

## **“The Lord’s Supper”**

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If you’re anything like me, you grew up going to church. And, if you’re like me, you grew up not understanding a lot of what happened at church. One of the things that I understood the least was communion, also known as the Lord’s Supper. I remember that once a month some broken pieces of matzo crackers were passed around on shiny plates and thimble-sized plastic cups of grape juice were distributed. The pastor would say, “The body of Christ, broken for you. Take and eat,” and, “The blood of Christ, shed for you. Take and drink.” I had no idea what he meant by eating Jesus’ body and drinking his blood, but I went along with the program and I didn’t ask any questions.

As you know by now, I think it’s bad—and even dangerous—for us not to understand what we’re doing when we worship together. Therefore, I want us to do understand what it is when we take the Lord’s Supper together. In recent weeks, we’ve talked about the importance of participation in the church, prayer, baptism, giving, discipline, singing, and preaching. We need to know what these things mean.

So, what is the Lord’s Supper and why is it important? Before giving a more comprehensive view of this important ritual we do, it’s important to make two observations: The Lord’s Supper is something that Jesus commanded we do, and it’s one of two rituals we observe that are visual and tangible representations of the gospel. The other one, of course, is baptism. Both of these rites, or ordinances, show us pictures of the gospel. For those who receive them, they are symbols of the gospel that can be touched and tasted. The Puritan Thomas Watson called the Lord’s Supper “a visible sermon.”<sup>1</sup> According to New Testament scholar I. Howard Marshall, “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper convey the message of the gospel in a visible form, and at the same time they provide the means by which the recipient can give outward, physical expression to his inward response to the message.”<sup>2</sup> So, what is this message? The message is that Jesus’ death gives us life.

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Watson, *The Lord’s Supper* (1665; repr., Edinburgh; Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 2004), 1. [??]

<sup>2</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord’s Supper* (1980; repr., Vancouver: Regent College Publishing, 2006), 14.

But the Lord's Supper is more than that. The Lord's Supper is based on the Last Supper, the final meal that Jesus ate with his disciples before he was arrested, tried, and crucified. And this meal was a Passover meal, which celebrated the great saving act of the Old Testament, when God rescued the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. So, the Last Supper had associations with the past (the original Passover), the present (what Jesus did with his disciples when they ate that meal with him on the night he was betrayed), and the future (both our taking of the Lord's Supper and the time when we will eat with Jesus in the new creation). Many of the great themes of the Bible come together in the Lord's Supper. To understand it is to understand the message of Christianity.

To understand the Last Supper and the Lord's Supper, we will turn to Luke's account of Jesus' final meal in Luke 22:7–20:

<sup>7</sup> Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." <sup>9</sup> They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" <sup>10</sup> He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him into the house that he enters <sup>11</sup> and tell the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?' <sup>12</sup> And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." <sup>13</sup> And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover.

<sup>14</sup> And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup> And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>20</sup> And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."<sup>3</sup>

Luke tells us that Jesus' Last Supper is a Passover meal. Before he can eat this meal with his disciples they must prepare it. It is the day of preparation, when the Passover lambs were slaughtered and arrangements were made for the meal, which would be held when the day of Passover began at sunset. What was the Passover? Let us review some Old Testament history.

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<sup>3</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV).

In Genesis, God chose Abraham and his family as the people he would use to bless the world. At the end of Genesis, this family ends up in Egypt, where Joseph, Abraham's great-grandson, is second in command. At the beginning of Exodus, something has changed. About 400 years have passed by and the Israelites have multiplied greatly, but they no longer find favor in the Egyptians' eyes. Instead, the Egyptians oppress and enslave them. God looks upon them with compassion and, because of his covenant with Abraham, he prepares to deliver them through the ministry of Moses. God tells Moses to go to Pharaoh and demand that he let the Israelites go. Pharaoh refuses because of the hardness of his heart, so God hits the Egyptians with nine plagues. Pharaoh still refuses to let the Israelites go, so God sends a tenth and final plague.

