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# The Lord's Supper: Part 3

## The Meaning of the Lord's Supper

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Sermon Series: *What is the Church?*

Topic: The Church, the Lord's Supper



### 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (ESV)

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often

as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”<sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

## Introduction

As we continue our series, *What is the Church*, we turn one final time to consider the Lord's Supper. The Church is those believers in Jesus who obey the command of Jesus to remember him and commune with him in the Lord's Supper.

There are four phrases through which I would like to worship the Lord Jesus with you this morning; “for you” (v.24), “the new covenant” (v.25), “you proclaim the Lord's death” (v.26), and “until he comes” (v.26).

These phrases point us to additional, sweet meaning of the Lord's Supper that we were not able to get to two weeks ago. Last week, Iain did a wonderful job in considering the methodology of receiving the supper. Today we return to a further consideration of the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

### 1) This is My Body, Which is For You

The first phrase that captures my attention is the two words, “**for you**” (v.24). During the Passover meal with his disciples, Jesus took the unleavened<sup>1</sup> bread, broke it, passed it to them, and said,

“This is my body, which is **for you**.”  
1 Corinthians 11:24

As Jesus held the bread in his hands, divided it, tore it, and then gave it to his disciples, he was teaching them that the bread represented what was about to happen to his own body (which they did not at the time fully comprehend). In just a few short hours, Jesus would be offering up his own body as a willing sacrifice “**for you**.” He spoke these words to his disciples. All that was about to happen to his body, he wanted them to know, was happening *to him for them*. All that he would soon endure, he would be enduring **for them**! Jesus looked his disciples in the eyes and said,

I'm doing this **for you**. I am offering up my body **for you**. I am being betrayed **for you**.

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<sup>1</sup> The bread used in Passover meal was unleavened because the Israelites fled Egypt quickly on the night of their deliverance during the final plague, thus their bread had no time to rise (Ex. 12:34; 13:3-10).

On that night, Jesus was not only speaking these words to the Eleven disciples there with him.<sup>2</sup> He had in his mind not just those Eleven, but he also had in his mind all those who would believe in him through the testimony of the those Eleven. When he prayed to the Father that night he said,

John 17:20 (ESV) "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word..."

Jesus offered his body as a sacrifice not only for the Eleven, but also *for all who would believe in him through the testimony of those disciples who were the eye-witnesses of all that he did*. What Jesus did that night, he did for all his disciples who have ever believed in his name. To this day, Jesus speaks personally to his disciples through the observance of the supper. When we participate in the Lord's Supper, we need to hear these words as they were intended to be heard. They are spoken personally by Jesus to every disciple who hears and receives them. In the Supper, he speaks to you and me.

This is my body that is *for you*. I was betrayed *for you*. I was abandoned and arrested *for you*. This is my body that was beaten *for you*. I was lied about *for you*. I was mocked *for you*. I was publicly humiliated *for you*. I stripped naked *for you*. I was flogged *for you*. My flesh was torn open *for you*. I hurt *for you*. I shed my blood *for you*. I was struck in the face *for you*. Thorns were driven into my head *for you*. Nails were driven into my hands and feet *for you*. A spear was driven into my side, my lungs, and my heart *for you*. I died *for you*. I was buried in a cold, dark tomb *for you*. This is my body that received the sentence of death *for you*.

## The Substitutionary Atonement of Christ

This is the doctrine of the substitutionary atonement of Christ. Every time a disciple of Jesus receives the Lord's Supper, these words need to be personally received. "***This is my body, that is for you.***" These words need to ring in our ears. The Lord's Supper is intimately personal in the mind of Jesus. Church, Jesus offered up his body to death *for you*. Isaiah is the first who comes to mind to explicitly state the substitutionary nature of Jesus' death (even though we could argue that the entire sacrificial system pointed to this reality).

Isaiah 53:4-6 (ESV)

Surely he has borne *our* griefs  
and carried *our* sorrows;  
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.

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<sup>2</sup> Judas did participate in part of the Supper, but he left immediately after receiving the bread (John 13:26-30) and was not present for the extended teaching (John 14-17) which followed.

