

What We Do When We Partake of the Lord's Supper

*...when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said,
"This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."
In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying,
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."
(1 Cor. 11:24-25)*

Dr. Ray Stamps, Pastor

**Lone Hill Church
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Introduction

Different Experiences

The experience of partaking of the Lord's Supper spans a wide range of experiences. A nominal Christian may mundanely check it off his religious "to do" list, like attending church every Christmas and Easter. He approaches it as another responsibility of a "good" Christian, and having fulfilled his responsibility he removes it from his mind and gets on with the rest of his life. Even a true regenerate believer with little appreciation of the blessedness of the Supper may approach it as a moment of silence. Seizing the moment he or she very reflectively meditates on the substitutionary death of Christ remembering it with a deeply personal appreciation that it was for me! But even for the regenerate believer the Supper can go unappreciated. It is not received as a tangible gift of grace but as a demonstration of his or her devotion to the Lord, which has an element of truth but just enough to subvert the true meaning of the Supper. Other believers come overwhelmed with unworthiness and burdened with their sin. They can be paralyzed with worries of the world, heavy laden by their failures, distracted by their own insecurities, even passing the elements feeling unworthy to partake. Fred Bruner confesses, "My most frequent feeling on Sunday mornings is spiritual *numbness* – feeling neither good nor bad about myself. Should I take Communion?"¹ How then should we understand and approach the Supper to avoid these experiences?

Churches Differ

The challenge is bigger than just our personal experiences. Evangelical churches both minimize its value and abuse the Supper in many ways. It can be presented so casually that it seems no more than light refreshments during the down time between music and sermon. It can be so heavily stressed as a recommitment of the believer's devotion to the Lord, a call for repentance, or a time for the confession of sins that this emphasis, again, having just enough truth to subvert the true meaning of the Supper. Lutheranism and Catholicism make a "sacramental" emphasis. They focus on the elements themselves. They emphasize that the elements, to one degree or another, become the actual *body* and the *blood* of our Lord at the consecration of the priest or pastor. This emphasis turns the Supper into something which appears magical at its worst and no less a miracle at its best, but this approach focuses on the elements. At other times, this same approach lays emphasis on the extreme degree of our

¹ Frederick Dale Bruner, Matthew: The Churchbook, Matthew 13-28, Vol. II (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 959

Lord's physical sufferings, again missing the point of the Supper. What then is the meaning of the Supper?

Being Nourished by Christ

The Supper is the Lord's gift of grace to His Church. In the Supper the Lord spiritually comes to be present with the individual believers in the midst of His Church gathered in His name. Through the faith of the believer our Lord ministers afresh the undeserved mercy of His righteous life and His atoning death with all their blessings to the believer's heart and soul. He strengthens the believer's faith with the reassurance that in Him he or she is at complete peace with the Father. We are completely reconciled to Him; so He can freely be completely *for* us. Jesus reassures each that He is coming again for them when the present necessity of our weak faith will fade, and our fellowship with Him will be face to face.

The Lord's Supper is first and foremost the Lord's gift of grace. It is the gift of Christ Himself to His gathered Church, and in this gathering it is individually administered to each believer. The Gospel is proclaimed by the Supper and believed by each participant. Through the believer's faith he or she sits at the banquet table in the presence of our Lord and King eating and drinking the delights of His Supper, being nourished and strengthened by His amazing grace. Therefore, the focus of the Supper is not on us but on Him. It is not about our worthiness, but just the opposite, the under laying of the Supper is our unworthiness. John Calvin wrote, the only worthiness disciples bring is a confession of unworthiness.² Thus, the Supper is not coming to give but to receive. We must come to receive all of Christ we can take in!

In the Gathering of the His Family

The Supper is a personal experience of being renewed and refreshed by the amazing grace of the Gospel, but it is to occur in the corporate gathering of the Church. Paul teaches us in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, *...The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.* Paul plays on his double meaning of *body*. It means at the same time the crucified body of Christ and His Church, His Body. He does this to emphasize the place of the Supper in the life of the Church. It is all that we have said that it is already, but it is more also.

The Supper tells us that to be united to Christ means we have become united to everyone else who has been united to Him, His Church. The thing that makes us who we are is our union to Christ, and in Christ we have been

² Calvin, The Institutes of the Christian Faith, IV.xvii.40, in *ibid*.

made members of the family of God. So the Supper is to be received in the midst of this family, the Body of Christ. It is a family meal to which only family has been invited. Partaking seals us as members of this family; it authenticates us as family for only true faith desires and longs to partake; and only true faith rightly honors and reveres it.

For this reason, Paul sharply rebukes the Corinthian church for disrespecting and abusing the fellowship and unity of the Church in their partaking of the Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34). By not respecting the brethren who were lesser esteemed they were partaking of the Supper *in an unworthy manner being guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27). In other words, not only was the Supper to be celebrated together, but it was to be done in a manner which honored every member as a family member, as one united to Christ (cf. Jn. 13:34-35). *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all* (Col. 3:11). All social distinctions are wiped away in Christ, and the Supper is to be a display of this unity in Christ, this new race which He has created for Himself. Because the Supper is a display of the unity of the Christ's Church, though partaken individually, it is to be celebrated in the corporate gathering of the Church. For this reason when Paul arrived in Troas on Monday he waited until the next Sunday for the gathering of the church and their *breaking of bread* (Acts 20:6-7). Celebrating the Supper was something the church did when it gathered.

The Sacraments Go Hand in Hand

Baptism and Lord's Supper are the two sacraments or ordinances celebrated by the Protestant Church. A sacrament was required to be commanded by Christ, to have physical elements which were commanded by Christ (water and bread and cup), and to seal the believer's faith with the promises of the Gospel. Baptism and the Lord's Supper alone meet these requirements. The first is the sacrament of initiation marking the one baptized as a disciple of Christ (Mt. 28:19). The second is the Lord's Supper which sustains the disciple in the grace of Christ.

One might reflect on the meaning of these sacraments in the analogy that we are born only once, but we must eat again and again. We are baptized once and receive the Lord's Supper again and again. The sacraments go hand in hand, and therefore neither should be neglected. Thus, it only makes sense that those who come to partake of the Supper should be those who have been marked as disciples of Christ in baptism. Baptism marks the beginning of faith, and the Lord's Supper sustains that faith by nourishing it with grace again and again. Not only do these two sacraments go hand in hand, they are

not to be separated. Sometimes the invitation to the Supper is extended to those who “believe” without baptism inviting them equally along with those who have been baptized. In doing so, we separate the sacraments. Baptism is neglected. If the Supper is important enough to be received, then baptism is no less important. The first is introductory to the second. Christ has given each a specific place in the life of the believer.

On the other hand, some are given to neglect the Lord’s Supper. Most anyone can skip a meal or two without it becoming life threatening, but who would encourage a believer to fast permanently from the Lord’s Supper. Even if you eat an occasional meal and fast the rest one’s health will be damaged. Sometimes such fasting is rationalized because one has sin to deal with in his or her life, or they are out of fellowship with the Lord, or some such justification. Repentance is most often found in the presence of Christ and hardness of heart in running from Him. The Lord’s Supper was meant to be taken regularly and eagerly (Acts 2:42, 46). It should not be neglected. The sacraments seal the faith of a true believer (Rom. 4:11) because true faith desires to obey Christ (Jn. 14:15), and it does not neglect what He has commanded. Thus, what Christ has joined together let no man separate. We need to urge all to make use of both of these sacraments as Christ has commanded them. They are important or Christ would not have commanded them. Therefore, neither is to be neglected and both practiced.

How to Use this Study

What follows is an attempt at expounding not just the meaning of the Lord’s Supper, but also its intended experience. Ultimately, participation is an individual act in the midst of a brotherhood of faith. Each must find his or her own way within the perimeters of the Supper’s Scriptural meaning and boundaries. To encourage that personal pilgrimage I give to you the following exposition of the Lord’s Supper. My intention is not for you to try to read it through in one sitting, but rather bit by bit thoughtfully reading one chapter at a sitting. Often times I have attempted to compress a lot of background and thought into a relatively small statement, so thoughtfully rereading over a single section at several sittings may be very profitable. In addition, a single chapter or even one of the points from a chapter can be utilized as preparation for partaking of the Supper. By this method each of the chapters can be read, studied, and utilized over a long period of time and then even repeated, rather than trying to take in too much all at one time. This study is the fruit of much reading, study, and thought over a number of years. It is my prayer that it can be used of the Lord to bless and better prepare others as they partake of the Supper making it a richer and deeper means of grace for His Church.

1. The Lord's Supper is fellowship with Jesus.

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?
(1 Cor. 10:10:16).

The Lord's Supper is the *Lord's Table* (1 Cor. 10:21). He teaches us that the meal is **My Body** and **My Blood** (1 Cor. 11:24-25). *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?* (10:16). The word for participation is *koinonia* meaning fellowship, communion, or participation. The Lord invites us to His Table for fellowship with Him and His people around His saving work for us, *My body and My blood*.

Jesus eating with the tax collectors and the sinners is the picture of Jesus' fellowship with sinners (e.g., Mt. 9:10). It is a picture of the Lord's Table. Those who embrace Him He embraces, no matter their deserving. It is the picture sketched for us by Rev. 3:20, *Behold I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and open the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me*. Rather than the *Lord's Table* Hebrews 13:10 alludes to it as an *altar*. It is there that we receive *grace* for the *heart* (v. 9). Not from food but from this *altar* at which only Christians are welcomed. Here, at the Table of the Lord, we are *strengthened by grace* as we come to fellowship with Him.

Before His ascension Jesus promised His disciples that He would be with them always (Mt. 28:20). Earlier He had promised where two or three are gathered in His name He would be in their midst (18:20). The fellowship of disciples gathering in Jesus' name was one specific way that Jesus' presence was to be experienced. Within that gathering the Lord's Supper is a specific way that we experience Jesus' presence. It is the *Lord's Table*. He said, *This is My Body, This is My Blood. It is a participation in the blood of Christ...a participation in the body of Christ*. In the Lord's Supper we experience the presence of Jesus in a very specific and unique way.

Here is a fundamental purpose of the Lord's Supper. It is to meet the Lord. The Supper is focused first on Christ, His person, then, secondly on the benefits, for when you have Christ you get all His benefits also.

2. The Lord's Supper is believing in Jesus.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (Jn. 6:53-56)

These are Spiritual Words

The words of John 6 had been so literally taken that the early Romans thought the Christians' celebration of Lord's Supper was cannibalism. *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him (vv. 53-56).* Jesus goes on in verse 63 to say that His words are not to be taken literally but spiritually. *The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.* This being the case what then is their meaning? Jesus had explained earlier. *I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst (v. 35).* In other words, to eat the body and blood of Jesus is to come to Him and to believe in Him. He says it most clearly in verse 48, *Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes has eternal life.*

Eating is Believing

When we partake of the Lord's Supper the eating and the drinking represents believing in Jesus, believing in the work of Jesus. Such believing is a personal act. It is embracing Jesus and receiving all the benefits of His work. John Calvin offered this definition of faith, "...it is a steady and certain knowledge of the Divine benevolence towards us, which being founded on the truth of the gratuitous promise in Christ, is both revealed to our minds, and confirmed to our hearts, by the Holy Spirit."³ Thus, true faith sees the grace of God extended in the person and work of Christ and then is convicted that this grace has been extended "to me." In eating and drinking the Lord's Supper we affirm that we believe that that the work of Christ is for me. That is what we do when we eat and drink the Lord's Supper. We partake believing that Christ in His death has saved me from the condemnation of my sin.

"I believe"

The Lord's Supper is the true personal application of the Gospel. It is not enough to talk about it without thinking and acting upon. To believe is not simply acknowledging but to believe is to say, "This is who I am, I belong to

³ *Institutes*, Vol. I, Bk. III, Chap. II, 604.

Christ.⁴ I am His beloved.⁵ My sins are forgiven.⁶ I am holy and blameless before God.⁷ More than that my heavenly Father and my Lord Jesus are FOR me!”⁸ Partaking of the Supper is taking the Gospel to our own hearts. It is the personal application of the Gospel. It is truly and confidently to believe the Gospel. Participation in the Supper is to confess that Jesus has saved you!

⁴ 1 Cor. 6:19-20

⁵ Rom. 8:37-39

⁶ Rom. 8:33-34; Mt. 26:28

⁷ Eph. 1:4; 5:27

⁸ Rom. 8:31

3. The Lord's Supper is a specifically physical act.

'Take, eat; this is my body.' And he took the cup..., 'Drink of it, all of you for this is my blood of the covenant... (Mt. 26:26-27).

Nonverbal Sermons

The sacraments are nonverbal proclamations of the Gospel. The Gospel is to be verbally preached and believed, but then it to be nonverbally and physically participated in through a live and true faith. Such participation is the Gospel acted out. It is the Gospel proclaimed (1 Cor. 11:26) by the demonstrative faith of Christ's Church. As such, implicit in the physical action of each sacrament, we find their meaning. In baptism, in immersion, we see a picture of identification or union of the believer with Christ,⁹ a picture of His death and resurrection, buried and raised,¹⁰ a picture of a washing away of our sins,¹¹ a cleansing of our conscience,¹² a picture of the indwelling or baptism of the Holy Spirit,¹³ a picture of being clothed in Christ,¹⁴ and a picture of being born into the family of God.¹⁵ In the Lord's Supper we see in the physical act of eating and drinking as a picture of Christ nourishing us with His work,¹⁶ with the Gospel; as food strengthens our bodies, so Christ strengthens our hearts with His grace.¹⁷ As food fills us with satisfaction, in Christ we are filled with righteousness,¹⁸ forgiveness,¹⁹ love,²⁰ peace,²¹ gratitude,²² and joy.²³

An Act of Meaning

Therefore, when we partake of the Lord's Supper we are taking the Gospel into ourselves, being nourished by the Gospel. We savor the goodness of Christ for us. We believe this is for me, for us. Forgiveness is ours though undeserved, holiness is ours though unholy, assurance of salvation is ours, and peace with God is ours. You are pronounced precious to the Lord.

Christ in Me

It is the picture not only of Christ nourishing us with His grace and all the benefits of His work, but also of us taking Christ into ourselves. The OT

⁹ Rom. 6:5

¹⁰ Mt. 28:19; Rom. 6:5

¹¹ Acts 22:16; Heb. 10:22

¹² Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 3:21; cf. Acts 15:9; Heb. 10:2

¹³ 1 Cor. 12:13

¹⁴ Gal. 3:27

¹⁵ Jn. 3:5; 1:12

¹⁶ Eph. 5:29

¹⁷ Heb. 13:9

¹⁸ Phil. 3:9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:19-21

¹⁹ Mt. 26:28

²⁰ Eph. 5:2, 25-27; Rev. 1:5; 2 Cor. 5:14

²¹ Eph. 2:13-14, 17-18; Col. 3:15; Rom. 5:1; Mt. 11:28-29

²² Heb. 12:28; Col. 3:15-17

²³ Rom. 14:17; Jn. 15:11; Heb. 12:2; Mt. 25:21, 23; Gal. 5:22

prophets promised that in the New Covenant the Law of God and His Spirit would come into our hearts. How would God write His Law upon our hearts and give us His Spirit? This mystery was revealed in Christ. Paul puts it in Col. 1:27, *Christ in you the hope of glory*. Paul testified to his own experience of this mystery, *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me* (Gal. 2:20). This mystery is proclaimed by the physical act of the Lord's Supper. When we eat and drink we take Christ into to us, *Christ in you the hope of glory*. "Yes," the Lord's Supper visibly proclaims, "Christ is now in you, and the New Covenant has become a reality for you!" When you have Christ, you have all His benefits! (Col. 3:1, 3-4).