This time, all the firstborn in Egypt will die, both firstborn people and even the cattle (Exod. 11:4–5). The first nine plagues did not affect the Israelites, but this time, to avoid the tenth plague, they must do something. They are to take male, year-old, unblemished lambs, slaughter them, and place some of their blood on their door frames. When God comes to kill all the firstborn in Egypt, he will pass over the houses of the Israelites because of the blood. God tells them to commemorate this occasion by roasting the meat of the lambs and eating it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. They are to do this with their belts fastened, their sandals on their feet, and their staffs in hand, because they will soon leave Egypt, for Pharaoh will now let them go. God tells them to keep this feast once a year to remember the event. The Passover is so important that God even tells them that the month of this event will now be the first month of their calendar year.

If you're not used to the story of the Bible, this talk of plagues and death may be rather shocking. Why did God kill the firstborn Egyptians? And why did the Israelites have to sacrifice lambs and have their houses "covered" with their blood? Well, God first made human beings in his image, to reflect his greatness and character in the world that he made. He gave them the responsibility of ruling over his creation—as long as they obeyed him (Gen. 1:26–28; 2:15–17). But, from the beginning, human beings have disobeyed God. They haven't trusted his word. They haven't trusted that he's good. And when human beings turned away from the source of life, they entered into a world of death. Death is a punishment for our broken relationship with God.

When we talk about sin, we don't just talk about making bad choices. Sin is a power that entered the world when the first human beings turned their backs on God. One Christian, a

British writer named Francis Spufford, calls sin “the human propensity to [foul] things up.” He writes, “It’s our active inclination to break stuff, ‘stuff’ here including moods, promises, relationships we care about, and our own well-being and other people’s, as well as material objects whose high gloss positively seems to invite a big fat scratch.”<sup>4</sup> Some sins don’t seem so bad, but we must remember that when we sin, we are breaking God’s moral law, which is perfect, and we are sinning against God, who is perfect and infinite. I think we would agree that when we break a righteous law and we ignore the legal demands of an innocent and righteous person, that wrongdoing is worse than if we break a dumb, pointless law or if we ignore the demands of an unrighteous person. So, there’s a sense that breaking God’s perfect law and rebelling against a perfect and righteous God is the highest moral crime.

Even in Genesis, we see the idea of children deserving to die for sin. God told Abraham to sacrifice his precious son, Isaac (Gen. 22). This is hard to understand. But part of the point of such a command is to show that all human beings deserve death because of our sin. As the Bible famously puts it, “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). But God is merciful and gracious. He often doesn’t give us over to what we deserve. And he provides a way for us not to die for our sins. Even in the story of Abraham and Isaac, God provided a substitute sacrifice, a ram, so that Isaac wouldn’t have to die (Gen. 22:13–14). In fact, the place where Isaac was nearly sacrificed, Mount Moriah (Gen. 22:2), is called “The LORD will provide” (Gen. 22:14). This is the same place where the temple in Jerusalem would later be built (2 Chron. 3:1). And, of course, this is later approximately where Jesus was crucified.

So, at the time of the exodus, I think we need to understand this: Both Israel and Egypt were nations full of sinful people. God’s wrath for sin and Egypt’s idolatry (Exod. 12:12) was poured out on the firstborn. And it seems that the Israelites would have suffered the same fate. But they were allowed to sacrifice lambs in place of their firstborn. The blood of the animals represents their lives (Lev. 17:11: “For the life of the flesh is in the blood”). The animals died in the place of the Israelites so they could go free.

