

**Series:** Mark — Summer 2020 Series

**Title:** “A Special Meal”

**Text:** Mark 14:22-26

**Date:** July 19, 2020

## **Verse 22**

In verse 22, Mark transitions to give an account of the first Lord’s Supper. Matthew speaks of the same event in Matthew 26:26-30, Luke provides record in Luke 22:14-23, and Paul shares a synopsis in 1 Corinthians 11:17-26. In our current passage, we read, “As they were eating, he took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to them, and said, ‘Take it; this is my body’” (Mark 14:22). The opening phrase in our verse (“as they were eating”) tells us the events at hand took place as Jesus and His disciples observed the Passover meal.<sup>1</sup>

Jesus made preparations for the sacred meal back in Mark 14:12-16. In Mark 14:17-21, He used the gathering to announce His upcoming betrayal by one of His disciples. In our current passage, we see Jesus intentionally using the Passover as a memorial for His death. By God’s Divine design (Revelation 13:8), He came to earth to die as a sacrifice for humanity’s sin. As a result, it is fitting to view Him as a sort of “Passover lamb” who “has been sacrificed” on our behalf (1 Corinthians 5:7).

According to the customs associated with the sacred feast, Jesus “took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to them.” In Jewish tradition, the head of a household was supposed to lead the observance.<sup>2</sup> Since Jesus was the leader of the group, He oversaw the feast. According to Hebrew custom, four different cups of wine were consumed during the Passover. The first was enjoyed before the food was served, the second was served with the meal, the third was consumed immediately after the meal, and the fourth was shared shortly before the gathering concluded.<sup>3</sup> Verse 22 seems to be concerned with the second cup of wine. Jesus is in the act of distributing the main course of the meal. Customarily, this would involve the second glass of wine, stewed fruit, greens, bitter herbs, roasted lamb, and unleavened bread.<sup>4</sup>

Mark says Jesus “blessed” the food as He served the group. The original language of the text depicts a prayer involving thanksgiving and praise.<sup>5</sup> It is the word from which we get “Eucharist,” the term the early church originally used as a title for the Lord’s Supper.<sup>6</sup> The idea isn’t that Jesus sanctified the bread through His prayer, or that He somehow transformed it into holy material; rather, the idea is that He simply returned

---

<sup>1</sup> Schnabel, 355.

<sup>2</sup> Ferguson, 230.

<sup>3</sup> Ferguson, 230-231.

<sup>4</sup> Ferguson, 230.

<sup>5</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 99.

<sup>6</sup> Brooks, 228.

thanks to God.<sup>7</sup> The customary prayer was derived from Berakhot 6:1 of the Mishnah. It asked, “Who brings forth bread from the earth?”<sup>8</sup> The obvious reply to the rhetorical prayer was “The Lord!” The blessing was designed to remind those present of God’s graciousness.

Reflection on what God had done for His people was the main purpose of the Passover meal. As the meal began, the youngest in attendance was supposed to ask the head of the household, “Why do we eat this meal?” In response to the question, the leader would recount God’s blessings, detailing the way in which the Lord had delivered the Jews from Egyptian bondage.<sup>9</sup> After he gave his explanation, the gathering would respond by singing Psalms 113-115, psalms that demoralized the Lord’s deliverance from Egypt. Then the head of the household would serve the food, holding up the unleavened bread and declaring, “This is the bread of affliction which our fathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let everyone who hungers come and eat; let everyone who is needy come and eat the Passover meal.”<sup>10</sup> Because of these customs, the meal was a way of remembering what God had done on behalf of His people.

In the New Covenant, the Lord’s Supper serves a similar purpose. The meal is designed to remind us of what Jesus has done for us. In Luke’s account, we read of the way in which Jesus said “Do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). In his instructions concerning the ordinance, Paul said, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). The Lord knows His people have a tendency to forget important spiritual truth, so He created the Lord’s Supper to be a perpetual reminder of glorious gospel realities.

