

“Do This in Remembrance of Me”
I Corinthians 11:23-26
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Hear the Word of the Lord. I Corinthians 11:23-26 says [23] *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, [24] 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.” [25] 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.” [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*

This is the Word of the Lord.

What does it mean to take the Lord's Supper in remembrance of Jesus? Why do we need this little ritual to remember our Lord? Why would you command anybody to remember anything? It is because there are people that have a tendency to forget and that's what we are. It's easy to forget what's important. The hard thing about life is that every day you're going to get up tomorrow and it's still going to be life. You're going to get up the next day and you're going to have to do it again and again and again and the mundaneness of life sometimes can start to just wear down on you and make you forget that you are part of a grand, redemptive drama that has been being told since before there was a world to redeem. Jesus wants us to remember and the Lord's Supper is a chance to remember the great drama of redemption, of which you are all called to be a part.

When Jesus wanted to explain the role of His coming death in that grand story on the last night before He died, He didn't have His disciples sit down for an extended theological seminar. He didn't talk to them in a parable. He didn't give them a sermon. He sat them down and gave them a meal and it wasn't just any old meal. This meal that they had sat down to have together was Jesus is taking up an ancient tradition. He's taking up this meal that has been part of the life of the Jewish people for 1500 years and He's doing something startling with it. His disciples would have known this meal by heart, and He's going to transform the meaning of this meal. Nothing is ever going to be the same after this night.

The Passover meal that they had that night had a set order of service, a set number of things. I don't have time in this study to unfold all the different deep meanings of what they did during this meal, but we're going to focus on two things that matter for what it means for us to remember Christ in this meal. We're going to focus on the bread and the wine, the bread and the cup.

The Passover meal was a liturgical meal structured around four cups of wine and each one was linked to a promise that God had made to His people in Exodus 6 and 7. There were four promises there, four cups of wine. As they drank each cup, they would be given an opportunity to explain what the cup meant, its significance for the people and its significance for the people at the table. There would be a host that was usually the father, who would stand up and do this liturgical part of the meal.

The first cup was called the cup of sanctification or the cup of holiness and as they drank it God's people were to remember that Yahweh had promised in Exodus 6:6 and that was, ‘I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.’ Yahweh intended to free His people Israel from their burdens, to bring them out of their slavery, that they could become a treasured

possession from among all the people on the earth. He had picked this very small group of people and said, 'I'm going to make you my precious treasure. They're going to be a kingdom of priests in a holy nation set apart from all of the nations.' That is what the cup of sanctification means.

The second cup was the cup of judgment and as they drank it God's people were to remember that Yahweh had promised, 'I will deliver you from slavery to the Egyptians through great acts of judgment.' Now, Yahweh, the Lord had struck Egypt with nine plagues. In these great acts of judgment each plague only served to harden the heart of Pharaoh more and more, until God was going to get glory over him by bringing him out to chase them, but Pharaoh refused to let God's people go. So, Yahweh had to up the ante and He brings the 10th and climactic plague.

It says this in Exodus 11:4-5, [4] *So Moses said, "Thus says the LORD: 'About midnight I will go out in the midst of Egypt, [5] and every firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh who sits on his throne, even to the firstborn of the slave girl who is behind the handmill, and all the firstborn of the cattle.*

Later, the prophets would call this day of judgment, where Yahweh comes up and visits in judgment, the great and terrible day of the Lord. It's the day of ultimate and uncompromising judgment against sin when every wrong that was ever done would be punished. It's a day of vengeance of the Lord to avenge Himself on His foes. It comes cruel with wrath and fierce anger to make the earth a desolation and destroy sinners on the earth. It is a terrifying thing.

The Lord says 'On that day, I will make the sun go down at noon and darken the earth in broad daylight' (Amos 8:9). He is saying, instead of this day of the Lord coming at the end of time like it was supposed to, it's going to come somewhere around midnight. Now, that is good news if it's just coming for the Egyptians, right? It's good news if the Egyptians are the only sinners here, but are they? This day of judgment, this day of justice, of the Lord is coming in a miniature scale and no one will escape.