Getting back to Jesus’ Last Supper: By the first century A.D., the Passover meal had taken on a certain form. The meal had to be eaten within the city walls of Jerusalem. Since there were as many as 100,000 pilgrims who came to the city, securing a room was of the utmost

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<sup>4</sup> Francis Spufford, *Unapologetic: Why, Despite Everything, Christianity Can Still Make Surprising Emotional Sense* (New York: HarperOne, 2013), 27.

importance. Two of Jesus' favorite disciples, Peter and John, are dispatched to prepare the meal. Apparently, Jesus has made prior arrangements to have the meal in an upper room. Peter and John would have had to prepare a lamb, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs, the elements of the original Passover meal. Other elements were added over the years: a bowl of salt water, a fruit puree or sauce, and four cups of diluted wine. Each element was very symbolic. The lamb reminded them of the sacrifice needed to be saved. The unleavened bread reminded them of God's swift deliverance of his people. The herbs reminded them of the bitterness of their slavery. The salt water reminded them of tears shed in captivity as well as the Red Sea. The fruit paste reminded them of the clay used to make bricks for the Egyptians. And the four cups of wine symbolized the promises found in Exodus 6:6–7:

<sup>6</sup> Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and [first cup] I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and [second cup] I will deliver you from slavery to them, and [third cup] I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment. <sup>7</sup> [fourth cup] I will take you to be my people, and I will be your God, and you shall know that I am the LORD your God, who has brought you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians.<sup>5</sup>

Normally, a family would eat this meal together. Jesus chose to share it with his disciples. Instead of eating the meal hastily, they ate in a reclined position, which symbolized the freedom they enjoyed after the Exodus. There would be a time when the host of the meal recalled the Passover narrative, explaining the redemptive history behind the feast and expressing thanksgiving. Listen to this statement from the collection of Jewish oral traditions known as the Mishnah. The parallels with our redemption should be obvious:

Therefore are we bound to give thanks, to praise, to glorify, to honour, to exalt, to extol, and to bless him who wrought all these wonders for our fathers and for us. He brought us out from bondage to freedom, from sorrow to gladness, and from mourning to a Festival-day, and from darkness to great light, and from servitude to redemption, so let us say before him the *Hallelujah*.<sup>6</sup>

The celebration would include the singing of Psalms 113 through 118. After the fourth glass of wine, the meal would end and the guests were supposed to spend the night in prayer.

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<sup>5</sup> The placement of the cups is thus depicted in Gregg R. Allison, *Sojourners and Strangers: The Doctrine of the Church*, Foundations of Evangelical Theology (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012), 387.

<sup>6</sup> *Pesahim* 10.5, quoted in Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper*, 22.

Of course, it's fitting that this is a Passover meal. The exodus was the great redemptive act of the Old Testament. But *the* great act of the whole Bible is Jesus' death and resurrection, which frees his people out of slavery to sin and death. We have to remember that all of the Old Testament anticipates Jesus. All the events of the Old Testament and all the figures like prophets, priests, and kings, and all the institutions of the Old Testament point to Jesus. They foreshadow him. He is the fulfillment of all God's plans and promises. So, the Passover was intended by God to point to Jesus. To put it in more contemporary terms, the Passover was simply the trailer, but Jesus is the whole movie.

Here are a few things we can learn, as Christians, from the Passover. One, it anticipated Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We know this because Paul tells us that Jesus is our Passover lamb (1 Cor. 5:7). Peter tells us that we were ransomed from sin "with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot" (1 Pet. 1:19). The redemption of the Israelites out of Egypt was accomplished through a blood sacrifice. Though they were freed from slavery to the Egyptians, the Passover did not deal with their slavery to sin. Therefore, the Passover was an incomplete redemption and a mere foretaste of Jesus' greater, perfect redemption.

Two, the Passover and the Exodus show us that God is powerful, that he performs amazing acts of redemption, and that he is to be feared. For those of you familiar with the plagues, the parting of the Red Sea, and the image of Mount Sinai in Exodus 19, you know how powerful and frightening God can be. God is still a holy and jealous God. He is still a consuming fire. Of course, God is also love (1 John 4:8, 16). He is patient and merciful and gracious. But he is still a holy judge.

Three, we see that God graciously saved his people even though they were sinful. In Joshua 24:14–15, we learn that the Israelites worshiped idols when they were in Egypt. Also consider the fact that God made the covenant with Moses and gave him the law *after* he saved the Egyptians. Their salvation was not based on their obedience and their goodness, and neither is ours.

