

**Text:** Matthew 26:26-30

**Title:** The Lord's Table Created

**Truth:** The Lord institutes two new symbols from Passover for the Communion remembrance of the Church (the Lord's Table).

**Date/Location:** October 26 and November 2, 2022 at FBC

## Introduction

This portion of the Bible is worthy of us slowing down to consider carefully what the Lord says and does here. After all, this is one of the world-wide church's two ordinances (the other being baptism). Because it is practiced very differently by difference factions of the church, we need to think about our own practice in light of what the Lord says.

## I. Bread

26 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."

- A. During the meal ("as they were eating"). The bread which He took was part of their Passover meal ("Seder").
- B. Blessed the bread. The NKJV translates as "blessed it," which is where we get the phrase "bless the food" for praying over our meals before we eat. Some manuscripts match verse 27 and have "gave thanks." There is no direct object "it" after the verb. The difference in meaning is negligible.
- C. Broke it and gave it. Another phrase we use—"to break bread"—comes from this. It means to divide it into portions/pieces and share it.
- D. Meaning of the bread: Jesus's body. This is a symbol. I use the word *symbol* purposefully. It would have been completely obvious to the disciples then present that the Lord was not suggesting the bread was actually his bodily flesh. This is because his actual body was right there in front of them! Rather, the bread was a *symbol* representing His body in that first Eucharist meal.

Luke 22:19 adds that the bread represents the Lord's body *given* for the disciples.

Some of us, because of the KJV or NKJV translations of 1 Corinthians 11:24, have become accustomed to the wording "which is broken for you." This double use of the verb "to break" is not found in all the Greek manuscripts for Luke. The breaking of the Lord's body derives from the breaking of bread earlier in the verse. But the Lord's body, obviously, was not divided into pieces like the bread was. Not a bone was broken and His body was intact, though it was greatly abused after flogging, beating, crucifixion, and stabbing with a spear.

Technical note: When we read the bread was broken and His body was also broken, we do some quick language transformation in our minds without noticing it. *Broken* bread means in our minds bread *divided* into portions. The same word about the *broken* body means *damaged* or *wrecked* or *abused*. Same word *broken*, different meanings.

E. Jesus told the disciples to eat the portion of bread that was broken for them. The eating was a physical act that portrayed a spiritual reality. The physical act is obvious enough because it was *eating*. But what was the spiritual reality thus portrayed? I believe the answer has two parts.

Luke 22:19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

**First**, the thing eaten is a symbol of the body of the Lord. The text in Luke 22:19 explicitly says that this is the body which is given for you. The spiritual reality portrayed refers to Christ's giving of Himself, His body, in sacrifice on behalf of His disciples. **Second**, eating of the symbol portrays our deep living connection to the bread eaten. That connection began when we came to faith (John 6:40, 51. 53-57) and continues in the present. **Third**, the text in Luke 22:19 commands that it be done in remembrance. Putting the three parts together, the element of bread reminds us in the present of our connection to Christ in what He did in the past. If we

are Christians, it reminds us in the present of our participation in Christ and that we benefited and still benefit from His work in the past. An interesting part of this is that these disciples at the first Lord's Table were learning to picture this connection before the atoning work of Jesus occurred!

F. The eating is not a re-enactment of sacrifice—the text in Luke tells us explicitly it is a **remembrance of Christ**. The eating is not the receiving a new dose of saving grace. It is a remembrance of Christ's grace in which He gave Himself in the past and continues to benefit us in the present. Let that sink in. Let the Bible text tell the meaning of the Table.

Some may feel that our understanding of this, which is called the symbolic or memorial view of the Lord's Table, takes something away from us in terms of divine grace. But this Scripturally-based view cannot take away that which was never there in the first place. What was "there" in the first place was a precious remembrance of the work of Christ and the life-giving connection that we have to it in Jesus.