4. The Lord's Supper is a memorial relived.

“This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me” (1 Cor. 11:24-25).

As Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper He said, *do this in remembrance of Me* (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25). In Matthew's Gospel we read the occasion of the Lord's Supper, *they prepared for the Passover (26:19)*. The Lord's Supper was instituted in the context of the Passover meal. This occasion of the Passover is clearly not incidental to understanding the Lord's Supper but critical. As the Passover was to be remembered, so the Lord's Supper was to be remembered.

Old Testament Remembering

The Passover was the remembrance of Israel's deliverance firstborn from the tenth plague and the wrath of God's judgment upon Egypt.²⁴ Exodus 12 gives us the instructions Israel was given for their observance of the Passover. We should note that God's way for His people to remember Him was to relive His saving events. The Israelites were to step back into the past to reexperience the event of God's deliverance.

1. No one was to observe it who had not been circumcised. One must be a participant in the Abrahamic covenant (vv. 44, 48). This was not a meal for outsiders.

2. A prescribed order and steps for the Passover celebration was given by God (vv. 5-10).²⁵

3. God's final instruction tells how each must replicate the dress of that night, describes the event of the Lord's coming in the night to strike the Egyptian firstborn, and the depiction of the sign of Israel's deliverance—lamb's blood over their doors:

“Now you shall eat it in this manner: with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and you shall eat it in haste—it is the Lord's Passover. ...this day will be a memorial to you,

²⁴The Feast of Unleavened Bread immediately followed the Passover of Israel's firstborns, and the Feast of Unleavened Bread was the celebration of the Exodus journey from Egypt. Passover was celebrated for one night. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was celebrated over the following seven days.

²⁵ The repetition of the Passover celebration was to include the same props and the same order as the original Passover. Exodus 12 stipulated these specific steps and order: 1) An unblemished male year old lamb was to be the sacrifice (v. 5), the same sacrifice. 2) It was to be killed on the 14th day of the first month of the Jewish year at twilight (v.5), the same day. 3) Its blood was to be painted on the door post of each Jewish home (v.7), the same act. 4) The lamb was to be roasted with feet and head and with its entrails (v.9), the same meal. 5) The meat of the lamb was to be eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs (v.8), the same condiments. 6) Whatever is uneaten is to be burned with fire the next morning (v.10), the same end. 7) They were to eat the meal dressed for travel in haste (v. 11), the same dress.

and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance” (Exodus 12:11-14; cf. Dt. 16:3, 12).

God stipulated these steps and the props so that each generation, no matter how chronologically removed from the Egyptian Passover, would *remember it by reliving* it. By this reliving they were to reenter that night and in memorial relive God’s deliverance. F. J. Leenhardt describes what remembering for the Israelite meant: “Remembrance was not for him...mental recollection, an evocative thought. Remembrance was for him the restoration of a past situation, which has for the moment disappeared. To remember is to make present and actual...It is possible for the past to become reactive.²⁶ ...Every one of those who shared in the Paschal meal confessed that he had personally been the object of the redemption from Egypt.”²⁷

To Call the Past into the Present and Relive It

Ralph Martin continues this insight, “‘remembrance’ [i.e. *this reliving of a past event*]...for the Hebrew mind [was] a dynamic aspect and was not simply a mental exercise. The case of the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings xvii, 18) is a good illustration of this dynamic quality. She accuses Elijah of ‘recalling’ her sin from the past; and the potency of this ‘remembering’ is seen in the death of her son. To recall, in Biblical thought, means to transport an action which is buried in the past in such a way that its original potency and vitality are not lost, but are carried over into the present.” In the Passover liturgy “the tale of deliverance is to be retold; and as it is recounted, each individual Israelite relives the experience and makes his nation’s history and destiny his very own.”²⁸ So Moses instructed successive generations of Israel, **You shall remember that *you* were a slave in Egypt...(Dt. 16:12), ...seven days *you* shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for *you* came out of the land of Egypt in haste), in order that *you* may remember all the days of your life **the day** when *you* came out of the land of Egypt (v. 3).** For this reason Yahweh had stipulated specific steps and props, so that the Israelite would step back into the history of his people to experience, to relive, what his forefathers had lived. This is what it meant for a Hebrew to remember.

²⁶ F. J. Leenhardt, “This is My Body,” *Essays on the Lord’s Supper*, O. Cullmann and F. J. Leenhardt (eds.) (London: Expository Times, 1958), 61f., quoted in Ralph P. Martin, *Worship In The Early Church* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Revised Edition 1974), 126, fn.*.

²⁷ F. J. Leenhardt, *Le Sacrement de la Sainte Cene* (Paris: Neuchatel, 1948), 38, quoted in Martin, *Worship In The Early Church*, 127, fn. †.

²⁸ Martin, *Worship In The Early Church*, 126, 127.

Relive God's Deliverance in Jesus

The meaning is the same when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper saying "*do this in remembrance of Me.*" It is not the Passover we are to relive but God's deliverance in Jesus. Martin comments,

"The tradition which Paul received contained the words: 'This do ye...in remembrance of me' (1 Corinthians xi, 24, 25). His account goes on to interpret this: 'you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes' (verse 26). Both sentences are of consequence for our understanding of the ordinance; and both are to be seen on a Passover backcloth.

"...*'In remembrance of me,'* then, is no bare historical reflection upon the Cross, but a recalling of the crucified and living Christ in such a way that He is personally present in all the fullness and reality of His saving power, and is appropriated by the believers' faith."²⁹

How?

Martin goes on to point out the answer to the question, how is this experienced? The Apostle answered the question when he wrote, *you proclaim the Lord's death.* When the cross is preached, when the Gospel is announced, when the Lord's death is proclaimed, when the preached Word is believed, when you see Jesus on the cross for *your* sins, and when you feel the weight of your sins slide from your shoulders, then you have remembered! "The Cross ceases to be a judicial murder which occurred, e.g., on April the third, in the year 33 under the procuratorship of Pontius Pilate; it steps out of the frame of past history, and it becomes present reality and personal fact. It confronts us, together and individually, as we sit at the Table with all that the death of the Son of God meant *then* and means *now.*"³⁰

²⁹ Martin, *Worship In The Early Church*, 126.

³⁰ Martin, *Worship In The Early Church*, 127.

5. The Lord's Supper reminds us of Jesus' sacrificial death for us.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:26).

The Meaning of the Emblems

As we seek Jesus' meaning of the emblems or elements we need to look for two meanings. First, there is a combined meaning, that is, the meaning which results from Jesus using two elements, the *bread* and the *cup*. Jesus intended to say something by this combination. He chose to combine the two elements together in Supper. He could have stopped with just one, but He chose two and put them together. Two were necessary because the meaning could not be revealed by only one. There is an obvious correlation between the elements as they are qualified by their accompanying verbs and phrases. For example, both elements are represented in substitutionary terms (e.g., *for you*, i.e., *on behalf of you*), as well as, in sacrificial terms (e.g., *given, poured*).³¹ Paul makes this combined meaning the primary meaning of the Supper when he writes, *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:26).*

Second, there is also an specific or individual meaning which is represented by each element.³² For example, each of the Supper passages distinguishes the *blood* as the *blood of the (new) covenant*. Consistently the *blood* is related to the New Covenant (Mt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24; Lu. 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). His *body* is not specifically related to the New Covenant, rather Luke distinguishes the *body* as that *which is given for you (22:19)*. The emphasis here is particularly substitutional. Jesus is given for you, on your behalf, in your place. The meaning derived from the combination of the elements provides their foundational meaning, while the meanings from each specific element builds on this foundation supplementing and complementing it. First, we will look at the combined meaning.

The Combined Meaning

The bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper direct our attention to the death of Christ and its significance. The language used for both elements is the

³¹ Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, 143f., writes, "Wherever Paul relates the preposition 'for' to Christ, it expresses on the one hand the idea of atonement: Christ for us; that means given in death *for our good* (1Cor. 15:3; Rom. 5:56, 8, *passim*), and on the other the idea of substitution: Christ died *in our place* (Gal. 3:13; 2 Cor. 5:21, *passim*). Neither is to be sharply separated from the other and the two can, as II Cor. 5:14f. especially shows, pass over into each other."

³² Each of the elements has its own individual saying, and they are separated by the main part of the dinner. Thus, it suggests each has its own meaning rather than taking them as correlatives with only a single common meaning. Cf. Günther Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1969), 143.

language of atonement.³³ It is the language of payment, ransom, expiation, propitiation, and redemption and forgiveness. This is the most obvious and centrally important message of the Supper. The Supper's language is penal, the language of punishment, *the wages of sin is death* (Rom. 6:23). Also, it is the language of substitution, Christ in our place, He dying our death. Where He died, we died. One of the most critical Messianic OT passages is Isaiah 53. Here we find the sacrificial meaning of Jesus' words, *this is my body,...this is my blood*. It is *Christ crucified!*

*But he was wounded for our transgressions;
He was crushed for our iniquities;
Upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace,
And with his stripes we are healed.
All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned – every one – to his own way;
And the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all
(Is. 53:5-6).*

Condemnation of our sin and its penalty are but the backdrop to the Supper's centerpiece. Both elements of the Supper, *body* and *blood*, speak to us of our cleansing by the sacrificial blood and body of Christ. In the words of David,

*Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven,
and whose sins are covered;
blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his
sin
(Rom. 4:7-8; Ps. 32:1-2).*

This is the never-to-be-neglected center of the Supper – *cleansed by His blood*. *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus* (Rom. 8:1). It is the focus of the Gospel and the cry from the cross – *It is finished* (Jn. 19:30). As a new Passover meal Jesus substitutes His body and

³³ Atonement vocabulary: **Atonement** – the act of making amends, payment, or reparations for an injury, wrong, fault, or sin with the result that there is reconciliation (Middle English, “at” = at + “one” = one > at one = at one or reconciled). **Expiation** – a covering over, an atonement for, or to cancel out sin (Latin, *ex* = intensive prefix + *piate* = to atone > to atone or to cover so as to restore or reconcile). **Propitiation** – an atoning offering which will appease or turn away the wrath of God, or will conciliate an offended person (Latin, *propitiat* = favorable > to make one favorable). **Enmity** – Deep-seated mutual hatred and ill will (Latin, *inimicus* = enemy). **Reconciliation** – the act of reestablishing a friendship which had been estranged or to settle or resolve a dispute so that a relationship is restored (Latin, *re* = back + *concilare* = to conciliate or to meet > to restore a meeting together). **Redemption** – the act of recovering ownership by paying a specific sum or paying the price necessary to ransom or rescue someone or something for its freedom (Latin, *re* = back + *emere* = to buy > to buy back). **Ransom** – the price or payment demanded for the return or release of a person or property; the price to be paid to be delivered from sin and its consequences (Latin, *redemptio* = a buying back > to redeem). **Sacrifice** – the act of offering something to a deity in propitiation or homage especially the slaughter of an animal or person (Latin, *sacer* = sacred + *facare* = to make > to make sacred to God). **Vicarious** – acting in place of someone else or as one's substitute (Latin, *vicarius* = substitute). **Substitutionary** – the attributing of an act of one to another, thus one takes the place of another (Latin, *sub* = in place of + *statuere* = to cause to stand > cause to stand in the place of another).

blood as the Passover lambs had for Israel's redemption and exodus.³⁴ He is the new Passover lamb and the new deliverance. The meaning being that as God had delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery, so Jesus delivers His Church from the condemnation and slavery of sin. Jesus' sacrifice and its redemption are the center stage of the Supper, but the Supper is not our redemption. It is a sign of our redemption. A Biblical sign like a photograph which reminds us of the reality which it portrays. We never prefer the photo to the reality. The sign refers us to the reality. Faith appropriates the reality from the sign to our hearts, and we taste the blessedness of our sins forgiven, of consciences cleansed, and our peace with God.

Translating the Idea into Experience

In all of the Gospels Jesus only interprets the meaning of His death in two passages: Mark 10:45, *the Son of Man...to give his life as a ransom for many*,³⁵ and here, in His institution of His Supper, *this is my blood...poured out for many...for you...for the forgiveness of sins*.³⁶ Here, we want to focus on His words of institution which interpreted His death to be His self-giving, substitutionary sacrifice which promised forgiveness.³⁷

How do we translate this to our experience of partaking of the Supper? It should lead us to consider at least one or two reflections. The first is reflected in Romans, *If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but **gave him up for us all**, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?...[Nothing] in all creation, will be able to separate us from **the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord** (8:31-32, 39)*. The sacrifice of Jesus should take our thoughts to the understanding that the cross is the supreme example of God's and Jesus' love for us. The cross is but the tip of the iceberg of God's love for us. The Supper should bathe our hearts in the everlasting love of God in Jesus' sacrifice, and if God will go to the extent of giving His only begotten Son for our forgiveness, surely He will hold nothing back giving us *all things* which are for our good. The Supper is meant to scrub away any question of the lack of God's love for us and to cement it soundly in our hearts and minds (cf. Rev. 1:5-6; 1 Jn. 4:9-10). This is what Jude means when he wrote, **keep yourselves in the love of God waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life** (v. 21).

³⁴ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 877.

³⁵ Mark 10:45 teaches us that Jesus' death was a self-giving sacrifice (*give his life*) which was a payment (*ransom*) to redeem *the many*. He substituted Himself *for* (*anti*, instead of) the many.

³⁶ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 185.

³⁷ His death was a self-giving sacrifice, *my blood...poured out*. It was substitutionary, *for many...for you*. The prepositions translated *for* mean *on behalf of*, i.e. instead of, in their place. (H.E. Dana and Julius Mantey, *A Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament* [Toronto: The Macmillan Company, 1955], 109, 111: Mt. 26:28, *periv, peri, my blood in behalf of many*, Lk. 22:19, *u&pevr, huper, he gave himself in behalf of us*.) Finally, Jesus' self-giving substitutionary sacrifice promised forgiveness, *for the forgiveness of sins*.

Secondly, the sufficiency of Jesus' death as a substitute sacrifice for the wages of our sins should flood over us with the forgiveness which He has bought for us. He is our ransom. With His *blood* He has redeemed us from the slave market of sin, from the debtor's prison of sin. *And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross* (Col. 2:13-14). So sufficient is Jesus' sacrifice that all your sins are completely atoned for. You are forgiven completely and exhaustively, scrubbed utterly and indescribably clean before God. Horatio Spafford expressed it well in his wonderful hymn, "It Is Well with My Soul." *My sin – O the joy of this glorious thought – My sin, not in part, but the whole, Is nailed to the cross, and I bear it no more: Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, O my soul!*

Paul makes this combined meaning the clear and primary meaning of the Supper when he writes, *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes* (1 Cor. 11:26). Unmistakenly, this is the central focus of the Supper – *Jesus Christ and him crucified* (1 Cor. 2:2). That which completes its meaning is the addition of faith – *Jesus Christ and him crucified* for me! The eating and the drinking of the elements is the testimony that I believe in the substitutionary, atoning death of Jesus Christ *for me!* Here is the Supper's plainest meaning to which both of the elements joined together by Jesus testify.

