

Shall we open our Bibles this morning to Mark 14:22 as we are continuing our study through Mark's gospel and find ourselves on Thursday night (or, if you will, on the Jewish calendar on Friday morning) as the Lord gathers with His twelve men to have Passover dinner together up in an upper room somewhere in Jerusalem. I think it is in Mark's (John Mark's) mother's and dad's house, but we can't be sure.

But the Lord had, last week as we studied together, sent out two of His boys to prepare the meal, kind of cryptically hiding it from all of the other guys - where they were going to be eating. And we mentioned to you last week that Judas had betrayed the Lord the week before and was looking for an opportunity to kind of get Jesus isolated somewhere. But the Lord was in charge, and Mark and all of the other gospel writers make a big deal out of us being aware of the fact that the Lord wasn't taken or slipped or somehow overcome. He willingly went to give His life. In fact Mark, as the one who writes about our Lord being a Servant, goes out of his way to speak about the willingness on the Lord's part and His complete oversight over all that goes on in all of the stories that we read going forward. So the Lord wanted some time with His disciples before Judas would be able to go and tell the planners, if you will, where He was. And He would dismiss Judas from dinner about half-way through the Passover meal.

We also mentioned to you that Mark is the shortest reporter when it came to the last supper. He covers it in fourteen verses, I think Matthew gives it fifteen, Luke twenty-four. You really need to go to the gospel of John to get the big picture. He covers it in about four chapters, and we did go through that on a Wednesday night for nineteen weeks - those chapters. So if you want to dig in, 155 verses in all, you're welcome to go over to the book store and check out that series of studies. Interestingly enough, for all of the gospels that cover communion, John, with all of his report, leaves it out entirely because it just didn't fit in with the message he was bringing about Jesus and who He was.

Well, last week we concluded with these twelve men meeting with Jesus and the Lord saying something that shocked eleven of them - that one of them was a traitor. And it left these broken-hearted disciples saying, "I hope it's not me. I think it could be me, but I hope it's not me." And we mentioned to you last week

that the very awareness of their weakness and sin is a pretty good indicator that a couple days down the road when they're going to get an opportunity to receive the Lord and be born again, they're ready because they realize that they're sinful, and they need a Helper. And so their hearts were prepared. So, they wanted to know who it was. Jesus' words in verse 20 did not help them much because part of the dinner was to eat together. And so, when Judas went out, and he was told to go do what he did quickly, really nobody assumed it was him.

Well this morning, we'd like to return to the dinner (verse 22) in the upper room, but this time with Judas out of the picture as the Lord establishes what we know to be communion or the Lord's Supper. And He does it out of the remnants of the Passover meal. It's important you know the Old Testament if you're going to understand the New. You can't really separate them. And this is pretty familiar ground to you, I'm sure. But it's also very important ground if you look at it from the context in which Jesus established it. In fact, radical things take place this weekend as the Lord gives His life and the application of the Passover completely fulfilled this weekend. We won't need any more Passover feasts, if you will, now.

So, at the table, the Lord now introduces communion as a picture of the past, but He makes it the reality of their present-tense. Passover was established by the LORD years ago - Exodus 12 - when God brought the children of Israel out of the bondage and out of the slavery of Egypt. And so every year they were to celebrate, "God brought us out." In fact, all of those pictures - spiritually - are significant. Egypt, in the Bible, when it's used spiritually speaks of our life in the world - in bondage, under a wicked taskmaster, life not really lived as it could be and should be; it's a picture of the world. Pharaoh is a type of Satan. He wants to keep you down, he seeks to oppress and keep you bound. The Passover lamb is the ultimate picture of Jesus, who would come and shed His blood; and, rather than putting it on the doorpost of the house, He puts it on your heart, on your life. And He covers you and delivers you from sin. The Promised Land is not heaven because there are enemies in it, but it is that place that you come to as a Christian where you can live a godly life in a wicked world. You can overcome enemies stronger than you. You can not only survive but excel, overcome. And so all of those pictures are beautifully so. Paul, when he writes to the Colossians in chapter 2, he said all of these things beforehand, these pictures and types, were just that; "they were foreshadowings of that which was coming." Though they were shadows, Jesus was the substance or the form. So everything that you see, in a spiritual sense, points to Christ; also all of the things that you find at the Passover meal.