So that was the second cup, the cup of judgment, but between the second and the third cup, after this cup, the host would take a piece of bread and he would break it and would say, 'this is the bread of our affliction, that our fathers ate when they were escaping from slavery going into the wilderness, when they came out of the land of Egypt. It was broken up in little pieces and everybody got a piece because you were supposed to be acknowledging your role in bringing the affliction on the world; that you're a guilty sinner and you have a role to play in this affliction.

Then he would take up the third cup and as they drank it God's people were supposed to remember that Yahweh promised, 'I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment.' The plagues weren't just judgment for judgment's sake. They served a purpose. Their purpose was to redeem. I'm going to pay the cost. The judgment was a means to an end. This day of the Lord presented a problem for the Israelites. Their redemption would cost them the lives of their firstborn sons and that doesn't make much sense to us, right? It's terrible, but in the ancient world, the life of your firstborn son was all your future hopes, all your dreams, everything was in that son. The Lord is saying it's going to cost you everything to set you free. It's going to cost you your past. It's going to cost you your present. It's going to cost you your future.

The wages of sin is death and Yahweh was coming to deliver the check, but He sees to it for He provides a way of escape that doesn't compromise His justice. Every Israelite family was to slay a blameless lamb, was to eat the lamb in the house that night, paint the door post with the

blood so that when the Lord came, death would see that death had already fallen on that house and pass over it. That's where the name comes from to Passover. The Lord would pay for His people. He would redeem His people through an innocent, blameless sacrifice.

Then there's the fourth cup and this cup is called the cup of praise because they have been redeemed. They have come out of slavery. The story has had its climax. The Lord has delivered His people and they praise the Lord and as they drank it God's people are supposed to remember that Yahweh promised in Exodus 6:7, 'I will take you to be My people and I will be your God and you shall know that I, the Lord Yahweh, am your God who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.'

Now, the other cups, from the perspective of Jesus' disciples, all look backwards. They look back to what God has done. He's redeemed us. He took the judgment. He brought judgment on our adversaries. He set us apart as a holy people, but the cup of praise is a little bit different. It's got this forward leaning tilt. Why? Can a lamb pay for a son? If you had the choice between your firstborn son and a lamb, what do you choose? Do you think the Israelites were dumb? Do you think they didn't know that? They knew that the value was not an equal value exchange. They knew that there had to be some greater redemption, something that was coming that would overshadow and somehow mysteriously pay for their sins without compromising God's justice so that He could forgive them and bear their sins. So praising God for what He had done, they also looked forward joyfully to the hope of the day that somehow God would actually redeem them from their fuller slavery, not just the slavery in Egypt.

Now, the Passover meal was never to be missed by any Israelite. Moses commanded that if you missed the Passover, you're out. You did have a chance to make up Passover if you needed to. For instance, if you were out of town or whatever, there would be a makeup Passover. He's gracious, but if one starting skipping the Passover, you would be declaring that you're not His people and you're not going to have a part in His people so this meal was the one of the central parts of Jewish life. Moses forbid that it ever be changed – this is what you do.

When Jesus gets alone with His disciples on the night that He was betrayed, does something audacious, does something insane, crazy, unless He is greater than Moses, He changes the meaning of the elements of the Passover. He doesn't point to a lamb. They don't ever talk about a lamb at the actual table. He points to Himself and basically says that all these things that they were talking about that night are fulfilled in Him. Think about the cup of sanctification, the cup of holiness.

In the garden after this dinner, they go to the Garden of Gethsemane, where they were regularly went to go, and Jesus praying to His Father for their sake, says, 'I sanctify Myself. I set Myself apart as holy so that they may be truly sanctified' which is seen in John, 17. So now those who are set apart in Christ, Peter later can say of them, 'You are a chosen race. You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation of people for God's own possession' (I Peter 2:9). That's you, Jew, Gentile, whatever, that's you in Christ, because He set you apart by setting Himself apart to death.

Second, Jesus takes the cup of judgment. James and John's mother earlier in His ministry, had come up to Jesus on their behalf, which is just a real power move, and she says to Him, 'can my sons sit on your left and your right when You come into Your kingdom?' Jesus says, 'Can you drink the cup that I have to drink? Now, of course, they think, the only cup that the Messiah is ever going to have to drink is the cup of joy, blessing and praise. So, they say 'Yeah, buddy, we can drink it, pour it on.' But Jesus says, 'Listen, you're going to drink the cup. You're going to suffer for My name, but listen to Me.'