6. The Bread of the Lord's Supper represents Jesus' presence.

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" (Lk. 22:19).

The Meaning of the Bread

As mentioned above each of the elements represents an individual meaning, as well as, a meaning from the use of the combination of the elements together. We turn to the meaning of the *bread*.

This is My Body

In Jesus' *bread/body* saying we find a very consistent and parallel wording between the Gospels' and Paul's accounts.

Matthew – *this is my body* (26:26).

Mark – *this is my body* (14:22).

Luke – *This is my body, which is given for you* (22:19).

1 Corinthians – *This is my body which is for you* (11:24).

All four sources are identical with the only exceptions being the additional relative clauses of both Luke and Paul emphasizing the purpose for which His *body* was given. Luke emphasizes the *givenness* of His *body*, namely, that Jesus willingly gave Himself, His self-giving, with the explicit personalized and relationalized purpose to benefit *you*.³⁸

The Word Became a Body

The bread/body saying reminds us of two specific truths. First, the use of *body* draws our attention to the incarnation, *the Word became flesh and dwelt among us* (Jn. 1:14). The *body* is Christ's incarnate, physical presence coming to us and dwelling with us. Accordingly, Jesus' *body* represents Christ's presence as *Immanuel, God with us*. At the Supper by faith we spiritually apprehend His presence (Jn. 6:63).

The Son becoming flesh, being incarnated, was absolutely essential for His accomplishing His goal of our redemption and salvation. Hebrews gives three reasons for the necessity of the incarnation. First, the Son had to take on flesh and blood so *that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery* (2:14-15). In other words, the

³⁸ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Comp., 1978), 804. Both Luke and Paul use the article, *to*, as a relative pronoun, *which*, with the preposition, *hyper*, with the genitive, *homon*, of *you all*, giving it the force of *for, in behalf of, for the sake of*. This is the language of substitutionary sacrifice.

The use of the second person plural, *you all*, in contrast to the third person, e.g., *many*, indicates a personalized and relational intent, an "I and Thou" or a "Me and You" relationship.

incarnation was necessary to defeat Satan and his power over mankind (cf. Eph. 2:1-10). As a warrior king the Son came to deliver His people and defeat His enemies, but His battleground was *death* which necessitated that He *share in flesh and blood* becoming like His people who were subject to death. He had to become like them.

Second, the Son had to take on the flesh and blood of the elect to be their high priest who would *make propitiation for the sins of the people* (2:17). To be the high priest representing and presenting the sacrifice for His people, the Son had to become like them *in every respect* except their sin (4:15). As their great high priest He became their sacrifice to satisfy the justice of God. As this sacrifice He also became their propitiation which took the wrath of God's judgment. A man had brought sin into the world, so a man had to pay the price for that sin (cf. Rom. 5:12-21; 1 Tim. 2:5).

Third, the Son, only through suffering and temptation as a man, would be truly able to sympathize and be *able to help those who are being tempted* (2:18). Only as our great high priest, the incarnate Son, would He be able to *sympathize with our weaknesses* (4:15) and provide the *mercy and...grace to help in time of need* (4:16). The incarnation was not simply a novel idea of God's, but it was a moral and just necessity. It was *fitting* (2:10), the best of all possible options. It was necessary for *the Word to become flesh and dwell among us*. It was this necessity which is represented by Jesus' words, *This is My body*.

The necessities (to enter death, propitiate, and sympathize) of the incarnation explain some of the reasons why *the Word became flesh and dwell among us*, but very simply He became *Immanuel, God with us* and never to leave us (Mt. 1:23; 28:20). Paul put it, *Christ in you, the Spirit of God dwells in you* (Col. 1:27; Rom. 8:9). The *bread/body* of the Supper is a sign of Christ's presence, a sign of that He dwells with us.

His Body means His Presence

The second truth which the *bread/body* sayings point us to is represented in the personal meaning of *body* which is "myself," "my person" (my body is me). This is especially the emphasis when *body* is combined with *blood*, again meaning one's totality, the whole person, the whole self (it's all of me). The combination of *body and blood, flesh and blood*, was a description implying, "I'm all here!" The personal possessive pronoun *My* makes it an emphatic statement, *this is My body*, or *this is My personal presence* represented in the bread symbol. When Jesus distributed the bread as His *body* He was assuring His disciples of His personal presence and of His

fellowship with them, reminiscent of their table fellowship during the three previous years. C.E.B.Cranfield forms this conclusion for us, Jesus' distribution of the bread as His *body* "was to be the pledge and the means of his real personal presence with them, though unseen. ...the primary gift of the Eucharist is the real personal presence of the risen, glorified Lord: the Supper is his appointed tryst [meeting] with his own."³⁹

Along this line there is a connection between the resurrection and the Supper. Both were celebrated on Sunday, the *Lord's Day*. The Church gathered *in His name* with the promise that *there am I among them* (Mt. 18:20). Here in the *bread/body* sayings was the further promise of His presence. Here, the risen, resurrected Lord would meet with people, thus the time and day of their meeting was understandably described as the *Lord's Day*. In conjunction with this expectation of meeting with the Lord the Church would pray, *Our Lord, come!* (*Maranatha*, 1 Cor. 16:22).⁴⁰ Such expectation of the Church assures us all the more that we too as we partake of the Supper experience the presence of our risen Lord at the Supper.

³⁹ C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 426.

⁴⁰ Cranfield, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 426.

7. The Bread of the Lord's Supper represents His righteousness.

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" (Lk. 22:19).

The *bread/body* sayings communicate more than one thing. First, we need to hear Jesus say, *I am here with you*, as we partake of the bread. But, there is more.

His Body means His Righteousness

Jesus' *body* is given a specific meaning by Hebrews 10:5-7⁴¹ which quotes Psalm 40:6-8.

*Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;
in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure.
Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do you will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.*

Hebrews represents the Psalm as a conversation between the Messiah and God, the Father. It represents a covenant between them made in eternity-past, *before the foundations of the world*. God, the Father, promises God, the Son, that He will give Him a *body*, in their Covenant of Redemption. The Son promises that with this *body* He will do the will of the Father (Jn. 14:31). In this *body* Jesus perfectly obeyed God's law (Rom. 8:3-4; Heb. 4:15; 7:26). He committed no sin (1 Pet. 2:22). He was perfectly righteous before God and His Law. The significance of this is stated for us in 2 Corinthians 5:21, *For our sake he [God] made him [Jesus] to be sin **who knew no sin**, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

God Desires More than Not Sinning

God's mandate for humanity is not just not sinning (Ps. 5:4-5), rather to satisfy God we must also love Him with all of our heart, soul, and might (Mt. 22:37; Dt. 6:5). Jesus said of Himself, *I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father* (Jn. 14:31). To so love God is true righteousness, and it is this righteousness, accomplished in Jesus' *body*, that is imputed to us by faith,

*...faith is counted as righteousness (Rom. 4:5),
...by the one man's obedience [Jesus] the many will be
made righteous (Rom. 5:19)*

⁴¹ Ralph Martin, "Lord's Supper, The," *The New Bible Dictionary*, J.D. Douglas, editor (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 750.

...not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith (Phil. 3:9).

Thus, Jesus' *body* represents His righteousness accomplished in His *body*, which is His righteousness transferred or imputed to His Church through their faith in Him. As we will see His *blood* is directly tied to His atoning death and sacrifice on the cross by which our sins are removed, but here, we see His *body* representing not what was taken away, our sins, but what was added to us, His righteousness, His perfect love for God.

An Alien Righteousness

When we partake of the *bread* of the Supper we partake of Jesus' righteousness, His active obedience, His perfect of obedience, which has been imputed to us, to me. Jesus perfectly obeyed the Father, was without sin, perfectly obeyed the Law of God. This righteousness is not what I earned, but what He earned. Luther called it an "alien righteousness." It is accounted to me through my faith in Jesus, by my clinging to Him alone for my salvation. I believe that He alone can save me from the just wrath of God. Before God I now stand *holy and blameless*, perfect, because Jesus' righteousness has been accounted to me.

Take the *bread* of the Supper and receive His righteousness which makes you perfect before God. One *eats* it as an act of accounting it, imputing it to one's own account. One *eats* the *bread* as an act of faith *proclaiming the death of the Lord*.

8. The Bread of the Lord's Supper represents the unity in Him of His Church

The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

The *bread/body* sayings communicate more than one thing. First, we need to hear Jesus say, *I am here with you*, as we partake of the bread. Second, the *bread* represents Jesus' righteousness, so we need to remember that it was imputed to me that is why I eat it, I take it into myself. Here is a third thing which the *bread* to us.

His Body means His Church

Jesus' *body* also represents His Body, the Church, the many that He made one.

*The bread that we break,
is it not a participation in the body of Christ?
Because there is one bread,
we who are many are one body,
for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor. 10:16-17).⁴²*

Paul gives *body* have a double meaning, i.e. Christ's physical *body* (v. 16), and the Church as Christ's *Body* (v. 17). The common loaf from which each member of Christ's Body, the Church, partakes in the Supper is now extended as a symbol of the unity of the Church. Participation in the Supper becomes not only *participation in the body of Christ* but also participation in unity of the Church which is also His *Body*. The *bread* is more than the presence of Christ, more than the representation of His righteousness accounted to His Church. It is also that body of people who have been joined to Christ, and by virtue of this union they are joined to one another, profoundly uniting them together.

To Have a Share

To partake of the *bread* represents that one has a place and a share in the unity of the Church in Christ. To partake of the *bread* means you are a part of that unity created by Christ. To put it another way, to partake means that you have become the member of a new race. *Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all (Col. 3:11)*. All social, ethnic, gender, and national distinctions are erased only one thing matters being in Christ.

⁴² Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, 143, points out that though Paul reverses the order of the elements, cup first, in this passage it does not reflect another tradition, rather it "is simply that Paul can deduce the thought about the congregation as the body of Christ, expressed in v. 17, only from the participation in the body of Christ that the broken bread mediates to us."

The first and one time sacrament of baptism signifies that we are in Christ and thereby unified in the membership of His Church. *For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus* (Gal. 3:27-28). The second and repetitious sacrament is the Supper which signifies and continues to confirm our share and place in the Church each time we partake. A writer succinctly summarized, “Just as there is only one loaf at the eucharist, so those who participate jointly in the single loaf constitute a single body (1 Cor.10:17).”⁴³

Look Around You

The Supper with this extended meaning of the *bread* presses us not only to remember Christ and His work of which we are personal beneficiaries, but in partaking we must stop and look around us remembering that participation obligates us with a debt of love joining us to all who are corporately partaking. We participate not alone but together. In doing so, we are and we demonstrate that we are the family of God, joint heirs, fellow members, brothers and sisters, a new race whose only distinguishing identity is our belonging to Christ, as Christians. We are this *one bread*. We are the body of Christ.

The *bread/body* saying of the Supper adds immeasurably to the meaning of the Supper. First, it reminds us that Christ is present with us at the Supper in His Holy Spirit. Second, it reminds us that with His body Christ perfectly obeyed all of God’s laws and perfectly loved the Father, and this righteousness of Christ is accounted to us as though we had perfectly obeyed and loved God. Third, the *Bread* is to remind us of our place, and our share to play in the corporate life and the unity of the Body of Christ, the Church. Now we turn to the individual and distinctive meaning of the *cup/blood*.

⁴³ Ronald Fung, “Body of Christ,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 77. Cf. I.H. Marshall, “Lord’s Supper,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, 572: “...the ‘many’ who share in the one loaf at the supper are ‘one body’ in virtue of doing so (1 Cor. 10:16-17). He sees that those who share in the blood and the body of Jesus are thereby brought into a unity with one another where social distinctions cannot be allowed to exist.” Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, 144, connects the flow of Paul’s thoughts for us: “For the body of Christ, which we receive in the bread, implies for Paul directly the ‘body of Christ’ in which we are bound together in the sacrament. In it we receive the body of Christ and, by receiving it, are and show ourselves to be the body of Christ. ...An appropriate paraphrase [1 Cor. 10:17] might therefore be: For the body of Christ offered to us in this bread and given up for us is one, and just for this reason we, the many, are one body, namely the body of Christ.”

9. The Cup of the Lord's Supper represents *the shed blood of Jesus*.

And he took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mt. 26:27-28).

Jesus could have said, *This is My body and blood*, but He did not. He separated each element and gave them each with their own saying. By doing so Jesus had a statement to make. This is the case as we have seen with His *body* saying, and, no less so, as we come to the *blood* saying He also has a statement to make. These individual statements are like dressings intended to enrich and beautify the foundational meaning of the elements taken together, their combined meaning.

This is My Blood – the savings differences

In Jesus' words of institution for the *bread* we found uniformity, but we find less uniformity in the *cup* sayings.

Matthew – *this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (26:28).*

Mark – *This is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many (14:24).*

Luke – *This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (22:20).*

1 Corinthians – *This cup is the new covenant in my blood (11:25).*

Matthew and Mark interpret the meaning of the *cup* as *my blood* qualifying it with *of the covenant*. In contrast Luke and Paul interpret the meaning of the *cup* as *the new covenant* which is then qualified by *the new covenant in my blood*. Note that the cup for Matthew and Mark is Christ's *blood*, but Luke and Paul identify it as the *New Covenant*; but there is no difference in meaning. *My blood of the covenant* or *the new covenant in my blood* are two ways of saying the same thing. Both traditions indicate the direct and positive relationship that the *cup* represents entrance into and participation into the *new covenant* which was inaugurated by the *blood* of Jesus. Thus to say that the *cup* represents Jesus' *shed blood* is recognizing its primary reference, and to say that it represents the *new covenant* simply recognizes its qualified meaning, namely, that it is the *blood* which inaugurates the *new covenant* for us.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Bornkamm, *Early Christian Experience*, 143, writes, "New covenant means the new, eschatological order of salvation. In substance, this means the reign of the exalted Christ, established in his death."

Poured out

Matthew, Mark, and Luke emphasize the sacrificial character of Christ's *blood* that it is *poured out* (or *shed*). Since all the accounts emphasize that this *poured out blood* is the *blood* of Jesus (*My blood*) thus emphasizing it a self-giving sacrifice (cf. Jn. 10:11, 15, 17). Matthew uniquely adds the beneficial purpose⁴⁵ of Jesus' *poured out blood* as *for the forgiveness of sin*.

Fundamental Meaning of *Blood*

Leon Morris, after an extensive study of the use of "blood" in both the OT and NT, offers this simple refinement of Jesus' fundamental meaning of His *blood*, "it seems... certain that in both the Old and New Testaments... blood signifies essentially... death. ...In particular, there seems no reason for disputing the dictum of J. Behm: "Blood of Christ" is like "cross," only another, clearer expression for **the death of Christ in its salvation meaning.**"⁴⁶

For those who have been receiving the Lord's Supper for years this is pretty basic and nothing new. When we remember Christ's *blood* by partaking of the *cup* we must reflect on His sacrificial death and His gift of salvation. His *blood* is the means by which He has achieved our forgiveness of sin. Here is our starting point. Three OT events are associated with the meaning of Christ's blood. They build on this basic idea, or perhaps better, they clothe this basic idea: the sealing of the Mosaic Covenant, the Day of Atonement, and the Passover.