So, as the families put the blood of the lamb without spot or blemish on the doors and the lintels of their home, and the Angel of death passed over, so, when you get to the New Testament, you have Jesus as your Lord. His blood is upon you, and the judgment of God is passed from you onto Him; and so you come away free, if you will, from your sin and delivered from it. And even that whole picture in the Old Testament of before Passover - you'd scour the house to get rid of the leaven which, spiritually, always represents sin (in the Bible as well). It is the issue of you get saved, and now you begin to walk with God, and you want to get rid of sin out of your life. You don't want to live that way anymore.

So, as Jesus continues the meal (here in verse 22), in reality the substance of all of the pictures on the table and the things that they're handling now sits among them. He's the fulfillment of all that they had learned over those centuries as God's people, Israel. This would be, like I said, the last Passover that God would ever recognize. Because after this, Jesus would die - the Son of God, the Lamb of God would give His life. The blood of God's Son would be available to cleanse everyone. And so this is that pretty big deal. In fact, in Luke 22:15, Jesus says to them before He institutes this sacrament of communion, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer." In other words, Jesus came to this last supper, if you will, with great joy, knowing this was it. This is all of the purposes and reasons for which He had come. He had come in the desire to, with great emotion I think, bring them together so that they could come to Him and find life from Him. If you keep that in mind as you read about this whole last supper and communion, that Jesus, for the joy set before Him, He endures the cross, says to the disciples, "Man, I've been looking forward to this." And you think, "You're about to die!" "I know, but I know what's going to happen because I die." And God's great desire for you is to have fellowship. And Jesus says, "I have this fervent desire." It's an emotional word. "I want to get this over with so that you and I can be together" in the present tense. And so that's the Lord's heart as He comes together, longing for this time, desiring this because the Lord wants fellowship with you. In fact, if you read the Luke 22 passage, Jesus goes on to say, "The next time I drink this cup with you" (and all), "I'm going to drink it in the kingdom." And so when you look through the Bible passages and all, the next time you and I, as the body, will sit with Jesus will be at the marriage supper of the Lamb when we will sit upon the earth during the millennial kingdom, and we will eat together with Jesus. So, Passover looked forward to this day, and communion looks back to the time that Jesus gave His life; and then looks forward to His return. So, beautiful pictures.

But understand that from the disciples' standpoint, sitting at this meal, all they knew was the Passover. And it is Jesus identifying Himself at every place so they'll understand He is the Passover Lamb. When you go through the Bible, there are an awful lot of places where the prophets, especially, of old would undergird their messages with dramatic, kind of symbolic, actions. And even though sometimes the message wasn't heard, the actions were really never forgotten. If you go to, for example, Ezekiel 4, there's Ezekiel. He draws a picture of Jerusalem on a tablet, and then he begins to put around the tablet these little miniature camps and said to the people, "We're going down. The enemy's coming. We're not walking with God. We're sitting ducks." And they didn't listen, but the message was clear. In chapter 5 of Ezekiel, Ezekiel the prophet shaves his head and his beard. He's a bald prophet - unheard of in Hebrew culture - and he took these three piles of hair, and he burned one, and he struck another with the sword, and then the third one he just threw up into the air, and the hair kind of blew in all directions. And he said, "The overthrow is coming. We're going to be scattered with the wind." And nobody listened. But years later they remembered the dramatic presentation. In Jeremiah 27, it's Jeremiah who puts a yoke on, and he wears it everywhere he goes; this big old yoke you put on an oxen. And everyone would say, "That's not a good lookin' tie," and he would say, "This is what's going to happen to us. The Babylonians are coming." Ahijah the prophet cut his coat into twelve pieces (1 Kings 11), and he sent ten of them to Jeroboam and talked to him about the division of the kingdom. And wherever you turn, there are these symbolic, kind of acting out, spiritual truths that the Lord uses to communicate truth. And you go to the last supper, and here's Jesus, the truth Prophet, and He reinterprets the words and the symbols of the Passover, the ones that the disciples had known since they were kids. But this time He wants them to know it's all about Him.

