

The Eucharist (the Lord's Table)

Read Luke 22:14-20

The Eucharist or the Lord's Table is directly related to the Passover Meal in the Old Testament. And when the Jews forgot about God and about God's covenant with them as a people, they also forgot about the Passover Meal which spoke of God's covenant. And then the Jews went into captivity under Nebuchadnezzar. And in captivity the Jews remembered God and re-instated the Passover.

As a result of the captivity the Passover Meal went as follows: there were three pieces of unleavened bread in a pouch. So you had three pieces of bread in one pouch, and they would rest on the table until the proper time in the meal. And at a certain point in the meal, the host would take the pouch – take out the middle piece of bread – break it in half, and pass it around the table in silence. The silence was crucial.

And during the meal the Jews would drink from a cup of wine four different times. But there was one cup of wine that sat at the end of the table; and it sat before an empty chair. And this cup was called THE CUP. And it was there only for ritual purposes – for no one touched it. For it was the cup that awaited the coming of David's descendant, the cup that awaited the coming of the Messiah.

And when this Messiah came then the words of Jeremiah the prophet would be fulfilled. In Jeremiah 31, the prophet said, "The time is coming declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more."

Thus, the new covenant would be brought in by the Messiah. And the Jews would go through the whole meal – passing the bread around in silence, drinking the cups of wine. And then, after the meal was over, they would clear the table. And still THE CUP remained untouched and the chair remained empty. So another year had come and gone with-

out the coming of the Messiah. For when he came, he would take the cup and sit in the empty place.

And after the captivity, upon their return to Jerusalem, this tradition continued. But it was hard to obtain unblemished lambs at that time. So the order went out: a special flock of lambs was to be bred for the Passover Meal specifically. These lambs were born to die. And no flock of sheep was allowed to come near to a city for hygienic reasons. Except for the Passover flock. And they were only allowed near Jerusalem the week before the Passover, which took place on the 10th of Nisan. The lambs would be examined in the temple for three days – and killed on the 14th.

And Luke 22:14 states that "when the hour came." In other words, it was time for the Lamb of God to be about His final work.

And you remember the details of Palm Sunday, right? Well, why all the fuss? Why all the preparations? Why not just walk in like He had done a thousand times before? Because our Lord was making an announcement.

The date was the 10th of Nisan. And as Jesus went into Jerusalem through the east gate, the Passover Flock was going in through the west gate. And then Jesus went into the courtyard of the Temple, and just over there in the courtyard were the Passover Lambs. And everyday the Levitical priests will examine them for blemishes.

Do you see it? Jesus was announcing Himself to the world. Your Passover Lamb is coming in. To the right place – on the right day.

And all that week before the crucifixion all the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians were at the Temple badgering Jesus with questions. Why? Because the Lamb of God is being examined. And it all took place in the Temple courtyard. And just across the compound the Passover lambs were being examined by the Levitical priests. And remember, they could find no fault with Him.

The 14th of Nisan begins at 6 PM on the evening

of the 13th. So on the night of the 13th, which is in reality the 14th, Jesus had a special Passover in the Upper Room. And remember, that at 3 PM on the 14th, the knife of the Levite would flash and kill the first lamb.

So they gathered in the Upper Room: our Lord, and His disciples. And the disciples knew something was happening because it is the right day, but the wrong time to celebrate the Passover.

And there on the table were the roast lamb, the bitter herbs, the cups of wine, and the three pieces of bread in the pouch. And our Lord was the host. They ate and they drank as usual. And then at the proper time our Lord took the pouch with the three pieces of bread – and He took out the middle piece, and He broke it. But He did not observe the mandatory silence. He broke the bread and he broke the silence. He said, “This is my body which is broken for you.”

And the middle piece of bread was called the *aphikomen*, Greek for the “coming one.” Thus, the little bag and the three pieces represented the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. And it is significant that they always took the middle piece out: the Son. And they broke it. For His body would be broken for us.

And then, after the meal was over and everyone is just about to leave – He took THE CUP, the cup that had never been touched for over 500 years. Can you imagine the disciples as they saw this?!!!! Riveted to their seats, their eyes wide open, staring. Mouths open. Their breathing would have stopped. Their hearts would have stopped.

And He said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” Those were the words of the prophet Jeremiah. They had not been uttered for centuries. Our Lord was announcing that He was about to make a new covenant with mankind. And He would not walk through the blood of a dead animal sacrifice. He would walk through His own death and His own blood as the Lamb of God. For the Law said that a life must be forfeit to pay the penalty of sin.

So when our Lord left the Upper Room, He left as THE Passover Lamb – the one who will die instead of us. And because He is man He can. But because He is God He is worth all of us. One man can die for all – and it was His decision to do so.

By 9 AM the next morning, the lambs were in the temple courtyard being prepared for death. And outside the city, at the end of the same hill, and at

the same hour – 9 AM – Jesus was being nailed to a cross. And then – at 3 PM that afternoon Jesus cried, “It is finished!” And He voluntarily yielded up His soul and spirit to death. And at that same moment, 3 PM, in the courtyard – the knife of the priest slashed across the throat of the first Passover lamb. But none of the animal sacrifices are valid anymore – for THE Passover Lamb – the Lamb of God – has just died. Fantastic!!!

And remember, that on the cross – death usually occurred by suffocation. For the chest muscles are paralyzed – you can't breathe. And the only way to breathe is to push up on the nail in the feet. And can you imagine the pain? But when the Romans wanted you to die in a hurry, they would come along and take out the nail and break the legs. This way you couldn't push up to breathe.

And remember, when they came to our Lord and were about to break His legs, one soldier said, “Stop. He is already dead.” And this fulfilled the command in Exodus “that not a bone of the Passover lamb was to be broken.” Fantastic!

And then He rose again from death. And He walks to the throne – the Living Lamb! But He bears on His body the scars and signs of death. But death is dead. He died, but He lives! And that means that death died in the death of Jesus.

So when our Lord said, “This do in remembrance of me.” He was not saying sit there and try to remember the sufferings of Jesus. The Eucharist is not a time to be morbid and sad. It is a time to remember the new covenant in His blood. The Eucharist brings all the covenants together. For Christ fulfilled them.

Christ said, “Passover is over.” Then He took two pieces of the old Passover, and said I will make these part of the new covenant. So when you take the bread and the cup you are to remember this: that Jesus lives! Jesus lives! And you live in Him.

And because you live in Him, you can say, “You are my God.” And the Spirit says to you, “You are my people.” And we get excited; for we find that we have been declared the righteousness of God in Christ. That the Holy Spirit lives in us. That we can do all things through Christ. That we are His special treasure.

For the bread is His body. And where is His body? It is seated at the right hand of God – on the throne. And the cup is His spiritual death for us. But now He has eternal spiritual communion with God.

So when you partake of the elements – the bread and the cup – you are eating of His human-ness. You are eating of the humanity that lived out the life of God. We are not just human beings, but Christ lives in us. He lives!! And we live because He does!

He said, eat of my human-ness that was like you and overcame and lived in Love. Thus, He said, “Let my Life come into you.”

The Eucharist, then, through the power of the Holy Spirit, gives the very Life and the very Love of Jesus. And the bread and the cup make it real to us just as he was a real human being.

And when we partake of the Eucharist we participate in our spirit and in our flesh – in all our senses – in the Life that was His Life – the Life that is His Life now.