Sweet and Bitter

One last thought regarding this basic meaning of Jesus' saying. *Blood* reflects the high cost of Jesus' sealing or inaugurating of the new covenant and with it the forgiveness of our sins. It cost His life. To *pour out* or to *shed blood* is nothing less than to give up your life. How extraordinary (Jn. 15:13; Rom. 5:7-8), how overwhelming (2 Cor. 9:15; 1 Cor. 8:9), and how dramatic (Jn. 3:16) that such a cost is displayed so simply in the sweetness of the *cup*, sweet for us but extremely costly and generous for Him.

⁴⁵ 1 Cor. 11:25, *ei&" thVn e&mnVn a&navmnhsin*, ei*ç indicates purpose here and accordingly is translated *for*.

⁴⁶ Leon Morris, *The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Comp., 1955), 117-122, (bold added). Cf. Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 190.

10. The Cup of the Lord's Supper represents God's Forgiveness.

And he took a cup and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Mt. 26:27-28).

The *cup*, as mentioned above, represents Christ's atoning death on the cross and all its benefits, but more specifically the OT event of the sealing of the Mosaic covenant is an historical type⁴⁷ to further explain the meaning of the cup as sacrificial blood which inaugurated a covenant.

The Sealing of the Old Covenant

All four accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper join the *cup/blood* to the **New Covenant**:⁴⁸

Matthew - *...for this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (26:28).*

Mark - *...This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many (14:24).*

Luke - *...This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood (22:20).*

1 Corinthians - *...This cup is the new covenant in my blood (11:25).*

Exodus 24:8, the sealing of the Mosaic covenant, provides the best background for Jesus' words which Matthew and Mark make more explicit by their simpler statement, *blood of the covenant*, dropping the *new* and thereby creating an allusion to the Exodus event.⁴⁹ "When Moses received the Law from the hand of God, he took the blood of burnt offerings and peace offerings and threw half of it against the altar. After reading to the people the covenant and securing from them the promise of obedience, he threw the other half of the blood upon the people, saying, 'Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words' (Exod. 24:8)."⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *Type* is a literary term of Biblical typology meaning an OT prefiguration of a NT accomplishment which is referred to as the *antitype*. It is employed by Biblical writers to show the continuity of God's redemptive plan. "The *type* is the initial person, event, thing or institution; the corresponding and later person, event, thing or institution is called the *antitype*." Arthur G. Patzia and Anthony J. Petrotta, "Typology," Pocket Dictionary of Biblical Studies (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 119.

⁴⁸ The New Covenant was first an OT hope and then in Christ a NT reality: Is. 59:20-21; Jer. 31:31-34; 32:37-40; Ezk. 16:60-63; 37:21-28; 2 Cor. 2:14-7:16; Heb. 8:1-10:39; 9:18-21; 12:24.

⁴⁹ Marshall, The Gospel of Luke, 807. Morris, The Apostolic Preaching of the Cross, 100f., argues that the best background text is Zech. 9:11, *because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free*. He believes this the text which Jesus had in mind (also see Zech. 9:9 cf. Mt. 21:5; Jn. 12:15; Zech. 13:7 cf. Mt. 26:31; Mk. 14:27; cf. Heb. 10:29; 13:20).

⁵⁰ Ladd, A Theology of the New Testament, 189. J. H. Kurtz, Offerings, Sacrifices and Worship in the Old Testament, James Martin translator (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998, orig. 1863), 322-323, offers this summary of the covenant consecration in Ex. 24: "After the people had unanimously declared their willingness to accept the duties and privileges of the covenant as expounded to them by Moses, and to regulate their conduct by them, Moses

Moses in these actions with blood inaugurated the Mosaic covenant. His actions signified the binding of both Yahweh (the blood cast upon the altar) and the people (the blood cast on the people) to the covenant. The significance of this covenant was to establish how Israel was to live before Yahweh and Yahweh's promised blessings for their obedience, as well as, His curses for their disobedience. The covenant was a like a great net thrown over Israel. It was a sign of Yahweh's election of Israel as His people which stipulated and defined their lives and relationship with Him. As such, the Mosaic covenant was a bilateral covenant. It placed stipulations upon Israel, and it contracted reciprocating promises from Yahweh. It required something from both sides to maintain the covenant.

The New Covenant's Forgiveness

The Mosaic covenant was sealed with blood, but it did not characteristically or inherently promise forgiveness. In contrast, the New Covenant explicitly promised forgiveness, *For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more* (Jer. 31:34).⁵¹ Jesus made specific application of the New Covenant's forgiveness in His *cup* saying, *...for this is my blood of the covenant... for the forgiveness of sins* (Mt. 26:28). The *cup* represents the *blood* of Christ inaugurating the New Covenant and its promise of forgiveness and all the redemptive blessings accomplished by the *blood* of Christ. As the Mosaic covenant was inaugurated with *blood*, so also is the New Covenant. It pledges that God will now relate to His people on the basis of the New Covenant with its complete and eternal forgiveness accomplished by the *blood* of Christ. *For I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.*

New Covenant is Unilateral

A further contrast between the two covenants is the unilateral nature of the New Covenant. It is accomplished solely by the work of Yahweh and His Servant (Is. 53). Here we are reminded that it is God alone and His Servant alone who save us. The New Covenant is a covenant of grace receiving what we do not deserve. This is the Good News of the New Covenant. Our salvation does not depend upon ourselves, but it is the result of another. We are saved by the vicarious death, the substitutionary death, of another who died for us.

built an altar, which represented the striving of the people upwards, and the stooping of the gracious presence of God downwards. He then erected twelve pillars (probably round about the altar) as symbols of the nation. In this way was the fundamental idea of the future place of worship, viz., the gracious presence of God in the midst of the twelve tribes of Israel, first exhibited. Moses then sent some young men of the children of Israel to offer young oxen as burnt-offerings and peace-offerings; and taking one half and sprinkled it upon them, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which Jehovah concluded with you.' Moses and Aaron then ascended the holy mountain, with Nadab and Abihu, Aaron's eldest sons, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and when they had seen Jehovah, they partook of the sacrificial meal (Ex. xxiv. 1-11)."

⁵¹ Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 189.

By His death we are freed from the wages of sin. By His righteousness we are accounted righteous. Such a salvation is so sufficient that *it is finished* (Jn. 19:30); nothing can be added to its sufficiency (Titus 3:5). Truly in the New Covenant we see how God is unreservedly *for* us (Rom. 8:31)! And why would God be so unreservedly *for* us? Because He has cast the net of His love upon us, and in Christ and His work we see how unreservedly He has displayed His love (Eph. 2:4-5; Rom. 8:32, 38-39). All of this is the unilateral force of the New Covenant in which we now stand in Christ. Nothing, Paul writes, *will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Rom. 8:39). This is the New Covenant in which Christ has sealed us with His blood.

11. The Cup of the Lord's Supper represents our free access to God.

...we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us...let us draw near with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience... (Heb. 10:19, 20, 22).

With this next OT event we continue to add to the meaning represented by the *cup* of the Lord's Supper. In the ceremony of the day of atonement we meet another historical type which unveils the meaning of Christ's *blood* and the *cup*.

The Day of Atonement

The second OT background event which gives meaning to the *cup/blood* of the Lord's Supper is the **Day of Atonement**. The Day of Atonement was filled with drama and significance. Only on this annual day could the Holy of Holies be entered. It was the innermost center of the Temple representing the presence of Yahweh with His people. Only the High Priest as the people's representative could enter to make atonement for sins of Israel, sprinkling the sacrificial blood upon the mercy seat of the ark of covenant (Lev. 16).

In the book of Hebrews much is made of this reference. The ceremony of the Day of Atonement was an historical type which gives meaning to Jesus' blood represented in the Lord's Supper. Hugh MacDonald writes, "In Hebrews 9:7f. the blood of sacrifice, associated with the Day of Atonement, is seen to prefigure Christ, who by his own blood brought to an end the alienation of humanity from God, and of God from sinful mankind. The 'blood of Christ' is at once a sign of Christ's voluntary giving of himself [poured out] and a statement of the atoning efficacy of his death for many (cf. Heb. 9:12-14)."⁵²

Christ our Great High Priest

Hebrews then goes on to depict Christ not only as the sacrifice, but He is also the *great high priest* who offers His own blood as atonement for His people. He offers it not on earth only but more importantly in the Holy of Holies of the heavenly Temple (cf. 9:24). His blood secures *eternal redemption*, is offered *once for all*, and *purifies the consciences* of His people (9:12, 14). Thus, Jesus' reference to His blood in the institution of His Supper suggests the picture of His Great High Priestly act of entering into the heavenly Holy of Holies, and there pouring out His blood as atonement and redemption for His people.

⁵² MacDonald, New Testament Concept of Atonement, 48.

Once for All

The significance of this act is never to be repeated because of its total sufficiency. It is efficacious for the *eternal redemption* of His people before God. The sufficiency of His blood does not only satisfy the justice of God, but it has a sweeping personal consequence upon His people to the end that even their consciences are cleansed (9:14). Here the potency of Christ's blood is portrayed. His blood removes the effect of His people's sins upon the offended, God, and it removes the effect of their sins upon their own consciences. ...*He entered **once for all** into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption (9:12). For by a single offering he has perfected **for all time** those who are being sanctified (10:14).* With these sweeping statements of facts we are assured of the true potency of Christ's blood.

Made Holy We have Access

Scripture makes clear that access to God is prohibited by the presence of sin. *For you are not a God who delights in wickedness; evil may not dwell with you (Ps. 5:4).*⁵³ Sin is disloyalty, disobedience, the breaching of a harmonious and just relationship with God. To sin is to treat the holiness of God as though it was common and base, it is to profane the character and name of God, and God will not tolerate, condone, or allow it to approach Him. He is disgusted by it; it is an abomination to Him.⁵⁴ Consequently, it prompts His wrath.⁵⁵ Thus, sin prohibits our access to God; it is simply not acceptable and cannot be admitted into God's presence. Access is only available to those who have been made holy and sanctified by the removal of their sin and the attainment of righteousness.

The high priestly work of Christ has accomplished our sanctification and righteousness with the resulting privilege of the free and open access of the believer to God. ...*we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us...let us draw near with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience...* (10:19, 20, 22). Our approach to God is now uninhibited. We have constant open and free access to Him, and He assures us that through the blood of Jesus He is now completely *for us!* This is what is represented by the *cup* of the Lord's Supper.

⁵³ Cf. v. 5; 11:5; 92:15

⁵⁴ Cf. Lev. 18:27; Gen. 46:34; Jer. 16:18; Dt. 7:25-26

⁵⁵ Cf. Ex. 32:10; Nu. 12:9; 25:3-4; 32:10, 13; Ex. 22:21-24; Dt. 6:15; 7:4; 11:16-17; 31:16-17; E.A. Martens, "Sin, Guilt," Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 770-771.

12. The Cup of the Lord's Supper represents Jesus as our Passover Lamb.

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed (1 Cor. 5:7).

With this final OT event we add to the meaning represented by the *cup* of the Lord's Supper. In the Passover we meet another historical type which reveals an additional significant meaning of Christ's blood and the *cup*.

The Passover Lamb

The third OT background event which depicts the significance of Jesus' blood is the Passover. The Passover celebration was the scene of Jesus' institution of His Supper. The ritual of eating the Passover or Paschal lamb in the Passover meal would have occurred immediately before Jesus' offering of His cup saying which would have been the third cup of the meal,⁵⁶ the cup of redemption or blessing. The eating of the lamb would be a very suggestive introduction to Jesus' *cup/blood* saying. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul declares, *For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed*. John the Baptist declared Jesus to be, *the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!* (Jn. 1:29).⁵⁷ John hears in heaven, *...you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God... Worthy is the Lamb who was slain* (Rev. 5:9, 12). Peter wrote, *with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot* (1 Pet. 1:19). The silence of a sheep led to slaughter and a lamb before its shearer was in the mind of Isaiah in his prophecy of the Servant-Messiah's death (Is. 53:7-8).⁵⁸

The Uniqueness of the Passover Lamb

A lamb, one that was less than a year whether a sheep or goat, had always been the principle sacrificial animal in the OT. Yet, the Passover lamb

⁵⁶ There are four cups used in the Passover meal. The first cup is the cup of sanctification; the second cup is the cup of deliverance; the third cup is the cup of blessing; and the fourth cup is the cup of praise. Jesus introduced the third cup here (Lk. 22:17), and it is this same cup to which He refers (v. 20) [Alfred Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Updated Edition 1994), 188; I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978), 797-799, 805; Stan Kellner, "Let's Have A Seder," *Focus On The Family*, April 1994, Vol. 18, No. 4, 6-7; E. Schweizer, *The Good News According To Mark* (Richmond: John Knox Press, 1970), 296-297].

⁵⁷ D.W. Wead, "Lamb of God," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Geoffrey W. Bromiley editor (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986), 62. Wead points out that the Aramaic translation, which Jesus spoke, of the Greek, *Lamb of God*, can be rendered both *Lamb of God* and *Servant of God*. In all likelihood John, the apostle, intended a double meaning for which he is famous for in his Gospel. John wanted to identify the Lamb with the Servant of Isaiah 53. In doing so, "The substitutionary atonement became an important part of the role of the Lamb of God. As the Suffering Servant of Isaiah bore the sins of many (Isa. 53:12), so the Lamb of God takes away the sin of the world...."

Behind John's use of *only begotten son* is the sacrifice of Issac (Gen. 22), Abraham's only begotten son, but in this incident a ram (not a *lamb*) was provided by God as a substitute for Issac. One could say that this event stands as a type of *the lamb of God*. Cf. H. D. McDonald, *New Testament Concept of Atonement: The Gospel of the Calvary Event* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 59-66.

⁵⁸ J.C. Moyer, "Lamb," *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 62.

was entirely unique, and as such it was used to typify Christ. The Passover lamb foreshadowed the later sacrifices stipulated by Law which would later be given at Sinai. Thus, we could say that the Paschal lamb was a prototype of the sacrificial victim. Alfred Edersheim points this out, the Passover lamb “was a sacrifice, and yet quite out of the order of all Levitical sacrifices. For it had been instituted and observed before Levitical sacrifices existed; before the Law was given; nay, before the Covenant was ratified by blood (Exod. 24). In a sense, it may be said to have been the cause of all the later sacrifices of the Law, and of the Covenant itself. Lastly, it belonged neither to one nor to another class of sacrifices; it was neither exactly a sin-offering nor a peace-offering, but combined them both. And yet in many respects it quite differed from them. In short, just as the priesthood of Christ was a real Old Testament priesthood, yet not after the order of Aaron, but after the earlier prophetic, and royal order of Melchisedek. So the sacrifice also of Christ was a real Old Testament sacrifice, yet not after the order of Levitical sacrifices, but after that of the earlier prophetic Passover sacrifice, by which Israel had become a royal nation.”⁵⁹ Paul declared, *Christ, our Passover lamb*, and accordingly, we can see four likenesses between the historical type and its subsequent fulfillment by its antitype.

One-of-a-kind Event

First, there was only one Passover though remembered each year. This meal had to be eaten on that night. No leftovers could be eaten; they had to be burned the next day. If it was missed on that night, there were no second chances the next day. This was not just any meal but a unique meal. We find in Christ’s sacrifice a similar uniqueness – the *once for all* nature of Christ’s sacrifice (Heb. 9:25-10:18). The Lord’s Supper embodies Christ’s blood as an one-of-a-kind, not to be repeated, entirely unique and sufficient sacrifice.

