

THE NEW COVENANT

Luke 22:1-38

Key Verse: 22:20

“In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.’”

In this passage Jesus has the Last Supper with his disciples before his betrayal and arrest. We call it “the Lord’s Supper.” It had deep historical significance, juxtaposed on the Passover. Through it, Jesus explained the meaning of his death on the cross. Just as God initiated the old covenant through the Passover, so Jesus initiated the new covenant through the Lord’s Supper. As Jesus shared bread and wine with his disciples, he said, **“Do this in remembrance of me.”** Since then, believers throughout the generations have celebrated the Lord’s Supper to remember what Jesus has done for us on the cross. In doing so, believers have kept their relationship with Jesus and their identity as his people. At the same time, they shared love for one another in Christ. This is a source of spiritual revival. For example, the Moravians, in the midst of strife and persecution—after thorough and prayerful preparation—celebrated the Lord’s Supper. Then they experienced the great work of the Holy Spirit.¹ They began to love one another deeply from their hearts, overcoming doctrinal differences. They began sustained and fervent prayer for the lost. Since that day in 1727, by faith, they have sent over 2,000 lay missionaries to the corners of the world. On the other hand, those who do not remember Jesus and his grace tend to become weak, and even fall away; they receive the Lord’s discipline (1Co 11:30-32). Remembering Jesus’ grace is important. Today we will celebrate the Lord’s Supper all together. Let’s remember Jesus’ grace as we do so.

First, “This is my body, given for you” (1-20). The Festival of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching. This was a historical event with a deep spiritual meaning. The people of Israel had been miserable slaves in Egypt under the oppression of Pharaoh. They groaned in their slavery and cried out. They could never get free by their own power. But God heard their groans and remembered his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God raised Moses as their deliverer and worked mighty acts of judgment against the Egyptians. Pharaoh was proud, stubborn and resistant. He never let Israel

¹ <http://yearningheartsjourney.blogspot.com/2011/06/zinzendorf-moravian-revival-and.html>;
<http://missionsbase.eaglemissions.org/history-moravian-falls/>

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go free, in spite of Egypt's great loss due to God's judgments. Then God brought a decisive blow, on a night to be remembered as the Passover. That night the angel of death descended upon Egypt and entered people's houses. He put to death the firstborn in every house, including that of Pharaoh. There was loud wailing throughout Egypt. The fear of death gripped people's hearts; cries of inconsolable grief filled the air. It was a very dreadful night. Yet in that moment, God provided a way for the Israelites to be saved. It was by putting the blood of lambs on the doorframes of their houses. When they did so, simply obeying God's word, the angel of death "passed over" their houses. Through the Passover, God delivered the Israelites from bondage in Egypt. This deliverance was totally by God's power. He wanted the Israelites to remember this grace by commemorating the Passover annually. They did so faithfully until the time of Jesus. For Jesus, this was the last Passover; for it would be fulfilled through his upcoming death. The Passover foreshadowed deliverance from the power of sin and Satan by the blood of Jesus, our Passover Lamb (1Co 5:7b). So we don't need to keep the Passover. We just need to accept Jesus as our Passover Lamb.

As the Passover approached, the chief priests should have been helping people prepare to observe it. Instead they were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus (2). They were very corrupted. They did not fear God, but they feared the crowd. At that very moment, Satan was working powerfully. Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot. Though Judas was one of the Twelve (3), he was not committed to Jesus. This made him vulnerable. Then he became the prey of Satan and went crazy, not knowing what he was doing. He went to Jesus' enemies and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus (4). They were delighted and agreed to give him money (5). He consented to betray Jesus (6). How could this happen? It is hard to understand. But we can say simply that it was Satan's work. We should take this event as a warning to us. Like Judas, we are all vulnerable to Satan's crafty attacks. This is why we need to pray, depending on God, that we may not fall into temptation.

