

Communion in Biblical Perspective: The Sacraments – Communion and the Community

Revelation 21:1-8

By [Dr. Harry Reeder III](#)

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I'd like to look at a text in Revelation of the marvelous picture of the new heavens and the new earth. Revelation 21 is the passage that is the fulfillment of the marvelous passage in Ezekiel. It's one I've been thinking about quite a bit recently. In Ezekiel our Lord is pictured by the beauty of the temple as the people were returning from the Babylonian captivity. Obviously Ezekiel like the other prophets i.e. Jeremiah, wanted to know what was going to happen and so Ezekiel was given a prophecy of the new temple that would replace the torn down Solomonic temple. Ezekiel's temple is described in great detail in Isaiah 40, 41 and 42. Then there is the out pouring of God's Shekinah glory in Isaiah 43. Then there is the blessings of that temple that are covered all the way up to Isaiah 47 in which it says from that temple will flow a trickle that will become a river that will bring fish of all kinds and wherever it goes it changes everything.

Of course it is that temple that is pointing to Jesus because when they built Zerubbabel's temple everyone kept saying "This isn't even as big as Solomon's temple." The Lord told His people, "Don't despise the day of small things. The glory that will visit this temple will be greater than the temple of Solomon." Zerubbabel's temple was refurbished by Herod but that still was not what the Lord was talking about. The Lord was speaking of the day that Mary and Joseph brought Jesus into that temple and the glory of the Lord filled that temple because He who was full of grace and truth had come to that temple. He Himself was Ezekiel's temple. He Himself was the One from whom the river of life would flow which is why He said to His disciples "Come and follow Me for I will make you fishers of men." He is pointing back to this river of life which is why at the day of the Great Feast in John 7 He says "If any man is thirsty let him come unto Me and drink and from his inner most being will flow rivers of living water." That is why John now brings us to this glorious moment when Christ, the fulfillment of Ezekiel's temple, shall return and that temple from which the river of life flows will be in the new heavens and the new earth. Christ Himself will dwell in our midst. Revelation 21:1-8 says

1 Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2 And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. 4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.” 5 And he who was seated on the throne said, “Behold, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true.” 6 And he said to me, “It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. 7 The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. 8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

Behold I am making all things new. In this study we prepare for the Lord's Supper in which Christ, the majesty and glory of our God, we celebrate His incarnation, His crucifixion, His burial, His resurrection, and His promised second coming. The Bible tells us when we come to the Table we are sharing in the body and blood of the Lord, not that these elements become the body and blood of the Lord, but when we focus using these elements upon the Lord spiritually we begin to partake of His benefits for refreshment and renewal. As we come and focus here, why is it that He brings us to the cross? There are wonderful sermons we could preach on the incarnation and there are great sermons we could preach on the resurrection and there's glorious truth that He's coming again and is even now interceding for us but the Supper, while assuming His incarnation and we'll do this until He comes again assuming His second coming, brings us to the cross because it is there that Jesus makes all things new.

I want to give you one other thought before I share with you three things as you prepare to come to the Table. He makes all things new and He has made all things new. He is making all things new and He will make all things new. This is what we call the now but not yet work of Christ. Now, He has done the work to make all things new but not yet has it come in its absolute consummation and fulfillment. But now what has He made all things new at the cross for you who come to the Table, who know Christ? There are three things that the Table reminds you of concerning what Christ did on the cross to make all things new for you. “For if any man be in Christ Jesus he is a new creation, the old is passed away, behold the new has come” (II Corinthians 5:17). So how has He made all things new?

The first one is Jesus Christ at the cross gave you a new past. As I look back on my life before I became a Christian at age 21 there is a particular span of years from age 15 to 20 that I have enormous regrets over. As I look back on them I have great shame in terms of who I was and what I did and the way that I lived and the ungodliness that characterized my life. I'm still a sinner but thankfully I've been saved by grace and the things that dominated my life I still have to deal with but praise God the power of sin has been broken in my life. One of the things this Table reminds me of as I stand before Jesus Christ tonight as many regrets as I would humanly have about my past, I know that before Christ I have a new past. I have a brand new past. All of my sins have been wiped away by the blood of Jesus. There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, but I'm not just forgiven. I'm not just pardoned. I not only have a new past because of what Christ has removed by His blood, but I have a new past because of what Christ has given me from His life. Now when God sees me and He looks upon my past He not only sees one who is forgiven and pardoned because Jesus Christ paid the price but He has seen one who is perfectly righteous, one who is perfectly acceptable.

