

# IMMANUEL BAPTIST CHURCH

LESSON: THE LORD'S SUPPER

MATTHEW 26:26-29; 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-29

MARCH 28, 2021

## MAIN POINT

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The Lord's Supper symbolizes Jesus' death. In partaking it, the believer proclaims Christ's death, unites with the church, and looks forward to the Great Banquet in heaven.

## BIBLICAL CONTEXT

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The biblical context for the Lord's Supper can be traced back to the Passover meal in the book of Exodus. As a way for the Israelites to avoid the 10<sup>th</sup> plague that God was going to perform against the Egyptians, God commanded the Israelites to do what God called the Passover.

Exodus 12 records the event. Each family was to take an unblemished male lamb, one year old. They were to kill the lamb at twilight. Afterwards they were to take some of the blood and put it on two doorposts of the houses. They were to eat the flesh of the lamb, roasted by fire, with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Exodus 12:11-13 records,

In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. And you shall eat it in haste. It is the *LORD's Passover*. For I will *pass* through the land... and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt... the blood shall be a sign for you... when I see the blood, I will *pass over* you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you.

You can see where Passover gets its name: the LORD *passed* through the land, but where there was blood on the doorposts, the LORD would *pass over* and did not strike the family.

Exodus 12:14 explains that the Passover was to be a memorial or annual festival: "You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD; throughout your generations, as a statute forever, you shall keep it as a feast."

Referencing the Passover meal in relation to the Lord's Supper is important. The reason is because Jesus appears to replace the Passover meal when he instituted the Lord's Supper. Matthew 26:17-29 describes the scene. In the passage, Jesus is in Jerusalem during his final days before his crucifixion. His disciples have asked him where he wanted to celebrate the Passover. After making arrangements and during the evening, Jesus reclined at the table with

the twelve disciples. Jesus mentions that one of them will betray him. Each disciple turned sorrowful and asked if it was him that would betray him. Jesus signals that it would be Judas. As they were eating, Jesus then instituted the Lord's Supper. He takes the bread, breaks it, and gave it to his disciples. He explains, "Take, eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup and gave it to each. He explains, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood." Luke records how Jesus wanted his disciples to do this "in remembrance of him" (Luke 22:19). We will talk more about the symbolism of the Lord's Supper, but it is interesting to note a few more connections between the Passover and the Lord's Supper.

It is interesting to note the timing in which Jesus died. Jesus celebrated and instituted the Lord's Supper the night he was betrayed. It is worth pointing out that the timing when Jesus was betrayed and crucified is the same time that the Jews were celebrating Passover. Notice the connection: Passover was celebrated by *sacrificing an unblemished lamb* so that God's *wrath* would pass over the Israelites and He would only strike the Egyptians. So too, Jesus' death pays the *sacrifice* for our sins as an *unblemished, sinless* God-man, who then satisfies the *wrath* of God. In this sense, God's wrath passes over us. The price of our sins has been paid. Jesus is the Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29). The Passover was an Old Testament foreshadowing to the day when Jesus would serve as a sacrifice for our sin and rescue us. Jesus is our Passover Lamb!!!

## INTRODUCTION

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As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Do you remember your first time witnessing or partaking the Lord's Supper? Did it seem confusing to you in any way?**

This week we are looking at the Lord's Supper. Other names for this include *Mass* (a word commonly used among Catholics and Anglican), *Communion* (a word that stresses the communal aspect of the meal) and the *Eucharist* (a word that means thanksgiving). And we will look at (1) the Lord Supper as a symbolic event and (2) it is to be observed by believers.

## EXPLANATION // ...believe Jesus is the Christ...

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Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ MATTHEW 26:26-29 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-26

Baptists hold to the belief that the Lord's Supper is a *symbolic* event that represents Jesus' body being broken for the forgiveness of sins. As explained in these verses the bread represents Jesus' body and the cup represents his blood. As evidence that the supper is symbolic, Paul instructs the Corinthians to do this in "remembrance of me." It is an act of remembrance not a "means of grace" as some denominations might call it. ("Means of grace" might seem like a confusing phrase. To put it in other words, "means of grace" means that the exercise of eating the bread and drinking the cup serves as a channel through which God's extends or disperses forgiveness).