...the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of **us** all.

Isaiah 53:11-12 (ESV)

... the righteous one, my servant, will  
make **many** to be accounted righteous,  
and he shall bear **their** iniquities.  
He bore the sin of **many**,  
and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Church, the words of Jesus during the Lord's Supper reveals to you and reminds you that what Jesus did that night, he did **for you**. This is personal and it ought to make you feel loved. It certainly did for Paul.

Galatians 2:20 (ESV) "...the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself **for me**."

Galatians 1:3-5 (ESV) ...the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>4</sup> who gave himself **for our sins** to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, <sup>5</sup> to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The wonderfully kind and beautifully sweet Savior, Jesus, messiah, "***gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age.***" Church, he did this **for you**! Church, the Lord's Supper is **for you**.

## 2) The New Covenant In My Blood

The second phrase that cries out for consideration is found in verse 25. It is the phrase "**the new covenant.**"

1 Corinthians 11:25 (ESV) "This cup is the new covenant in my blood."

What was in the cup, as Jesus held it up before the disciples was wine, not the literal blood of Jesus, since this was taking place before his crucifixion. However, Jesus was saying to his disciples that the wine represented his blood, which would indeed be shed in just a matter of several hours. He was pointing to the great truth that ***more would be happening in his suffering and death than would be immediately apparent to human eyes.*** As Jesus was shedding his blood on the cross, God was present establishing a new covenant with his people, the Church.

A covenant is a "legally binding agreement between two parties that involves reciprocal terms, which governs the relationship." The root word means, "to cut."<sup>3</sup> Thus, in the Old Testament (OT) you "***cut a covenant.***" The see this most clearly seen in the covenant God made with

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<sup>3</sup> Johannes Behm, "Διατίθημι, Διαθήκη," ed. Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964–), 108.

Abraham (Gn. 15:9-21). He commanded Abraham to cut a cow in half and then, in the form of a smoking pot and a flaming torch, God passed between the two halves of the cow and as he did, he promised Abraham that he would give his descendants the land upon which Abraham presently stood.

The purpose of cutting of an animal in half and passing between the halves is that those making the covenant are effectively saying, "May I myself be cut in two if I fail to keep the terms of this agreement." From that point on, *whenever a covenant was made, it always involved the shedding of blood.*

When God first established a covenant with the nation of Israel at Mt. Sinai in the giving of the Ten Commandments which Israel agreed to keep, it involved the shedding of blood.

Exodus 24:7-8 (ESV) Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient." And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

But the people of Israel did not keep that covenant. They broke it, again and again and again. They were not able to keep the covenant even though they intended to. (Does this not sound like us? Not able to do what we wish we could do? Didn't Jesus say, "The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak?"). So after giving them enough time (about 500 years) to realize that they were completely powerless to keep the covenant, God revealed to them his plan to solve this problem. The plan involved making a *new covenant* with them. This new covenant would be far more powerful than the old and would provide the power that the old covenant lacked.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV) "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, <sup>32</sup> 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. <sup>33</sup> 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. <sup>34</sup> 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."

### **The New Covenant Forgives Sin**

Notice that this new covenant is founded upon God forgiving their iniquity and no longer remembering their sin. This is what Jesus effected on the cross. He paid the price of the sins of all who would trust in him. He took away God's wrathful remembrance of their sin and turned his displeasure towards them into delight. For those who surrender their lives to Jesus,

he becomes the means of transforming God's frowning face of condemnation against rebellious sinners, into the fawning face of a Father toward his sons and daughters.

### **The New Covenant Brings a New Heart**

Not only is sin removed in the new covenant, but it also involves an inward work of the heart whereby God transforms the desires of his people so that they no longer despise God's law, but rather delight in it. The *new covenant brings a new heart*.<sup>4</sup> This new covenant will effect change from within. No longer will people have to be told to obey God. They will desire, "from the heart,"<sup>5</sup> to obey God's law. "*I will write my law on their hearts.*" No longer will anyone have to be told "you need to know the LORD," because they will already know him. "They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest!" No longer will we have to be told, "Worship the Lord as your God," for "we shall say, "The LORD is my God and I am one of his people."