On the first day of the Festival of Unleavened Bread the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed (7). According to Jewish time, the day began at sunset, not sunrise. Preparations for Passover began before sunset on Thursday. After sunset Thursday they ate the Passover meal. Jesus died on Friday before sunset, the same day on which the Passover Lamb was eaten. Again, Jesus became our Passover Lamb. The Passover meal had to be eaten within the

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walls of Jerusalem (Dt 16:5-6). Jesus was staying at the Mount of Olives, outside the city (Lk 21:37). In order to prepare, he sent Peter and John into the city (8). They would prepare by sacrificing a lamb at the temple, roasting it, and preparing various side dishes. When they asked “where,” Jesus did not give a specific address, but told them to follow a man carrying a jar of water to a certain house (9-12). Jesus wanted to keep the location a secret from Judas so they would not be disturbed at this important moment. Peter and John followed Jesus’ instructions and found things just as he had told them. So they prepared the Passover (13).

Verse 14, “**When the hour came...**,” signifies the importance of this historical moment. Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. Jesus said, “**I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer**” (15). Jesus expressed his deep heart’s desire which came from his great love for his disciples. Until now, Jesus had foretold the fact of his suffering and death repeatedly. Whenever he did, the disciples were afraid, closed their hearts and could not ask him about it. Jesus really wanted them to understand the meaning of his suffering and death by demonstrating it in light of the Passover. Jesus wanted them to know that his suffering and death was not failure or accident, but the fulfillment of God’s long-wrought salvation plan. It looked forward to the wedding supper of the Lamb in God’s kingdom (16; Re 19:9). Jesus foresaw the eternal glory after his death and resurrection. This is what he really wanted to share with his disciples and us.

Verses 17-20 take place during the Passover meal, when it was customary to drink four symbolic cups. Verse 17 seems to refer to the first cup—the cup of freedom from oppression by God’s deliverance. Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and said, “**Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again from the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes**” (17-18). Jesus announced that the kingdom of God was at hand. Jesus shared the true freedom that comes from God. When we accept Jesus who suffered and died for us we are free from the power of sin, death and Satan. Yet we do not fully experience God’s kingdom until Jesus’ second coming. The kingdom of God is already here, but not yet fully realized. The best is yet to come.

Taking the bread, called “Matzah” was the most important part of the meal. Jesus associated the breaking of the Matzah with the giving of his body.

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So he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, **“This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me”** (19). Jesus gave his body for us. When we eat the bread, we are accepting his body broken for us. This means we have union with Jesus in his death. Jesus said in John 6:51: **“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”** When we receive the bread that Jesus gives we receive eternal life and are fully satisfied. Chris Coughlin was raised by good and caring parents. But his father, a police officer, was killed in an auto accident when Chris was just 15. His home was filled with sorrow. Chris poured himself into playing baseball and became outstanding. He also began to drink alcohol. After having great success at the University of Mississippi, he was drafted into professional baseball in the first round in 2003. But after drinking heavily one night, Chris injured another player and was demoted. He was filled with shame and disappointment. But at rock bottom, he met a fellow player who shared Christian faith with him. Through a Bible study, Chris accepted Romans 10:9-10, **“That if you confess with your mouth ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”** Jesus came into his heart. His soul found rest. He is no longer tired and empty from chasing temporary thrills. He is fully satisfied with Jesus. Whoever feeds on Jesus’ body has eternal life and full satisfaction.

After this, Jesus said, **“Do this in remembrance of me.”** Jesus wants us to constantly remember what he has done for us on the cross. Though we have received Jesus’ grace, it is easy for us to forget this grace when we face the daily pressures and troubles of life. We develop spiritual amnesia. We remember bitter and unfavorable things but forget the grace of God. There is a saying, “We engrave bitterness in stone and grace in water.” But God wants us to do the opposite. God wants us to always hold on to his grace and to let bitterness go. This makes us healthy physically, mentally and spiritually. Remembering Jesus’ grace through the Lord’s Supper is not just a personal matter. It was to be done in community. As we receive the grace of forgiveness from Jesus, we also become forgiving, loving and compassionate toward fellow believers. As we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, we should forgive anyone and everyone from our hearts. The Lord’s Supper can be a kind of Love Feast. Through it, the gospel is proclaimed to the world.