Furthermore, to remember the work of Christ and be reminded of our ongoing present benefit from that work is a boundless blessing that we can enjoy. Do not look for what you might be missing, but rather look at what you have right in front of you in the Lord's Table! Remember the Lord! Do not forget him!

## II. Cup

27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you."

A. Like He *took* the bread moments earlier, He now took the cup. From Luke 22:17 and 20, it is probably unclear to you where exactly the cup was located in the meal since *two cups* are mentioned. The text in Luke 22:17 says that the Lord took a cup (indefinite—no article) and told the disciples to share it. Then He explained how He would not enjoy this fruit of the vine until the Kingdom of God comes. That is a long wait! And then He took the bread, and finally after supper took the cup (this time *with* the

definite article). Matthew records the order of events somewhat differently.

- B. Gave thanks. This is parallel to the thanksgiving for the bread. He probably did similar for both elements—giving of thanks in prayer to God the Father. The verb for giving thanks is eu-kar-i-ste-ō. It is the origin of our word *eucharist*.
- C. The Lord gave the cup to the disciples. The text portrays this as a single cup passed from one to the other. This sort of practice, which seems foreign to us because of our consciousness of germs, is still practiced in cultures worldwide. This form of sharing pictures a deeper kind of union between the disciples and their Lord. I am not advocating going back to that form, but we need to have that deep *meaning* in our hearts when we participate in the Table service.
- D. Jesus told them to drink of it. All the disciples were to drink. The text does not say that they were to drink all the wine; rather, all of *them* were to drink *some* of the wine. Whether the wine was entirely consumed is not the point; the point is that all the disciples were to take a portion. The meaning of this? All of them were participants in the blessed benefits of the pouring out of Christ's blood.

Some Christians focus on whether Judas was present or not when the elements were shared—was he part of the “all” who shared the cup? In Luke's gospel, it appears that Judas is present at the time of the bread and cup. The Matthew and Mark accounts leave room for either option. John specifically mentions Judas leaving the supper (John 13:30) but it leaves room for him to be present while the elements were shared. The ambiguity on the matter means Judas may have been gone by then—or not.

Whichever is the case does not much matter to me because either he did not take the elements, or he did so in a disingenuous fashion. Taking the elements of Communion is not a saving act! People that are unsaved do a ritual like the Lord's Table every day, every week, every month throughout this world. And some believers participate in an unworthy manner and eat and drink condemnation to themselves (1 Cor. 11:29). In Corinth, some even

*died* because of their ill participation at the Lord's Supper. If Judas did participate, his participation would be in the most unworthy manner you could imagine and he would deserve to die afterward, which he did.

Even the other disciples were about to flee from the Lord and Peter would deny Him, all within a few short hours. Perfection is impossible. But we do what we can to guard the Table so that known unbelievers or those acting as such do not participate.

- E. Like with the eating of the bread, the drinking of the wine was a physical act that portrayed a spiritual reality. The physical act is obvious enough because it was *drinking*. But what was the spiritual reality thus portrayed?

As with the bread, the liquid that they drank is a symbol of the blood of the Lord. Blood itself refers to His life given in sacrifice for sinners. This sacrifice is the basis of the new covenant and the remission of sins. Drinking portrays the life-giving connection we have with Jesus Christ. It is also done in remembrance of the Lord. Putting the three parts together, the element of the cup reminds us in the present of our connection to Christ in what He did in the past.

- F. As we said above, this is a remembrance. It is not a re-enactment or receiving a new dose of saving grace.
- G. There is also a forward looking aspect to the Communion service. The Lord speaks of enjoying the fruit of the vine again—when the kingdom comes. Not in this present age, for the Lord is not sharing the cup, and the kingdom is not here yet. In addition, Paul reminds us in 1 Cor. 11:26 that we carry on with the Communion service proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes back.
- H. Identification of the symbol: Jesus's blood. I said above that this is the basis of the new covenant and the remission of sins. But there has arisen great controversy over the blood of Christ. I believe the phrase expresses an expansive idea encompassing the atoning work of Christ. It is *not* limited to the fluid containing cells and plasma. The competing view says that the blood is the literal "blood of God" based on a wrong reading of Acts 20:28. Some

believe it was collected from the foot of the cross and transported to heaven, actually sprinkling each new believer who comes to faith in Christ (Heb. 12:24, 1 Peter 1:2).

