

THE FIRST LORD'S SUPPER

Luke 22:1-23

Intro: I had intended to start a series today on the Psalms, or the portions of the Psalms, that we will be memorizing in our Bible memory groups which begin this week. But as I prayed about what the Lord wanted me to do, it seemed to me that the Lord was leading me to speak on the Lord's Supper since we are observing His Supper today.

The Bible does not set a particular time, or times, when we are to observe the Supper. We are simply told in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup," which means that every church is free to set the times when they will observe the Lord's Supper. But also implied in that statement is the truth that we are to observe the Lord's Supper. Some observe the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day. Others observe it every month. Still others observe it only once every three months. We observe it every first and third Sunday of the month, but we feel free in the Lord to move it to the second and fourth Sundays especially when we observe it on New Year's eve as we do every year. And we do this so as to spread out the times when the Lord's Supper is observed. In addition to New Year's eve, we normally observe the Lord's Supper at the conclusion of our Day of Prayer in the Fall.

The important thing is that we observe the Lord's Supper in the right way when we observe it. We need to be careful not to be critical of others who don't do it with the same frequency that we observe it. We are free to decide *how* we will observe the Lord's Supper up to a point. For example (and these are minor points), some churches ask their people to come forward to receive the elements. In other churches the people eat the bread and drink from the cup when it is served. We like for everyone to wait until we have all been served, and then we partake together. But really, beyond these points, we are not at liberty to change the Supper itself.

The importance of the Lord's Supper is brought out by the fact that Matthew, Mark, and Luke all speak of it in their writings. But I believe that one point that speaks of the special importance of the Lord's Supper has to do with how he learned about it. He was not a believer when the Lord was here on earth. He was saved afterwards, as we learn in Acts 9. But when it comes to the Lord's Supper, and what he had to say about it in 1 Corinthians 9, he began by saying, "For I have received of the Lord that

which also I delivered unto you” (1 Cor. 11:23), and then he went on to say what Matthew, Mark, and Luke said. I believe this signifies at least two points which we also should remember:

1) It emphasizes the importance of the Lord’s Supper. The Lord Jesus made the details known to the Apostle Paul by special revelation. The Apostle Peter could have told Paul what the Lord did that night, or the Apostle John could have told him. Any of the apostles could have told him. But instead, *the Lord told him!* This surely indicates how important it was to the Lord.

But the second point is this:

2) The Lord obviously wanted to preserve the purity of the Supper. In spite of that there are those who have changed it, either as to what basically it is, or who is to participate in it. And you will doubtless remember that in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul went on to say that because the Supper had been observed in a manner that was displeasing to the Lord, “many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor. 11:30). This means that there were people who had physical problems that they had not gotten over, and there had been many funerals among the church people in Corinth, because they had displeased the Lord in the way they had observed the Lord’s Supper. Every meeting of the church where we gather together to hear the Word of God, is important. And every meeting where we gather together for prayer, is important. But there is a special way in which the observance of the Lord’s Supper is important to the Members of the Godhead, and that is why we need to follow very carefully what the Lord has told us to do. It all has to do with our Savior, and with salvation itself. It is symbolic to be sure, but symbols of the highest degree of importance.

The Lord and His disciples had just observed the Passover. And it appears that they observed the Passover just as God told Moses in the OT that it should be observed on that night before the God brought His people out of bondage in Egypt.

But then the Lord introduced something which the disciples themselves had never observed before, and there is nothing in the text that would lead us to think that they even anticipated what the Lord would do. The first had to do with:

I. THE BREAD.

The words of the Lord Jesus here are full of meaning. He said concerning the bread,

A. “This is my body.”

Now some interpret this as meaning that at that moment the bread was turned into the actual body of the Lord. Others say that this meant that He was spiritually present in the bread. But the simplest and most reasonable explanation is that the Lord was saying, “This bread represents my body.” It continued to be bread, but the bread symbolized the body of the Lord.

The Lord was still in His body. Therefore, He was making that bread a picture of His own body.

They had only unleavened bread at the Passover, and so we can say that the bread the Lord was speaking about was also unleavened. Leaven in the Bible is always a type of sin; unleavened bread pictured that which was sinless. And this was a true and an absolutely important part of the body, or of the humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Passover Lamb had to be “without blemish,” that is, without any physical flaw at all. The Lord Jesus had a body prepared for Him by God, and that body, that humanity, was untarnished by any sin in any way. The bread itself speaks of the absolute perfection of our Lord Jesus Christ. “He did not sin” (1 Peter 2:22). “In Him was no sin” (1 John 3:5). “He is pure (1 John 3:3). He “knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21). And, as we read in Heb. 4:15, He was “without sin.” If we deny that absolute sinlessness, the complete holiness, of our Lord Jesus Christ, saying that He was a sinner like any other Person, then we are saying that He needed a Savior. And this would disqualify Him from being our Savior. For the Lord Jesus Christ to come into the world as the child of the virgin Mary, did nothing to change what He had always been before, the spotless Son of God. It is absolutely essential that we believe that, and we can believe it, because it is true!

But now let us look at:

B. What He did with the bread (Luke 22:19).

We read in this verse four things which the Lord did with the bread.

1. “He took it (v. 19).”