And so, as the meal is laid out, and the roasted lamb is kind of at the centerpiece, and Jesus is the host, He tells this story of the Passover, and each one of the foods is symbolically identified. There's those bitter herbs that remind them of the slavery that they had suffered before the LORD delivered them. There was the stewed fruit which, both in color and in consistency, was a reminder of the bricks they had to make the mortar by hand for Pharaoh. And then there's the lamb, whose blood kept the families alive from the Angel of death and the firstborn spared. And then there was that unleavened bread and as the Lord passed it around the table, and later after dinner the third of four cups of wine, (which was traditional to the Passover meal), Jesus goes out of His way, breaks the meditative silence that you would find at a Passover meal even today, to say, "It's

all about Me," and communion becomes that turning, if you will, of a Jewish very symbolic practice to a faith in God that He had sent His Son.

So we read in verse 22, it says, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' " Now, from the Passover practices of today, we can learn something about what had taken place that evening. The first glass of wine (if you've ever been to a Passover Seder) opened the meal. It was called the "*Kiddush*." It was a cup of blessing. The host would bless the Lord and welcome the people, and they would take their seats. The second cup of wine, later on in the meal, was the cup of judgment - as the Lord talked about the judgment that God brought in plagues upon the Egyptians so that He could secure the people's release. The host even put his finger in the wine at that point and splattered it, if you will, across the cloth and the meal that was in front of Him. It was the judgment of God. He affected every part of this work. Well then, after that (verse 22), the bread is taken. It's broken, it's blessed, it's dipped in these bitter herbs, the "*chazeret*," and it's given, after a blessing, to the people that were sitting as they dip into this meal. Well, the words which Jesus speaks here (in verse 22), uses to bless - notice He took the bread, and He blessed it (this unleavened bread), and then He passed it around. We don't know if the prayer that you hear today in modern Jewish practices was already written at the time of Jesus. We don't have that prayer here in the Bible. What we do have are the most important words of all, "This is My body, take and eat. This is My body." And Paul will write to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 11), "which is broken for you." And when He gives thanks, He broke, and He said, "This is My body. Eat. Do this in remembrance of Me." And so, much like the lamb that was slain at the Passover, which they understood, so Jesus would be broken for us. "This is My body." "Wait a minute. This is to represent the lamb that was slain on that Passover day to save us and our people." "No, no, no. I'm that Lamb. I'm the body now." And the Lord would be slain for us, physically. He was scourged by the Romans. We read that in Acts 22:24 as Paul is preaching about him being "examined by scourging." So, the Romans used to beat you with whips, and they would give you thirty-nine lashes, according to history. And they wouldn't give you forty because they wanted you to know they were merciful. But the beating usually killed you. It was like the cat o' nine tails. It would rip big chunks of flesh out of your back. The way that we read it there in Acts 22 with Paul was that it says, "So that he might know why they shouted so against him." "Let's just beat him a little until he confesses to something." And history tells us that when people were beaten by the Romans, they would confess to things they'd never done just to

quit getting beaten. And so Jesus had nothing to say. We read it this morning in Isaiah 53, that "He opened not His mouth" (verse 7). You'll read it twice in two verses. "Like a lamb before its shearers is silent." He had nothing to confess. He hadn't done anything wrong, and so He took the full brunt of this beating. "Chastisement fell upon Him" (verse 5). And for His disciples, from now on whenever they would eat this bread of communion, it was to remind them of Jesus' work, that His body had been broken for them. Paul said to the Hebrews, in chapter 9:22, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin. Or Peter writes, "In His own body, He bore our sins - by His stripes we are healed" (1 Peter 2:24). We read that as well in Isaiah 53:5. So this was a significant changing the table, if you will, for these men that were sitting with Him. Up to now, it had always been a looking back; but now it was about to be a looking forward, especially to the death that Jesus would die.