A Substitutionary Deliverance

Second, the Passover lamb’s primary significance was its blood. The significance of its blood was its deliverance from the tenth plague. The blood represented the life of the lamb (Lev. 17:11; Heb. 9:22), so the life of the lamb was substituted for the life of the firstborn of the household. It was slaughtered on the day of the tenth plague which promised the death of the firstborn of everyone whose doorpost was not painted with the blood of this lamb (Ex. 12:7, 11-13). By the display of its blood the firstborn of the household was spared. As the blood of the Passover lamb was a substitute for Israel’s firstborn, so Christ’s death was also a substitution. His shed blood was not for Himself but for the *many* (Mt. 26:28).

⁵⁹ Edersheim, *The Temple: Its Ministry and Services*, 184.

Nourishment

Third, the Passover Lamb provided not only for the *deliverance* of Israel's firstborns by its blood, but its body served as *nourishment* for Israel's exodus. Following the painting of its blood over the doorposts of their homes the Israelites were commanded to cook and eat the lamb (Ex. 12:7-8). This was not just symbolic because the number of people to be covered by a lamb was determined *according to what each can eat you shall make your count for the lamb* (v. 4). Further, the manner in which they were to eat the lamb made it obvious that it was nourishment for travel. *In this manner you shall eat it: with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand* (vv. 11). As the Paschal Lamb delivered Israel it also strengthened and nourished her for the Exodus. In an analogous way the Lamb of God, Passover Lamb, *delivers* us with His blood and He *nourishes* with His presence and His grace (Heb. 13:9-10).

A Fellowship Meal

Fourth, the Passover Lamb reflects more than a sacrifice; it was also the occasion of fellowship which took place in the Passover meal. A sacrificial meal was a meal of fellowship with the one to whom it was offered (1 Cor. 10:20-22). To eat with another signified much more than simply nourishment shared but also a friendship established. Remember how Jesus was called a "friend of sinners" because He ate with them (Mt. 11:19; Lk. 7:34). All of these shades of color and texture provided by the Paschal lamb spill over and clothe Jesus' words, *this is my blood*. The Apostle wrote, *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation [fellowship] in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation [fellowship] in the body of Christ?* (1 Cor. 10:16). In this context Paul warned the Corinthians against participating in pagan sacrificial meals saying, *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy?* (1 Cor. 10:21-22). The Supper was a fellowship meal not just symbolically. It was a meal for a very real and profound fellowship with Christ and God, the Father, through the presence of the Holy Spirit (cf. 2 Cor. 13:14).

The Passover Lamb as an OT type prefigured its antitype Jesus, our *Passover Lamb*. As the original served as a one-of-a-kind sacrifice to deliver and nourish Israel, as well as, offer fellowship with Yahweh, so Jesus as our *Passover Lamb* serves all who have savingly trusted in Jesus as their Savior. It becomes obvious that the occasion of the Passover meal for the instituting of the Lord's Supper was not a coincidence. The Passover and its lamb prefigured the meaning of Jesus' cross work and the sign of its significance in the Supper.

13. The Cup, *This is My Blood* – A Life Given

“I lay down my life for the sheep...” (Jn. 10:15).

The reference of *blood* for death was a euphemism for a violent death. Though from a purely human perspective Jesus’ life was taken from by Pilate and the Jews, but it was for this reason He came into the world (Mk. 10:45). He offered no resistance to His torturers and executioners (1 Pet. 2:23; Is. 53:7). He came to **give** His life (Jn. 10:15). It was not taken from Him but freely given! The cup represents His *blood* given.

A New Passover Meal with Deep OT Roots

Jesus’ *cup* saying would have been associated with the third of four cups (the cup of redemption or blessing) served during the Passover meal. Paul confirms that it was the third cup with his reference to it as *the cup of blessing which we bless* (1 Cor. 10:16). The third cup of the Passover meal was mixed wine (wine diluted with water) and was drunk after the eating of the lamb after which nothing else was to be eaten. This would also fit with Luke’s and Paul’s description that the cup was given *after they had eaten*. Jesus, at this point in the dinner, takes the cup saying, *Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins* (Mt. 26:27-28).

By His reference to His *blood* Jesus simply means His sacrificial death, but it was clothed with the memories of these three OT events: the Sealing of the Covenant, the Day of Atonement, and the Passover. The blood of Christ **sealed the New Covenant** inaugurating a new relationship with God which was initiated and established by God. It provided all that was necessary for salvation with its abundant and eternal provision of forgiveness. The **Day of Atonement** informs us that His blood brings holiness and purity and with it free access to God as our heavenly Father. The background of the Day of Atonement also assures us of the continual intercession of our Great High Priest, as well as the personal gift of relief through a clean conscience before God. Finally, the **Passover** adds to the meaning of Jesus’ blood as deliverance and protection, as our Passover Lamb’s blood delivers us from the wrath of God and the wages of death and nourishes us with grace.

Blood Meant a “life violently ended”

Here, we may form a fitting conclusion to Jesus’ rich meaning of *...this is my blood...* F.J. Taylor, summing up the ideas represented by the Bible’s use of *blood*, points to the extremity and greatness represented by the use of *blood* because it was the figure used for a “life violently ended.” As such, when used of Jesus’ death, it gives it the significance of the **greatest offering** which can

be made – “the giving of life or blood (John 15.13).” By comparison we see that the taking of another’s life or blood is deemed the **greatest crime**. Consequently, “the **greatest penalty** [is] to have one’s life or blood taken.” Sacrificial blood is the **greatest atonement**, *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins* (Heb. 9:22). But just a man cannot give his own life because it “is already forfeit (Ps. 49.7-8).” *The wages of sin is death* (Rom. 6:23), thus man has forfeited his own blood. Besides this, his life has always belonged to God, thus “he has nothing which is not God’s (Ps. 50.9-10) to give.” These particularly OT ideas “are used to set forth in NT the significance of the death of Christ. In him all these meanings are summed up and fulfilled.” Taylor concludes with these words: “The life of the sinner was forfeit and lay under sentence of death until Christ by the shedding of his blood in the suffering of death gave release and cleansing to the sinner (Eph. 1.7, I Pet. 1.18-19, Rev. 1.5, 5.9). ...The blood of his cross can only mean the pouring out in death of his earthly human life, a deed which availed and still avails to put men right with God.”⁶⁰ Herein is the meaning of Jesus’ words, *...this is my blood...*

A Robe Dipped in Blood

In this light, we find a vivid image of the *blood* of Christ in the book of Revelation. The battle of Armageddon is introduced with the appearance of one sitting upon a white horse who will confront the raging beast, false prophet, and their kings of the earth. He has fire in His eyes, crowns upon His head, is called Faithful and True and the Word of God and has a name which He only knows. He is further and perhaps most distinctively identified by His clothing, *He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood* (Rev. 19:13). When Jesus says, *this is my blood*, He gives us that which most completely distinguishes His work, His blessings, His love, and all that He is. *He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood*.

⁶⁰ F.J. Taylor, “Blood,” *Theological Word Book of the Bible*, Alan Richardson editor (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 34.

14. The Lord's Supper is a proclamation of hope.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:26).

Eating and Drinking in Anticipation

The Apostle Paul wrote, *For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor. 11:26)*. He instructs us that the Supper is a proclamation, a proclamation of hope, *until he comes*. The content of the proclamation is the *Lord's death*, and the duration of the proclamation is *until he comes*. The means by which the *Lord's death* is proclaimed is the Lord's Supper. Here the verbal proclamation of the Gospel gives way to the sacramental nonverbal proclamation. The implication of Paul's statement is that the proclamation lasts only for a time. What faith claims as its hope is held by faith only for a time until it becomes a present reality, until its hope is realized. Then it will be faith realized, trust rewarded. Faith is turned into sight. We proclaim in anticipation, while we wait for our hope we proclaim it by partaking of the Supper. The elements of the Supper explain the *Lord's death*, and the Lord's death gives us the ground for our hope, so we confidently wait in His promises of His coming!

Jesus' Fast

Jesus' original words are reflected in Paul's words. *I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (Mt. 26:29)*. Luke makes Jesus' statement even more explicit. *For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. ...For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes (22:16, 18)*. Jesus speaks of fasting from drinking and eating until the kingdom of God comes in its fullness, when it is no longer a hope but a realization.

The OT referred to a banquet when the Messiah would bring in the Kingdom of God. *...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 (Is. 25:6)*. John gives this feast a name. *Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9)*. This is when all the promises of the Gospel will be realized as the Church is united to her Lord. This supper is a celebration of that union. Jesus promised that He will not eat or drink until this supper. We with Him will enter into His glory for ever and ever, and this supper will celebrate this entrance.

Until that day we proclaim the power and victory of His death by partaking of the Supper. His fast is a sign of His dedication to accomplishing

the fulfillment of His kingdom. Our partaking proclaims our faith in the victory of His cross work and our confidence in His coming kingdom. When we proclaim His death by partaking in the Supper we are also proclaiming our future won by His death as we confidently wait for His coming.

The Glory to Come

The power and glory of His coming should be vivid in our minds as we partake. Paul wrote of this to the Thessalonians.

...When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

Earlier Paul had described the Lord's return (1 Thess. 4:16-17). Jesus with all majesty will descend from heaven announced by *a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God*. At His coming there will be the resurrection of the dead in Christ. *And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord*. Together all of His saints will be glorified and made perfect. He...*will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself* (Phil. 3:21). He will gather us to Himself separating the world from His own as sheep from goats (Mt. 25:32). *When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory* (Col. 3:4). It is with this hope that we *proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*.

Witness and Confession Merge

The Supper's proclamation is both a witness to the truth of the Gospel and a confession of our confidence in His death and His promised future. Both our witness and confession merge in the Supper. Before the world or any unbeliever in the gathering of the church we take the bread and cup representing Jesus' death and His promised hope, and in doing so we confession, "I believe in Jesus! I believe that He died for me. I believe that He is coming again for me, to take into His glory. I am His and He is mine." As real and tangible as are this bread and cup, just as real and tangible will be my Lord's coming. By such participation we *proclaim the Lord's death until he comes!*

15. The Lord's Supper is a time of personal examination – rightly discerning the body.

Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.

Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself (1 Cor. 11:27-29).

Remember the Supper's Primary Focus

Earlier, we had stated that the Supper is a means by which our Lord ministers His grace to His people. This is the primary focus of the Supper, but often it is presented as an opportunity for personal examination. There is this dimension to it, but it is not its primary focus. To rightly understand the type of personal assessment or examination it calls for we must rightly understand the context in which the call for personal examination was commanded.

The command only comes to us from the pen of Paul in his Corinthian correspondence (1 Cor. 11:17-34). In verses 23-25 he relates the words of the Lord commemorating the Supper as he had received them. In verses 26-34 we have Paul's exhortation and application of these words of Jesus to the Corinthian situation, especially the situation mentioned in verses 17-22. This is the context in which we must understand the call for personal assessment. Jesus' own words of institution do not call for this personal assessment.⁶¹

The Corinthian Love Feast

The Corinthians' celebration of the Supper was part of a larger event, a love (*agape*) dinner.⁶² This meal seems to have gone back to Jesus' institution of His Supper. On that occasion He had commanded His disciples, *that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples...* (Jn. 13:34-35). "The Christian duty to love one another has always been expressed in gatherings for fellowship. Such fellowship was realized from early times by participation in a common meal, and love feasts, *agapai*...."⁶³

It is believed that based upon Jesus' command and a desire to reproduce the events of that night that a tradition developed of incorporating the celebration of the Supper as part of a meal to display Christian love and

⁶¹ The announcement of Judas' betrayal (Mt. 26:20-25; Mk. 14:17-21; Lk. 22:21-23; Jn. 13:18-30) and Jesus' announcement that the disciples will fall away (Mt. 26:30-35; Mk. 14:26-31; Lk. 22:31-34) stand outside the institution of the Supper though they are interwoven into the events of the evening.

⁶² 1 Cor. 11:17-22; Jude 12; cf. 2 Pet. 2:13; Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7 ff; Jn. 13:34-35.

⁶³ R. J. Coates, "Love Feast," *The New Bible Dictionary*, J. D. Douglas, editor (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 754.

fellowship. In addition, Acts records the earliest gatherings of the Church were characterized by fellowship, the sharing of all things in common, and the breaking of bread. The example of the church in Acts relates the continued practice of celebrating the Supper in the context of eating together (Acts 2:42, 44-47). Jude refers to these meals as *love feasts* (v. 12). These were common meals, everyone bringing what they had whether little or much. These were to be displays of unity, love, and an experience of genuine Christian fellowship, then in the midst of this shared meal the Lord's Supper would be served for all. Preaching and worship were probably incorporated into the event as well (e.g. Acts 20:7; 2:46-47).

The Corinthian Failure

The Corinthians in their celebration had miserably failed to display Christian love and fellowship. Paul described their failure at several levels. First, *For...when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you* (1 Cor. 11:18). Rather than displaying Christian love and unity in Christ – *bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Eph. 4:2-3) – the Corinthians were selectively excluding some and including others which formed factions and exclusive groups who openly opposed other groups (e.g. 1 Cor. 1:10-17). These divisions were bad enough, but it did not end with their bigotry and exclusiveness.

Second, *[f]or in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?* (11:18, 20-22). The further complication was their riotous and indulgent behavior at the dinner with the specific accusations of their gluttonous eating and their drunken drinking. They had no patience to wait on others. They began when they were ready without regard for anyone else but themselves and their friends. This seems to be especially the case of the wealthier of the church. For the rich it was just another good meal, but for the poor it would have been their only good meal. The poor were slaves to their employers' or masters' schedules, and the rich would not wait. They were on their own schedules. Such a description simply declares the self-centeredness of the offenders. Their offense was especially glaring in light that the Supper was a display of Christ's self-giving!

Finally, Paul identified the heart of their specific failure. In the midst of this atmosphere the proper sanctity for the Supper was not given a thought, rather it was dishonored by the Corinthians' behavior. The Corinthians failed to rightly proclaim *the Lord's death* (v. 26) in their celebration of the Supper.

Further, Paul explained the necessity of *discerning the body* lest bringing divine judgment upon the participant. *For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself* (v. 29). *Body* here is best taken as shorthand for *body and blood* (parallel to v. 27) meaning the sacrifice or death of Christ for His Church.⁶⁴ The word used for *discern* is *diakrino*. The main root word is *krino* which means to separate, judge, consider, or decide, but the prefixed preposition, *dia*, meaning *through*, strengthens the meaning to mean more than what *krino* alone means. It suggests the idea of thorough judgment or discerning thoroughly to arrive at a judgment or separation of things. Thus, Paul is warning any who would partake of the Supper that they must give due respect and reverence to the death of Jesus. To partake of the Supper without this thorough consideration will end in divine judgment, and such has already fallen upon the Corinthian church as the Apostle notes, *That is why many of you are weak and ill and some have died* (v. 30).