It is for this reason that believers alone should take part in the celebration. Every once in a while, someone will ask me, “Pastor, who is allowed to participate in the Lord’s Supper?” I usually invite all believers to do so. If one has been saved, he or she has good reason to take of the bread and cup. On the contrary, unbelievers do not. They have not been saved, so they have nothing to remember or celebrate. Ryle has commented, “Let it be a settled principle in our Christianity that no unbeliever ought to go to the Lord’s table, and that the sacrament will not do our souls the slightest good, if we do not receive it with repentance and faith.”<sup>11</sup>

When we take of the bread and the cup, we are supposed to remember what Jesus has done on our behalf. We see this in our current text as our Lord says, “Take it; this is my body.” It is important to note that Jesus did not mean to say the bread was literally His flesh. Religious groups that claim the bread of the Lord’s Supper becomes the actual body of Christ are misled and mistaken. The disciples could have never have

---

<sup>7</sup> Brooks, 228.

<sup>8</sup> Schnabel, 356.

<sup>9</sup> Ferguson, 231.

<sup>10</sup> Ferguson, 231.

<sup>11</sup> Ryle, 244.

accepted such a view. Because Jesus stood in front of them physically, the bread could not have been His corporal being.<sup>12</sup> It seems best to translate the word “is” in verse 22 as “represents,” since there was no word for “is” in the Aramaic language Jesus spoke.<sup>13</sup> Our Lord meant to convey the idea that the bread was a token or symbol that represented His physical body.

Herein lies the significance of the Lord’s Supper. The ordinance is designed to refresh our spiritual memories. It makes us recall our sin. It stirs up our memories, making us mindful of how Jesus was our substitute. Without the meal, we might forget who we are in Christ. Satan is always working to make us have low view of ourselves and our God (Genesis 3:1; Job 2:4, 5, and 9; and James 1:13). Consequently, we need reminders that we are forgiven of our sin (Romans 5:1), that we are righteous in Christ (Romans 5:17-18), and that there is no condemnation hanging over our lives (Romans 8:1). No failure, no conflict, and no person can change our spiritual status (John 10:28). We are righteous in Jesus and a glorious future awaits us! The Lord’s Supper provides an opportunity for us to remember these powerful truths.

### **Verse 23**

Verse 23 tells of how Jesus distributed the wine: “Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it” (Mark 14:23). In our current verse, it seems that Jesus is portrayed as serving the third cup of wine. The cup was usually a shared one. Each participant at the meal drank from the same vessel.<sup>14</sup>

During this round of drinking, worshippers usually sang Psalms 116-118, Psalms that gave thanks to God for His deliverance. For Christians, the Lord’s Supper is an opportunity to thank God for deliverance from sin. The word “cup” was often used as a symbol for wrath in the Jewish perspective.<sup>15</sup> By holding up the vessel, Jesus gave an allusion to His upcoming death. He would be the one who, through “anguish,” would “justify many” (Isaiah 53:11).

It is important to be aware of the nature of the wine Jesus served. The beverage He consumed was not on par with modern wine. It seems likely that He used the customary wine of His day. Our text reveals this to be true by calling the drink “the fruit of the vine.” The same language is used in the Papyrus of a grape vine.<sup>16</sup> Such was the moniker for the popular diluted wine of Judea. It was usually a concoction of one third wine and two thirds water. The Greek word “oínos” was used for the stronger

---

<sup>12</sup> Brooks, 228.

<sup>13</sup> Brooks, 229.

<sup>14</sup> Schnabel, 356.

<sup>15</sup> Schnabel, 357.