In addition to the symbolism, the Lord's Supper is also a *proclamation*. Through taking the bread and cup, we symbolically proclaim Jesus' death and his return. Both the Matthew and 1 Corinthian passages look forward to the day when Christians will feast with Christ in the kingdom. In Matthew 26:29, Jesus says he would not drink again, "until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." Jesus looked forward to sharing the cup once again with the disciples. Likewise, Paul mentioned that we proclaim his death *until he comes* (1 Cor. 11:26).

Baptist belief is distinctive from Catholics and Lutherans. Catholics hold to something that is called "transubstantiation." (there is your big word for the day ☺). Catholics believe that the phrase, "This is my body," should be interpreted literally. So that when they partake of the meal and the priest says, "this is my body," the bread will literally transform into the substance (hence trans-substantiation) of Christ. In this transformation, the bread and cup can become, according to Catholic belief, a means of grace. In Catholic belief, God gives saving grace to those who partake of the meal. This means-of-grace understanding is different than Baptist belief. Baptists believe that God's grace is dispensed through faith alone, not with any additional work.

Lutherans holds to a view called consubstantiation (your second big word for the day ☺). Martin Luther did not want to go as far as transubstantiation but wanted to maintain some of the literalness in "this is my body." So, he considered the bread and cup to hold God's presence much like a sponge holds water. In the case of Catholics, the bread and cup are transformed into Christ; but with Luther the bread and cup remained bread and cup. The elements of the Lord's Supper simply hold the presence of God much like a sponge remains a sponge, but it can hold water.

In response to both these views, Baptists see the Lord's Supper to be symbolic. There are lot of times that Jesus said something to the effect of "this is my body" but these other statements are understood to be figurative. For example, Jesus said he was the true vine, the light of the world, living water, etc. When we hear these statements, we do not think that Jesus is in the vines or in light, nor in water. Rather we understand them as figurative. So too, Baptists

believe in the symbolic nature of the Lord's Supper as opposed to a means of grace, because Scripture is clear elsewhere that we are saved by faith alone. Ephesians 2:8-9 state it plainly, "For by grace you are saved through faith, not of works."

**What are some of the details that our church does when we serve the Lord's Supper? Practically, how do we typically serve? (Served by deacons, we pass it down from one place, we all eat and drink at the same time, it is typically a reverent time).**

**To you does the Lord's supper feel like a celebration? Why or why not?**

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11:27-29

In light of this warning attached to the Lord's Supper, Baptists believe that believers should be the ones who take the meal. For it is hard to reason how an unbeliever can partake the meal in a worthy manner since the meal proclaims Christ's death and future hope. It is best performed by believers who have already publicly professed Christ.

But in addition to believers taking the meal, Paul also warns the church to take the meal with discernment and with a worthy manner. In the context of 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses the church who were disunified as they took it. Some were taking the Lord's Supper in excess, getting drunk, and to the exclusion of the poor in the church. First Corinthians 11:20, 33 explained to the Corinthians,

*When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?... so then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.*

**In light of our lesson, why is it significant that we pass the food down from one place? (Admittedly, this is how we normally pass the Lord's Supper, although COVID might alter this practice.)**

**Why is it significant that we eat and drink at the same time?**

**Do you ever notice that the Lord's Supper is generally quiet? Why do you think that is?**

## **APPLICATION // ...have life in His name.**

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Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**We can be honest, have you ever found yourself unfocused when taking the Lord's Supper? Is it ever hard to do it in *remembrance* of him? Any ideas or steps you've taken to help you do it in remembrance?**

## **PRAYER**

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Close in prayer, asking God to press this truth that was studied.