The cup of God's wrath is a Biblical metaphor for God hand His people over to the consequences of their sin and their rebellion against God; over to their enemies and their insistence on rebelling against Him. This rebellion, this sin is equivalent to drinking poison. Psalm 75:8 says, [8] *For in the hand of the LORD there is a cup with foaming wine, well mixed, and he pours out from it, and all the wicked of the earth shall drain it down to the dregs.* Jesus says, 'Yes, you're going to have to suffer for My name, but I'm going to drink the cup of judgment down to the dregs. I'm going to take every last drop.'

Then He breaks the bread and this is really fascinating. He doesn't say 'this is the bread of our affliction' but says, 'this is My body, which is for you.' Do you get what He is saying there? He's saying this is no longer the bread of your affliction but this is the bread of My affliction. The bread isn't broken to symbolize that you share it, but this bread is broken for you. Jesus is going to suffer for you in your place. I am being broken so that you can be made whole. That's what My death is about.

Then He takes up the cup of redemption and most commentators all agree that this is the cup where He says 'this is the new covenant in My blood.' In Jesus, Yahweh Himself has come to pay the price to free His people from their slavery with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, but it's shocking how He does it. He did not do it by bringing judgment on God's enemies. He did not judge Rome. His outstretched arms were stretched out on the cross. His mighty hands were pinned down and He wasn't able to lift them. That's how He redeemed His people. He did not come to judge, but to bear the judgment for you and me. There was darkness at noonday and He bore the judgment. He became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. So, if we shelter under His blood, we never have to fear death. It will pass right over us.

Now, I was a firefighter in South Carolina before I came here. I went to a fire school and they trained us in wildland firefighting. In wildland firefighting there is this giant wall of fire, this wave of flame that's burning up the countryside that is being driven by the wind and they tell you when you're out there, watch for places that are already burned out because the same wind that's driving the fire will send embers ahead and it'll burn up and consume everything that's ahead of it. If the wind changes and the fire of judgment starts to roll down the mountain after you, you need to know where that burned out spot is, because if you can get there, there's nothing left to be consumed so the fire of judgment will pass right over you. It's the only way to survive. That's the meaning of the blood on the door post. That's the meaning of Christ. Christ is the burned out spot.

In conclusion, this meal is also a mission. The cup of praise looks forward to Jesus' coming. Paul says in I Corinthians 11:26, [26] *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.* This proclamation, this mission that we have to really be under Christ's blood and in that burned out spot, we have to sit down at the table.

The Passover liturgy says that every Israelite of every generation must regard himself as if he himself had come out of Egypt and during the meal, one of the children of the table was supposed to ask, 'what does this all mean, Dad?' The father was supposed to respond, 'We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, Yahweh heard our voice, saw our affliction and toil.' As it is written Yahweh, heard their cry, saw their affliction and toil and God brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

So, when you eat this bread and drink this cup in remembrance of Jesus, then you are identifying yourself as a beneficiary of His death. You're pulling up your seat at the table. In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus doesn't actually drink the fourth cup. He says in Matthew 26:29, [29] *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. So, the meal never closed. So, in a way, every time we take the Passover meal, every time that we take the Lord's Supper, we are in a real way participating in that same meal and He's waiting at the head of the table. He's waiting for the wedding feast of the Lamb with that cup of praise held high, saying, "Come, there's a seat at the table for you. Come and drink."

He is not going to return until everybody gets here. We're not going to drink it until everybody gets here, brothers. We're going to wait until everyone He has redeemed, has died for comes in and then we're going to drink the cup of praise. So, to participate in that, to take your seat, it doesn't just mean to view Christ death as a historical fact and to remember it. It means, like Paul, from Galatians 2:20, to be able to say, *[20] I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*

Come, let's do this in remembrance of Him. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, I thank You for Your Word. I ask that You would give us the gift of this meal. Help us to rejoice in the fact that You have invited us to Your table. Bless this meal to strengthen us for the continuation of our journey to inviting people to come to the table of that great wedding feast of the Lamb that's been prepared for us. Thank You, Lord Jesus, for taking the judgment and giving us the blood that we could hide from and escape the judgment of death. I pray these things in Your Name, Amen.