As if to protect us from this “sacramental” view, the Bible explains that Christ’s work was finished at John 19:30 as He died. He gave up his life and poured out his blood. Yet not all his blood was yet gone, for after He was dead, a soldier pierced his side with a spear, and out came blood and water (John 19:34). So not every drop of blood had exited Jesus’s body by the time He died. But He did give His life an atonement for sin. Since His life was in His blood (Lev. 17:11) we say that He shed His blood. Sufficient blood was let out, and sufficient injury done to the body, and sufficient wrath poured out upon Him bodily and spiritually, that He died. Of course, He gave up His spirit at the right moment, for no one took His life from Him (John 10:18).

The blood of the cross represents his entire death. We thank God for the blood of Christ, which is saying we thank God for the death of Christ and all that it accomplishes. There is blood because it is a sacrifice, and the OT offerings were bloody sacrifices too.

An entire dissertation could be written on this subject, or an entire sermon. We have given it very short treatment here, but I encourage you to ask questions if you have any on this subject.

28 “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

I. New Covenant: The blood is described as being “of the New Covenant. I understand this connection to be one of foundation or basis—the blood of Christ is foundational to the inauguration and operation of the New Covenant. Without it, the New Covenant cannot come into being.

But are we in the world under New Covenant conditions right now? Most Christians do not think about this topic in depth and simply assume, because they have been taught, that we are in the New Covenant today. We do enjoy some blessings that seem to put us in the New Covenant. But let us think about this carefully.

1. To whom was the New Covenant promised? Jeremiah 31:31 makes it clear: “the house of Israel and the house of Judah.” This is a clear and un-obfuscatable reference to the Jews, the nation of Israel. God did not make the covenant with the church.
2. When is the covenant made? Clearly it will be made some days future to Jeremiah’s prophecy. It appears that the nation of Israel will be brought into the covenant *after the second coming and re-gathering of the nation* as recorded in Ezekiel 20:37. Being brought “into the bond of the covenant” is covenant establishment language. Since covenant ratification is a national-level event, it appears that it must wait until a sufficient part of the nation will accept it. At the time of our Lord’s Last Supper, only he and a few disciples were there, and they were not really representing the nation because they were rejected by the nation.
3. What kind of blessings will be present during the operation of the New Covenant? I observe two general categories of God’s work: **societal** and **spiritual**. The spiritual blessings include God’s law written in the mind and heart, fellowship with God, all people knowing the Lord, and sins forgiven. Ezekiel 36 adds that they will be cleansed of sin and idolatry, receive a new heart of flesh instead of stone, a new spirit, and the indwelling Holy Spirit. Romans 11:25-27 adds that all Israel will be saved. Zechariah 12:10 adds a great turning from sin will occur amongst the Jews.

The **societal** or physical blessings include assurance of continued existence of the nation of Israel; rebuilding of Jerusalem; the re-unification of the nation of Israel from the two historical kingdoms; international peace; David will rule again; population will multiply; the dwelling place of God will be with them; the millennial temple; Israel will rule the nations. We can find other kingdom blessings that are connected to the New Covenant throughout the Bible, including restoration of the animal kingdom to friendly relations with humans, agricultural prosperity, economic prosperity, and Christ reigning with His saints over the world’s governments.

J. Remission of Sins: A second thing that the blood of Christ is connected to is the forgiveness of sins. The blood of Christ was shed with the purpose of providing forgiveness of sins. This is not a restatement about the new covenant. Remission of sins is indeed a *part of* the New Covenant, but it is not the whole thing by any means.

