESV)
- 1 Peter 1:17–19 [17] And if you call on him as Father who judges impartially according to each one’s deeds, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of your exile, [18] knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, [19] but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. (ESV)

- The Bread

- Exodus 12 articulates why the bread was significant.

- The bread was to accompany the fire roasted lamb in being consumed with bitter herbs. Vs 8. (Jesus drank the cup of bitterness⁷ for us.)
- The bread signified the departure from Egypt in haste. Vs 33-34. (Jesus makes it possible for our deliverance from sin's captivity.
- Deuteronomy 16:3 defined the passover bread as bread of affliction because it was made during the time of great affliction by Egypt. (Jesus suffered our affliction on the cross.)
- John 6:35 [35] Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. (ESV)
- 1 Corinthians 10:15–17 [15] I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. [16] The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? [17] Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. (ESV)
- The Cup
 - There were traditionally four cups (1 part wine, 3 parts water) shared at the passover meal.⁸ These four cups were meant to commemorate the statements made by God through Moses to the nation of Israel in Exodus 6.
 - Exodus 6:6–8 [6] Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. [7] I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians. [8] I will bring you into the land that I swore to give to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob. I will give it to you for a possession. I am the LORD.' (ESV)
 - These four cups were known as
 - The Cup of Sanctification because God said "I will bring you out".

⁷ Numbers 5:11-31; Obadiah 1:16; Matt. 20:22; 26:39

⁸ Mishnah, Pesachim 10

- **The Cup of Deliverance because God said “I will deliver you from slavery”**
- **The Cup of Redemption because God said “I will redeem you”**
 - This is the cup that Jesus would have shared with his statement: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood”. It was the cup that signified Christ’s redemption of Israel as the passover lamb.⁹
 - This is important because in Exodus 24:8 God told Israel that His covenant with them was sealed in blood!
- **The Cup of Restoration because God said “I will take you to be my people”.**
 - Messianic Jewish theologians conjecture that this cup was most likely not shared by Jesus with his disciples as it was a cup for the future! He stated in Matt. 26:29 “I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”¹⁰
- The Lord’s Supper teaches us this theology again and again, and that was why Jesus took some of His final moments to illustrate through the Lord’s supper. It’s something He wanted us to reflect on and remember often.
- **Hebrews 9:15–22 [15] Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant. [16] For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. [17] For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. [18] Therefore not even the first covenant was inaugurated without blood. [19] For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, [20] saying, “This is the blood of the covenant that God commanded for you.” [21] And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. [22] Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. (ESV)**

⁹ Matt. 26:28; 1 Cor. 11:25

¹⁰ Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (NY: Doubleday Pub., 2011)

- When we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are recognizing 6 ideas or acts of worship in the life of the believer and the church:
 - Confession: communion invites us to confess that we need Christ's blood applied to our sin! This is either a prayer of salvation for unbelievers who need to surrender, or a prayer of remembrance.
 - Contrition: to be contrite means we are genuinely sorry and repentant. This is not just lip service, it is a life posture of humble admittance that we can not save ourselves and we need help.
 - Connection: when we celebrate communion, we are connecting the truth of the Gospel to our own lives and seeing ourselves as the contractual recipients of what Jesus did for us.
 - Condition: we are choosing to remember that we are in a condition of justification and sanctification before God, so we want to live a life that represents our true condition.
 - Community: the word "community" is part of communion because we are a chosen people group that together covenantally belong to God.
 - Commitment or Covenant: communion reminds us that God is committed to us in covenant, and we are committed to him in covenant.

Study Question: Where is the connection of the six "C's" in Hebrews 9:15-22?

Question: is there anything new you learned about communion in this study that has allowed you to better understand, reflect or worship?