

# THE FIRST LORD'S SUPPER

*Matthew 26:26-29*

## The Setting

In the timeline of the Gospels, it is now Thursday of Passion Week: Passover. It was the 14th day of the first month, called Aviv in the books of Moses and Nisan from the book of Esther onward. That was the day that Yahweh sent the tenth plague against Egypt and delivered His people from slavery.

Nine plagues had already come against Egypt: water turned to blood, frogs, gnats, flies, the death of livestock, boils, hail, locusts, and darkness over the land. It appears that the Hebrews were protected from all of those plagues.

But the Hebrews were completely vulnerable to the tenth plague: the death of the firstborn of each household. Being God's chosen people did not protect them. The same death that struck the Egyptians would strike them. The death of the firstborn was not simply a punitive act against the Egyptians but an emblem of God's judgment against sin. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, Jews as well as Gentiles. All face the same judgment of death.

But Yahweh did provide protection for His people. They were to take a male lamb into their homes on the 10th of the month. They were to slay the lamb on the 14th of the month, smear its blood on the doorposts and lintel of the house, roast the meat, and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They were to eat it in haste while dressed for travel, with sandals on their feet and walking staffs in their hands.

And the Lord said,

**12** And I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments—I am Yahweh.

**13** And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are; and I will see the blood, and I will pass over you,

and there shall be no plague among you to destroy you  
when I strike the land of Egypt.

**(Exodus 12:12-13, 2022 LSB)**

The Exodus was a defining moment for Israel; Yahweh is the God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery (Exodus 20:2). The Old Testament makes hundreds of references to Him delivering them.

Yahweh commanded His people to observe Passover every year on the same day. For a long time, they did, but eventually, their idolatry shifted their focus. It was so rare during the kingdom years that we are specifically told that the kings Hezekiah and Josiah celebrated Passover.

During all that time, the observance was simple and straightforward. Each family killed a male lamb, roasted its meat, and ate it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs.

Then, about 100 years before Christ, the Rabbis of Israel began to create a more complex order of events. The Hebrew word for "order" is *seder*, which is still the name of the Passover ritual today. The oldest written *seder* known today is from the end of the 2nd century A.D.

Jesus and His disciples probably followed something similar to what is practiced today, although the Scriptures are silent about the order they followed.

## THE PASSAGE

*Matthew 26:26-29*

**26** Now while they were eating,  
Jesus took some bread,  
and after a blessing,  
He broke it.  
And giving it to the disciples,  
He said, "Take, eat; this is My body."  
**27** And when He had taken a cup

and given thanks,  
 He gave it to them, saying,  
 "Drink from it, all of you;  
**28** for this is My blood of the covenant,  
 which is poured out for many  
 for forgiveness of sins.  
**29** But I say to you,  
 I will not drink of this fruit of the vine  
 from now on until that day when I drink it new with you  
 in My Father's kingdom." **(Matthew 26:26-29, 2022 LSB)**

These are very familiar words for us. We read these words from Matthew, Mark, Luke, or First Corinthians every month when we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

**First of all, we see that the Scriptures keep the focus on Jesus the entire time.** He takes the bread, He blesses God for it, He breaks it, He distributes it. "Take, eat," He commands His men. He takes the cup, He gives thanks to God, He gives it to them, He commands them, "Drink from it, all of you." Matthew and Luke's Gospels don't even take time to say that they ate or drank, although Mark says they drank the wine. The spotlight is completely on Jesus. So the emphasis is not on a shared experience or what the disciples thought, but on the Lord Jesus.

**Second, we see that Jesus defines the meaning of the Lord's Supper.** "This is My body," He says, "this is My blood." There are many false views of the Lord's Supper, views that put the focus on the elements themselves. Both Roman Catholic *transubstantiation* and Lutheran *consubstantiation* are unbiblical and go far beyond the Scriptures.

The Scriptures define the Lord's Supper as an act of remembrance and proclamation.

