

The Lord's Supper in Biblical Perspective: A Special Meal in a Special Place

Luke 22:7-23

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April 3, 2010 – Morning Sermon

Let's look at Luke 22. This is the Word of God. It's the Truth. Luke 22:7-23 says

7 Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. 8 So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." 9 They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" 10 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 11 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?' 12 And he will show you a large upper room furnished; prepare it there." 13 And they went and found it just as he had told them, and they prepared the Passover. 14 And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. 15 And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. 16 For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 17 And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. 18 For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." 19 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." 20 And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. 21 But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. 22 For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" 23 And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this.

The grass withers and the flower fades. God's Word abides forever and by His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

I had the privilege to begin my senior pastoral year here in September of 1999. In the preceding months before that I was doing ministry in Scotland. I was doing some teaching, evangelism ministries and itinerate preaching. The news came

through on July 16, 1999 that this family that seemed to know tragedy after tragedy now had another one and that was the Kennedy family. John F. Kennedy Jr. had taken off from New York to Martha's Vineyard, the Kennedy's vacation spot and he didn't make it. They eventually found his plane, him, the body of his wife Carolyn Bessette Kennedy and his sister in law Lauren. Of course speculation immediately began of wondering what happened, all the tragedies in this family and of course the death of his father, the assassination of JFK. Much in depth scrutiny was done but finally the verdict came back and I was already aware of what the verdict would be of why that plane went down in the ocean never getting to the coastline on that night he flew in the middle of the night. The answer was what a number of pilots already told me. A number of pilots had explained to me that given the conditions of that night it was probably because of "pilot error – spatial disorientation." In other words someone who doesn't either trust the instruments or isn't properly trained on the instruments begin to what we call "flying by the seat of our pants" and begin to trust their own sensory apparatus instead of the instruments. Then came disorientation and what they thought was the sky was actually the ocean because you couldn't see the horizon and that's where he went in – spatial disorientation.

I want you to tuck that phrase 'spatial disorientation' away in your mind and when we get to the takeaways I will bring it back up. We have to move rapidly now so let's look at that Luke 22 text. I have tried to sum up in a personal and pastoral way why the Lord's Supper and baptism are so important. The Lord's Supper, along with baptism are the two divinely-designed and appointed signs and seals of the New Covenant, designed to be celebrated in the gathered worship of the Church. In I Corinthians 11 the Apostle Paul lays out the Lord's Supper and five times he says "when you come together to celebrate the Lord's Supper..."

The Lord's Supper isn't something to be done privately. You might say "What do you do about 'shut-ins' at Briarwood?" We take four or five people and we have a worship service because it's a gathered worship service in which the Lord's Supper is celebrated. It is to be when you gather together you have the Lord's Supper. It's not a private administration or a pick me up exercise for a small group but it is the supper of the Lord to be properly administered, under the direction of the church, having been instructed from the Word of God for a particular reason. Why is it given in the gathered worship service? Here is the reason. Together (baptism and the Lord's Supper), they focus the affection, adoration and allegiance of God's people upon Christ and His redeeming work on the cross while increasing our love and devotion to one another.

It says to dismiss everything, even the good things as well as your sin and see Jesus. Sir, we would see Jesus, Christ and Him crucified, the body and blood of the Lord, while increasing our love and devotion to one another. It is a bond and a pledge of our singular commitment to Christ and our commitment and devotion to one another in the Lord, the body of Christ.

In Luke 22 we have the account of when our Lord instituted the first Lord's Supper on top of the Passover. I'd like to walk you through three very brief statements in this study because we need to really focus in here. I want to look at the meal, the meeting and then the meeting place. First of all is the meal. The Lord's Supper is the New Covenant meal. It replaces the Old Covenant meal of the Passover. By the way, I'm looking forward to Maundy Thursday coming up where we'll have communion at the Table but the service is going to be built around a first person sermon as John the Apostle, from that morning until the cross. John the Apostle will walk you as a narrative through what happens in those hours and we're already kind of there in this study because John along with Peter at the beginning of the day were instructed to go and meet a man carrying a jar of water. This man will guide you two to a house and when you get to the house you'll say to the master of the house, "Sir, the Rabbi, Teacher, Jesus has need of a room. Where is your guest chamber?" He will point you upwards and there will be a large upper room. Now Peter and John the rest of the day you prepare the Passover for us and then we'll join you and they did.

Jesus along with the other ten disciples then come and amazing things happen and I'll talk more about that on Maundy Thursday during holy week but one thing for sure that happens is this. They begin the celebration of the Passover that Old Covenant meal that had been designed and instituted under Moses, first celebrated the first year after the Exodus, built around the event in which the Lord 'passed over the houses' where the blood of the lamb was as a cross over the door lentil.