I'm not only forgiven but I am accepted. A lot of times we'll ask people "Have you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior?" I know what we're saying and I'm not going to quarrel with our terms but the Bible really never says it that way. The Bible asks us if we have received Him. I know I'm not quibbling over words but I do like to draw the distinction because when you receive Jesus, the glorious truth is not that you accepted Christ but that when you received Jesus you are now accepted in the beloved One. He gave you a new past. All your sins have been forgiven and you now have a perfect record of absolute perfect righteousness. So that every time God looks at you He sees the perfect righteousness of His Son, Jesus Christ. So when you come to the Table Jesus has made all things new. He has given you a new past where your sins are gone and His righteousness has now been granted to us.

Secondly, as you come to this Table, because of who Christ is and what Christ did on the cross, you not only have a new past, but you now have a new present. I'm not only forgiven, I'm not only pardoned, I'm not only accepted through the work of Jesus Christ my Savior for He has made all things new, the old has passed away and the new has come, but He has broken the power of sin. He has not only removed the penalty of sin in my life and He has not only received me with the righteousness of Christ and yes I still have sin living in me but I don't have to live in sin. I am no longer under its power. I am not dead in my sin for I have some dead sins in me but I am alive in Christ. I am born again. I've got a new life. I not only have a new record but I have a new heart. I have a new life in Christ. So as you come to this Table you not only have God's precious gift of a new past but you have God's precious gift in Christ of a new present.

Today when you leave here you may live for Him who died for you and who is living and because He lives I can face tomorrow. That's actually my third point on

the newness you have in Christ. Behold I make all things new. I not only give My people a new past where they are forgiven and clothed with My righteousness but they have a new present where they can live by the fruit of the Spirit with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control they now have a reason to live. They have the purpose of God that God is their purpose in life for to me to live is Christ. They not only have a new present but they have a new future. That new future is that they will be with me forever.

John 14:1-2 says 1 “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. 2 In my Father’s house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? So that where I am there you may be also. You have a new past. You have a new present. He is with you. By His Spirit He is with you. You have a new future. You will be with Him in a new heavens and a new earth. There will be no pain, no sorrow, no consequences of sin, no sin, and not even the ability to sin just the glorious presence of the Lord forever. That’s what we have because of the cross. He has made all things new – a new past, a new present and a new future.

Many times we’ll speak about this and say “You need to know, love and follow Jesus Christ because Jesus has unconditionally loved you.” Again, if I may quibble with words not so much to redo our vocabulary because I know what we mean by that but really you weren’t loved unconditionally. You were loved conditionally. Jesus met the conditions for God to love you and make all things new. You’ve been loved without merit. He didn’t need you and you didn’t want Him but He loved you. While we were yet sinners Christ died for us. While we were the enemies of God, while we were helpless, while we were ungodly and apart from Him, He died for us. With no merit to my account Christ came to save me and met the conditions for my salvation. He gave me a new past. He has given me a new present and He will give me a new life. I have been saved from my sins. I am being saved from the practice of my sins and one day I will be saved from the presence of sin. He makes all things new. For you, come and eat with Him. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments we could be together in Your Word. Thank You Father that we can come to this Your Table to meet the Lord Jesus tonight. Minister to us I pray. Father, even now as we contemplate these moments would You give us great joy for we have a new past? Would You give us great excitement for we have a new present? Would You give us great hope for we have a new future because of Christ having made all things new. Flow River of Life from heaven even now. Fill us to overflowing so that from our inner most being would flow rivers of living water, in the name of Him, Christ, our Lord, whom we eat with and one another and to whom we now fix our eyes and our hope, Jesus, who makes all things new, Amen.

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