

Sermons on Matthew

The Lord's Supper

Matthew 26:26-29

With Study Questions

*Pastor Paul Viggiano
Branch of Hope Church
2370 W. Carson Street, #100
Torrance, CA 90501
(310) 212-6999
pastorpaul@integrity.com
www.branchofhope.org
5/25/2008*

The Lord's Supper
Matthew 26:26-29

And as they were eating, *Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."*²⁷ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, *"Drink from it, all of you."*²⁸ For *this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.*²⁹ But *I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom*" (Matthew 26:26-29).

Introduction

The Israelites of the Old Covenant celebrated the Passover by killing a lamb and eating a Passover meal. In doing this, they would remember how God delivered them from the slavery of Egypt (Ex. 12:14). But being delivered from the slavery of the Pharaoh was not the main point the exodus. Through all this they would learn, and were called to remember, that God is a God who delivers—who sets free.

And that from which God truly and primarily sets us free is the slavery of **"sin and death"** (Rom. 8:2). The blood of the Passover was primarily instructional. The blood of an animal could never remove any sin, **"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins"** (Heb. 10:4). The true deliverance to which the Passover pointed was the deliverance found in Jesus.

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death (Rom. 8:2).

It was for this reason that John the Baptist recognized Jesus as the **"Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world"** (John 1:29).

When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper during the Passover, He took bread and wine and made clear that these elements point to Him, to His body which was broken and blood which was shed for the **"remission of sins,"** literally the "sending off" of our sins. It is a fancy way of telling our sins to hit the road.

Jesus authoritatively tells our sins to leave because He would pay the price for their exit by His own blood. When we speak of Christ's blood we're not speaking of magic blood like some magic potion. Blood, in the

Bible, is synonymous with life, **“for the life of the flesh is in the blood” (Lev. 17:11)**. Jesus is informing His apostles that He will die for sinners.

The Lord’s Supper truly conveys an event to us that is unique to Christianity, that God saves sinners fully and completely by sending His own Son to pay the price for sin.

For *the wages of sin is death, but *the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom. 6:23)**.

And like any other gift, it is free for the one who receives it, but there is a cost to the one who gives it. Jesus would pay the cost by bearing **“our sin in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24)**. The Father would lay upon Jesus the **“iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:6)**. Jesus would take the hell that should rightly fall upon the shoulders of sinners.

And as they were eating, *Jesus took bread, *blessed and broke it...**
(Matthew 26:26a)

Consecration

Jesus blessed the bread. We speak of this as a consecration—a setting apart. At times there is an unhealthy sacred-secular distinction made by Christians, as if there are things that shouldn’t fall under the ownership, guidance and direction of God. Other times this distinction is appropriate. God did, after all, own all things when He told Moses he was walking on holy or sacred ground (Ex. 3:5).

When we pray to God or speak of God to others, we recognize those words as distinct from the mundane chatter of musing over a sporting event. When we proclaim the gospel we are told those words are **“power of God to salvation” (Rom. 1:16)**. Similarly, the elements of communion should be thought of as distinct from an Arby’s roast beef sandwich. In the same way there is a special presence of the Spirit of Christ in the words of the gospel, there is special presence of the Spirit of Christ in the pure administration and consecration of the communion elements when accompanied by God’s word. Paul does call it a **“cup of blessing” (1 Cor. 10:16)**.

...and gave *it* to the disciples and said, “*Take, eat...*” (Matthew 26:26b)

Distributing the Elements

There can be lively discussion regarding who hands out the communion elements. We have our elders and deacons distribute the elements because we believe Christ has given this responsibility to the church which is His body and of which He is head. But the rule is merely to convey an idea and not ironclad. The idea is simply this, that Christ and Christ alone offers the meal.

The church loses its place when it begins to operate as mediator (a go between for man and God), an office that belongs to the one true Head of the church, who is Christ. The church, in a certain sense, becomes most valuable when it comes most invisible. Like John the Baptist said of himself in relationship to Christ, **“He must increase, but I *must* decrease” (John 3:30).**

The church will play a necessary role in the administration of the Lord’s Supper **“till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26)**, but it is only valuable to the extent that it is presenting Christ and Him crucified for sinners (1 Cor. 2:2). The church is to present Christ, not supplant Christ.

Jesus tells His followers to **“Take, eat”** which is an imperative. It is not a suggestion. When the ship is sinking and the captain tells you to put on the life-vest, it is not optional. If you wish to live, this is what you do.

