

What Did Jesus Teach Us at the Last Supper?

Matthew 26:26-29

Turn in your Bibles to Matthew 26, please. This is Friday morning of Holy Week. Let's turn back the clock 15 or 16 hours, to supper on Thursday evening, 7 or 8 in the evening. Our Scripture describes something that happened during that supper. The Last Supper.

The Scriptures read a few minutes ago make it clear that Jesus and the twelve are eating the Jewish Passover supper. In that first Passover, back with Moses in Exodus 12, when God was taking Israel out of Egypt, each household sacrificed a lamb. They roasted the lamb, and they ate the whole thing, and they painted the lamb's blood on the doorposts.

Whoever ate the roasted lamb, and had the blood of the lamb spread on the doorposts, escaped the destroying angel. Every year, the Jews ate the Passover lamb again, to remember what happened that first time. The Last Supper took place during that Jewish Passover meal.

²⁶ *While they were eating [the Passover meal], Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."*

²⁷ *Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*

Did you notice that there is nothing here about "remembrance"? Not in Mark, either. We have four accounts of the Last Supper in the NT: Matt, Mark, Luke, and Paul in 1 Cor. Luke and Paul record Jesus saying: "*do this in remembrance of me,*" but that line is not in Matt or Mark.

Jesus certainly said those words, since Luke and Paul write that. But the same Holy Spirit that led Luke and Paul to include "*do this in remembrance of me,*" led Matt and Mark to leave it out. In Matt and Mark, Jesus is not giving us a way to remember him. He's doing something else. He's teaching us, he's explaining his death, and telling us what to do about it.

Jesus has told them repeatedly that he must die, but Jesus has said almost nothing about WHY he must die. What does his death mean? He said earlier that the Son of Man must give his life a ransom for many. That's a start, but not much explanation. In Matthew's Last Supper, that's what Jesus is doing: he explains to the 12, and to us, what his death *means*, and how we *respond*.

Jesus and the twelve are eating the Passover meal. There is a roasted lamb on the table there, and they are all eating the body of that lamb. During that meal, Jesus takes bread, and says, "this is MY body, take it and eat. THAT meat is the body of the Passover lamb. This bread is MY body. I die as a Passover lamb. You need to take it, and eat it."

They already know about eating the body of the sacrifice. It's what they are already doing. Roasted lamb is on the table. They may not have caught this all in the moment, but it would not have taken long. Jesus is giving them *another* sacrificial body to eat, his own body.

V27 *Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

In the first Passover, with Moses in Exodus 12, they painted the lamb's blood on the doorway. Jesus is the new Passover lamb. *Drink from this, all of you, because this is my blood.* Drinking the blood of this lamb replaces painting the blood of that lamb on the doorway.

In Exodus, they ate a lamb, and painted its blood on the doorway. WE eat the lamb, and drink his blood in a cup. How could the disciples have understood anything else? Jesus shows the disciples and us that he will die as a Passover lamb, and he tells us what to do about it: eat the bread, and drink from the cup. In 1 Cor 5:7 Paul writes, *Our Passover lamb has been sacrificed.*

Jesus leads us on a new exodus, out of Egypt, out of dark slavery, toward the promised land, the home God has for us. Jesus is the new Moses, and the new Joshua, and he is also the new Passover lamb.

Covenant Sacrifice *"Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."*

Jesus brings in something new at this point, covenant sacrifice and covenant blood. "Covenant" is the only word of explanation that is in all four of our Last Supper accounts, Matt and Mark, and Luke and Paul. It is just as important as Passover as Jesus explains his death.

Covenant is where God says to us, "You will be my people, and I will be your God." And we say, "We will be your people, and you will be our God." The covenant sacrifice seals the agreement, locks it in, from then on neither can back out of this covenant.

Jesus takes us back to Exodus, just like Passover took us back to Exodus. In Exodus 24, Moses brought God and Israel into covenant with each other. He sacrificed young bulls there, and he put some of the blood on God, and some of the blood on Israel, and sealed the covenant in that way.

It's hard to put blood on God, so what Moses actually did was pour blood on the stone altar there, which was Moses' way of spreading the blood on God. The rest of the blood he sprinkled on the people. And as he spread the blood on the people, he said, *"this is the blood of the covenant that God has made with you."*

Jesus said, “*this is my blood of the covenant.*” Moses: “*this is the blood of the covenant that God has made with you.*” Jesus: “*this is my blood of the covenant.*” Jesus sort of quotes Moses. Jesus is the replacement for those young bulls, those covenant sacrifices.

Moses sprayed the blood of the covenant sacrifice on the people. Jesus put his covenant blood in a cup and said, “Drink this.” Moses poured the other half of the blood on the altar, which was his way of putting the blood on God. Jesus does not talk about his blood and God here.

But in Hebrews 9:12 we read that Jesus entered the Holy Place in heaven with his own blood. I will not speculate on how that actually happened, but perhaps that was the equivalent of Moses pouring the blood on the altar.

Jesus is teaching us the meaning of his death, and teaching us what we should do about it. Eat the bread. Drink the cup. Moses brought Israel into covenant by spraying the blood on them. Jesus brings us into the new covenant by giving us his blood to drink.

By dying as a covenant sacrifice, Jesus binds us to God, and binds God to us. That’s the best news ever. God, and the followers of Jesus, bind themselves to each other. Covenant blood is in all four NT accounts of the Last Supper. It is an important part of Communion.

