

XX. Contending and Defending the Faith in Biblical Perspective
Contending and Contenders—Defending and Defenders
“Contending and Defending the Lord’s Supper”

Luke 22:14-23

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We will start by looking at the Gospel of Luke. There is a very special reason I’ve chosen this passage to usher us into the Table of the Lord, the Lord’s Supper. We are in the Thanksgiving Season and it’s our custom to have the Lord’s Supper to usher in this Thanksgiving week. This passage in Luke 22 gives the account of the institution of the Lord’s Supper.

Luke 22:14-23 says [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.*

The grass withers, the flower fades, God’s Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may this His Word be preached for you.

This is one of my favorite holidays of the year. I make no pretensions about it and I want to tell you why. This is actually my second favorite holiday of the year for my first favorite holiday of the year is Reformation Day. Some of you are probably thinking this is not a holiday but I think it should be and if they would give me twenty minutes in front of Congress I would try to convince them it should be. I do love Thanksgiving and the reason why is that it is very unique. This is the only holiday that we celebrate that is Christian and American in origin. I know when I say Christmas in origin you immediately think of Christmas and Easter and they are Christian in origin but they are not American in origin.

Thanksgiving is something that flowed out of God’s providence at work in this nation and it came to be established. It was done by practice. The pilgrims established the very first one. George Washington, our founding father, perhaps preeminent founding father, the man who would not be king when he could have been king, was the one who wrote the very first proclamation that I’ll read in the next study where I will take a little more time to further into the origin and uniqueness of Thanksgiving in the context of our country. We love to go into this Thanksgiving week with this special Thanksgiving service. In this next study I’ll read two proclamations, this one from George Washington, and the one from Abraham Lincoln. You can chronicle the conversion of Lincoln not only through the diary of his pastor, Dr. Phineas Gurley, but

also through the documents he wrote – The Meditations upon the Divine Will and the Gettysburg Address.

Also in 1862 and 1863 Lincoln wrote this declaration of Thanksgiving and he began to take up the desire of George Washington that this would actually become not one declared by every President but would actually be embedded as a National Holiday. It took a long time for this to get embedded as a National Holiday even though it was with us from the very beginning. In it there is a distillation in which he says “It is good for a nation to come together and give thanks to God for His good providence. He has blessed us in enormous ways and those blessings were not deserved even though they were greatly needed and it would be wrong for us to enjoy them without giving thanks to the One whom it came.” He encouraged families to get together for meals of Thanksgiving and churches to have services for Thanksgiving. He did so and then said “For this God should be worshipped and we ought to give Him thanks for His good providence and we ought to take time to examine ourselves for our National sins that we might turn from them.”

Stop and think. A sacred time, meal, a day, focus, give thanks, remember God’s gifts and examine yourselves. Does that sound familiar to you? Our founding fathers were just working off what they had been taught that was to be practiced within the church. Now it’s not that they were instituting a sacrament for the Nation but they were borrowing from the Lord’s Supper and its pattern to call upon a nation, to enjoy meals of fellowship, worship, give thanks and examine ourselves that we might turn from our sins. Specifically they were looking back at what we are to celebrate in the Lord’s Supper.

The Lord’s Supper in many of the churches is called the Eucharist. Eu- means good and –charist comes from the concept of grace that’s been received so Eucharist translates to good thanks or give thanks. In the noun form it’s thanksgiving and in the verb form it’s give thanks. In other words, the predominant name that the church has used throughout the ages to speak of the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion or the Lord’s Table has been a word that declares give thanks – a meal of thanksgiving.

Now, why would this meal be predominately identified? It’s a meal of proclamation for when we get here we are proclaiming the Lord’s death until He comes. It’s a meal of remembrance for we are remembering what He did in His death. It is a meal that does a lot of things but the dominant theme within the church has been a meal of worshipful thanks to the Lord, while you examine yourself and remember what He has done. So why is it that this meal is predominated with this notion of giving thanks?

I want to give you three reasons from the text in Luke 22. I will confess to you that the first reason I never saw until preparing for this study in the last couple of weeks and I cannot tell you how many times I have preached on Luke 22. I’m glad the Lord let me live long enough to see this from the text but it has something to do with this matter of thanks. Then I will give you two more reasons that I have seen that I want to put you in remembrance of as well.

Let’s look back at Luke 22 where Jesus pulls the disciples together to celebrate the thanksgiving and remembrance meal from the Old Testament, the Passover. Luke 22:14-16 says [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. (That Passover is pointing to His suffering for He is the Passover Lamb.) [16] For I tell you I will not eat it (this Passover) until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of*

God.” In other words, to emphasize what He just said, this is the last supper of the Passover. The next time I eat with you it will be in another Supper in the fulfillment of the Kingdom. Then to emphasize it notice what He does in the next verse.

Luke 22:17-18 says [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.”* We don’t have any great details of how the Passover went. I know many think they do but they don’t. We have a lot of traditions that have developed out of the last 200 to 300 years in the Jewish community but we don’t know a lot.

