

Sunday, November 3, 2024 | Holy Week

Week 10 | Luke 22:14-20 | "The Last Supper"

A couple weeks ago, we unpacked the last Passover. We saw that since Jesus was devoutly Jewish, he would not miss celebrating this festival even though he knew his end was close at hand. We saw that the Lord didn't only keep the Passover, but he also prepared it. And through examining the Passover, we learned that just as lambs were once a substitute for Israel's sin, the Lamb of God is now the only substitute for humanity's sin. Because of Jesus, the believer's sin has been paid for. Because of the death of his Son, the Father will pass over our transgressions, giving us life.

READ: Luke 22:14-20 (ESV)

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."

Today, we'll be unpacking one of the most controversial passages in all of Scripture: *the Last Supper*. And it's controversial because it deals with one of the most debated subjects in all of Christendom: *Communion*. And while we'll briefly address those controversies, we must avoid getting bogged down by them. We'll miss the message at the heart of this wonderful passage if we're thinking of the Lord's Supper as nothing more than an academic exercise.

This is not to say we should check out mentally. No. We must ponder and meditate on this passage. We *must* weigh and understand every word that Jesus says about this most essential ordinance. However, the Lord's Supper ought to engage *more* than just the mind. From tasting the bread to smelling the wine to touching the elements, saying prayers, singing songs, and so on, properly done Communion involves every aspect of our being.

MENTION

Poem:

A Shocking Thing to Forget by D.A. Carson

For further study:

Beginner | Why Is the Lord's Supper So Important? By Aubrey Sequeira

Intermediate | The Lord's Supper: As the Sign and Meal of the New Covenant by Guy Waters

Advanced | The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes by Thomas R. Schreiner & Matthew R Crawford

Though the Communion proper doesn't technically begin until vs. 19, this entire passage communicates at least seven principles about the Lord's Supper:

i. **Consummation** | In Communion, all the O.T. feasts are **fulfilled**.

Jesus said, "I have **earnestly desired** to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." Why? What made this Passover so special that the Lord "**earnestly desired to eat**" it? Notice that Jesus isn't sad but joyful. He had wanted to partake in this meal for some time, and now that it was here, he was overjoyed.

This is **not** to say that the Lord's Supper is a Passover feast. Instead, as we talked about two weeks ago, the Passover (as well as the other O.T. feasts) is the foundation upon which the Lord's Supper rests; it informs much of our understanding of Communion. Namely, Passover points back to the Exodus but also points forward to a greater exodus, one in which all of mankind, not just the Jews, will be led out of bondage to sin and death. **The Lord's Supper is not in isolation** from the other covenantal feasts in Scripture; to the contrary, communion is the crowning culmination of them all!¹

ii. **Anticipation** | In Communion, we're **awaiting** Christ's return.

Jesus said, "I will not eat it *until* [emphasis added] it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God...I will not drink of the fruit of the vine *until* [emphasis added] the kingdom of God comes." Though some understand it this way, this is not to say Jesus **didn't** partake in this Passover. Remember, he just said, "I have **earnestly desired** to eat;" it would be quite strange to say this and not eat.

¹ Waters, Guy, *The Lord's Supper*, A Short Studies in Biblical Theology, (Wheaton, IL; Crossway, 2019), p. 91, "The Lord's Supper serves, then, to point the people of God in hope to the certain return and to the consummation of their salvation in Christ."

Thus, the Lord was saying he would not participate in this Passover meal ***again*** until the consummation of God's kingdom.²

Passover always pointed to an era in which all of God's promises would be fulfilled. Likewise, the Lord's Supper has an eschatological element to it. **Just as the Jews with Passover, so in Communion, we *anticipate* a far better meal. It is like the appetizer before the main course.**³

READ: 1 Corinthians 11:26 (ESV)

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death ***until*** he comes.”

Through the Lord's Supper, we are ***readying*** ourselves for the Lord's return, when his kingdom will come, and all the promises will be fulfilled. **When the Lord returns, the Church—his bride—will participate in the aptly named “marriage supper of the Lamb” (cf. Rev. 6-9).** When this occurs, that grand feast will parallel the much simpler original one in the Upper Room.

iii. ***Affiliation*** | In Communion, we partake in a ***family*** meal.

Jesus said, “**Take this, and divide it *among*** [emphasis added] ***yourselves.***” Jewish tradition stipulated three to four cups of wine during the Passover meal.⁴ Luke is the only gospel writer to mention there was more than one cup, alluding to this multiple-cup-wine practice. Given Jesus' words seem introductory, it is likely that the specific cup mentioned at this point was the first of the four. However, there is no way of saying definitively.