Failing to Discern Led to Other Problems

Their failure to rightly *discern the body* was at the heart of the Corinthian offense. This failure of rightly *discerning* Christ crucified led to their abusive failure at Christian fellowship. The failure in fellowship was symptomatic of their *unworthy* participation and their refusal to rightly *discern* Christ. One writer put it, “The social is founded on the salvific...”⁶⁵ This means that had they rightly *discerned the body* (i.e. Christ, the salvific), then they would have rightly participated in the fellowship of the church (the social).

This brings us to two applications for consideration and preparation for receiving the Supper. Learning from the Corinthians’ mistakes, these two relevant areas must be examined in preparation for partaking of the Supper. The first has to do with proper reverence for the Supper, and the second asks what contribution we make to the environment of the church’s celebration of the Supper.

Are You Reverent and Humble?

This call to personal examination is not a demand for perfection. Rather it sets the picture of the Corinthian abuse of the Supper before us, and it warns and admonishes us not fall into any of their abuses. They like the *rulers of this*

⁶⁴ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 893. Contra Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 559, 560, 563: “Most likely the term ‘body,’ even though it comes by way of the words of institution in v. 24, deliberately recalls Paul’s interpretation of the bread in 10:17, thus indicating that the concern is with the problem in Corinth itself, of the rich abusing the poor. All the evidence seems to point in this direction” (563, cf. 563-564).

⁶⁵ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 893.

age had failed to *discern* God's wisdom in a crucified Messiah, so those *rulers* crucified the *Lord of glory* (2:6, 8). This same disregard is the point of Peter's sermon on Pentecost. It ended on this note, *Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified* (Acts 2:36). His audience was *cut to the heart* and cried, *Brothers, what shall we do?* (v. 37). Peter's listeners took responsibility for what was done, and then questioned what reparations could be made. Such a sober and serious response is the beginning of rightly *discerned the body*. They recognized the momentous reality of what had been done and the potential repercussions which now faced them. The intensity of their conviction is described as going straight to their *hearts*. There was nothing superficial here. In the same way the Supper calls us to give our full attention to the momentous event which is signified.

In contrast, the Corinthians treated the Lord's Supper as though it was a casual, common meal, receiving it without reverence, without sober and due regard for its significance, and then consequently they were without due regard for those who were also called to partake. So, with regard we must examine ourselves. Do we appreciate that in the Supper we are standing on holy ground? We must stop our chattering, and we must harness our wandering minds. Recognizing this holy occasion we must take off our shoes, so to speak, meaning that we must bare ourselves, get honest, get real, get serious. In the Supper we meet with Jesus, our Savior and Lord. We must give Him all due respect, all due honor, all due attention. We cannot rightly *proclaim the Lord's death* without this first step of examination and preparation by rightly *discerning the body*.

What can You Contribute to the Environment of the Supper?

A second application shifts our focus from our hearts to our hands, from our attitudes to our behaviors. How can you better contribute to creating the best atmosphere for the whole church to receive the Supper, not just for yourself but for all those around you? How can you "eagerly" *maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*? Certainly such involves *forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you* (Eph. 4:32), which begs the question, "am I generously forgiving any who have offended me?" Are others heavy-hearted to whom you could ask, "can I pray for you right now?" What can you share with someone else – financially, socially (acceptance, acknowledgment, kindness, an invitation, etc.), relationally (a smile, a conversation, sitting with them, a helping hand, a listening ear, etc.), or spiritually (a verse of Scripture, a prayer, an encouragement, etc.). All such gestures are cups of water and when all are added together they become a river of Jesus' love displayed in His

Body. These contributions to the atmosphere of the church receiving the Supper should be part of our preparations for the Supper.

The Corinthians utterly failed in creating the proper environment, the proper context, for the celebration of the Supper. Rather, each Corinthian contributed to their failure. Each brought a cup of gasoline to the fire until their celebration of the Supper had become an abomination, and it no longer was the Supper (1 Cor. 11:20). The Corinthian celebration, like Ananias and Sapphira's hypocritical, self-serving lie (Acts 5:1-11), had to be judged by the Holy Spirit. Consequently Paul explained, *That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died* (1 Cor. 11:30).

The Corinthians' self-centered context should stir us to create the right environment of self-giving love and self-denying ministry as we approach the Supper. In so doing we remember that it is the sign of Christ's self-giving love for me and all of Jesus' family, all my family, gathered with me and around me.

16. The Lord's Supper is a time of personal examination – partaking in a *worthy manner*.

Whoever... eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner ...anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body (1 Cor. 11:27, 29).

Our first lesson on personal examination was learned from the negative example of the Corinthians that they had failed to partake in a reverent way that reflected the self-giving sacrifice of Christ. Consequently, they failed to honor one another. They failed to guard the unity of the Spirit. This resulted in their abomination of the Supper, so that it was no longer the Supper. As we continue to explore the Corinthian situation we will now look more specifically at their offense.

The Parallelism: *Unworthily* and *Without Discerning*

There is a parallelism between vv. 27 and 29. *Whoever... eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner* (v.27) is parallel to *anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body* (v. 29).⁶⁶ Thus, the offense is described differently, but they are parallel in meaning. To eat and drink in *an unworthy manner* is the same as to eat and drink *without discerning the body*. Further, the consequences or punishments are also parallel in these two verses: *will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27) is parallel to *eats and drinks judgment on himself* (v. 29). If we understand *unworthy* partaking, then we will understand *without discerning the body*. If we understand *guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord*, then we will understand *judgment on himself*.

Body Shorthand for *Body and Blood*

First, we will look at the crime, *being guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27).⁶⁷ We will begin by looking at its parallel in verse 29. Barrett points out that in verse 29 we only find *body* there, but in verse 27 *body* is combined with *blood*, the ***body and blood of the Lord***. This leads to an important observation, namely, *body* when combined with *blood* in verse 27 could not refer to the Church, His *body*, which is one possible

⁶⁶ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1968), 275. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, discerning (*diakrino*) means to separate, to make a distinction, to differentiate, to discriminate (x from y), to test, to judge correctly, and to recognize. This leads Thiselton to conclude, “Clearly, therefore, the central motif of separation leads to the force of recognizing...what [is] different” (892).

⁶⁷ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1987), “The adjective ‘guilty’ is a technical legal term to express liability. ...the ‘guilt’ Paul has in mind is that of the crime itself. ...To ‘profane’ the meal as they are doing is to place themselves under the same liability as those responsible for that death in the first place. Thus, to be ‘guilty of his body and blood’ means to be ‘liable for his death’” (560, 561).

interpretation of *body* in verse 29, like its usage in 10:17. But, when it is used in combination with *blood* it refers to the sacrificial death of Christ for His Church. Barrett writes, “That *body* is not to be interpreted here as equivalent to *church* is shown by the addition of *blood*. ...it is best, in view of the parallelism between verses 27 and 29...to interpret *the body* (29) in the light of *the body and blood of the Lord* (27), which is now taken up again in shorthand form.”⁶⁸ In other words, because of the parallelism between the verses and the fact that both *body and blood* are used in v. 27, then *body* in v. 29 must be shorthand for both *body and blood* or the physical death of Christ for His Church not the Church as the *body* of Christ.⁶⁹

The Meaning of *Unworthy*⁷⁰

The parallelism between *unworthy* participation (v. 27) and *not discerning* (v. 29) also helps our interpretation. The meaning of *unworthy* (*anaxios*) is translated variously: incompetency, not good enough, not fit, undeserving, inappropriate, or unsuitable.⁷¹ Fee feels the translation of *anaxios* as *unworthy* has led far too many to the wrong kind of examination becoming wholly introspective and withering under the sinfulness that they find, asking “if they have any sin in their lives, or have committed sins during the past week. ...The tragedy of such an interpretation for countless thousands, both in terms of a foreboding of the Table and guilt for perhaps having partaken unworthily, is incalculable.”⁷² In contrast, our sinfulness is the reason we need the Supper. The appropriate thing to do with personal sin is confess it and repent of it. As Luther said, we are at the same time both sinner and justified. Paul confessed himself as the foremost of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15), but in his confession he didn’t say he *was* but rather he said, *I am*. *But I received mercy for this reason...* (v. 16)! The Table declares that grace has been extended to the sinner and calls us to receive a fresh helping at the Table (Heb. 13:9). Calvin put it this way, “the worthiness disciples bring is a confession of unworthiness. But where there is not this *confession* or sense of unworthiness, this sense of even modest need, it is not right to come: ‘Let us remember that this sacred feast is medicine for the sick, solace for sinners, alms to the poor’ (IV.xvii.41). It is not ceremony for the self-satisfied.”⁷³

⁶⁸ Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 273, 275.

⁶⁹ Contra Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 559, 560, 563. “Most likely the term ‘body,’ even though it comes by way of the words of institution in v. 24, deliberately recalls Paul’s interpretation of the bread in 10:17, thus indicating that the concern is with the problem in Corinth itself, of the rich abusing the poor. All the evidence seems to point in this direction” (563, cf. 563-564).

⁷⁰ Because of the parallelism between vv. 27 and 29 when we define *unworthy* we also define *not discerning*. See page 43 for the meaning of *discerning* (*diakrino*).

⁷¹ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 888-889.

⁷² Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 560, n. 10.

⁷³ In Bruner, *Matthew*, Vol 2, 959.

Thiselton believes a more accurate translation for *anaxios* (unworthy) in the context of 1 Corinthians 11 is *fitting manner* (v. 27). He concludes, “Paul’s primary point is that attitude and conduct should *fit* the message and solemnity of what is proclaimed. At Corinth these were too often **not fitting**, or, in Meyer’s accurate words, “*in a way morally out of keeping with the nature (10:16) and design of the ordinance (11:24-25; his italics)*.”⁷⁴ The idea behind Paul’s use of *unworthy* is that it was *not fitting* to partake of the Supper with the behavior and attitude being displayed in Corinth. Such behavior and attitude did not reflect a *fitting* or *worthy* understanding of participating in the Lord’s Supper. An *unworthy* or *unfitting* understanding was “to contradict both the purpose of Christ’s self-offering, and the spirit in which it was made, and thus to place oneself among those who were responsible for the crucifixion, and not among those who by faith receive the fruit of it.”⁷⁵

The Corinthians’ Unworthy Celebration

The Corinthians had come to the *Lord’s Table* without due reverence for the Lord or His people. Their behavior was abysmally the opposite of *worthy* or *fitting* participation. In fact, their celebration fell so far short that it had failed to even be the Lord’s Supper; it had become like saying one had been baptized because they had been dunked in a swimming pool game. Such falls short by magnitudes of being a real baptism. With regard to the Lord’s Supper Paul stated, *When you come together, it is not the Lord’s supper that you eat* (1 Cor. 11:20). Rather it is you eating your *own meal* (v. 21). You are not focusing on Christ. The Corinthians were focused upon themselves and their own satisfaction. *What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? ...if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home – so that when you come together it will not be for judgment* (vv. 22, 34). Paul wasn’t against enjoying a meal and being satisfied by it, but that was not the point of the Lord’s Supper or the love dinner. They had missed its point by 180°. It was to focus on Christ, reverently to receive His Supper, and to honor His Church. It was soberly to receive His grace and in transformational-turn be gracious to those who had joined you. Anything less was to *despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing* (v. 22). It was to pervert the proclamation of *the Lord’s death* (v. 26). This *manner* of participation was to partake *unworthily*. It was *not fitting* of Christ and His sacrifice.

The Irony

The heart and motive of Jesus’ sacrificial death was His self-giving love. Jesus said, *I lay down my life for the sheep. ...No one takes it from me, but I*

⁷⁴ Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 889.

⁷⁵ Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 273.

lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and I have authority to take it up again (Jn. 10:15, 18). Later, He added, *Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends* (15:13). Christ's death was His display of this self-giving love. He offered Himself as our substitute sacrifice, while the objects of His love were entirely undeserving of any such gracious gift. In light of this pulsing, heart beat of the Supper, one is struck by the irony of the Corinthian self-indulgent abuse of the Supper. It is blatantly evident that their celebrations was *unworthy, unfitting*.

Fitting is the Anticipation of a Disciple

Paul in his second letter to the Corinthian church described the appropriate or *fitting* response to Christ's self-giving love for us.

*For the **love of Christ controls us**, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, **that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him** who for their sake died and was raised* (2 Cor. 5:14-15).

The focus of a *fitting* mind with which to participate is to focus rightly on Christ and what He has done for us, to be *controlled* by His love. It is to *live...for him*. It is to bow before His Lordship. It is to speak the words Eli gave to Samuel, *Speak, LORD, for your servant hears* (1 Sam. 3:9). We remember that *You are not your own, for you were bought with a price* (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Christ's love creates a reciprocating, answering love in His beloved. He in essence dresses us in His love, and by it we are transformed, from His love we love in turn. By the very nature of His self-giving love those who follow Him must be self-denying (Mt. 16:24). In the Supper, to be rightly focused demands that we dress with this mindset; we must put on the attitude of a disciple of Jesus, a follower. We need to note that the Supper is not evangelism (sharing the Gospel as though it has never been heard, an appeal to come to faith), rather it is food to nourish His needy disciples and renew them to their discipleship. The Supper ultimately focuses us on following Jesus. The way it does so is that it first brings us to His self-giving love, and as He casts this love over us; and we once again experience it afresh; we hear His voice and follow Him (Jn. 10:27). Being disciples we anticipate this process preparing ourselves with a *fitting* attitude for the Supper and the work of grace therein. With such preparation our partaking *proclaims the **Lord's death*** (v. 26) and it conforms to that which is "**signified** in the bread and cup and '**proclaimed**' in the bread saying and cup saying."⁷⁶

⁷⁶ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 560, bold added.

17. The Lord's Supper is a time of personal examination which prevents becoming *guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord*.

*Whoever... eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be **guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord***
(1 Cor. 11:27).

Our first lesson on personal examination was learned from the negative example of the Corinthians that they had failed to partake in a reverent way that reflected the self-giving sacrifice of Christ. Consequently, they failed to honor one another. Next, we learned that we must examine ourselves according to the *manner* of our participation, whether it is a *worthy manner* or not. Paul desired for the Corinthians to come focused on Christ's death and its expression of His magnanimous love. It was to come prepared to bathe and bask in that love, and to allow it to renew and transform us refreshing our call to His Lordship and our discipleship. Now, we will find that we must personally examine our faith.

Parallel Consequences

Verses 27 and 29 offer a parallel of both the offense of the Corinthians, as well as, their punishment. Their crime was to eat and drink in *an unworthy manner* (v. 27) or to eat and drink *without discerning the body* (v. 29). We find the same parallelism with regard to the consequences listed for failure: *will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27) being parallel to *eats and drinks judgment on himself* (v. 29). When we discover the meaning of one, we find the meaning of the other.