So how would you have done this? Here is what would have happened. You would have had the meal and raised a cup of wine and then proclaimed a praise to the Lord with the cup of the wine as the head of the house. Immediately everyone in the house would have gathered around together and the son of the house or the appropriate one appointed if there wasn't a son, would then ask a question. The question would be "Father, what distinguishes this night from all other nights? Why do we not have sweet herbs like every other night? Why do we have bitter herbs and why is the lamb so roasted tonight and why is there a lamb?" Then the father will begin a narrative in which he will explain all the way back to the father of Abraham and how God called Abraham out yet the patriarchs time and time again fell back into idolatry. Then God, to refine His people and then to use them as an instrument of judgment sent them into Egypt for over 400 years of slavery. There God is refining and preparing them to bring them to the Promised Land. Then God raised one up to lead them out of slavery and his name was Moses. God showed His power through Moses and led them out. The last thing He did that they might be free from slavery which was one of the ten plagues was the death of the first born. Yet the children of Israel's first born lived. Why? Their first born lived because a Passover lamb had been sacrificed, God's judgment passed over them and then brought them out.

So his narrative would bring them from the despair of their unfaithfulness and sin to their hope that God is always faithful in His grace to deliver His people, even when we are not faithful, He is faithful. Clearly, that Passover Lamb is now standing in front of the disciples. He says, “I want to eat this meal with you before I suffer for you. I have earnestly desired to eat this meal and I will never eat this meal again until I eat it anew.” Now is a New Covenant meal not with blood but bloodless. A meal that didn’t point to the Lamb but a meal that proclaims ‘the Lamb has been slain’ and we are forgiven in Him. So Jesus sets that meal up and after all that is properly explained in the Passover a second cup would be enjoyed around the meal, the singing of the ‘hallel’ songs which we get hallelujah from and they would be Psalm 113 and Psalm 114.

Then at an appropriate time an unleavened bread that had been hidden away in a linen cloth would be brought out and it would be brought from its hiding place into the open and the linens taken away. This would be consumed along with a third cup which was called the Cup of Blessing. Jesus, the One who would drink the Cup of Wrath, now takes the Cup of Blessing and says “This is the New Covenant in My blood which is shed for you.” So now He institutes for us this Lord’s Supper that we rejoice in for the despair of our sin has dissipated and our hope is in Christ our Lamb. Worthy is the Lamb!

Now that was the meal that He institutes that we now continue to do for 2,000 years so what was the meeting? It was that embryonic church, wasn’t it? The twelve that had been with Jesus, this is the last time the twelve will be together with Jesus in their entirety. Before this meal is through, one the apostate Judas will go away to betray Jesus. When this meal is through and they go to the garden and the temple guards and soldiers come to arrest Jesus then as Jesus had prophesied all of the rest of them, the eleven, will flee in fear. They will abandon Him. He said “You will leave Me, you will forsake Me.” They will run to Bethany and all kinds of places but now we have at this meeting at the Table the embryonic New Covenant church.

Isn’t it like every church? There are sinners saved by grace who falter in their sin and their fears, like us. From our fears relieve us, we’re just like the eleven and in the professing church today there is a mixed multitude. There are some who profess who actually don’t know Him, just like Judas and they’re going out proclaims that they don’t know Him. I know some of you are reading this today and we are here at the Lord’s Table which is designed for the God’s people to gather together with their Savior to eat and focus upon Him but you’ve come seeking and wondering. I tell you that what the world offers you cannot save you. The world will do all kinds of things to seduce you and to call you aside but it cannot save you. It will not make your life significant. Sexual promiscuity will bring death. Power, control, consumerism and all the things that Satan says “if you will only do this, this will bring you life” are empty and vanity but there is a Savior and He is Jesus Christ the Lord. The deep love of the Father has sent Him for you. He hasn’t sent you a plan to get to heaven. He sent you His Son to

bring you to heaven. Will you come to Him today? Come to Him today and He will give you life forever more.

By the way, don't get turned aside to religion because preachers can't save you and my goodness that's obvious. Baptism can't save you. Church membership can't save you. The Sunday school pin can't save you. Your resolve can't save you. Religion can't save you but Jesus can and will. The twelve are there, saved but faltering. One is not saved and betraying. They are now in that meeting.