What is clear is that this cup was ***communal***. And herein lies a crucial parallel between Passover and the Lord's Supper: **just as the Passover was *emblematic* of the nation of Israel, so the Lord's Supper is *representative* of the Church of Christ. In other words, one must be *affiliated* with Jesus to partake of his Supper.** This means that the Lord's Supper is ***not*** for three kinds of people: unbelievers, believers with unconfessed sin, and believers under church discipline.

READ: 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 (ESV)

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a ***participation*** [communion/fellowship/sharing] in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a ***participation*** in the body of Christ? Because there is ***one bread***, we who are many are ***one body***, for we all ***partake*** of the ***one bread.***”

² Bock (1996), p. 1720.

³ Waters (2019), p. 117.

⁴ Bock (1996), p. 1722.

This is also why you **cannot** partake in the Lord's Supper **outside** the community of faith. Just as an unbeliever is unfit to participate in baptism so they are unfit to participate in the Lord's Supper. Baptism is an **outward** sign of an **inward change**; it's a **one-time** tangible demonstration of what has **already** occurred spiritually. The Lord's Supper is an **outward** sign of an **inward relationship**; it's an **ongoing** tangible demonstration of what is **already** a spiritual reality. Spiritually speaking, we commune with Christ in Communion.

Therefore, one who has not professed faith cannot and **should not** partake in communion. To do so, would be to **profane** what this sign represents (e.g., taking the Lord's name in vain). We must examine ourselves to see if we are in proper relationship with Christ before taking part in his supper (cf. 1 Cor. 11:23-26). If we are unsaved, a profession of faith must be made first. If we are in sin, a confession of sin must be made first. If we are under church discipline, a restoration of standing must be made first.

iv. **Representation** | In Communion, the focus is on **symbolism**, not **cannibalism**.

With those preliminary statements out of the way, this is where the discussion proper of Communion begins.

Jesus said of the bread, "**This is** [emphasis added] **my body**." And he said of the cup/wine that it "**is** [emphasis added] **the new covenant in my blood**?" What did he mean by "**is**"? The communion elements are the **metaphorical** body and blood of Jesus; they are not the **literal** body and blood of Jesus, aka transubstantiation.⁵

We know this because, just as the elements of the Lord's Passover **symbolized** truths from the Exodus, so the elements of the Lord's Supper **symbolize** truths from the crucifixion. To insist that the apostles thought they were literally devouring Christ during the Last Supper is to impose a 9th-century French philosophical idea on a bunch of 1st-century Jews.⁶ Not only that, but it would've also been utterly repulsive to them (cf. Jn. 6:52). Lastly, if Jesus meant that the wine was his **literal** blood, then we must also say that the cup was the **literal** new covenant. This is an **absurd** thought.

Given that the disciples had participated in multiple Passovers in which symbols permeated the feast, they were the kind of men who understood a metaphor when they saw it. Also, as disciples who had heard Jesus speak like this before (cf. Jn. 6), they would've immediately interpreted Jesus' words metaphorically, not literally.

⁵ Bock (1996), p. 1724, "The verb *is* indicates representation, not identification."

⁶ Elwell, Walter, *Evangelical Disciontionary of Theology*, Baker Reference Library, Second Edition, (Grand Rapids, MI; Baker Academic, 2001), p. 705.

So, since transubstantiation is false, this means that, unlike in Catholicism where the bread and wine are venerated, in Protestantism, we **do not** worship the elements of Communion. To do so would be, at best, to lean into superstitious fancies that have no Scriptural basis, or, worse, it would mean creating an idol made from wheat and grapes. **How tragic that something which ought to be a means of worship becomes something worshipped.**

Put simply, the communion elements **represent** Christ's body and blood; they do not **re-present** Christ's body and blood.

v. **Substitution** | In Communion, we acknowledge Christ as our **replacement**.

Okay, so if the point of Communion is not the literal body and blood of Jesus, what is the point? What should we think of when we partake of the Lord's Supper? **Penal substitution**.

Jesus said that his body, represented by the bread, was “**given for** [emphasis added] **you**.” And he said that his blood, represented by the cup/wine, was “**poured out for** [emphasis added] **you**.” The Lord was our substitute; he was our replacement. His body was supplied on **our behalf**. His blood was provided on **our behalf**.