Four, in Exodus, there is a phrase that God tells Moses to say to Pharaoh: "Let my people go, that they may serve me" (Exod. 7:15; 8:1, 20; 9:1). God freed the Israelites from the yoke of slavery to the Egyptians, but they were not rescued so that they could live for themselves. If you have faith in Christ, you are freed from slavery to sin, but you still have a master. Jesus says, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will

find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:29–30). We are freed in order to serve the King of kings and Lord of lords.

That is what we have learned from the connection of the Last Supper to the Passover. Now, let’s return to Luke to see what Jesus did at this meal. Verse 14: “And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. And he said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.’” Jesus wanted this last opportunity to teach his disciples the significance of his impending death. He knows he is about to die, and yet he is in complete control. In fact, his vague directions to Peter and John about where they would find this house were probably intentional: he wanted to make sure that Judas did not know the address of this upper room so that the meal would not be interrupted by a premature arrest.

Jesus is acting as host of the Passover meal, yet instead of recounting the Exodus story, he starts to teach them about the theological significance of his death. Jesus tells his disciples that he will not eat this meal again until “it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” He will not share in such a meal until the kingdom is consummated, when he returns, judges, and heaven—the New Jerusalem—comes to earth. I will discuss this more in a moment.

In verse 17, he takes one cup and gives it to his disciples. This is probably either the first or second of the four cups of wine of the Passover meal. It is a common cup that he shares with his disciples, just as it is a common loaf of bread. This meal scene is one of intimacy and unity. Meals are generally a time of closeness and they are very important to Luke. In his gospel, there are seven meal scenes. It seems completely natural to read about people eating, but we must remember that this is God sharing sustenance with humans. God dwells among us and desires close fellowship with us. What an amazing idea! And he wants his followers to be united in fellowship.

In verse 18, Jesus says he “will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” The kingdom was inaugurated with Jesus’ first coming, but it will not come in its fullest form until he returns and the new heaven and earth are created.<sup>7</sup> Jesus repeats this idea so that his disciples will know that, even though he will die, death will not have the last word.

In verse 19, he takes the bread and distributes it to his disciples. Here, Jesus begins to reinterpret the elements of the Passover meal in a radical way. He uses the bread and the wine

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<sup>7</sup> “It is there that the deliverance of his people, not from Egypt, but from all sin and evil, will have been fully accomplished.” William Hendriksen, *Luke*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1978), 957.

they are the elements of the Passover meal that correspond best to Jesus' death. It is interesting that none of the gospels mention a lamb at this supper. I'm sure they ate a lamb. But the Gospel writers don't need to tell us about it, because Jesus will be the final, once-and-for-all sacrifice. The focus is on him, because he is the true Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world.

Here, Jesus takes the bread, a symbol of life and sustenance, and makes it a symbol of his flesh, which was about to be beaten, torn, and broken. That's what bread and wine were: They were staples of the Israelite diet that sustained life. Jesus is making the point that he is the one who gives true, lasting life. In order to give that life to those who have faith in him, his body would have to be broken, the way that a loaf of bread needs to be broken (or sliced) to be consumed. Jesus is probably alluding to Isaiah 53, an Old Testament passage that predicts what the "suffering servant of Israel" would do for his people. Isaiah 53:5 says, "But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities." A few verses later, we read, "Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand" (Isa. 53:10). The Father had to pour out his wrath on someone, for sin must not go unpunished. Jesus took that wrath in our place. He was crushed so that we don't have to be. That was God's will. It was always his plan.

Notice that Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." Israelites were supposed to remember the Passover, but when they did, they didn't just bring a past event to mind. Rather, they saw themselves as participants in the Exodus. In that way, it affected their present life. They also anticipated a future redemption that would come through the Messiah. For us, we should remember Jesus' death, not just to review history, but so that our lives will be changed. We, too, should also look forward to Christ's return, when he makes all things new.