### **The New Covenant Gives the Holy Spirit**

What effects this change? What is different about this new covenant that enables this inward change of heart? It is the inward presence and power of the Holy Spirit, whom Jesus poured out after he ascended into heaven.<sup>6</sup> Jesus, in his sinless life, atoning death, and victorious resurrection, purchased the right to provide forever his Holy Spirit to all who would go to him in faith and surrender their lives to him. This was not part of the old covenant, but it is *the* defining characteristic of the new covenant.

2 Corinthians 3:5-6 (ESV) God, who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit. For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

The new covenant brings a new Spirit. Paul is here referring to spiritual life, not physical life. Spiritual life comes from the Spirit who *is* life. Coming alive to God flows from putting faith in God's only Son, who alone has the right to give his life-giving Holy Spirit to whomever he will.<sup>7</sup> And he gives his Holy Spirit to all go to him in faith, repenting of their sins, believing that he is God's messiah-Son, the crucified-sinless-Savior, and the resurrected-reigning-Sovereign. Go to him in faith and ask him to give you his Holy Spirit. Jesus says,

John 6:35 (ESV) "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."

"Coming to Jesus" means *believing* in Jesus. It means that you trust that Jesus actually and really is who the Bible says he is. And the Bible tells us that eternal life is found only in Jesus

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<sup>4</sup> Ezek. 11:19; 18:31; 36:26.

<sup>5</sup> Rom. 6:17; Eph. 6:6.

<sup>6</sup> Acts 2:32-33.

<sup>7</sup> John 5:21; 17:2-3.

and only Jesus will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.<sup>8</sup> Only Jesus can plunge you into spiritual life. No human being can do that. I can't do that. No one but Jesus alone can give you spiritual life and power and a new heart to live life in a new way. Only by the help of his indwelling Holy Spirit can you walk obediently with Christ and put to death the sinful deeds of the flesh.

### Summary

The fullness of the new covenant comes by faith through Jesus, who poured out his blood to buy you a new life and give you a new Spirit—his own Holy Spirit. This is what the Lord's Supper means. It means that when you receive the cup of the new covenant by faith, then you are participating in all the spiritual blessings that Jesus purchased for you. **Participating in the cup is participation in the all the blessings and benefits purchased by the blood that the cup represents.** *"This cup is the new covenant in my blood."*

### 3) You Proclaim the Lord's Death

The third phrase that helps us understand the meaning of the Lord's Supper is found in v.26.

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.

Part of the meaning of the Lord's Supper is **proclamation**. *"You proclaim the Lord's death."* The Lord's Supper is an ordinance which requires proclamation. What Christians do when they are doing this demands to be explained and heralded. The essence is that Jesus died a real death. He fully experienced death. But his death was a death that brought life.

Jesus was crucified during Passover. Jesus is our Passover lamb. Just as Paul explains to the Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 5:7 (ESV) For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

If you "unhitch from the Old Testament," you will be unable to fully understand the enormity, wonder, and glory of the New. ***If you don't know what Passover means, you will not fully know what Christ's death means.*** Passover was the night the Israelite's were saved from God's judgment of death while the Egyptians were plunged into it. That night the world received a small taste of what the "Day of the Lord" is like. Death comes to us all. However, after death, there's an optional eternal destiny. There is either eternal death, or "the second death,"<sup>9</sup> separated from God in hell or there is eternal life communing with God in heaven. What you

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<sup>8</sup> Mt. 3:11; Mk. 1:8; Lk. 3:16; Jn. 1:33.

<sup>9</sup> Rev. 2:11; 20:6, 14; 21:8.



do with the death of Jesus is *the* determining factor that decides the destiny of your eternal future. If you bow down under the protection of the blood of Jesus, then eternal condemnation will pass over you. However, if you refuse to bow down under the shed blood of Christ, our Passover lamb, then eternal condemnation will consume you.