He will die as a Passover lamb, and as a covenant sacrifice. Jesus’ death is wider than these, but those two are clear in this meal. He will die as a Passover lamb, and as a covenant sacrifice. How should we respond? Eat the bread, drink the cup, eat his body, drink his blood. In the Last Supper, that’s how we bring the new Passover lamb to ourselves, and the new covenant blood.

Forgiveness of Sins Is it possible that drinking the cup is a way of being forgiven? We know that God offers forgiveness. We know we receive this by confessing our sins to God, as in the Lord’s prayer, and he is faithful and just to forgive us. We know that, and it is true.

If a prayer can do that, why could eating the bread and drinking the cup not do that? *Drink from this, all of you, this is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

Let me add: “You are all sinners, you need this.” Jesus said: *[You are all sinners, you need this.] Drink from this, all of you, this is my blood of the covenant poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.*

I know this is not how we usually take the Lord’s Supper, but Jesus’ words do aim us in that direction, and he says nothing to discourage this way of taking it. It sounds like eating the bread and drinking the cup are a way of asking God to forgive our sins, and a way of receiving his forgiveness.

[You are all sinners, you need this.] Drink from this, all of you, this is my blood of the covenant poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

If *words coming out of our mouth* can bring God's forgiveness to us, why could *putting bread and wine into our mouths* not also bring us God's forgiveness, assuming basic faith in Christ for both the prayer and the meal? I don't see why we would fear this, and the words of Jesus to lead us toward that. Eating and drinking are like a forgiveness prayer without words.

Eat, Drink In the Last Supper, Jesus wants something from his disciples. What is it? What is he concerned about? He's concerned that we would eat the bread, and drink the cup. These are commands. "Take; eat. Drink from this, all of you."

"You must eat this bread, which is my body. You must drink this cup which is my blood. It's important that you eat and drink."

This Last Supper meal is the main teaching in Matthew and Mark and Luke on what his death means, on why he must die. Here, as they eat the Passover lamb he springs it on them: He will die as a sacrifice. That is all new to them at this point. He will die as a Passover sacrifice, and as a covenant sacrifice.

And in the same breath, he tells them and us what to do about it, how to respond to his sacrifice: "Eat this bread, which is my body; drink this cup, which is my blood." He has taught us how to respond to him *as Lord*, and *as Christ*. Here he tells us how to respond to him *as sacrifice*.

In Matthew's Gospel there are two ways to receive forgiveness of sins from God: the Lord's Prayer, and the Lord's Supper. Both are group events, part of ongoing church life.

Some churches think they should have the Lord's Supper quite often. Based on our Scripture, it is hard to disagree with them.

That Day. V29 *I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day, when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*"

The Lord's Supper includes a strong look to the future. The exodus began with the Passover lamb, in Exodus 12. That's when they left Egypt.

Soon after they left they made the covenant, in Exodus 24. But that was still a long time before they were at home in the promised land, a long and difficult journey. But God did get them there.

Our Passover lamb has been sacrificed, but we are not in our homeland yet. He's preparing a place, but we are not yet there. We are in covenant with the same God, covenant at the start of a long journey, but we're not in our homeland yet. *I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on, until that day, when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

Another Scripture says, *Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until he comes**.* We eat and drink looking backward to the death of our Lord, his sacrifice, and we eat and drink looking forward to the Lord coming. We look forward to eating and drinking with our Lord in his Father's kingdom, on that day.

Let me summarize:

1. Jesus has not explained the meaning of his death, but now he does. He dies as a Passover sacrifice, and as a covenant sacrifice.
2. As the body of the roasted lamb was on the table, and they ate it, so the bread is HIS body, and we shall eat that.
3. As the Passover lamb's blood was painted on the door, so Jesus' blood is in the cup, and we shall drink that.
4. His blood is also covenant blood. Moses sprinkled the blood on the people, and bound Israel and God to each other. So also Jesus offers himself as covenant sacrifice. Instead of sprinkling his blood on us, he gives his blood to all his disciples in a cup, to drink. We drink it. In this way Jesus binds us his disciples, and God, to each other.
5. The covenant blood of Jesus was poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins, and he urges us to drink it. Eating the bread and drinking the cup seems to be one of the ways we can ask God for forgiveness, and receive it from God.
6. How shall the Lord's followers respond to this teaching? How shall we obediently show our understanding? *Take* the bread. *Eat* it. *Drink* from the cup, *every one* of us. In the Lord's Supper, the Lord calls us to do something: Eat and drink. It's our response to his sacrifice.

Take. Eat. Drink, all of you.

7. Hope, longing for that day: When we have *this* meal, we always look forward to *another* meal. *I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*

Let's give thanks to God. *Almighty God, you provided a Passover lamb for us. You took us out of Egypt and slavery, and are bringing us to yourself. Thank you for Jesus the Passover Lamb. You provided a covenant sacrifice, to bind yourself to us, and to bind us to you. Thank you for the Covenant blood of Jesus. Through Jesus you offer us forgiveness of sins, and we thank you. You gave us hope in another meal, on that day, with you and our Lord and all of us, and we praise you for that hope. And you gave us the bread and the cup, to celebrate all this, and participate in it; thank you for the bread and cup. You gave us the bread and the cup to remember the past, and to remember the future. We are very grateful. Amen.*