

Last Supper, Lord's Supper

Luke 22:7-20

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November 22, 2020

Moishe Rosen, the founder of the Jews for Jesus, used to be the first time he celebrated the Lord's Supper in a Christian church. His friend told him that it would be pretty much the same as the Jewish Seder, the Passover meal. As the pastor read about Jesus taking the bread and the cup, it kind of made sense to Moishe. Then a plate with "the bread" was passed around. Yet, rather than getting a piece of Matsa as Moishe anticipated, he received a tiny white disk that looked and tasted more like Styrofoam. When it came to "the cup," he was even more disappointed. Instead of a full cup of wine, he was given a tiny thimble full of grape juice. Moishe says thought "Wow! And these people have got the nerve to claim Jews are stingy."

Well, there are interesting similarities and differences between the Jewish Passover and the we call The Lord's Supper or Communion. We will see some of them as we explore our text today. Our journey through Luke's Gospel brings us to **Luke 22:7-20**. If you have a Bible turn there, otherwise the verses will be on the screen. Let's pause and pray that through His word and by His spirit, the Lord with both challenge and encourage us this morning.

Luke 22:7 "Then the Day of Unleavened Bread came when the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed."

Luke's narrative to this point have focused on Jesus' teaching on Tuesday and Wednesday of Passover week. Luke now moves his narrative to Thursday, which was the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan. The preparations for the Passover meal were made on Thursday afternoon. Jesus and the disciples ate the meal on Thursday Eve. Since that was after sundown, it would then be the 15th of Nisan. Jesus would be crucified the following afternoon, Friday, which was still the 15th. Passover is the annual feast, where Jewish people celebrate God delivering them from slavery in Egypt, AB 1400 years before

the time of Christ. The culmination of that deliverance was the night when the angel of the Lord came and struck dead the 1st born of every Egyptian household, but "Passed over" the home of every Israelite. Their houses were easy to identify because each family killed a lamb and splattered some of its blood above their door. If you want more details you can read **Exodus 12** or even watch the movie, The 10 Commandments. By Jesus' time the people of Israel had been commemorating the Passover for a long time. Passover week was a huge event and many thousands of people came to Jerusalem from all over Israel to celebrate.

Luke 22:8 Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover,"

This involved having the lamb sacrificed at the temple, roasting it, getting the ram ready for the meal and preparing various side dishes.

22:9-12 "Where do you want us to prepare it?" they asked him. "listen," he said to them, "when you've entered the city, a man carrying a water jug will meet you. Follow him into the house he enters. Tell the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks you, "Where is the guest room where I can eat the Passover with my disciples?"' Then he will show you a large, furnished room upstairs. Make the it there."

It seems Luke thinks these details are important. I suspect Jesus has made arrangements, both for the sake of privacy and safety. The man was probably carrying the water jug as a signal Jesus set up. The disciples would meet in secret location because Jesus opponents were already planning his arrest. Jesus is making sure that doesn't happen before he has his last supper with his disciples. As we think about all that occurs that evening, it is very important he is not arrested until late that night.

22:13 So they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

Things are all set for the most important evening.

22:14 When the hour came,

It is after sundown and the time for the Passover meal. It is also time for "The Hour" of Jesus' great sacrifice to begin.

Jesus reclined at the table, and the apostles with him.

In that culture they would be around a low table, reclining, maybe on mats, often leaning on their elbows. It was not like Da Vinci's painting, where they are all sitting or standing on one side of a long table.

22:15 Then he said to them, "I have fervently desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer,

Doing this is very important to Jesus.

22:16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

The Passover meal contained a number of messianic aspects. Most important is the cup of Elijah, the 5th ceremonial cup of wine no one drinks at the Passover meal. That is reserved for the great prophet, who is expected to return heralding the coming of the Messiah. Most Bible schools think Jesus is referring to the marriage supper of the Lamb, spoken of in **Revelations 19:19**. Others, however, think there will be a separate, final Passover meal. Some think a spiritual fulfillment has already occurred in heaven, while others, including me, believe this will be a literal meal in the milln kingdom, or some think it will be in the eternal kingdom. The bottom line is, as believers in Jesus, we will find out, and we will not be disappointed.

22:17,18 Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he said, "Take this and share it among yourselves. For I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

While the other gospel writers mention just one cup, Luke talks about 2. The Passover meal involved 4 cups, plus, as said, a 5th cup reserved

for Elijah. It is uncertain after which cup Jesus speaks these words. Jesus' promise to drink again with his followers in the kingdom of God points ahead to the return of Christ, and that marriage supper of the Lamb.

