

sermon study guide

March 13/14, 2021

The Week that Changed the World: The Last Supper

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IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. What is your favorite meal of the year? Why?
2. Why do we partake in communion? What is the significance of it for you?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Matthew 26:26-35

3. What are the similarities between the Passover meal (Exodus 12) and the Lord's Supper? What are the differences?
4. While the Passover meal commemorated a past event, what hope for the future is given by the Lord's Supper?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Jesus trusted fully in His Father's plan for His life. How can you trust in the same way in Jesus' promises to you?
6. How can you renew the depth and gravity of observing the Lord's supper in your hearts and minds?

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Consider the last supper: The bread represents Jesus' body, the wine represents his blood, and Jesus himself is the lamb. These elements all speak of the sacrifice that cost him everything and gave us everything. Spend this week giving God thanks for what His Son sacrificed for us.

THE WORD (NIV)

Matthew 26:26-35

26 While they were eating, 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."

30 When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

31 Then Jesus told them, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written:

"I will strike the shepherd,

and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.'

32 But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

33 Peter replied, "Even if all fall away on account of you, I never will."

34 "Truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "this very night, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times."

35 But Peter declared, "Even if I have to die with you, I will never disown you." And all the other disciples said the same.

sermon study summary

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The week before Jesus's crucifixion coincided with the Passover. As Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his disciples, He instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper which is a powerful symbol of our unity as the body of Christ and a visual proclamation of the gospel.

The Lord's Supper is the New Passover. In the book of Exodus, the Israelites suffered hardships as they were in bondage to Egypt. God sent various plagues to get the attention of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. With each plague Pharaoh hardened his heart, thinking he was in control and refused to let the Israelites go. The final plague, which resulted in their deliverance, was the death of the firstborn in every household unless the household slaughtered a lamb and applied the blood to the doorposts. This event was commemorated by the Israelites with the Passover meal, which consisted of lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs and wine. Death passed over their home because of the blood of the slaughtered lamb. The unleavened bread was a reminder of the haste with which they left Egypt. The bitter herbs represented their years of affliction. The wine represented four promises (Exodus 6:6-7): Rescue from Egypt, freedom from slavery, redemption by God's power and a renewed relationship with God.

As Jesus is celebrating this Passover meal with His disciples, He redefines its symbols (Matthew 26:26-27). The bread is no longer symbolic of the affliction of their ancestors but of Christ's broken body on the cross which will result in ultimate deliverance for all who will receive it. The cup symbolizes Christ's blood which is for the forgiveness of sin. Jesus is the lamb who would be slain. The original Passover, which was a shadow of what was to come, commemorated deliverance from slavery. The new Passover, The Lord's Supper, is about deliverance from the power of sin and new life in Christ.

The Lord's Supper inaugurates the New Covenant. The Old Testament covenant was sealed with the blood of animals. Jesus' blood seals the new covenant and guarantees the forgiveness of sins. Rather than engraving the laws on stone tablets, the Holy Spirit profoundly transforms the heart from within (Hebrews 8:6). The New Covenant results in the gift of eternal fellowship with God sealed by Christ's blood.

The Lord's Supper points to New Hope. The Passover meal not only looked to the past deliverance from Egypt but it also looked forward to the future in the Promised Land. The Lord's Supper likewise testifies to the past and the future: Jesus' sacrificial death in the past and His future return to fulfill our hope of spending eternity with Him. The elements of the Lord's Supper remain as plain bread and juice but they are powerful symbols. Participating in the Lord's Supper is a profound act of worship. Reflecting on the meaning of Christ's broken body and shed blood with gratitude provides spiritual nourishment, along with a reminder that Christians all around the world are united as one body in Christ.

Casual and unexamined participation in the Lord's supper will bring judgment (I Corinthians 11:27-29). But the heart of the Lord's Supper is not to exclude anyone because God's invitation is for all to be in right relationship with Him and to thus participate for spiritual nourishment. The call is for the weary to be renewed, for the guilty to receive God's grace and forgiveness, for those stuck in sin to confess and receive the assurance of forgiveness and power to overcome the sin and for those who are not a follower of Christ to submit to Jesus now as Saviour and Lord. It is only Jesus who can make us worthy of participating in the Lord's Supper.