We read in verse 23, "Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.'" Paul will write (1 Corinthians 11:25), "In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.'" Now typical Passover meal again. It was the third cup of wine at dinner that was passed around. It was called the cup of redemption. And so this is the cup that Jesus took that spoke of the death of the firstborn and the deliverance of God for Israel by the blood of the lamb. And again, that's shared at the Passover. Except Jesus, this time, takes the cup, and He says, "It's really not about the lamb back then. It's about Me, the Lamb. I'm the One who's coming." And He ties, if you will, a big bow around all of this symbolic nature of the Passover in times past and His coming. And so He identifies Himself as the Passover Lamb, which means He was sinless, without spot and without blemish. He's the unleavened bread, that which has not sinned. And He pours His blood - not upon our door but upon our life. And so He says to them, as He drinks this third cup, "This is the new covenant." The word "covenant" means agreement. It is a word that is used not in agreement where two parties have an equal responsibility, but literally speaking of God's arrangements and God's accomplishments on our behalf that we can just receive or we can reject. The old covenant, Old Testament if you will, was dependent upon you coming to the LORD in the system of blood sacrifice. If you were ever to get near to the LORD in fellowship, you'd have to bring an offering for sin - a goat, a lamb, an ox. The sin offering was offered to the LORD by the

priest. You laid your hands upon its head. You confessed you were a sinner, and you allowed the blood that was shed by this animal to get you close. The blood was sprinkled on the altar, the animal was killed (it says in Exodus 24). He is a "*kaphar*." The word "*kaphar*" means to cover, like putting a lid on. The animal didn't really get rid of your sin, but it painted that portrait of death for sin, and it covered you in the Old Testament. When you had offered a sin offering, then you could offer the other offerings - peace offerings and fellowship offerings - with God. But they were all kind of dependent upon first dealing with the sin. When you get to the book of Hebrews 10:4, Paul said, "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins." It can cover your sin, but there's really no substitute of an animal for you. And so God sent His Son in the image of man and took a flesh, lived the life, and was the perfect sacrifice, the exchange - His life for ours. And so you read, "By one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). By this one Man, by this one sacrifice, by this one time, God saved man. That was His plan. So Jesus pays the price, and He removes the penalty of sin, the power of sin, and He gives us life to be able to live for Him.

So, at this Passover supper, Jesus points out to His disciples the clear purpose of His coming. "I want you to know who I am." He redefines all of the symbolism at this memorial meal. It would now be called, according to Paul (1 Corinthians 11:20), the "Lord's Supper," or, as we call it, communion - which is a word that just means fellowship with God, intimacy, "*koinonia*."

So we read, in verse 25, that Jesus said, " 'Assuredly, I say to you I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.' And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" and towards Gethsemane. The significance of what Jesus proclaims here I think can be appreciated in the four cups of wine that they drink during the Passover meal. And it goes along with what the Lord reports through Moses in Exodus 6, where he makes them four promises. He said, "I will bring you out, I will rescue you from bondage, I will redeem you, and I will take you as My people." The last cup of wine that is drunk at a Passover meal was the cup of consummation, as it is called, or literally that the fruit will then be completely accomplished; or the Lord's promises will be completely seen. So, when we get to the Kingdom Age where we're going to sit down with the Lord in the kingdom, then the full fruit of His work will be seen. So there's a cup of redemption and then there's a cup of fulfillment, if you will, at the end.

So after supper (and, like I said, Mark runs through this pretty quickly - we did it in just a couple of weeks), the guys sing what would have been the normal song to sing after Passover - Psalm 118. It's the last of the Hallel psalms. And then they get up, and they begin a walk - which was about a mile and a half - down the slopes, through the Kidron, back up on the other side to the Garden of Gethsemane. Meanwhile, Judas is off in town plotting with the priests, getting everybody together, getting the Roman soldiers, and eventually coming to that place (maybe three hours or so later) where they would arrest the Lord. So I can only imagine what is going through our Lord's thoughts as He takes these guys, and He heads for the cross. There's nothing to interrupt that any longer. It is on. The Lord has come. He has looked forward to this for eternity past. And these men were going to be the start of a church bought with the blood of the Lamb.