Finally, in verse 20, Jesus distributes the cup, which commentators agree corresponds to the third cup of the Passover meal. He says, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." The "pouring out" likely refers to Isaiah 53:12: "Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors." In the Bible, blood represents life (Lev. 17:11). To bear the sins of many, Jesus had to die in the place of many. Because of our sin, we should die eternally, yet Jesus took our sin and nailed it to the cross, so that we could be credited his

righteousness. As it says in 2 Corinthians 5:21, “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

We also come to the important idea of the covenant. A covenant is a binding commitment that is made unilaterally, which is to say there is no negotiating. It’s a bit like a contract, but it’s stronger than that, and it’s more personal than a contract. Both sides of the covenant must live up to the conditions of the covenant, so it’s a bit like law. But it’s also very personal. When God makes covenants with his people, he says things like, “I will be your God, and you will be my people” (Exod. 6:7; Lev. 26:12; Ezek. 36:28; 2 Cor. 6:16).

There are a number of covenants in the Bible: ones made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, as well as the new covenant made through Jesus. The two covenants in view here are the “old covenant,” the one made through Moses at Mount Sinai, and the new covenant.

After God delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, he made a covenant with them. We find the words about the covenant in Exodus 19:4-6:

<sup>4</sup> You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. <sup>5</sup> Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; <sup>6</sup> and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.

God then gave Moses and the Israelites the Ten Commandments as well as many other laws. This covenant was based on a condition: *if* the people obeyed those laws, they would be God’s treasured possession.

Covenants were often made with a sacrifice. That happened when God made a covenant with Abraham (Gen. 15) and it happened when God made a covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai (Exod. 24). The idea was that when an animal was sacrificed as a covenant was made, it was a sign that whoever broke the covenant would die. The covenant began with blood and the only way to end it was shedding the blood of the party that failed to keep the covenant. So, in the “old covenant” made with Israel, if they failed to keep God’s law, they would die. And, of course, we know how human nature is and many of us know the story of the Old Testament. Every human being has died, and Israel as a nation was often defeated by her enemies because she refused to obey God.

If that’s how the story ended, it would be bad news. But God promised a new covenant. This was promised in Jeremiah 31:31–34, as well as in Ezekiel 36. God said he would make a

new covenant with his people. He would write his law on their hearts and give them new hearts and his Holy Spirit so that they would want to obey him. He promised that everyone in this new covenant would have a personal relationship with him. And he promised the forgiveness of sins.

It's important to understand the covenants because they form the backbone of the story of the Bible. Every person or group of people that God made covenants with failed. They all fell short of God's standards. And that is why God had to send his perfect Son to come into this world. Jesus is the one who always obeys God. He is the one who has never failed. Jesus' moral perfection is important because God demands a perfect human covenant partner. That's because God is perfect. And the only way to have a perfect human covenant partner is to have one who is also God. Jesus fulfills all the covenants and all of God's promises (2 Cor. 1:20).

But Jesus' death is also very important. When he died on the cross, it inaugurated a new covenant. As he says in Luke 22:20, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood." But Jesus' death doesn't just begin the covenant. Jesus' death also pays for all the sins, all the failures, all the mistakes of God's people. If you have put your trust in Jesus, if God has united you to his Son, then all your failures—past, present, and future—have been paid for and have been forgiven.

What does this mean for us? First, Jesus' Last Supper is the model for our Lord's Supper. We are not told explicitly how often to take the Lord's Supper, but here we take it on the first Sunday of every month, toward the end of the worship service. The apostle Paul tells us that we should observe the Lord's Supper in a particular way.

Second, I want to say this: If you are here today and you are not a Christian, I hope you are getting some understanding of how great Jesus is. And you should know this: When we take the elements of the Lord's Supper, a small wafer and a bit of grape juice, these are symbols. There's nothing magic that happens. The Catholic Church teaches that the substance or essence of these elements turn into the substance of Jesus' body and blood, so that by consuming them, you are actually partaking of Jesus' flesh. But the Bible doesn't teach that. Jesus clearly used these elements as symbols for his body. Nothing happens automatically when you take them. But when you take them in faith, you can expect to be spiritually nourished. When you put your trust in Jesus and when you remember what he has done for you, you can find satisfaction for your souls.