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In the same way, after the supper, Jesus took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you’” (20). The cup mentioned here most likely refers to the third cup, the cup of redemption. After delivering the people from Egypt, God met with them at Mt. Sinai. There he revealed his glorious purpose to use them as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. For this purpose, he gave them the law. He made a covenant with them. They failed to keep it due to their sinful nature and their relationship with God was broken. Did God abandon them? Did God give up on his salvation plan? No! God made a better covenant with better promises. This is the new covenant. God foretold it through the prophet Jeremiah: **“I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel...I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people...For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more”** (Jer 31:31-34). The new covenant is better than the old. It is a covenant of grace, while the old covenant was one of works.

In the old covenant, God engraved his law on stone tablets with the condition that one must obey it in order to live. It is characterized by God’s words, **“You shall...you shall not.”** To violate even one law one time made one a covenant breaker. There is no mercy, only justice. The problem is that no one can keep it. In effect, it exposes the sinfulness of fallen people. It exposes that we deserve to be punished for our sins according to God’s justice and righteousness. But God had mercy on us. God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son to save us. Jesus suffered and died for our sins. God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Ro 5:8). When we simply believe in Jesus, we enter into his covenant of grace. It is characterized by God’s words, **“I will... will.”** It is based solely on God’s faithfulness. It is God’s one-sided promise of blessing. God justifies us and makes us his beloved children. He gives us the Holy Spirit, who puts his laws in our minds and writes them on our hearts. He gives us desire and power to obey God and bear good fruit as a royal priesthood and a holy nation.

God forgives our wickedness and remembers our sins no more. In the old covenant, whenever one committed sin, whether intentionally or unintentionally, they had to offer an animal sacrifice. Then their guilt was assuaged temporarily, but soon came back again; they suffered throughout their lifetime. However, in the new covenant, God forgives all our sins

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through Jesus and wipes them away completely. He will not remember them again. Sometimes we suffer from Satan's accusation due to our sins. So we ask forgiveness again and again for the same sins. But God forgave all our sins and remembers them no more. Though we remember, God remembers them no more. This is God's promise in the new covenant. Let's believe it.

How did we come to have this new covenant? It is through Jesus' blood poured out for us. The words "poured out" mean that Jesus died a violent death and fully devoted himself to God. In contrast to animals' blood, this was the blood of the holy Son of God. Jesus' blood has power to cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we can serve the living God (Heb 9:14). As we come into an intimate relationship with God we share his heart and his mind. We participate in his salvation purpose for people of all nations. This covenant is not just for justification; it enables us to serve the living God in holiness and righteousness, without fear (Lk 1:74-75).

As God's children we have deep desire to serve God. But we are hindered. It is not primarily from the outside, but from within: sinful desires that never seem to go away and make us stumble again and again. Or it may be Satan's temptations. Or it may be a sense of failure, despair, and frustration. We may think that life is too hard for us to endure and on top of that, serving God is just another heavy burden. So we are tempted to give up serving God, thinking that God has lost hope for us and has stopped loving us. It is important to realize that God entered into a covenant relationship with us through the blood of his Son Jesus. God is not like man. God keeps his promises without fail and his love never ends. God sent the Holy Spirit as a deposit to guarantee our relationship with him. Unless we renounce Jesus, God will never let us go. God binds himself to the covenant relationship and continues to fulfill his good purpose. God works in us to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose (Php 2:13). All we need to do is to trust God, renew our covenant relationship and live in this relationship moment by moment, by grace and by faith. So Paul says, **"...as you have always obeyed... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling..."** (Php 2:12b). **"Let us approach God's throne of grace with confidence so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need"** (Heb 4:16).

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Second, “I am among you as one who serves” (21-38). Though Jesus offered the gracious new covenant, there was one person at the meal who did not accept it, but rather betrayed Jesus (21). It was very painful for Jesus to know that Judas would betray him. Yet Jesus did not mention his name. It is because he accepted God’s sovereignty and wanted to give Judas a chance to repent. Judas would not escape responsibility for his action. So Jesus said, **“Woe to that man who betrays him!”** (22) This was totally shocking for Jesus’ disciples. They had no idea who the betrayer was and began to question among themselves. As they tried to figure out who might betray him, and who would be loyal, it naturally led to think about who was considered to be the greatest. They began to reveal their hidden thoughts about each other’s weaknesses, and soon a fierce quarrel developed (24). Jesus was already heavy-hearted due to his upcoming sufferings and Judas’ betrayal. Now he had to deal with a dispute among his disciples. It was hard to bear. Yet in that moment, Jesus gave valuable and precious teachings to his disciples with great patience and careful instruction.