So the first communion was established by Jesus here, but it was at a typical Jewish feast, and it was a very simple ceremony wrapped in the symbolism of the past. The Passover always looked ahead to the cross. We know that, but for them, it looked forward to a Deliverer. Communion has always looked back to what God has done, but it also makes us look forward to the fact that He's going to return.

Over the years, there have been many doctrines that have emerged about this simple rite that Jesus established for the church, not the least of which is - if you were raised Catholic like I was - the doctrine of transubstantiation, where the bread and the wine (as they teach us) actually become the body and blood of the Lord, and they treat this - the Catholics call it the Eucharist. The word "Eucharist" is a Greek word; it just means to give thanks. It's in verse 23, actually; the word "thanks" is used. I would be remiss if I didn't at least say to you that the Bible never teaches that concept. In fact, it's almost an illogical position to take. For one thing, Jesus was still alive. "Here, take and eat this My body. Oh, by the way, I'm still right here." I mean, it doesn't even make practical sense. The disciples didn't understand it that way. They understood it symbolically. They instituted it into the life of the early church. You will find it in the book of Acts, you'll find it in the epistles, if you will - instructions for approaching with care and seriousness. Paul talks about it to the Corinthians as well. They always understood everything that had to do with Passover as symbolic. Nobody ever showed up and thought that that was a literal thing. It was a pointing to the past, to the work that God has done. We certainly take all of Jesus' words of illustration that are allegorical to be just that - allegorical. So when the Lord says, "I am the vine," you don't go, "He's a vine." "My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch....." I don't

think you guys are a bunch of trees. But it's allegorical, it's illustrative in tone. If I showed you a picture in my wallet of my wife and said, "This is my wife," you wouldn't go, "That's your wife? She's so thin, look, and she fits in your pocket." So we have to be careful when we try to read into the Scriptures. Now I'll give you maybe the best example for you that have come out of that background. In John 6, where Jesus is multiplying the food, and the people run around to try to get to Him, and they want more food, the Lord says, "Man, you put so much effort to get the food that's perishing. You should labor for that bread that leads to everlasting life." And as the crowds were huge, Jesus one time said to them, "I am the bread of life. Unless you eat of Me, you shall not have life." And people went, "That's gross!" And you'll read there (towards the end of chapter 6 of John) that many of them departed from Him because they didn't like the words that He was using. And Jesus says to the disciples, "Are you also offended by My words? Listen to Me. The words that I am speaking to you are spiritual, and they're life." He goes out of His way to say, "I'm not telling you to take a bite out of My arm, but I'm making the picture that, like you eat bread and it keeps you physically alive, you need to partake of Me if you want spiritual life." It's illustrative. It's spiritual in nature. And, unfortunately, a lot of folks have gotten off on the "take care of the host, be careful not to drop it." It's an aberration, certainly, of biblical teaching. But we should do it in remembrance of Him. Jesus says that time and again. Paul goes out of his way to say the same thing. Realizing that God's method of salvation is the death of His Son, the blood that He shed, assuring everyone that that's sufficient to save and to give life, and then you'll be fine. This was pretty simple, but yet it was revolutionary to the disciples. This is why Jesus needed time before Judas would crash the party. He wanted them to know and understand why He came.

Now the question - sometimes people ask, "How often should I have communion?" 1 Corinthians 11:25 says, "as often as you do....." It's kind of an open-ended statement, "as often as you do." We have communion as a church once a month on the last Wednesday of every month. We look forward to having communion together. Our smaller group ministries in our church sometimes have them at their quarterly meetings and all, and as the Lord leads. But "as often as you do," don't forget what it was there for, why God gave it to us - so that we might have communion or fellowship with God.

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
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