### Summary

The Lord's Supper is a picture of God's provision of the true Passover Lamb by which we can escape eternal, spiritual death and enjoy eternal, spiritual life. The Lord's Supper proclaims the fact that eternal life with God only comes through the death of Jesus, our Passover lamb.

## 4) Until He Comes

The final phrase to consider is the last phrase in verse 26, "***until he comes.***"

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.***

Until he comes. What? You mean the Passover lamb is coming again? Didn't we just read that he died? Yes, we did. The previous phrase was "*proclaim his death.*" However, the very next thought mentions the fact that ***he will come again.*** Jesus, our Passover lamb, really did die. But, that's not the end of the story.

Paul now jumps to the truth that Jesus will *come again*. He will return. This presupposes the fact that *Jesus didn't stay dead*. The resurrection is assumed. If Jesus is coming again, then he must have risen up from the dead. But Paul doesn't spend time on the notion of the resurrection. He simply focuses his attention on the fact that part of the meaning of the Lord's supper is to highlight to the fact that Jesus will come again.

The Lord's Supper is an expression of worshipful waiting *until he comes* back. This is in fact the purpose of the whole season of Advent. It is intended to intensify our longing for his return. For about 2,000 years the world awaited the arrival of messiah. Now, about 2,000 years after, we await his return. At Christmas time we look back and celebrate his birth, but each week during Advent we look forward to his return. This is also part of the meaning of the Lord's Supper—we worshipfully wait *until he comes* again. This notion came from Jesus himself.

Matthew 26:26-29 (ESV) <sup>26</sup> Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." <sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."



Jesus is waiting to drink the fruit of the vine until that day when he can drink it “*new with you*” in his Father’s kingdom. He will not drink again until every person in the “with you” category is there in the kingdom with him. Jesus is waiting to drink until all his people are safely with him in his kingdom. Therefore, the Lord’s Supper is a visible reminder that he is coming to take us to himself. Just after Judas left the room that night, Jesus told his disciples,

John 14:2-3 (ESV) “In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? <sup>3</sup> And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.”

Jesus is coming again. Part of the meaning of the Lord’s Supper is to remind us that he will come again. He will return to receive the Church, which is his bride. The language here is the unmistakable language of love. There are amazing similarities between the events surrounding Jesus’ death, resurrection, and ascension that have parallel with Jewish ceremonies of betrothal and wedding. Understand these will give us a much deeper worship experience as we approach the Lord’s Supper.

## Jewish Marriage and Marriage to Christ

There are essentially five steps involved in the process of Jewish marriage, from the beginning of the betrothal ceremony to the seven day celebration feast.

### 1) Arrangement (*Shuddukhin*)

This is the time of matchmaking. Fathers would typically choose a bride for the son and invite a conversation, invite a conversation with bride-to-be’s father, and the approval of the bride-to-be (i.e. Rebekah Gn. 24:57-59). The terms of the arrangement were agreed upon, including the bride price to be paid by the groom, and the dowry to be offered by the bride. When the terms had been agreed upon, a covenant, called a *ketubah*, was made.

### 2) Betrothal Ceremony (*Kiddushin* = sanctification)

The ceremony is somewhat like an engagement party, only it is legally binding. Prior to the beginning of the ceremony, the bride and groom will separately enter a *mikvah* bath of immersion symbolizing ritual cleansing and a new beginning.

A ring would be given to the bride and the *ketubah* is read aloud. The ring is a seal of the love of the groom and his intention to materially provide for all the needs of the bride. The groom would state, “With this ring, you are consecrated to me according to the law of Moses and Israel.”<sup>10</sup> This means that two were pledging themselves to be faithful to each other from that day forward. They were “sanctified” to each other alone. They were agreeing to cut themselves off from all romantic affections for any other person.

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<sup>10</sup> Source: [https://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/477335/jewish/The-Betrothal.htm](https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/477335/jewish/The-Betrothal.htm) accessed 7 December 2019.

Next a blessing was pronounced over a glass of wine and thanksgiving offered to God for sanctifying the two of them for each other, then the two would each drink from a single glass of wine, signifying that they two would soon be one, under God's blessing.