**It is an act of remembrance.** In Luke 22:19, the Lord Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of Me." First Corinthians 11:23-25 repeats this:

**23** For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you,

that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was being 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 He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood;

**do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."**

**(1 Corinthians 11:23-25, 2022 LSB)**

In partaking of the bread and cup, we are to actively remember that Christ's body was given for us, and His blood was shed for us. There is a real and spiritual benefit to eating and drinking the Lord's Supper. I am reminded that Jesus died in my place and shed His blood for my forgiveness and salvation. It is not that through the Lord's Supper, Jesus dies all over again or is represented as dying all over again. It is that He died once and for all time and will never die again. His death on the cross was perfect and complete. The Lord's Supper reminds me that I have been perfectly and wonderfully saved.

**It is an act of proclamation.** First Corinthians 11:26 says,

**26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, **you proclaim the death of the Lord until He comes. (1 Corinthians 11:26, 2022 LSB)**

We don't tell sinners, "No, the Lord's Supper is not for you! You're not good enough!" We say, Yes, the Lord's Supper IS for you IF you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ! Here is what Jesus did: His body was given for sinners on the cross. His blood was shed for sinners on the cross. Jesus Christ died for the ungodly. He satisfied the holy wrath of God. There is just one requirement for receiving the Lord's Supper - believing in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you see that this proclamation takes place until Jesus returns? That's because Jesus is saving sinners until He returns. The preaching of the Gospel began in earnest on the day of Pentecost, and it will not stop until the Second Coming of Christ.

**Third, Jesus says He will abstain from wine until He shares it with all His people in His Father's Kingdom.** In the Scriptures, eating and drinking with others is typically a sign of intimate fellowship and relationship. In Genesis 18, Yahweh took on human form and, with two angels (also in human form), visited Abraham and Sarah at the oaks of Mamre. Abraham and Sarah quickly prepared a meal for them, but we are never told that they joined the Lord and the angels for that meal. They were hosts, but they were not in intimate fellowship with them. On the other hand, in the early church, the saints were "daily devoting themselves with one accord in the Temple **and breaking bread from house to house ... taking their meals together** with gladness and sincerity of heart." (Acts 2:46). They were in intimate fellowship with one another, joined to one another as they were joined to Christ.

The Lord's promise to abstain from wine until we are all together with Him tells us how seriously He takes our union with Him. He shared this wine with His disciples, but He won't drink it again until *all* His disciples are gathered with Him. He won't engage in a partial fellowship with some of His people. He is waiting until we are all together.

## **THE LAMB OF GOD**

There are a number of references in the New Testament to Jesus Christ being the Lamb of God. When Jesus says, "This is My body" and "This is My blood," he identifies Himself as the Passover Lamb.

Now, we know that the Passover was Yahweh's means of protecting His people from His temporal judgment. Sin brings death (Genesis 2:17). The wages of sin, which we all deserve, is death (Romans 6:23). Those who are slaves to sin will die eternally under God's judgment (Romans 6:16).

But Yahweh did not merely provide a refuge from temporal, earthly judgment. He provided a permanent refuge from His eternal judgment in His own Son, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36). The historical Passover lamb in Egypt points prophetically to Jesus Christ as the eternal Passover Lamb of God.

So Paul writes in First Corinthians 5:7,

**7** Clean out the old leaven [by repenting of sin]  
 so that you may be a new lump [of dough],  
 just as you are in fact unleavened [born again in Christ].  
**For Christ, our Passover lamb, also was sacrificed.**  
**(1 Corinthians 5:7, 2022 LSB)**

That night in Egypt so long ago, Yahweh “passed over” His people; He did not bring the temporal judgment of death on the firstborn. On another Passover, 2,000 years ago, Yahweh poured out all the death faced by His people on His only begotten Son, not taking away temporal judgment only, but all his wrath and judgment against us.

