

Hartford Bible Students

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The Bread and the Cup

Our Lord's Memorial

We read of Jesus' last meal with his disciples in Luke 22:14-20: "And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer: For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. "

In verse 15 through 18 of Luke 22, Jesus is adhering to the traditional and historic aspects of the Passover meal, including the blessing of the meal and the first cup of wine. But then in verses 19 and 20, Jesus does something brand new when he reinterprets the elements of the Passover meal in terms of himself.

Reinterpreting the Bread

Instead of the unleavened bread being "the bread of affliction which our fathers did eat as they came out of Egypt" (Deuteronomy 16:3), Jesus re-interprets the bread to be his body.

Luke then adds that Jesus said to his apostles that "This is my body which is given for you." What did Jesus mean by these words? In Luke 22:15 Jesus said, "With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer," literally "before I suffer death." Jesus then adds a new dimension to his death. He says his life is given in sacrifice. It is given for his apostles, it is given for all the spirit begotten of the Gospel Age, and it is given for the entire world of mankind, as Jesus said in John 6:51, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that

I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Reinterpreting the Cup

Jesus' reinterpretation of the Passover in connection to his sacrificial death is even clearer in his words over the cup of blessing, the cup after the meal, where he says, "This cup is the new testament (or covenant) in my blood, which is shed for you," which is poured out for you (Luke 22:20).

This reference to a covenant sealed by blood is a clear allusion to Exodus 24:3-8 where the nation of Israel entered into the Law Covenant: "And Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the LORD hath said will we do. And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basons; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."

In Exodus 24 there was a covenantal sacrifice which typically cleansed the people of Israel, the people of the covenant, from sin so that they could enter into the Mosaic Law Covenant. But instead of the twelve tribes entering a covenant with God at Mount Sinai sealed with the blood of oxen, Jesus at the Last Supper introduced a new covenant which was sealed with his blood. This is the New Covenant that will enable all mankind who are obedient to it to enter into the

future earthly phase of the Kingdom of God. It is the New Covenant that we read about in Jeremiah 31:31-34: "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

But even as the Law Covenant could not be entered upon, would not be serviceable, until the slaying and sprinkling of the blood of bulls and goats, even so, until the blood of the Christ, head and body, until the blood of the Church (faithful Christians) is comingled with the blood of Jesus, the sacrifice for sin is not yet complete and the New Covenant cannot go into effect.

When Jesus takes the one cup and invites his apostles to drink from it, he is inviting Christians to follow in his footsteps of pouring out his life on behalf of the world as a sin offering so the world of mankind might enter into a new covenant with their Creator. And once that sacrifice is complete and the kingdom of God has truly come, then Jesus and his followers will once again drink of the fruit of the vine. But it will not be, as it is now, a cup of suffering unto death. It will in the kingdom be a cup of unspeakable joy.

When giving bread to the apostles Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me," he was re-interpreting the remembrance of the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage, which the Passover was intended to be, as it says in Deut. 16:1-3, "Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night. Thou shalt

therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there. Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life."

The Israelites were to remember their deliverance from Egyptian bondage. They were also to remember their deliverance as a people from death at the Red Sea; and the firstborn were to especially remember their deliverance from death at the hand of the death angel in the 10th plague. All three of these deliverances were made possible by the death of the Passover lamb and its blood sprinkled on the doorposts of their houses.

Jesus is now reinterpreting what we are to remember about the Passover by putting himself in the place of the Passover lamb and all that it represented. Jesus is our deliverance. Jesus is our salvation from sin and death. And the memory of what he did for us, for the firstborns, is to replace the memory of the typical Passover.

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