For the Lord to move His disciples from the Passover to this new Supper, was an indication that the time had come when the believers were moved from the types and symbols in the Law, to Christ. Those endless sacrifices were worthless in themselves, but they pointed ahead to Christ. So when Christ came, it meant moving away from the Passover to that which the Passover Lamb typified, and He was Christ.

Listen to what the writer of the book of Hebrews had to say in Hebrews 10:4-10:

4 For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me:

6 In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

7 Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

8 Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

9 Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

This was largely a quotation from Psalm 40, one of the Psalms we are going to learn in our Bible Memory work, starting this week. A body was prepared for our Lord, a body He received at His conception by the Holy Spirit. And so for the Lord to take the bread was symbolic of His acceptance of the work that the Father had ordained for Him to do. He delighted to do the will of God even though it was going to mean the worst kind of suffering for Him.

But notice in our text that there was a second thing that the Lord did.

2. He “gave thanks” (v. 19).

This is the translation of the Greek verb from which we get our word, *eucharist*. The Greek word is εὐχαριστέω. It means *to give thanks*. Here the Lord was consecrating Himself to the Father to do the work that

the Father had sent Him to do. What a most solemn moment that was in this first Lord's Supper. His hour had come, and He did not shrink from doing the Father's will.

And then we read that

3. He "broke it" (v. 19).

Do you remember those words of the Lord Jesus where He said this?

17 Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again.

18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father (John 10:17-18).

And do you remember the last words that our Lord spoke from the Cross? I will read it to you from the NKJV:

And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, "Father, 'into Your hands I commit My spirit.' " Having said this, He breathed His last (Luke 23:46).

For the Lord Jesus to break the bread was a picture of Him giving Himself voluntarily to death. In one way we can say that Jews and Gentiles alike murdered the Lord Jesus. But in another way we see that *He broke the bread*, that is, He voluntarily laid down His life in death. *What a marvelous picture of the sovereignty of God and the sovereignty of the Lord Jesus Christ!* Through all of the sufferings and death of the Lord Jesus, God and Christ were in absolute control of everything. It is in the Lord's Supper that we get our thinking straightened out with regard to our Lord's death on the Cross.

But then the Lord did a fourth wonderful thing.

4. He "gave unto them" (v. 19).

This is the true picture of our salvation. He "gave to them." Again let me remind you of what the Lord said, and these words, too, we find in John 10. I feel sure that most of you will remember them as I read them to you.

27 My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

28 And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish,

neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

And then the Lord strengthened and explained this action even more when He added, “This is my body which is given for you.”

In the Apostle Paul’s account, this is how he reported the words of the Lord Jesus:

23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me (1 Cor. 11:23-24).

What a marvelous picture of particular redemption! The Lord told His disciples that His death was especially for them! And their salvation was certain because He said to them, “Take, eat.” The initiative in salvation always comes from the Lord. We seek Him because He seeks us first. We love Him because He loved us first. We were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and as we came on the scene, He drew us, and we came.

From my earliest years I remember singing in church that wonderful hymn by Philip Doddridge, but it was not until much later that I really understood the meaning of the words. Let me give you a couple of the verses. It is hymn #589 in our Hymnal:

O happy day, that fixed my choice
On Thee, my Saviour, and my God!
Well may this glowing heart rejoice,
And tell its raptures all abroad.

‘Tis done! the great transactions done!
I am my Lord’s, and He is mine;
He drew me, and I followed on,
Charmed to confess the voice divine.

Now let us look at what the Lord said about

II. THE CUP (Luke 22:20).

The Lord explained the cup with the fruit of the vine in it as “the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”

— The word “testament” is the translation of the Greek word, διαθήκη. So is translated *covenant*, and at other times *testament*. But here it seems that the word testament is the better word, and I say that because of what we have in Heb. 9:13-16:

13 For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh:

14 How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

— Our translations vary as to whether to use the word *covenant* or *testament*. Some introduce the word *will*. But regardless of the word we choose to use, the promise of God required the death of a fitting substitute, and the only One Who would qualify was the Son of God Who became a Man. We are not saved by His example. We are not saved by our good works. We are saved by the blood of the crucified One. There can be no change whatever in the Lord’s Supper because as it is, it perfectly portrays what is necessary for our salvation.

This brings us to:

III. THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER (Luke 22:19).

We have our Lord’s words for it: “This do in remembrance of Me.” We do this remembering Who He is – this is seen in the Break. And we do it remembering what He did – He shed His precious blood, taking our sins upon Himself, that we might be forgiven, cleansed, and made acceptable to God through faith in what Christ did for us.

— **Concl:** I close by reminding you of how the Lord pictured salvation during the course of His earthly life and teaching, because this is

what qualifies us to come to the Lord's Table to partake of the Lord's Supper. I am referring to the Lord's words in John 6 where He said,

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.

52 The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?

53 Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.

54 Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.

55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.

56 He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.

57 As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me (John 6:51-57).

When we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, we are actually partaking of Him, eating His flesh and drinking His blood. We become a part of Him forever, and He becomes a part of us. He is in us, and we are in Him.

Therefore, the Lord's Table is for the Lord's people. And it is a time when we are to search our own hearts to make sure that our relationship with Him is what He wants it to be.