Jesus deeply understood his disciples. Man’s desire to be great is not bad. God made man to be truly great. The issue is how to become great. The disciples’ concept of greatness should be different than that of worldly rulers. Worldly rulers exercise authority over people and call themselves “Benefactors.” They magnify their power and glory saying, “You should all be very respectful and thankful for my great leadership because I give you a lot of benefits.” But in reality they exploit the weak, burden others and crush them. Jesus told his disciples, **“...you are not to be like that”** (26a). Then Jesus introduced what true greatness is. It does not come from position or title; it is a matter of character and mindset. Jesus’ words, “The greatest among you should be like the youngest” means that a humble person is truly great. **“The one who rules like the one who serves,”** means that real leadership comes from seeking to serve others for their benefit (26b). Jesus taught not only with words, but by setting the example. He said, **“For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves”** (27). Jesus is the Lord and Savior, and their Teacher. Jesus is worthy to be served. But he never demanded them to serve him. Rather, he humbled himself and served them. One who serves others is looked down on and despised. Their service is usually taken for granted. They are not thanked or appreciated. It is not easy for anyone to bear this kind of treatment. But Jesus bore all their

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weaknesses, arrogance, and mistakes and babysat them like a loving mother. Because of Jesus' serving, they were all healed, nurtured, and transformed until they became great men of God. Though they still had many weaknesses, Jesus was thankful for their faithfulness. He said, **"You are those who have stood by me in my trials"** (28). They had participated in Jesus' sufferings. So they would also share in his glory. Jesus said, **"And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel"** (29-30). Anyone who suffers together with Jesus will also share in his glory. So Paul said, **"Here is a trustworthy saying: If we died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him"** (2Ti 2:11-12a).

Though the disciples had a new covenant with Jesus and the promise of glory, at present they were vulnerable to Satan's attack. Jesus knew their weaknesses and prayed for them, especially Simon. **"Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon, that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers"** (31-32). "Sift as wheat" means that Satan wanted to test the disciples, hoping to bring them to spiritual ruin. Satan is so strong and clever that they could not overcome him by themselves. Jesus knew that they needed help from above. So he prayed for them. His prayer was their spiritual lifeline. Because of Jesus' prayer Peter was not destroyed, but turned back and strengthened his brothers. When we are in the time of trials, let's remember that Jesus is at the right hand of the Father and always intercedes for us (Heb 7:25). We also learn that intercessory prayer for those in trials is necessary and very effective.

When Peter heard Jesus' prayer topic for him, he was upset. So he responded, **"Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death"** (33). He did not know himself well. But Jesus knew him very well. So Jesus predicted that before the rooster crowed, Peter would deny him three times (34). Though Jesus had hope for Peter as his top disciple, he knew that Peter would now deny him. Jesus was not upset. Rather, he wanted to help Peter be aware of spiritual reality, so he could grow and follow Jesus' footsteps. Then he asked them, **"When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?" "Nothing," they answered** (35). Jesus reminded them of their fieldwork training. The general principle they learned was that God

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provides when they depended on him. This was unchanging. But the specific rules to not take a purse, bag or sandals would no longer apply. When Jesus was with his disciples, he protected them and provided for them. But now Jesus would be taken from them. Their situation would no longer be favorable. So if they had a purse, bag, money or a sword they should use them. According to Scripture, Jesus would be numbered with the transgressors (37). Jesus humbly submitted to this in order to fulfill the will of God. When the disciples heard this, they said, **“Lord, here are two swords.” They were ready to fight for Jesus. But Jesus said, “That’s enough!”** (38) Jesus did not want them to get more swords. Jesus’ point was not to engage in military combat, but to be spiritually prepared to follow him even though he was regarded as a transgressor. Jesus wanted his disciples to know that he was the suffering Messiah, who would die, according to the Scriptures.

Today we learned of the new covenant in Jesus’ blood. Let’s remember what Jesus has done for us and renew this covenant relationship with him. Let’s remember his purpose in this covenant—that we serve him in holiness and righteousness.