“...this is My body.”⁻²⁷⁻ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, __“_Drink from it, all of you.⁻²⁸⁻ For _this is My blood _of the _new covenant, which is shed __for many for the __remission of sins.” (Matthew 26:26c-28)

My Body

The seemingly infinite controversy over the **“this is My body”** words of Jesus would take us beyond our goal at this time. Some believe the elements are actually transformed into His flesh and blood—*transubstantiation*. Others believe in *consubstantiation*—that the body and blood coexist with the bread and wine—that Jesus is with, in and under the bread and wine but not literally the bread and wine. Others believe it is a mere *memorial* and would have already disagreed with what I said about the unique *spiritual presence* of Christ in the elements (although they would normally believe in the unique spiritual presence of Christ in the preaching of the gospel).

The Lord's Supper is a sacrament. The nature of a sacrament is that it points to something other than itself. If it were literally the body and blood, it would not be a sacrament, but would be the body and blood. Not to press this too far here, but such a wooden interpretation of this passage would require us to draw the conclusion that when Jesus says **"this cup is the new covenant in my blood"** (1 Cor. 11:25), that the cup itself, as Calvin observes, "must be transubstantiated into *blood*." ¹

In all of this controversy the enemy of our souls often succeeds in spewing his fog over the blessing. The justice of God declares that **"without the shedding of blood, there is no remission (forgiveness of sins)"** (Heb. 9:22). But Jesus declares that there will be forgiveness and it is in His blood.

Old to New Covenant

Those who trusted in Christ in the Old Covenant are our brothers and sisters. They were effectually saved by Jesus. We learn in Hebrews that Moses esteemed **"the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt"** (Heb. 11:26). But there was an aspect to the Old Covenant which could be considered flawed—it was **"obsolete and growing old and ready to vanish away"** (Heb. 8:13).

It was obsolete in the respect that it involved one nation who God held by the **"hand and lead them out of the land of Egypt"** (Heb. 8:9). They were a people who would not **"continue in the covenant"** and therefore were **"disregarded"** by the Lord (Heb. 8:9). When Jesus came to God's covenant people, instead of receiving Him (John 1:11), they conspired to kill Him (Matt. 26:4).

But God had already promised that there would be a New Covenant with a new Israel, **"the Israel of God"** (Gal. 6:16) made up of all, and only all, who have **"faith"** in Christ (Gal. 3:7). The Lord spoke of this New Covenant through Jeremiah.

Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—³² not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says

¹Calvin, J. (1998). *Calvin's Commentaries: The Harmony of the Gospels : Calvin's Commentary on Matthew, Mark, and Luke* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; Calvin's Commentaries. Albany, OR: Ages Software.

the LORD. ⁻³³⁻ __ But this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: __ I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their __ hearts; __ and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ⁻³⁴⁻ No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘ _ Know the LORD, _’ for _ they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For __ I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more _” (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

This is what we are to remember when we eat and drink. That the **“Son of Man did not come to be serve, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for man” (Matthew 20:28)**. God, therefore, remembers our sin **“no more.”** There is nothing more central to the Christian faith than to know that we have found peace with God through the grace of God in the cross of Christ. We are to sing with the Psalmist:

I will take up the cup of salvation, And call upon the name of the Lord (Psalm 116:13).

But __ I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on __ until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom _” (Matthew 26:29).

I take this to be fulfilled after the resurrection. Peter preached of Jesus that

_ God raised (Him) up on the third day, and showed Him openly, ⁻⁴¹⁻ __ not to all the people, but to witnesses chosen before by God, *even* to us __ who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead (Acts 10:40, 41).

Christ’s victory over death was no mere metaphor. Metaphors don’t eat and drink. Jesus was anticipating His own victory over death. He kept His promise, His words were sure. And they are to ever be trusted.

Questions for Study

1. Why did the Israelites celebrate the Passover in the Old Covenant (page 2)?
2. What is the true deliverance and how is it found (pages 2, 3)?
3. What does “blood” mean in the Bible (page 3)?
4. What is the unique message conveyed in the Lord’s Supper (page 3)?
5. Explain the idea of ‘consecration’ and how it applies to the elements of the Lord’ Supper (pages 3, 4)?
6. Who offers the meal in the Lord’s Supper (page 4)?
7. How do the elements symbolize the body and blood of Jesus? What are the different views? What are their strengths and weaknesses (pages 4, 5)?
8. Discuss some of the differences between the Old and New Covenant (pages 5, 6)?