Where is the meeting place? I love that phrase because that's what Presbyterian Churches used to be called until about 75 to 80 years ago. It was the "meeting place." The sanctuary was our meeting place. This isn't a church this is the meeting place. You're the church of Jesus Christ but the meeting place has become very sacred not because they are the church but because the church meets within them and it uses them. This is one. It's a guest chamber that's in an upper room. A week or so ago I was standing at the traditional site of this which is probably where it is. Now the building is not the same building because it's a visiting church which was built later but there is this place called the upper room and they gathered there.

Now probably as we piece this together from the Scripture this house probably belonged to John Mark's father and John Mark might have very well been the man carrying the water. When he gets to the master of the house which would have been John Mark's father he sends them up to that upper room. They go there and meet at that place and that won't be the only time they are there. That's the first time we know they are there but that won't be the only time because just a few days later Jesus will go to the cross. He will die for our sins and will be raised. The word will get out and all of the disciples that fled in fear will filter back to this upper room according to the Gospel of John but they will lock the door because they are still fearful. Of course, stones don't keep Jesus in and locked doors don't keep Him out. He comes in and announces peace but this time it's not the twelve that are there.

How many are there? There are ten. Judas has hung himself and Thomas isn't there yet. This was the first gathering of the New Covenant church but one was missing. It's interesting to note that the first service held was on Sunday night. That's my favorite worship time and that's when Jesus starts them. Thomas didn't make it. Perhaps he was home watching 60 Minutes. So then the next week they meet again. Now it's not ten but it's eleven. Thomas comes and says "My God and my Lord." They were there for the Table. They were there for the first appearance to the disciples on the day of resurrection. He is there for the second Lord's Day and the New Covenant church for worship again on a Sunday night and then we find out that when He ascends to heaven He sends them back and guess where they go to pray to wait for the Holy Spirit to come upon them in Acts 1? They go back to the upper room but now it's not ten, eleven, but now it's

120. Then they are going to go out and preach and thousands are going to come to Christ.

That upper room kind of becomes a prayer room for the early church because in Acts 12 they are back there praying because somebody had been arrested. Who had been arrested? Peter had been arrested so they are praying up there for Peter be released. Guess what? God says “yes” and he gets released. He comes to the upper room and knocks on the door. The servant girl comes and says “who are you?” “I’m Peter.” “It can’t be Peter, he’s in jail and we’re praying for him to be released.” Then of course there is the fifth time that it is mentioned. The places that the church meets become sacred. Do you know what is true about every one of those? The church meets together with Jesus – for the Supper, for the resurrection, for the second appearance of the resurrection. Harry, He has ascended and the next time they meet He wasn’t there. Oh yes He was, He sent His Spirit and then He comes in the midst of His people for where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there I am in their midst.

Here are the takeaways. Do you remember when I talked about spatial disorientation? I believe many of us suffer spiritual disorientation because we start living the Christian life by the seat of our pants. We rely on our sensory abilities instead of the truths of God’s Word. God has designed some instruments to keep us on track. Worship is when we gather together. Corporate prayer, baptism, fellowship, preaching of the Word and the Lord’s Supper are all instruments. What is the Lord teaching us so that we’re not spiritual disoriented because we’re trying to do this on the cuff? We’re not flying the Christian life by the seat of our pants, we trust His divinely designed instruments and what do they teach us?

Number one, fix your eyes on Jesus and the cross. At the cross the love of God met the holiness of God and Jesus saved you. Don’t get swept aside to anything else. Don’t let anything else become your focus, even the good things. Your children, your family, the church, baptism and even the Lord’s Supper don’t make your life but Jesus Christ is your life. The Supper is saying fix your eyes on Jesus. Hebrews 12:2 says *“Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.”* Fix your eyes on Him is what the Table and gathered worship shout.

Secondly, God calls us to be connected to each other. We don’t live the Christian life alone. We live it with interdependency with God’s people. Stay connected intentionally to the “Ekklesia”, the “called together ones”, His gathered church. It’s not to think that you don’t have anything else to do so you’ll show up at church today but we are members of the body of Christ 24/7, 365 days a year and when God’s people assemble unless we’re providentially hindered, we assemble because together we fix our eyes on Jesus and we reach out to one another.

You might be thinking, “Do you know what it’s like to function with Christians?” Here’s one I jotted down for you. “To live above with saints we love, O that will be glory. To live below with the saints I know, now that’s another story.” I know it’s difficult and I know it’s challenging but fix your eyes on Jesus. You are members one of another. When one hurts, the other hurts. When one rejoices, the other rejoices. God uses us in each other’s life. This is the Lord’s Table for His people to gather together with Him, fixing our eyes on Him and know the cross is our victory. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Thank You for the glorious truths of Your Word. Now Father, come upon us with joy and reverence all at the same time as we come to this Table. May Your people be able to feast upon You, I pray in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

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