It appears self-evident to me that you can have the forgiveness of sins before the full operation of the New Covenant unfolds in the world. Why? Because of all the conditions we mentioned above, only some are operational today. Most people say that sins are forgiven and the Spirit indwells God's people, and that, in their thinking, amounts to the full blessings of the New Covenant. I do not find the societal or physical blessings at all as I look about our world. I do not see the Israel-centered New Covenant spiritual terms in operation either. I therefore conclude that although the New Covenant is not operational in the present day, the blood which establishes the covenant is not idle. Rather, it provides forgiveness of sins for every person who trusts Christ, regardless of the operational status of the New Covenant. In the past, the NC was not operational; today it is not; in the future it will be. But the blood which is the foundation for that covenant is always relevant. Old Testament believers were not under the New Covenant, yet now their sins are entirely addressed. Present-day believers experience the same but have the joy of looking back on a completed sacrifice for their sins. Tribulation saints will have the same experience. At the same time the millennial kingdom begins, the New Covenant will become operational.

Only in the kingdom will Jews and the rest of the world enjoy the experience of remitted sins *along with* all the other spiritual and societal blessings of the New Covenant. That is why I am hesitant to say that we are in the N.C. now. We are actually in a waiting period, enjoying God's forgiveness and calling out of many to be His future kingdom citizens.

There are challenges to this viewpoint, not the least of which is that it is not common among Christians. There are a handful of passages that speak of New Covenant ministry like 2 Cor. 3:6 and Hebrews 8, 8:13, 9:15, and 12:24.



### III. Next Time Awaits the Kingdom

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.”

A. Verse 29 tells us that the Lord awaits the coming of the kingdom in which He will rule before He enjoys the fruit of the vine again. He is in effect *fasting* from that fruit until He comes back. Of course, we do not know what nourishment may be required for a glorified body, and the Lord’s glorified body at that, but He is not drinking of it again until He drinks it new with His disciples in the Kingdom.

B. Why is that, do you suppose? The text does not tell us here. I t would seem to have something to do with His absence, that He is not with His people on earth, not sharing fellowship with them. The breaking of bread and drinking of wine around the table signified a happy union of fellowship between the Lord and His disciples. *That* happiness of direct fellowship will not recur until Jesus returns. Despite this, thankfully, He *is* with His people who have departed and gone to heaven. They together await His coming. The Lord will not partake again until He *gathers* with His people.

It is no wonder then, that the Lord’s Table is shared by the church when it is *gathered together*. No other location, no isolation, no livestream, no conference call, can replicate the kind of togetherness that is required to properly picture the fellowship that those in Christ share together.

- C. When the kingdom of the God of Heaven is established, *then* our Lord will do this. It refers His Father’s kingdom, entrusted to the reign of Christ, and then turned back to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:24).
- D. The mindset that Jesus seems to have here is one of anticipation. While at the present time He was troubled in knowing that He faced imminent death, He was looking forward to the triumphant time in the future when He would partake once again. His anticipation should be *our* anticipation as well!

## IV. Hymn

30 And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

- A. They probably sang a hymn from the Psalms. God did not tell us through any of the gospel writers which hymn it was. We can speculate, but there is no need. We can be relatively sure that it was not a feel-good hymn all about “me.” It was one of praise and trust in God, which would be fitting for such an occasion as this.
- B. The now-traditional Passover order of service uses Psalms 113-118, but I have no idea how long after Passover (1440 B.C.) this traditional order was established. These Psalms were written, collected, and generally available to the people around 1000 B.C., about the time of David. The first one or two of these psalms is sung at the second cup of wine, and the latter of these Psalms is sung at the fourth cup.

## Conclusion

More bad things are soon to come, including the Lord’s prophecy that all the disciples will stumble and be scattered later that very night. But now the general form of the communion remembrance service is settled. Most Christian churches follow a variation of this service in their worship. Hopefully they participate regularly, remembering the Lord and reflecting on how it reminds us in the present of our connection to Christ in what He did in the past.

MAP