We all have spiritual hunger and thirst, a longing for something that the things of this world cannot satisfy. Jesus is the only one who can satisfy the deepest yearnings of your soul. In John 6:27, Jesus says, “Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you.” Are you trying to fill your spiritual hunger with Jesus or something or someone inferior?

Third, I want to say more about taking the elements. Again, they are symbols. And I am open to changing the exact way we take the Lord’s Supper together. Perhaps we should use a different type of bread, or even take these elements before sharing a real meal together. The reason we use grape juice and not wine is because we know that for some people, alcohol can be a stumbling block, and we don’t want to tempt people. However, you should know that throughout the history of the church, wine diluted with water was used. Grape juice didn’t exist until 1869, when a Methodist minister named Thomas Bramwell Welch (I kid you not) invented it.<sup>8</sup> The fact remains that Jesus made wine and drank wine and it would perfectly acceptable to have wine as part of our Lord’s Supper. But by using juice, we avoid a lot of problems.

Part of the reason why Jesus gave us the Lord’s Supper is that it helps us not only *know* about Jesus, but it helps us feel, in a tangible way, what Jesus has done for us. Just as singing helps drive the truths we know into our hearts, so does the Lord’s Supper. When we take these elements, we should remember how Jesus was broken and his life was drained so that God doesn’t have to break us, and that we can live.

Fourth, the Lord’s Supper should be a time for examination. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:28, “Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.” Do you know God? Are you living as his servant? Do you have some sins to repent of? It is always good to confess to God our sins and to make a commitment not to go back to doing them.

Fifth, the Last Supper and the Lord’s Supper call us to be a community. Jesus shared a common cup and a common loaf with his disciples. Though we come to faith in Christ individually, when we are regenerated by the Holy Spirit, we enter the body of Christ. In 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, Paul writes, “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”

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<sup>8</sup> Luke T. Harrington, “How Methodists Invented Your Kid’s Grape Juice Sugar High,” *Christianity Today*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/local-church/2016/september/how-methodists-accidentally-invented-your-kids-grape-juice-.html>, accessed November 6, 2016.

Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” The Greek word behind “participation” is *koinonia*, which, as some of you know, means “fellowship” or “community.” Paul warns the Corinthians, and us, that when there are divisions within the church, we are taking the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy way. Paul says that some people in the Corinthian church even became sick and died because they were taking the Supper in an unworthy way (1 Cor. 11:27-34). We need not only to confess our sins to God, but we need to confess our sins to each other. We need to mend relationships within the church before taking the Lord’s Supper.

My sixth and final point is this: at the Last Supper, God ate with man. As I noted earlier, this was a very intimate and special time. Jesus, God incarnate, was about to die for our sins, and he sat at table and shared a meal with his followers, one of whom betrayed him. John tells us he even washed their feet (John 13). In Exodus, we have a picture of a somewhat distant and very powerful God. Here, we have a picture of a God who is near and who is loving. He loved us so much that he came down to rescue us. We now have a complete picture of God. We need to fear him but we also need to realize he loves us. He is a consuming fire and he is our Lord, but he is also a friend and a brother. We need to keep both ideas in mind in order to understand God fully.

Because God loves us, one day Jesus will return. He will make everything right. He will judge everyone, and those who believe in him will be with him in a new heaven and earth forever. There are several places in the Bible where this new creation is pictured as a great meal. Here is one image, from Isaiah 25:6-9:

<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples  
a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine,  
of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.

<sup>7</sup> And he will swallow up on this mountain  
the covering that is cast over all peoples,  
the veil that is spread over all nations.

<sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death forever;  
and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces,  
and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth,  
for the LORD has spoken.

<sup>9</sup> It will be said on that day,  
“Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.  
This is the LORD; we have waited for him;  
let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

On “this mountain,” the New Jerusalem, the city of God that will encompass the whole earth, there will be a giant feast. There will be a celebration. God will make all things new, he will eradicate death, and he will offer us the very best food and fellowship that we could ever hope for.