READ: Isaiah 53:4-6 (ESV)

“Surely he has borne **our** griefs and carried **our** sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was pierced for **our** transgressions; he was crushed for **our** iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and 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**.”

Jesus took the punishment we deserved.

vi. **Obligation** | In Communion, we **obey** the Lord's command.

Of the seven principles, this point is the shortest and most straightforward to explain, but do not let such things deceive you. **This point is, by far and away, the most important principle of Communion.** Jesus said, “**Do this** [emphasis added] **in remembrance of me**.” The phrase “**do this**” is an imperative; **it is a command**. You may only understand some of the principles we discuss today, but even the youngest can understand an **obligation**. We partake in the Lord's Supper first and foremost because the Bible says so. As children of God, we must obey our Father's command. **Even if you don't perfectly understand everything that goes into the Lord's Supper, that's okay. First, obey; the understanding comes later.**

vii. **Commemoration** | In Communion, we **celebrate** the **new** covenant.

After the bread, Jesus said, "Do this in *remembrance* [emphasis added] of me." And then, after the wine, he said, "This cup that is poured out for you is the *new covenant* [emphasis added]..." Just as the Lord's Passover commemorates the O.T. covenant, the Lord's Supper commemorates the New Covenant. Just as the first Pascal lamb gave its body and blood for Israel (cf. Ex. 24:8), so the Lamb of God gave his body and blood for all mankind.

In his farewell address, Moses foretold of a time when "the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live" (Deut. 30:6). If you read on, it is clear Moses wasn't referring to the current generation. All of the O.T. is proof that the Israelites' hearts were hard, as they continually rebelled against God. Thus, it seemed like Moses' prediction would never come true. That is, until God, speaking through Jeremiah, said:

READ: Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)

³¹ "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³² not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord.

³³ For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴ And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

In the new covenant, we remind ourselves that God has forgiven our "iniquity and [he] will remember [our] sin no more." This means unlike in Catholicism, where Jesus is regularly sacrificed every time they partake of the Eucharist, in Protestantism, we remember Christ's one-time sacrifice; He is not sacrificed repeatedly (cf. Heb. 10:1-18). To insist that Jesus' death wasn't enough is to deny the gospel itself. It turns the Lord's Supper into a work by which we can earn grace. Salvation is through grace alone, by faith alone in Christ alone; it is not through anything else, not even the Lord's Supper. If it is anything, it is not the gospel.

The Greek word translated as "*remembrance*"⁷ is not typical in Scripture (cf. LXX Lev. 24:7; Num. 10:10; Psa. 38:1; 70:1; Lu. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25; Heb. 10:3). When it is used in 1 Cor.

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ἀνάμνησις (anamnesis)

11:24-25, Paul is addressing Communion while when it is used in Hebrews 10, it is addressing the O.T. sacrificial system. While I'd like to jump to 1 Cor. 11, we will look at Hebrews 10 because discussing what "remembrance" meant under the old covenant shows us what "remembrance" means in the new covenant.

In Hebrews 10:3-4, the writer is making a point that the sacrifices of the O.T. could not purge sin; instead, they were a "reminder" that even by shedding "the blood and goats," it was "impossible...to take away sins." This means that, like Christians, the Jews practiced a type of "remembrance;" but unlike Christians, it was a reminder that they'd have to make the same sacrifices the next year. In other words, the sacrificial system reminded the Israelites of their sinfulness. In contrast, Communion is a type of "remembrance" which reminds the believer that their sins have been forgiven. Communion is "a memorial, not a re-sacrifice."⁸

READ: Hebrews 10:11-14 (ESV)

¹¹ And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹² But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³ waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴ For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

Thus, when we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are not sacrificing Jesus over again to pay for that sin, thereby reminding ourselves of our sinfulness. Instead, we're reminding ourselves of our forgiveness. Our sins, past, present, and future, have already been paid for through the one-time sacrificial death of the Lamb of God. As Dr. James White puts it, "We have a remembrance of what Christ has done in bearing our sins, not in a remembrance of our sins."

So, what's the takeaway?

In the Lord's Supper, we reaffirm our relationship with Christ.

Video Description:

Holy Week | Week 10 | “The Last Supper” (Luke 22:14-20)

SPEAKER: Ben Hyrne, Pastor

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Pastor's manuscript can be found here:

Grace Pointe Baptist Church

12029 Eastern Ave.

Baltimore, MD 21220

Contact: info@GracePointeLife.com

Website: <https://www.gracepointelife.com>

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