Guilty Concerning the Body and Blood

The crime of *unworthy* partaking Paul says is being *guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord* which means to become liable for the death of Jesus. "To 'profane' the meal as they [the Corinthians] are doing is to place themselves under the same liability as those responsible for that death in the first place. Thus, to be 'guilty of his body and blood' means to be 'liable for his death.'"⁷⁷ This is what it means to *sin against Christ* (1 Cor. 8:12; cf. Heb. 6:6; 10:29). The consequence of *unworthy* partaking, to say the least, is "significant." It is the same punishment to be afforded Judas, Pilate, and the Jews who crucified Jesus. Judas, Jesus said, was *lost*. He called him *the son of destruction* (Jn. 17:12; cf. Acts 1:16-20). Jesus cursed His betrayer, while He left the specific punishment of Judas open to the imagination, *woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!* (Lk. 22:22). Pilate's symbolic washing of his

⁷⁷ Fee, The First Epistle to the Corinthians, 561.

hands of his condemnation of Jesus was a sham, while declaring Him innocent he still turned Him over to the desires of the Jews (Mt. 27:24; cf. Acts 4:25-28). The Jews then boldly declared, *His blood be on us and on our children!* (Mt. 27:25; cf. Heb. 10:26-31). They said more than they ever realized! Psalm 2 is quoted in regard to the end of both Pilate and the Jews with this note, *Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled* (v. 12; cf. Acts 4:25-26). Paul, here in 1 Corinthians 11, has colored the punishment of *unworthy* and *undiscerning* participation in the most vivid and dire of language, *guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord* (v. 27), ... *eats and drinks judgment on himself* (v. 29). .

A Failure of Faith

Such is the significance of being *guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord*. The implication of this, in the context of God's judgment (vv. 29-33), is stated by E. Käsemann. "The self-manifestation of Christ calls men to obedience and this means that, at the same time, it calls them to account before the final Judge who is already today acting within his community as he will act towards the world on the Last Day – he bestows salvation by setting men within his lordship and, if they spurn this lordship, they then experience this act of rejection as a self-incurred sentence of death."⁷⁸ In other words, in Christ God imputes our judgment upon our substitute, as an act of pure grace, but to become *guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord*, to come under Christ's *judgment*, is to be abandoned of the protection of Christ's Lordship and His substitution. One must then face the coming judgment without His substitution and outside of His blessings. Even more, the offense is of the extreme of being convicted of being the one who crucified Him, *guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord*. The opposite, the Psalm tells us, is to *Kiss the Son*, and such, in our present context, means to receive the Supper in a *worthy* or *fitting* way. To *Kiss the Son* is to cling to Him in faith as *my* Savior and Lord, as *my* substitute and propitiation. It is by faith to *proclaim the Lord's death* [for me] *until he comes*. It is the declaration of personal faith.

A Failure of Regard

From this **personal confession and declaration of faith** must come the reciprocating **outward expression** of our own imitation of Christ's self-giving love. The evidence of being loved by God is loving. The evidence of being forgiven is forgiveness. The Corinthian celebration of the Supper failed in both the first and second counts. They failed in the regard of personal faith, and, even more evident, was their failure in this second regard of neglecting to imitate Christ's self-giving love toward one another. Their failure was to such a degree that in 1 Corinthians 11:20 Paul declares, *When you come together, it is*

⁷⁸ In Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 272.

not the Lord's supper that you eat. True faith encompasses a reciprocating love, a repentant *change of mind*, which yields a fruit which seeks to conform itself to Christ-likeness. Faith purposes to follow Christ's self-giving example in its relations to others and especially so with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Both of these aspects make up a *fitting* participation, to rightly *discern the body*, and it is the direct opposite of an *unfitting manner* (cf. e.g. Mt. 5:43-48; 18:21-35; Jn. 13:34-35).

The Corinthian offense of irreverent and unfaithfully receiving the Supper was further compounded by their disregard and abuse of the unity and fellowship which Christ has given His Church. The second is seen as the symptom of the first. To abuse the fellowship is to abuse the Savior. To reject the fellowship is to reject the Savior. Jesus taught that when one of His disciples was neglected or mistreated that it was the same as doing it to Him. *Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me* (Mt. 25:40; cf. Acts 9:4-5; 1 Cor. 12:21-27). This is a vivid picture of Jesus' union with His Church, and it illustrates why the punishment for *unworthy* participation and *without discerning the body* packs such a withering consequence.

When Paul wrote that we are to *examine ourselves* before we partake of the Supper he seems especially to have in mind due reverence for the Supper and its corresponding faith and care of the church's fellowship and unity. He does not suggest a probing "sin search," rather that our minds are attuned to this holy event and what it means, as well as, stirring ourselves and one another *to love and good deeds* (Heb. 10:24). In stating these very simply we do not want to minimize them but simply put them in Biblical perspective, saying no more or less than what Scripture says. We are called to *examine* ourselves before partaking, and we should seek to do so properly and with Biblical perspective.

18. The Lord's Supper is a time of personal examination and judgment.

*Let a person **examine** himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ...But if we **judged** ourselves truly, we would not be judged*
(1 Cor. 11:28, 31)

Examine and Judge Yourself

In verse 28 Paul describes the alternative to *unworthy* participation. *Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.* Then again in verse 31, *But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.* What does it mean to *examine* and *judge* oneself?

Gordon Fee warns, “This is not a call for deep personal introspection to determine whether one is *worthy* of the Table.”⁷⁹ Note his insight it is **not** about being *worthy* but about the **manner** of your partaking. “Deep personal introspection” is not bad. As disciples of Jesus we need always to be examining our hearts, but we are not instructed that the Supper is the appointed time for it. Remember, it is only in the Corinthian correspondence that we are called to *examine* ourselves. The Supper is not about *judging* yourself worthy of participation because we are not worthy on our best days, let alone on our worst. We are called to examine the manner of our partaking, and such begins with a personal testing of ourselves as to whether we are avoiding the errors of the Corinthians – are we loving and trusting Jesus and are we loving our brothers and sisters in Christ (cf. 1 Jn. 4:12). Are we reverencing the work of our *Lord of glory* and honoring one another. If we find ourselves wanting, then appropriate steps of repentance must be taken. Though we have stated this examination simply, we must approach it with all soberness. For this examination is preemptive of God’s judgment, *if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged* (v. 31; cf. Rev. 2-3).

Examine

The two words which Paul uses, *examine* and *judge*, are the translation of two different Greek words, *dokimazo* and *diakrino*, respectively. To *examine* means to test something or someone with an expectation for approval. Such an examination seeks to find first what is right. It is not looking for what wrong, rather it begins by looking for the positive things which prove the validity of our faith. I remember a parenting principle read many years ago which warned parents of our tendency to catch our children doing something wrong, so we could correct them. It went on to point out the need to counter that tendency with an equal or greater effort to catch them doing something right, so we can commend them. To *examine* especially emphasizes this last

⁷⁹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 561.

counter tendency. Along this line, we should test ourselves if we are truly trusting Christ for our salvation and not our own works. We need come with no pretense of our deserving or that I have been good enough to partake. We like the tax collector of Jesus' parable must say, *God, be merciful to me, a sinner!* (Lk. 18:13). Are we clinging to Christ alone as a drowning victim would cling to a life preserver? That is the way we must always trust Jesus and His work. He is our **only** hope before the judgment and justice of God. Is our hope for approval before God based on Christ alone, on grace alone, by faith alone? Colossians 1:23 asks, *are you continuing in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel...?* When we affirm the Gospel from our hearts we are *examining* ourselves.

Judge

The second word, *judge, diakrino*, is a more emphatic word. It is prefixed by a preposition which strengthens the word to mean more than what the root word by itself would mean. Thus, to *judge* means the forming of a very thorough judgment. Perhaps as much as *examine* would emphasize finding the positive, *judge* looks for what would condemn. This would remind us that as we come to the Supper we must realize that like Moses, as he approached the burning bush was told he was on holy ground, so are we. Consequently, we must begin by approaching the Supper with reverence, all honesty, and humility. Such is a good time for confession; it is a good time for resolve in a new direction; it is a good time to repent if needed. On the other hand, as we judge ourselves we should also remind ourselves to not think too highly of ourselves either (Rom. 12:3). The unworthy servant's confession should fit all of us especially on our best days, *We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty* (Lk. 17:10). Humility must always be the manner in which we take the Supper, and humility is the fruit of *judging* ourselves.

In the context of 1 Corinthians 11 one of the obvious glaring issues which needed *judging* was the Corinthians' unloving and disrespectful behavior toward one another. This caused divisions to form. Paul's correction was that they all were to *say the same thing* (ESV agree, 1:10). Later, Paul wrote that there is one thing which they can say only by the Holy Spirit, *no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit* (12:3). When we all are living out Jesus' Lordship divisions and offenses tend to be resolved. When we are all *saying the same thing*, "Jesus is Lord," individually and together, we know that we must forgive and be reconciled. To take Jesus' Lordship seriously we must always remember His reprimand, letting it ring in our ears, *Why do you call me "Lord, Lord," and not do what I tell you?* (Lk. 6:46). Thus, when we *judge* ourselves it is good to ask, where is Jesus Lord in my life, and where is

Jesus **not** Lord in my life? Our response to whatever we might find is not disqualification from partaking of the Supper, but rather a call to repentance (cf. Rev. 3:19-20). William Barclay tells of “an old highland minister seeing an old woman hesitate to receive the cup, stretched it out to her, saying, “Take it, woman; it’s for sinners; it’s for you.” He added, “If the Table of Christ were only for perfect people none might ever approach it. The approach is never closed to the penitent sinner. To the man who loves God and loves his fellow men the way is ever open, and his sins, though they be as scarlet, shall be white as snow.”⁸⁰

Judging and Repentance

This *judging* ourselves is the pathway to repentance, and repentance is the way of the Christian life. With Martin Luther we can say, “when our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, ‘Repent!,’ he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.”⁸¹ Repentance is the path of growth. We should not look at repentance as a negative. It is the positive course-corrections which we need daily, even hourly, or moment by moment. Repentance is discipleship.⁸² We must constantly be renewing our minds with the meaning of repentance and filling our faith with the promises of God. Paul described such a life of repentance to the Philippians, *Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (3:12-14)*. Repentance is **always reaching forward, ...always forgetting what lies behind, ...always pressing on ...for the prize of the upward call**, by the grace of God!

The Lord’s Supper should always lead us to Christ. It is the sign of His presence in the midst of His people, and it is the sign of the redemption of His people. It calls us into the presence of Christ, into the presence of His people, and into His grace. There we will see our weaknesses, our failures, and our sin. It cannot be helped, and it is necessary. Faced with our weaknesses we realize afresh how great our need is of a great Savior. In the light of His amazing and abundant grace we once again hear His call, *Follow Me!* At the Supper we are humbled, renewed, and then sent upon our way, corrected, focused, following Him.

⁸⁰ William Barclay, *The Letters to the Corinthians* Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 117.

⁸¹ First of Luther’s 95 Theses which he nailed on the door of the Wittenberg Church, October 31, 1517.

⁸² Compare Matthew’s great commission (28:18-20) to Luke’s (24:45-48). Matthew says it is about making disciples, while Luke says its about preaching repentance.

19. The Lord's Supper is a time of divine judgment.

...anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself (1 Cor. 11:29).

Danger

Have you ever attended a church where the Lord's Supper was served without instructions? How dangerous! Like guns, which have their place, but that place is not in the hands of the uninstructed or irresponsible. Guns have the potential of great enjoyment, recreation, and offer protection from threats when handled responsibly and with due regard, but they can be tragically dangerous when handled with no training, irresponsibly, and with no respect. So it is with the Lord's Supper. It was given by Jesus to bring grace and blessing to His people when received with reverence and faith, but to the irreverent and faithless it harbors dire threats of judgment. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-34 eight times in these nine verses Paul warns of divine judgment (vv. 27, 29, 30, 31, 32 [3x], 34).

Discipline

We should hasten to say that Paul qualifies the judgment in verse 32, *...when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.* Yet, when illustrated this *discipline* in verse 30, its experiences are "significant." *That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.* Earlier, Paul instructed that such *judgment* should be administered by the Corinthian church upon a man living openly in *sexual immorality* (5:1). *...You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord* (v. 5). Though the specific dynamics of the way this discipline works are vague, it is usually interpreted to mean that the church was to expel him out of the fellowship of the church, treating him no different than an unbeliever or pagan as an unsaved sinner (Mt. 18:15-18). It was later given the name of "excommunication" which barred the disciplined person from the Lord's Table, the nourishment of the Gospel, and from all the privileges and blessings belonging to the Lord's Church. This was done in the hope that giving him over to the kingdom of darkness, the reign of Satan, and hopelessness he would turn from his sinful ways (*the destruction of the flesh*), and in repentance (2 Tim. 2:25-26) be received back into the church, its fellowship and privileges, and to the Lord's Table (2 Cor. 2:5-11). John indicates that to continue without repentance and a return to the church are the signs of a vain and false faith which does not save (1 Jn. 2:19; cf. 1 Cor. 11:19; 15:2).

Ever lurking behind God's exercising of *discipline* is the revealing of a vain faith. We see this in Christ's letters to the seven churches in Revelation 2

and 3. We find the characteristic formula – *I know your works...* (2:2, 9, 13, 19; 3:1, 8, 15). This examination is followed by Jesus' call to *repent* (2:5, 15, 21; 3: 3, 19). In His last letter we are reminded, *Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent* (3:19). Behind this *discipline* is again dire warning, *I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth* (3:15-16). Yet, repentance is rewarded by the sweetest of blessings, *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me* (3:20). Behind God's *judgment* and *discipline* stand the ultimate rejection of vain faith and a faith which will not repent (cf. Mt. 13:18-23; Heb. 5:4-6). Such *discipline* has an additional action of culling the Church of such counterfeit faith.

Church Discipline

Apart from the discipline enforced by the church, the Lord's *discipline* can also take very tangible forms. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for their self-aggrandizing lie to the church (Acts 5:5, 10). Saul as the persecutor of the Church, before his name was changed to Paul, was struck blind for three days (9:8-9). Once again, here in our Corinthian passage, *That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died* (11:30). Hebrews 12 presents the discipline of the Lord as normal for all His children, *God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons* (vv. 7-8). We are reminded that Jesus was *perfected through suffering... Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered* (2:10; 5:8). One of the signs of *discipline* is suffering.

Judgment can be Necessary and Good for Us

This leads us to the very important insight that God's judgment in our lives can be a good thing, a necessary thing. When we read in Proverbs that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge* (Prov. 1:7), it teaches us that all understanding of life must begin with the realization that God will hold us accountable for the way we live. He will judge us not simply as *discipline*, but all humanity will face His final judgment which will decide their eternal destinies whether heaven or hell. The righteous standard of God's judgment is God's Law which condemns us all that *all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God* (Rom. 3:23). If we break even one law of God it is as though we have broken them all; for our hearts are revealed for what they are, rebels to God and His Law (Jas. 2:10). Left to face God's judgment on our own merits we will be utterly and completely condemned and sentenced to an eternal hell.

Such realization should lead us to the conviction that we need a Savior, and God in His love and grace has provided one and only one, His Son, Jesus. The goodness of God's judgment is that it leads us to see our need for Jesus (cf. Gal. 3:21-28; 1 Tim. 1:8-11).

Though God's judgment shows us our spiritual poverty and great need it does not leave us there. The justice of God's judgment against us and our sin has fallen upon God's substitute for us, Jesus. Only in the crucified Messiah could God demonstrate both His love and satisfy His integrity and justice. To describe this momentous event we find a whole vocabulary: propitiation, atonement, expiation, redemption, reconciliation, justification, salvation, etc. All these words describe the accomplishments of Jesus by His death on the cross. As Savior and Lord He extends this salvation to all. *Come to me all who are labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* (Mt. 11:28).

