

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Mark 14:22-25

INTRODUCTION

Error crept into the thinking of the early Church. These errors germinated and flourished throughout the Middle Ages leading up to the Reformation. There were three areas where these errors were focused:

1. Clergy-layman distinction – thinking of clergy as higher level beings
2. Baptism – confusion with infant baptism and believer baptism
3. Communion – idea of substance of bread and wine changing to body and blood of Christ.

In our passage today, we study the third area – Communion.

1 Corinthians 11 – The Lord's Supper

- Need solid Biblical understanding of communion
- It is not a mechanical action
- It must come from inside our heart

A Looking Back ... and ... A Looking Forward!

- Communion is a memorial – remembering what Jesus has done
- Communion is a celebration
 - There is a sobriety to it remembering the sacrifice
- Christ ends the Passover and institutes a new memorial to Himself
- In this one meal, Jesus both ends the old and begins the new.

Recall:

It is Thursday evening of Passion Week

- Jesus is observing the Passover
- He will lay down His life this very day (Jewish Reckoning)

Passover → Old Covenant → New Covenant

Lev 23:2, 4, 37, 41 – there are 7 Feasts/Festivals of Celebration

- How much more so under the freedom of Christ should we approach Communion as a celebration
- Celebrating with a heart of joy and thanksgiving of the Lord

READ Mark 14:22-25

Consider this quote by Charles Spurgeon:

“Well, we are coming to a festival, not a funeral. The choice festival of the Jewish faith was the Passover. The Lord's supper takes its place with higher joys; we come to this feast to *testify our joy in Christ* ... It is a festival for joy and delight, and you cannot praise Christ better, and give thanks to him better than by rejoicing in him. Praise him by your grateful joy. We want you not to come here quivering and shaking, as if you were slaves that came to eat a morsel of your master's bread, under fear of the lash. No, no; come, ye children; come, ye beloved ones of the Lord! Come, ye table companions of Christ, and sit at the festival he has prepared, and let your joy be full of thanksgiving!”

Proposition:

There are 3 celebrations of the Lord's Supper to remember:

- 1) Fellowship
- 2) Forgiveness
- 3) Future

So That:

- We will see Communion differently.

1st, Communion is a **Celebration** of ...

I. Fellowship Mark 14:22-23

Point:

- 1) Fellowship with Christ
 - As adopted sons of Abba Father
- 2) Fellowship with each other
 - In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, a key part of the letter addresses Communion. He emphasizes fellowship together:

Gal 3:28 →

- Jews and Gentiles together in one body of Christ
- Man and Woman together in one body of Christ
- Jew and Greek together in one body of Christ
- Slave and Free Man together in one body of Christ

14:22 – “And while they were eating, He took *some* bread, and after a blessing He broke *it*; and gave *it* to them, and said, "Take *it*; this is My body."

“while they were eating”

- The Passover meal is in progress
- Judas has left
- Jesus remains with his eleven faithful disciples
- Jesus institutes the new memorial in the midst of the old.

This is the last Passover sanctioned by God. It is a covenant expired because it is fulfilled in Christ.

Passover - looks forward to the work of Christ at the Cross

For us, on a weekly basis, Communion looks back to the All Sufficient Sacrifice of Christ.

“**bread**” – The unleavened bread is baked in large, flat, crisp loaves, which Jesus breaks into pieces.

- more like a tortilla than the Wonderbread slices of today

“**blessing**” – euvloge, w – *to praise, celebrate with praises*

Thanksgiving – v. 23 – “gave thanks” – eucaristew -

- give thanks for His work on the Cross
- our newness of life
- our fellowship with Christ

“**them**” – the Eleven – Judas has left – Jesus is with the 11 faithful disciples

Read Luke 22:19 - this is a parallel account

– “do this in remembrance of Me.”