At the conclusion of this ceremony the two were considered husband and wife, although they will not yet consummate the relationship. They were legally bound together and were referred to as husband and wife.<sup>11</sup> However, they will each return to their father's home for a period of preparation.

### 3) The Time of Preparation

During the period of preparation the husband would go and prepare a house and land for his wife. The wife would begin to make her wedding dress and demonstrate her purity by proving that she has not been unfaithful with another man. This time period would last about a year.

When the husband had finished the house and prepared everything for his wife, he would return to receive his bride. She knew it would be about a year, but she would not know the exact time of his return. Thus, she must always be ready. The husband would not delay since he looks forward to being with his wife. He would work night and day in order to see that all was properly prepared. As soon as the last details were completed, he would rush to get his wife, even if that meant arriving late at night, just as is pictured in the parable of the ten virgins (Mt. 25:1-13).

Matthew 25:6 (ESV)

"But at midnight there was a cry, 'Here is the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.'"

As the wedding party arrived, the groomsmen would call out, "He is coming, the groom is coming, come and meet him." [But some foolish virgins missed him because they were at Target buying batteries for their flashlights.]

### 4) The Wedding Ceremony (Nisu'in)

When the groom came for his bride, the wedding ceremony would immediately begin. That night they would consummate the marriage.

### 5) The Feast of Celebration

The next day began a week-long celebration and of feasting as everyone would rejoice in the new family that has been established under God's grace, goodness, and blessing.

**How does this relate to the Lord's supper?** Let's review the steps and see how it relates to our relationship with God and the particular symbolism of the Lord's Supper.

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<sup>11</sup> See Matthew 1:18-20, where Joseph and Mary were betrothed, yet "before they came together" she became pregnant, and "her husband Joseph" (v.19), "resolved to divorce her quietly" (v.19).

## The Arrangement

The first step, the Arrangement, is seen in the doctrine of election. It's like the time "before the foundation of the world,"<sup>12</sup> when God chose out of the world, certain persons<sup>13</sup> to be his Church, the bride<sup>14</sup> for his only Son. He then called those whom he has chosen<sup>15</sup> and invited them into the fellowship with his Son.<sup>16</sup>

The bride price was the death of the Son. He paid the price with his own blood. Securing the church as his bride cost him everything. He gave his life to purchase his bride (Rev. 5:9).

## The Betrothal

The betrothal period of the marriage is like the period of sanctification of new Christian. Just as the betrothal begins with the cleansing *mikvah* bath, new life in Christ begins with baptism.<sup>17</sup> [Baptism does not *effect* regeneration, but rather is *evidence* of regeneration.]

Just as the *ketubah* is the marriage covenant to bind the life of the husband and wife together, so the cross is the covenant, cut in the body of Jesus, to bind together Christ and his Church for all of eternity.

Just as the giving of the ring is a seal of the groom's love and a downpayment on the promise to provide a living for his bride, so the giving of the Holy Spirit is the seal of Christ's love for his church and a downpayment on his promise of eternal life.

Just as wine is a symbol of God's blessing upon marriage, so the wine of the Lord's Supper is a symbol of God blessing upon the new life the Church has in Christ.

Just as the groom goes away to prepare a home for his wife, so Christ has gone away to prepare an eternal home for his Church. Just as every groom promises to return to receive his bride, so Christ has promised to return to receive his Church (Jn. 14:2-3).

Participating in the Lord's Supper is a regular reminder that Christ is coming again. He will not have paid such a high price—his own life—and fail to return for his bride whom he loves. The Lord's Supper guarantees the return of Christ.

He is coming! The Groom is coming! He will return! Are you ready for him!

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<sup>12</sup> Eph. 1:4.

<sup>13</sup> Jn. 17:6, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Eph. 5:25-27; Rev. 19:7; 21:2, 9; 22:17.

<sup>15</sup> Rom. 8:30.

<sup>16</sup> 1 Cor. 1:9.

<sup>17</sup> This is the NT pattern that we consistently see. Immediately after a person believes in Jesus, he or she is baptized (Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 36; 9:18; 10:47; 16:15, 30-33; 18:8; 22:16).