So, Peter urges us to holiness in light of Christ's death:

**17** And if you address as Father  
 the One who impartially judges  
 according to each one's work,  
 conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your sojourn,  
**18** knowing that  
**you were not redeemed with corruptible things**  
 like silver or gold  
 from your futile conduct  
 inherited from your forefathers,  
**19 but with precious blood,**  
**as of a lamb unblemished and spotless,**  
**the blood of Christ.**  
**(1 Peter 1:17-19, 2022 LSB)**

Exodus 12:5 requires that the Passover lamb be a male. Male lambs were never used in the general sacrificial system. A *female* lamb could be used as a sin offering (Leviticus 4:32). When the people entered the land for the first time, one of the accepted offerings was a male lamb (Numbers 15:11). Male lambs were to be offered for the cleansing of a leper. But male lambs, as a general rule, were used only for Passover.

Jesus Christ is our Passover lamb, unblemished and spotless. His blood redeemed us from sin, freed us from God's judgment by His death, and caused us to be born again. He is the Lamb of God who redeemed us.

The book of Revelation makes many references to Jesus as the Lamb of God; it's the most common picture of Christ used in Revelation. But don't think that being the Lamb of God makes Him weak and vulnerable. As the Lamb of God,

He receives worship and adoration;  
 pours out wrath on the wicked;  
 redeems Israel;  
 leads, provides for, and comforts His people;  
 and in eternity will, with the Father, be both our sanctuary and our light.

The Lamb of God is not soft, powerless, or a victim. He is the Mighty One who powerfully delivers His people from sin, judgment, and the hatred of the enemy and who equally powerfully pours out His wrath on the wicked of the world, Satan himself, and the whole demonic realm. The wicked will be tormented in His presence for all eternity (Revelation 20:10).

## BRINGING IT HOME

What do we have in Christ, our Passover Lamb?

- Through the Lamb of God, we have **redemption**, the **forgiveness of sins** (Matthew 26:28).
- Through the Lamb of God, we have **new birth** and **new life** (First Corinthians 5:7).
- By the blood of the Lamb, we **overcome** sin and the world (Revelation 12:11).
- We have the Lamb of God, Jesus, as our **Shepherd, guiding** us, **providing** for us, and **comforting** us (Revelation 7:17).
- We have the sure and certain promise that **the wicked will not prevail** forever but will face the perfect and righteous wrath of the Lamb of God (Revelation 14:10).
- We have the sure and certain knowledge that **our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life** and will never be erased (Revelation 13:8). How do we know they are written there? Because it is by the Lamb of God that we **believe**.

- We have the sure and certain promise of being at **the marriage supper of the Lamb** (Revelation 19:7-9) as His bride.
- We have the sure and certain promise of **an eternal Temple** and **eternal light** because God and the Lamb will be our sanctuary and light (Revelation 21:22-23).
- We have the sure and certain promise of **eternal life** because “a river of the water of life” flows from the throne of God and of the Lamb (Revelation 22:1).

All this and so much more because Jesus is our Passover Lamb. The truth is that every blessing in the heavenly places (Ephesians 1:3) comes to us through the Lamb of God.

I don't pretend to know what you need this morning, not in any detail. But I do believe this: there is nothing that you need that is not granted to you in the Lamb of God slain for us, Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb.

In a few moments, we are going to move into the celebration of the Lord's Table. I'm going to pray, and then we will take a couple of minutes to prayerfully consider how the Lord has met our needs. On the screen is a slide listing many of the things that are ours in Christ Jesus, the Lamb of God.

I want to encourage you this morning with tenderness and compassion to rest in the arms of your Savior. Trust Him to do what He has promised to do. The promises of God are not dependent on how you feel at any particular moment. So if you see something on the slide that you don't think is yours, confess your lack of faith, and ask the Father to show you how it IS yours in the Lamb of God. As you partake of the bread and cup, remember what the Lord has done for you and give thanks.