When he dies on the cross the next day and conquers the grave on Easter Sunday, He completes the work necessary for our individual salvation. When He returns, he will complete a cosmic salvation, where our entire planet, our entire universe, will acknowledge Jesus as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

22:19 And he took bread, gave thanks, broke it, gave it to them, and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Jesus has pointed to the Passover meal's messianic dimension, looking ahead to his 2nd coming and the consummation of God's Kingdom. Now, however, he system the meal points to his sacrifice that would occur in less than 24 hours. Than

22:20 In the same way he also took the cup after supper and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.

Bible schools think this was the 3rd or 4th cup of wine used in the Passover. Now, this is not really the first time Jesus spoke of bread and wine as a symbol of his body and blood. In John 6, Jesus refers to himself as the bread of life and sd

John 6:53,54a, "Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life.

I think this is the reality to what the Lord's Supper points.

Ok, I want to make 3 points about our text before we consider some practical implications.

#1 It seems obvious, at least to me, that Jesus is using figurative or symbolic language. This is one point where my Roman Catholic friends can say they take the bible more literarily then I do, because they believe that, in the Mass, the bread and wine actually become the body and the blood

of Jesus. Thus, by participating in the communion one truly eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Jesus.

I am pretty sure that when Jesus held up a piece of bread and said “this is my body,” the disciples understood and Jesus meant them to understand that he was speaking in a figurative way. “ This represents my body.” We all need to remember that taking a statement in the bible literally, when God means for it to be understood figuratively, is misinterpreting that statement.

More imply, I believe that viewing the bread and wine as literally the body and blood of Jesus, often leads to the serious error of thinking Jesus’ sacrifice is being repeated over and over again. This seems to imply that is his death on the cross was not a once and for all sufficient sacrifice for our sins.

Hebrew 7:27(NLT) says, Jesus has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people, since he did this once for all when he offered up himself.

That is why I am very uncomfortable with the idea that the body and blood of Jesus are literally being offered up to God in a communion service. On the other hand, I think it is also a mistake to follow Ulrich Zwingli’s view of the Lord’s supper, as many Baptists do. This emphasis that the bread and wine or cup “merely represent” the body and blood of Jesus. I prefer to say as John Calvin did, that at the Lord’s supper, Jesus is not present in the elements, the bread and wine, but in the table.

Now, I do not mean Jesus becomes a piece of furniture, but rather he is simply present when the church gathers for the Lord’s supper. So when a believer in Jesus participates with the proper attitude, he/she will be simply nourished and strengthened.

#2 It seems that the primary meaning of the cup or wine is the sealing of the new covenant.

Luke22:20b “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

Now, when we participate in the Lord’s Supper we often think of the blood of Jesus cleansing or washing away our sins. That is not wrong, because that is what happens for us as believers.

1John 1:7 If we walk in the light as he himself is the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Having our sins forgiven through Jesus dying and shedding his blood in our place on the cross is an important part of the new covenant, in fact in ***Matthew 26:28 Jesus says, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out or many for the forgiveness of sins...***

But there are other important parts as well. A covenant is an agreement, we might say a contract, between two parties, in this case between God and believers in Jesus Christ. It has been signed and sealed by the blood of Jesus. I won’t take time to try and explain all the dimensions of the new covenant, but if you are interested, read the book of Hebrews. It is a good place to start. This new covenant supersedes the old covenant that God mad with his people through Moses.

It includes not having to offer animal sacrifices to experience God’s forgiveness. It involves freedom from the many rules and regulations of the old covenant law, including dietary restrictions and Sabbath requirements. The new covenant includes having the Holy Spirit continually indwelling us, rather than coming upon us intermittently as he did in the Old Testaments.

The book of Hebrews makes it clear this new covenant is vastly superior to the old and in the Lord’s Supper we remember that this new covenant was established and sealed through the blood of the God the Son, Jesus Christ. The Lord’s Supper is a time to thank Him that we are part of this new covenant.

#3 Christian observance of the Lord’s Supper has deep roots in the Old Testaments. Jesus’ transformation of the Passover supper to the Lord’s Supper points to a rich, though somewhat complicated, relationship between the Old and the New covenants. I know some of you have had

the opportunity to attend a “Christ in the Passover presentation.” Missy’s working with “Jews for Jesus,” and “Chosen people ministries,” often do these to show how the Passover meal actually points in a number of ways to Jesus being the Messiah for which many Jewish people are still looking. The most significant is that Jesus himself is the Passover lamb. He was killed as a sacrifice and his blood indeed provides protection from the wrath that all of us as sinners deserve because of our rebellion against God.

For us today, this is a reminder that we need to be reading and studying the Old Testaments. We really cannot understand what the Lord is saying to us in the New Testaments, unless we grasp what he has revealed in the Old.