→ again, there is a memorial at the heart – to do what we do in remembrance of Christ

Mark 14:22 – “this is My body”

- this is part of what fed the error regarding communion in the early church
 - 1) spiritual presence – “means of grace”
 - 2) symbolic

Roman Catholic View – Transubstantiation

- at consecration by the priest, the bread and wine are miraculously transformed into the literal body and blood of Jesus
- eating the body and drinking the blood brings saving grace to the soul

Lutheran View – Consubstantiation

- the bread and wine don't cease to be bread and wine, but the real, literal presence of the physical body and blood of Christ is present with, in, under, and through

Reformed View 1 – Spiritual Presence

- “means of grace”

Reformed View 2 – Symbolic/Memorial

- bread and wine are symbols of the body of Christ as a memorial

A little history might help us focus here:

I In early church, there was a progression of error as the men move away from Scripture as the sole authority. As soon as the apostles passed from the scene, the early church began to lose key elements of biblical doctrine and practice

- 110 – **Ignatius** (Bishop of Antioch – martyred by emperor Trajan)
– “the medicine of immortality”
- 178 – **Irenaeus** – “may obtain remission of sins and life eternal”
- 197 – **Tertullian** – called the Lord’s Supper “that Holy Thing”
- by 417, the “eucharist” was said to provide life
- 850 – **Radbertus** defined the doctrine of **Transubstantiation**
- 1215 – **Innocent III** declared as dogma at 4th Lateran Council
→ clear teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on the Lord’s Supper - stands to this day

“The sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifice of the Eucharist are one single sacrifice ... the same Christ who offered Himself once in a bloody manner on the altar of the cross is contained and offered in an unbloody manner” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1367)

“the body and blood ... soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ ... is truly, really, and substantially contained” in the Eucharist (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1374-78)

This ties in with the lack of gospel understanding within the Roman Catholic Church. What is really going on in the Roman Catholic Church?

- Blasphemous Resacrifice of Christ – 3rd Sacrament

During the reign of bloody Queen Mary, from 1555 to 1558, 288 Protestant Reformers were burned at the stake, including 55 women and 4 children. Why were they burned by the Roman Catholic Queen? There was one central issue: the meaning of the Lord's Supper.

J.C. Ryle explains:

“The doctrine in question was the real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the consecrated elements of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. Did they, or did they not believe that the body and blood of Christ were really, that is corporally, literally, locally, and materially, present under the forms of bread and wine after the words of consecration were pronounced? Did they or did they not believe that the real body of Christ, which was born of the Virgin Mary, was present on the so-called altar so soon as the mystical words had passed the lips of the priest? Did they or did they not? That was the simple question. If they did not believe and admit it, they were burned.”

I mention this martyrdom of those who denied that the physical body of Christ is really there in the form of bread and wine - to show that there was once a time when the Lord's Supper carried meanings that were very important - worth dying for, and some thought, worth killing for.

In the Bible, we understand that Jesus is talking of imagery – that He is the true spiritual food for a child of God. At times, He describes Himself as a vine, a door, a cornerstone, a lamb, a rock.....but He is not physically a vine, a door, a cornerstone, a lamb or a rock.....

Celebration of the Lord's Supper is foundationally remembering:

- Bread and Cup
- Body and Blood
- Execution and Death
- That we sin
- Of God's mercy and grace
- The substitution and forgiveness of God

14:23 – “And when He had taken a cup, *and* given thanks, He gave *it* to them; and they all drank from it.”

Note: 4 cups of wine (not grape juice) were taken at the Passover meal

→ bittersweet – the sweetness of victory over sin and the bitterness of our sin

This was probably the third **cup**, called the cup of blessing. Paul refers to it by that name:

“Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ?” (1 Corinthians 10:16)

Fellowship! It is from the King James translation of that verse (“is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?”) that Communion, another name for the Lord's Supper, is derived. A few verses later Paul refers to this cup as “the cup of the Lord” (v. 21).

“**they all drank from it**” – Fellowship

- 1) with Christ
- 2) with each other

- Communion is open to all believers
- This is a beautiful picture of the body of Christ
- Fellowship with Christ– at peace – joint heirs – sons of the Most High – dine together! **Rev 3:20**

Consider this illustration:

One bee always seems ready to feed another bee, sometimes even one of a different colony. Mutual feeding among bees, is the order of their existence. The workers feed the helpless queen who cannot feed herself. They feed the drones during their period of usefulness in the hive. They feed their young.

Bees cluster together for warmth in cold weather and fan their wings to cool the hive in hot weather, working together for comfort.