<sup>16</sup> Robertson, 210.

beverage.<sup>17</sup> As a result, one should be aware that grape juice is perfectly acceptable for use at the Lord's table.<sup>18</sup>

Jesus used the fruit of the vine as a symbol. For the first century mind, the stronger forms of wine were often used for cleansing. If one was injured, he or she might apply oínos to a cut or scrape. The alcoholic properties helped sanitize and sterilize. It is for this reason that the Good Samaritan poured wine onto the wounds of the victim he found on the roadside (Luke 10:34). In holding up the fruit of the vine, Jesus used it as a symbolic representation for His blood. His disciples knew that wine had cleansing properties. In a similar way, the blood had the ability to cleanse from sin. The author of Hebrews said "the blood of Christ" can "cleanse our consciences from dead works so that we can serve the living God" (Hebrews 9:14).

### **Verse 24**

The meal continues in verse 24 with Jesus saying, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mark 14:24). Our Lord's words contained a departure from the regular Passover meal. They introduced a monumental change for the disciples. Jesus used the word translated "covenant" to depict the different nature of His meal. The Greek uses a term that spoke of a "testament" or a "will."<sup>19</sup> It was used in reference to an agreement or contract between two people. In the original language of the New Testament, the word is a compound word that literally means "two" and "will."<sup>20</sup>

In New Testament times, most wills became binding upon death of the one who initiated the will. Hebrews 9:16 says, "Where a will exists, the death of the one who made it must be established." In Christian salvation, the Lord's testament with humanity was enacted by the death of Jesus. Through His crucifixion on the cross, we became beneficiaries of His inheritance. We gained forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and hope of a bright future.

Jesus employs the word translated "covenant" to highlight the nature of His work. Whereas the Passover demoralized rescue from Egypt, the Lord's Supper would memorialize rescue from sin. Throughout the New Testament, we read about the superior nature of the Christian covenant. Hebrews 7:22 says, "Jesus has also become the guarantee of a better covenant." Ultimately, our Lord's ratification of the New Covenant was a fulfillment of Hebrew prophecy. Jeremiah once declared, "'Look, the days are coming'—this is the Lord's declaration—'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah'" (Jeremiah 31:31).

In our current text, Jesus made His disciples aware that He was initiating the New Covenant of which the prophets had prophesied. He even used distinct words from the Torah in making His proclamation. The phrase "blood of the covenant" was a direct

---

<sup>17</sup> Robertson, 382.

<sup>18</sup> Robertson, 210.

<sup>19</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 99.

<sup>20</sup> Robertson, 209.

quote of Moses from Exodus 24:8. The same terminology is also found in Zechariah 9:11.<sup>21</sup> Our Lord wanted His disciples to know that He had come to establish a new way of relating to God through His blood.

For the Christian church, the cup of the Lord's Supper represents the "blood" of Christ. Such may seem a bit morbid or macabre. Some have mockingly labelled Christianity a "slaughterhouse religion" because of its adherence to blood atonement. It is important to note that blood has an important place in Christian salvation for good reason. The Lord ordained that every covenant between God and man be instituted with blood in order "to indicate that disobedience to the covenant stipulations would result in death."<sup>22</sup> The presence of blood, was intended to remind worshippers of the seriousness of their relationship with the Lord.

Blood also has significance in Christian theology because of the symbolic representation it holds. In God's eyes, it represents life. Such is fitting, since blood is the material that carries life-sustaining nutrients throughout the body (Leviticus 17:11). As a result, the Lord has always required a blood sacrifice in order for there to be atonement from sin. Think back to the Garden of Eden. When man and woman rebelled against God's command, death was the consequence (Genesis 2:17 and 3:24). In order for the penalty of sin to be reverse, a living being had to be sacrificed (Genesis 3:21). Since blood provides life-sustaining nutrients and oxygen to the cells of the body, it is an appropriate symbol for the spiritual life we need.