Especially those of you reading through the bible, including all 39 books of the Old Testaments have really equipped yourselves to better understand what the Lord is saying to us in every part of His Word, Including Luke 22.

Ok, let’s turn our focus to some practical benefits of participating in the Lord’s Supper.

#1 Sharing in the Lord’s Supper helps us grow closer to each other as believers in Christ.

1Corinthians 10:16,17 the Apostle Paul writes, ***the cup of blessing that we bless, is it not sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is that not sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are on body, since all of us share the one bread.***

In **1 Corinthians 11**, Paul implies that one should not participate in the Lord’s Supper if he/she is in conflict with another Christian.

Sharing in the Lord’s Supper together is a symbol of our unity, love, and commitment to each other. The symbols of the body and the blood of Jesus remind us that he has made us part of one body and one family. As we go through life together as a congregation we might do and say things which irritate each other. When that happens, remembering that these are the people with whom we eat the bread and drink the cup, should help us, number one forbear (overlook) the small things, and number two, be willing to work on reconciliation and forgiveness in the big

things. God intends to use the Lord’s Supper to draw us closer to each other.

#2 The Lord’s Supper helps us become closer to God. The 1st way that happens is through the “communion” we have with Him at the Lord’s Table. This flows out of my belief we experience the Lord’s presence, not by eating and drinking the elements, but in the spiritual, very real, way when we share in the Lord’s Supper.

“Pastor Dan I don’t understand. I thought God was always with us, always present.” That is true, but I believe he is present when we are at the Lord’s Table in a way that he is not at other times.

“So, Pastor Dan, am I supposed to get some warm feeling when I take part in communion?” I do not know. I know I am on the boarder of being mystical here, which is uncomfortable territory for me. I would just say this: it is not a surprise that you “feel” closer to the Lord during or after taking communion than you do at other times. This maybe just because you have spent that time with your mind focused on the death and resurrection of Jesus and what that means for you.

We will talk about that in a moment. However, I think there is often something more involved than that. I suspect many of you have experienced this, which is great. If you have not, I suggest you focus on...

#3 We become closer to God as we focus on Jesus’ death and resurrection and what that means for us. This is a bit easier for me to explain. The purpose of the bread and cup, of the Lord’s Supper is to remind us what Jesus Christ has done through his death on the cross in our place and his resurrection from the dead which guarantees our salvation.

Thinking about what Jesus has done for us, fills our minds with thoughts like, “what wondrous love...what amazing grace...what magnificent salvation. And the Holy Spirit works in our minds and hearts It fills us with deep gratitude, which then grows into greater love for the Lord and yes, greater closeness to him.

In recent years I have come to, not a new realization, but the A through Z of what it means to be a Christian.

What Jesus has done for us through his life, death and resurrection, what he is doing for us today as our Great High Priest. What he will do for us in the future as our coming king. Every part of being a Christian revolves around that great news of Jesus.

Thus, I need to be reminded of the great news often and it helps to more than just hear about it. Through the Lord's Supper I can see, smell, touch, and taste the gospel, as well as hear those magnificent words of truth.

I think as a master teacher, Jesus was very intentional that this wonderful object lesson, which utilizes all 5 of our senses, and which would serve as a powerful reminder of what he has done for us until that day when he returns.

When I was a kid, growing up at 1st Baptist Church, Prentice, WI, population 427, the village, not the church, I remember 2 things about the Lord's supper. One was how good that Welch's grape juice smelled, and how I wished my parents would let me have some. That maybe one good thing our current cup and wafer. I cannot imagine anyone wanting to participate in communion merely because of how these elements smell or taste.

The 2nd thing I remember is how maybe a 1/3 of the people in the church would leave before the Lord's Supper was served. Why? Because only official members of the First Baptist Church, Prentice, WI were allowed to take part.

It was a practice called "closed" communion and is still practiced in some churches today.

Now, there is a good reason behind that. People who are not believers in Jesus, including children who do not understand what it means to be a believer, should not participate in the Lord's Supper. Now, that does not mean they need to leave the room. I think it is a good idea for nonbelievers and children to observe the communion service.

However, I think it is important for all believers in Jesus, especially those who are young or weak or struggling in their faith, to take part in the Lord's Supper. If, as I said, the Lord's Supper is intended to help us grow in our love for the Lord and one another, why would we not want Christians to participate?

Yes. It is important that no one participates in a manner unworthy to the Lord, we want those who believe to come to the Lord's Table.

And we want you to do that this morning. We are going to do that this morning. Yes, I now we had communion earlier this month, and we would do it again in a couple of weeks, there is certainly nothing wrong with doing it more than once a month. So if you are a believer in Jesus I invite you today to the Lord's Table. In preparation for this time we will sing