When swarming time comes, bee scouts leave to find a suitable location where the new colony can establish itself. These scouts report back to the group by doing a dance. Then they all fly away in a swarm.

A lone bee is a dead bee.

➔ In the same way, there should be no lone Christians. We are all part of the universal body of Christ. We have different roles and all are important. We must be part of a local church. This is part of our celebration of fellowship.

Application – Celebrate fellowship

2nd, Communion is a **Celebration** of ...

II. Forgiveness **Mark 14:24**

Point – Forgiveness of Sins – the New Covenant

14:24 – “**And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many."**”

Now, no longer looking back to a lamb in Egypt

Now, looking to the Lamb of God

The blood of the sacrificial animal sealed the Old Covenant

The blood of Jesus seals the New Covenant

- **1 Corinthians 11** – Paul makes it clear that it is a New Covenant

Recall:

In **Mark 13** – right understanding of end times is six Biblical Covenants

- 5 unconditional, 1 conditional (Mosaic)
- Simeon was praising God in beginning of Luke for the Forgiveness of Sin in the New Covenant
- All religions of the world – all the human efforts to earn salvation don't understand it
- Salvation can't be earned – that is why all glory goes to Jesus

Lev 17:11 – “**For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement.**”

Matt 26:28 – “**poured out for many for forgiveness of sins**”

- Substitutionary Atonement – **2 Corinthians 5:21**
- the reason for the Passion is recorded here

“**covenant**” –the covenanting parties eating the feast together after the sacrifice enter into the idea

- **Genesis 31:44-46**, Jacob & Laban.

Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25 – “new covenant”

Jeremiah 31:31-34 – 3 “I will” statements

- **Old Covenant** “If you ...” **New Covenant**

Exodus 19; 20 – Mosaic Covenant

“**poured out for many**” – on behalf of – vicarious substitutionary nature of His death

The **New Covenant** replaces the **Old Covenant** – Heb 8:7 → Heb 8:8, 13
→ Heb 9:1-10 – OC, 11f

Consider this illustration:

When the **Moravian missionaries** first went to the Eskimos, they could not find a word in their language for forgiveness, so they had to compound one. *Issumagijoujungnainermik*. It means: “Not-being-able-to-think-about-it-anymore.”

Application: The Gospel! Forgiveness! All-Sufficient Sacrifice

“It is finished!” Sola Fide

Celebration of the New Covenant – “I will!”

Fellowship, Forgiveness, ...

3rd, Communion is a **Celebration** of ...

III. The Future **Mark 14:25**

We have a taste of heaven on earth each moment of each day

- Because of our **fellowship** with Christ
- because our sins have been **forgiven**
- but something much better is coming!!!
- The Kingdom! Heaven!

14:25 – “**Truly I say to you, I shall never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.**”

“**Truly ...**” – Authoritative announcement

“**I shall never again drink**” – *ouke, ti ou mh* – emphatic triple negative → I absolutely will never again drink

“**the fruit of the vine**” – at this time of year (April) in Judea, it would be fermented grape juice, wine

Point – A **Looking Back** ... and ... A **Looking Forward!**

The Lord’s Supper not only is a **reminder** of our Lord’s sacrifice for our sins but also a **reminder** of His promise to return

- We are celebrating our Future with anticipation

1 Corinthians 11:26 “**For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes,”**

- the words, "until he comes" don't come out of nowhere

“never again ... until”

- Similar statement regarding Passover → **Luke 22:15-16**

Matt 26:29 – “with you”

- I am not going to eat it till that day comes.
- You eat it (Communion!) to remember me and keep your hope strong and empower yourselves for mission.
- But I am going to wait until I can eat it new with you and with *all* the ransomed that you will gather from every Land, Tongue, Tribe, and Nation.

Communion → **Already, Not Yet!**

CONCLUSION

Remember Me being betrayed - and knowing all along.

Remember Me giving thanks to God who ordains it all.

Remember Me breaking the bread just as I willingly gave my own body.

Remember Me shedding My blood for you so that you might live because I died.

Remember Me suffering to obtain for you the blessings of the New Covenant.

Remember Me promising that I would drink the fruit of the vine new in the kingdom.

Let the memories of Me, in all the fullness of my love and power, flood your soul at the Communion table.