Blood persisted as a symbol of salvation throughout the Old Covenant. Under the New Covenant, it is Jesus that provides rescue from sin and death. In our text, Jesus speaks of His blood as being "poured out." The original language of the text depicts a violent shedding of blood, a gruesome death.<sup>23</sup> It provides a fitting portrayal of the way in which Jesus gave His life on our behalf. Scripture says we have been "justified by his blood" (Romans 5:9). In Ephesians 1:7 we read, "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." By believing that Jesus was sacrificed on behalf of our sins, one can receive forgiveness and life. By His blood, our guilt, sins, and shame can be erased. We have life, because Jesus gave His life on our behalf!

## **Verse 25**

In instituting the Lord's Supper, Jesus added yet a second wrinkle into the customary Passover meal. Mark gives us details in verse 25: "Truly I tell 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" (Mark 14:25). Usually worshippers consumed a fourth cup of wine before concluding the meal. Jesus left the fourth cup of wine on the table. He didn't drink it. He did so in order to

---

<sup>21</sup> Brooks, 230.

<sup>22</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 99.

<sup>23</sup> Brooks, 230.

provide a powerful picture, wanting His disciples to be aware of the future hope they had.

Our verse begins with the declaration “Truly I tell you.” The words form a solemn pronouncement in the original language.<sup>24</sup> Jesus meant to place emphasis on His words. He wanted His readers to listen carefully to His declaration, but He also wanted them to know that what He would say was true and binding. He was leaving the fourth cup untouched, but His disciples would drink with Him again.

Though He would die for sins, He would be raised. Furthermore, He would eventually establish His Kingdom upon the Earth. At that time, His followers would enjoy the cup with Him once again. They would live in unhindered fellowship with Him forever and ever. Paul’s account of the Lord’s Supper contains a similar allusion to the hope of the eternal state. The apostle said, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death *until he comes*” (1 Corinthians 11:26). The communion elements remind us that we will one day see Jesus face to face. We will live with Him in Paradise (Luke 23:43) – the New Heaven and the New Earth (Revelation 21:1). The Lord has gone away to prepare a place for us (John 14:1), and He will soon make all things new (Revelation 21:5). The former things will pass away, and there will be no pain, sadness, confusion, grief, hurt, deception, sin, or death forever (Revelation 21:4)!

In the eternal state, we will enjoy unhindered fellowship with God. The Hebrew prophets had foretold of a future meal that would usher in the age of Divine bliss (Isaiah 25:6-8). In Revelation, we learn that the eternal state will be marked by endless feasting in His presence (Revelation 19:6-10)!<sup>25</sup> This underscores a distinguishing trait of Christianity.

While most religions are focused on performance for God, Bible-based spirituality is focused on personal relationship with God. In John’s gospel, Jesus taught about how the Lord’s Supper highlights this truth. He said, “Truly I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves. The one who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day” (John 6:53-54). Life is at the heart of the gospel message. Those who are in Christ have both abundant life (John 10:10) and eternal life (John 17:3). Christians are never alone. Though Jesus is currently at the right hand of God (Hebrews 1:3), He is also in the hearts of His children (Ephesians 3:17). Throughout life, believers have a comforter, guide, teacher, and helper. They never need to be unnecessarily afraid, worried, upset, or bewildered. The Lord’s Supper serves as a reminder that they are one with Jesus.

## **Verse 26**

Verse 26 describes the conclusion of the first Lord’s Supper, saying, “After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (Mark 14:26). Normally, the Passover meal ended after the fourth cup of wine. Worshippers typically sang Psalms 116-118 and

---

<sup>24</sup> Schnabel, 358.

<sup>25</sup> Brooks, 230.

dispersed from the gathering.<sup>26</sup> Usually the Passover celebration was complete by midnight.<sup>27</sup> From studying the other gospels, it appears that Jesus and His disciples didn't travel to the Mount of Olives immediately. John interjects a teaching session that Jesus likely shared after the end of the Lord's Supper. See chapters 14-16 in John's gospel.

---

<sup>26</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 99.

<sup>27</sup> Rogers Jr. and Rogers III, 99.