We do know that there were four cups in the Passover around the four promises of a coming Lamb who would redeem His people. Each one of those cups had a very specific purpose. It is one of those cups that He takes. This is not *the cup* after they had eaten from the first Lord’s Supper, but this is *a cup* from the Passover Supper. I don’t if it was the first one, second one, third one or fourth one for I will not speculate but it becomes by Jesus’ appointment a thanksgiving cup that the Passover is finished and fulfilled now in Him. It is a thanksgiving cup that He gives declaring the fulfillment of the Passover is here when I suffer and this is the last Passover meal. They are about to eat the first New Covenant meal, the Lord’s Supper and you will eat it with Me in the fulfillment of the Kingdom at the marriage supper. Now I am eating the last meal of the Passover, here is the cup, give thanks for it’s now about to be fulfilled. From now on you’ll eat a new meal and you will eat that meal with the presence of My Holy Spirit and one day you’ll eat the meal fulfilled in the Kingdom at the marriage supper. So this became known because it was instituted with a cup from the last Passover Supper that Jesus identified as a cup of thanksgiving.

Secondly, it became known as a thanksgiving meal in a predominate way not only because it was instituted with a cup from the Passover but it was a thanksgiving cup for what He was about to do in fulfillment of the Passover but secondly when He identified, designated and delivered the elements of the bread and the fruit of the vine, He gave thanks. He blessed ordinary elements to an extraordinary use and as He blessed them He blessed them by giving thanks. Notice what it says in the text.

Luke 22:19 says [19] *And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it (pointing to Himself as the giving of a sacrifice) and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”* What did He do? He then gave thanks that this element would have the substance of His body upon which He bears all of the sins of all of His people. Then He takes the cup and pours it out and declared that this was His blood which will be poured out at Calvary that He would make an atoning death for our sins. He gives thanks not just for the elements but for the body He has and the blood He has. He gives thanks to the Father who sent Him and He gives thanks that by His death taking our sins in His body and pouring forth His blood He will redeem His people.

Thirdly, it became the meal of thanksgiving because it declares in glorious simplicity the body and blood of Jesus through the bread and the fruit of the vine. When we get together for our thanksgiving meals this week there will be nothing simple about our meals. It will be complex and there will be recipes that come from all corners of the earth. This meal is simple. It’s the bread and the fruit of the vine. It’s glory. It’s nourishment. It’s not complex for with simple elements that are ingested for physical

well-being He then says “By faith you feast upon Me, My body, My blood and your soul is nourished. I will nourish your soul.”

To keep the spirit of contending and defending alive in this study this has been a big dividing point in the church. What does He mean that this is My body and this is My blood? Then there is the element of the church that says “Well when the officiant does what he does that it actually becomes the actual corporate body of Christ and blood.” Then there are those coming out of the Reformation that say “No, it is body and blood of Christ as you spiritually feast upon Him with these physical elements that symbolize it so that you focus upon Him. It’s not in the complexity of the elements for they are simple so that you focus of Him and you’re nourished by the benefits and the glorious work He did on the cross.”

People ask me if it sets itself as a symbol whereby we remember what He did and therefore we speak these spiritual upon Him then why would He put it ‘this is My body’? It is because He fully identifies with it as a sign that He has given to you. We know it can’t actually be His corporal body, not only as you and I partake of it now, but Jesus is at the right hand of the Father and we don’t re-sacrifice it for the sacrifice was once and for all.

A second reason is the very first time we did it and He said “This is My body and this is My blood” where was He? He was standing there giving it to them. He wasn’t the bread and the wine for He was there giving it to them and because of how He appointed it they would spiritual by faith feast upon Him and all the benefits He has done for them. That is why we give thanks for we are helpless, hopeless and we didn’t care but there was a God in heaven who cared and He gave His Son. His Son took our sins in His body and He spilled and poured out His blood. He cared for you and me. He cared for sinners and now He is our Redeemer and that’s why we give thanks. There was no reason we wanted this or deserved this but God in His grace and mercy did for us what we could not do by sending His Son who paid a debt He did not owe for us. We’re debtors and we had a debt we couldn’t pay. So we give thanks.

So as you come to the meal come and give thanks. Give thanks for there is no Passover meal, anticipating that cup of thanksgiving from that meal has been given because the Lamb of God has come to bear the sins of His people for all eternity. Give thanks because the Lord has given simple elements of the substance of life to point you to Christ who is life indeed for ever and ever and by faith, take, eat of Him. Drink of Him and give thanks you have a sovereign, sufficient Savior who paid for all of your sins on the cross, when He took in His body all the sins of all His people for all of eternity and He poured out His blood that you and I might have the cup of life forever.

Dear friends, let me be more specific. You will have a few moments of meditation when you receive the bread that has been broken and what has been poured out and as you take that broken bread and ingest it, remember the One who in His body took your sins on Calvary’s cross and paid for them. As the cup is poured out through your lips and into your body, remember the One who poured out His blood, not only with the agony of a body bearing our sins but the agony of a soul that had cried out in a loud voice saying, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” that is, “*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*” (Matthew 27:46) As it is poured into your lips remember His blood poured for you so you will not be forsaken. You will be kept by Him and brought to be with Him in all eternity. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, we come to this Your Table, the Table of Your Son, who gave thanks to You for sending Him, who gave thanks that as You sent Him He had a true body that He could take upon Himself our sins. He had life blood that He could pour out for us so that we who could not be saved by the blood of bulls and goats but are saved for in Christ all things are made new. So now Lord we come. We worship. We examine ourselves. We are free to confess our sins but even as we touch the bread and have the cup poured through our lips, we give thanks for a Savior who is glorious, a Redeemer, God's own Son sent by the Father, who will bring many sons and daughters to glory. We give thanks in Jesus' Name, Amen.