From the Horrors of Hell to the Gates of Heaven

God's judgment shows us what we are on our own merits, covered in the guilt of our sins, and destined for hell. Turning to Jesus, trusting that His substitutionary death satisfies God's justice against my sin requiring my death, *for the wages of sin is death* (Rom. 6:23). As a result of my act of trusting in Jesus, my status before God radically changes. My trust in the work of Jesus, and nothing more, fulfills God's only requirement to receive complete forgiveness, righteousness, and eternal life. In my transaction of faith I am transferred from being at enmity with God to being His child, from being spiritually destitute to being made a joint heir with Jesus. An heir of all the blessings of heaven and all the benefits won for me by my Savior and Lord. Here is our new identity before God, from being alienated and separated by His judgment I have been made His child and given the key to heaven.

Full Circle

Thus, we come full circle, God judges, disciplines, all of His children, all whom He loves. Such discipline is a mark of being His child. *...He disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness* (Heb. 12:10). Such He does even when we violate His Supper. His corrections are to bring us to repentance and back to the rightful celebration of His precious Supper. There to be bathed in His love dramatically portrayed in the sacrifice of Jesus. There to join with the hearts of our brothers and sisters in a chorus of "I believe!" There to be reminded of Jesus' complete sufficiency for us. We need no more than Jesus' "blood and righteousness."

20. The Lord's Supper provides grace for our hearts.

Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefitted those devoted to them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to them (Hebrews 13:9-10).

A Vivid Allusion to the Supper

One last passage to be addressed is Hebrews 13:7-17. Much like John 6,⁸³ Hebrews 13 is not a direct reference to the Lord's Supper, but the passage bears a readily apparent allusion⁸⁴ to the Supper which also has been readily recognized.⁸⁵ So we will want to look first to its direct meaning which then in turn makes the allusion all the more apparent.

A Call to the Examples of Their Past

The Hebrews writer begins the section with a call to remember and imitate their past, faithful, church elders (v. 7). These leaders had a very simple message which they had preached, "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yes forever*" (v. 8).⁸⁶ This confession reminds us that the Gospel is entirely trustworthy as an historical reality (*yesterday*) which is constantly relevant (*today*), and it will endure unto our eternal salvation (*forever*). At the center of their preaching and the Gospel always stood the unchanging person of Jesus, the ever-reigning Christ.

The False Teaching

The warning of verse 9, *Do not be led away*, concerns the same disruptive source, Judaizers and their call to return to ceremonial practices Judaism, which had caused the previous problems addressed in the letter, but here the specific issue is the false teachers' promises that temple sacrificial

⁸³ See Jn. 6:6:48-58; With regard to Jn. 6, F. D. Maurice said it this way, "If you ask me, then, whether he is speaking of the Eucharist here, I should say, 'No.' If you ask me where I can learn the meaning of the Eucharist, I should say, 'Nowhere so well as here'" (In Leon Morris, The Gospel According To John [Grand Rapids: Wm. E. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1971], 354, n. 55). John Calvin acknowledged, "...it plainly appears that the whole of this passage is improperly explained, as applied to the Lord's Supper. ...And yet, at the same time, I acknowledge that there is nothing said here that is not figuratively represented, and actually bestowed on believers, in the Lord's Supper; and Christ even intended that the holy Supper should be, as it were, a seal and confirmation of this sermon. ...Augustine follows...when, in explaining this chapter, he does not touch on the Lord's Supper till he comes to the conclusion; and then he shows that this mystery is symbolically represented, whenever the Churches celebrate the Lord's Supper... (John Calvin, Commentary on the Gospel According to John, William Pringle, translator (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, reprinted 1993), 17:266)."⁸³ So it will be in this secondary sense, as Jn. 6 is viewed, that we should also view the teaching of Heb. 13.

⁸⁴ Cf. Heb. 6:4; 1 Pet. 2:3; 2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 12

⁸⁵ William Lane, Word Biblical Commentary, Hebrews 9-13, Vol. 47b [Dallas: Word Books, Publisher, 1991], 538, wrote, "It has frequently been claimed that the confessional statements..., 'we have an altar,' is an allusion to the Eucharist or to the Eucharistic table (Schroger, *MTZ* 19 [1968] 170, lists twenty scholars holding this opinion...)."

⁸⁶ Lane, Word Biblical Commentary, Hebrews 9-13, Vol. 47b, 528.

meals resulting from thank offerings will produce “...joy through eating and drinking so as to praise God with power. ...This was the basis for the conviction that God can be praised properly only when his people are strengthened through the feast of joy...”⁸⁷ Such eating was claimed to *strengthen the human heart* (Ps. 104:14-15; cf. Neh. 8:9-12; Esth. 9:19). This teaching instructed which foods could be eaten and which should not be eaten, but these, the Hebrews writer tells us, have no benefit of Gospel grace, a grace that saves to the uttermost.

Our Altar is Christ

In contrast to the Gospel these ceremonial teachings appeared *diverse and strange teachings* which offered what they could not deliver. *We [Christians] have an altar from which those who serve that tabernacle [temple] have no right to eat (v. 10)*. The *altar*, which belongs to Christians, is not a material altar like the one in the tabernacle or temple, but a spiritual one. The temple altar is but a shadow and a type of the true *altar*, which is Christ. Arthur Pink writes, “...sufficient has been advanced...in the preceding chapters to make in unmistakably plain that Christ Himself – in His person, office, and sacrificial work – is the antitype and substance of all the tabernacle types!”⁸⁸

Our Sacrifice is Christ

But, Christ is not only the *altar*; He is also the sacrifice, *through his own blood* (v. 12). Christ is the reality to all the shadowy types of the OT. Paul wrote in Colossians simply, *Christ is all*. Bishop Westcott rolls several of the images and descriptions from Hebrews of Christ and His work into this summary, “But Christ who is our sacrifice for sin, the perfect antitype of that symbol, is our food also. He is our atonement; and He is our support. He died as the sin-offering ‘outside the gate,’ and He lives to be our life by the communication of Himself. By His blood He entered into the archetypal Sanctuary and made a way for us, and He waits to guide us thither. Meanwhile ‘we have become partakers of the Christ’ (c. iii. 14), and live with the power of His life which in His own appointed way He brings to me.”⁸⁹

Grace for the Heart

The Christian’s *altar* is a privileged place. Jews do not have a right to eat of the sacrifice of the Christian *altar*. In other words, a Jew has no right to partake of Christ and His sacrifice, and it is this Christ that is the substance from which our hearts are *to be strengthened by grace* (v. 10). Pink offers this

⁸⁷ Lane, *Word Biblical Commentary, Hebrews 9-13, Vol. 47b*, 533.

⁸⁸ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews* (Grand Rapids: Baker book House, reprinted 2003), 1173.

⁸⁹ Brooke Foss Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrew* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, reprinted 1973), 438

explanation of this grace, "...to have the heart 'established with grace' signifies two things: first, to be weaned from self-righteousness and creature dependence as to clearly apprehend that salvation from start to finish is of the unmerited and unconditional favour of God; second, to have the Spirit so shine upon His work within that as we diligently examine the same and carefully compare it with the experience of saints as described in the Scriptures, we may be definitely assured that we are born of God."⁹⁰ Pink is saying that this grace which comes from partaking of Christ, our *altar* and sacrifice, is twofold. First, it is the humbling, spiritual realization of being saved by grace alone, and second, it is the confident assurance of one's salvation. Westcott describes the grace more simply, "Our strength must come from without. And 'grace' is the free outflow of divine love for the quickening and support of man (c. ii. 9)...."⁹¹ He sees it more generally as the power by which God's love flows to us making us alive and strengthening us. A. Casurella offers the simplest explanation of all. When grace is used in an absolute sense, without modification, it represents God's empowerment for His people coming in all its manifold expressions.⁹² In the broadest sense grace is God's power which is communicated to us through all the various means of grace. With this in mind Paul wrote Timothy, *You then, my child, be strengthened by the grace that is in Christ Jesus...* (2 Tim. 2:1).

Grace in Hebrews

As we look more deeply into the meaning of this grace, we find that *grace* occurs seven other times in Hebrews. By the *grace of God* Jesus died *for everyone* (2:9). It is the motive and enablement for Christ's death. God's throne is described as the *throne of grace*, the source of all grace (4:16). Grace flows from this throne, meaning from God Himself, as the gift from heaven. Because of the heavenly intercession of Jesus, our great high priest, we can both confidently approach the throne and confidently know that we will receive *mercy and grace* (4:16). The Spirit as the dispenser of grace is named the *Spirit of grace* (10:29). Grace comes from the Father because of the Son and is dispensed by the Holy Spirit, the *Spirit of grace*. The *grace of God* when received delivers from bitterness (12:15). Grace provides God's forgiveness to His people that they might have the grace of forgiveness toward others and thus be delivered from bitterness. *Grace* enables us to offer acceptable worship and service to God (12:28). It is both the motive and power for offering acceptable gratitude and ministry to God. Finally, Hebrews' closing benediction is both simple and profound, *Grace be with all of you* (13:25). **Hebrews presents a picture of God's grace as His help in**

⁹⁰ Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews*, 1178.

⁹¹ Westcott, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 436.

⁹² A. Casurella, "Grace," *Dictionary of the Later New Testament & Its Developments* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 433.

every way to His people and all such help is described as *grace*. In addition, grace by its very nature is **undeserved**. Grace is giving what is not earned or deserved, and as such God is under no obligation to give it, thus grace is always a **free act** of God. He does it only because He delights in being gracious. We can simply say that grace summarizes all of God's gifts, and thus, all the ways that God is *for us* (Rom. 8:31), His people, comes to us as His grace.

Grace Strengthens Our Inner Being

Grace is what is promised *for the heart to be strengthened*. The fact that it is the *heart* that is to be strengthened indicates it is a spiritual work. The Spirit administers this grace empowering our inner man, our inmost being. This empowerment equips us for living for the glory of God and Christ (vv. 13-17; cf. 12:28).

Eating is Believing

We receive it by means of eating our sacrificial meal, partaking of the *altar*, partaking of Christ our sacrifice. This language plays off the promises of these Judaizing teachers who were plaguing the Hebrews, but it simply means trusting in the work of Christ that it is effectual for "me" (cf. 10:12-15). When we partake of Christ we trust Him; we put our faith in Him as the Gospel calls us to do. By it we taste the forgiveness of God; we are delivered from the final judgment; we are justified. We are empowered to follow in the steps of Jesus and be imitators of Him. By faith *we seek the city that is to come. Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God* (vv. 14-16; cf. 10:19-26). Here then is the sense and the end in which and for which we experience this strengthening grace.

To eat of the sacrifice of this Christian *altar* is to trust in Christ, and we know that the Lord's Supper is a sign of this very reality and act. In fact, the Lord's Supper is an act of eating and believing. It is an act from which those, who deny that Jesus is the Messiah or who refuse to believe that Jesus is the Christ, are barred from participation, *have no right to eat* (v. 10). It is difficult to read these verses without seeing at least an indirect reference to the Lord's Supper. Further, we know that the Supper is not an empty sign or a lifeless memorial, but it is a given means for experiencing the presence of Christ and the grace of God in Christ. It was given to Christ's Church as a means of grace. So, when we are instructed that we will be *strengthened by grace* by eating of the altar, once again, it is difficult not to see an allusion to the Supper.

Grace and the Supper

This passage is an important addition to understanding that grace is transmitted to the each believer as we gather in His presence and focus by faith directly on Christ and His work, and in this we can clearly see the allusion to the Lord's Supper which has been given as a sign of personally trusting in the work of Christ. In this participation, in this eating, we can confidently receive in the name of Jesus this grace which flows from throne of grace to specifically strengthen of our hearts.

21. The Lord's Supper a sinner's meal

“Now when the evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating, he said, ‘Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me? As they grieved, they each one began to say to Him, ‘Surely not I, Lord?’” (Mt. 26:20-22).

Jesus' institution of the Supper was during a Passover meal. It was a particular Passover; it was planned. There was nothing spontaneous or unplanned about this evening. Jesus had made arrangements for the place in which they would hold His last supper. Prophetically, He had instructed and sent his disciples to make final preparations (Mk. 14:12-16). Luke recorded Jesus' very specific anticipation for the celebration and His institution of this sacrament. *“And He said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer” (Lu. 22:15).* In other words, “I have steadfastly anticipated,” “I have looked forward to this event with excitement and longing.” As a child anticipates the opening of his Christmas gifts, or as a worker longs for his day off or even more his next vacation, as pregnant woman looks forward to the birth of her child, such was Jesus' anticipation of this event.

The Preceding Event

Then purposely He interjects into the festivities of this longed for occasion an announcement, which is as startling as an unexpected bucket of ice water in the face leaving the recipient gasping for breath. Matthew records, *“Now when the evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating, he said, ‘Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me? As they grieved, they each one began to say to Him, ‘Surely not I, Lord?’” (26:20-22).*

First, this announcement is framed by one of Jesus' *“truly”* statement. When He prefaced a statement with *“truly”* (Amen) it placed great certitude and weight upon His words. In other words, this statement was of grave importance.

Second, He announced *“one of you”* will betray me. One commentator noted the significance of this phrase as a powerful call to self-examination. Another noted that with this phrase Jesus called every Christian to personal examination. One writes, “Jesus' ‘one of you’ is a Word of the Law of God intended to bring disciples under conviction and self-examination and so to prepare them for the right reception of the gospel of the Lord's Supper. Bach got it right in his ‘Saint Matthew's Passion’ when at this point he had the congregation sing a confessional chorale with the words...(‘I'm the one, I

should repent'...)."93

Third, the disciples' response to Jesus' announcement is stated in a question. Literally they each ask, "*Am I he, Lord?*" The translation, "*Surely, not I, Lord?*," should be made clearer, "*Surely it is not I, Lord is it?*" Their response betrays them. For they had truly examined their hearts, and there they found the heart of a betrayer hidden. Jesus had already taught them, "*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders*" (Mt. 15:19). The heart examined in the light of God's Law is always a dark place full of the potential of betrayal. Their question asked, "Lord please tell me it is not me because I know in my heart I am fully capable of such betrayal! Please tell me it is not me!"

Dale Bruner writes with another insight, "The grammatical form of the disciples' question (*meti*) expects the answer 'no,' i.e., the disciples genuinely expected Jesus to say, 'no, I don't mean you will betray me.' Thus the disciples retain their sense of security in Jesus' friendship. But their relation with Jesus is not so secure that they do not allow his hard words to affect them. They are not so ensconced in a doctrine of eternal security that they have no need to ask Jesus insecure questions. The fact that they expect a 'no' answer to their question shows the responsible assurance of their faith in 'Jesus;' the fact that they ask the question at all shows a responsible diffidence in their faith in Jesus... ."94

It is this faith, this confidence, in Jesus, not in themselves, which is the foundation of their assurance and the rock of their hope. Such should clearly cheer us on.

It is with this confidence in Jesus that each one individually comes to Him for assurance. Mark describes them as coming "one by one" (14:19). Unavoidably the Lord's Supper is prepared for by a personal encounter, this fellowship with the Lord, a communion "one by one." Luther writes,

"Do you think that [Jesus' prediction of betrayal] did not cut them to the heart? Of course they accepted that saying with all fear and they sat there as though they had all been traitors to God. And after he had made them all tremble with fear and sorrow, only then did he institute the blessed sacrament as a comfort and console them again."95

93 Frederick Dale Bruner, Matthew, Volume 2, The Churchbook, Matthew 12-28 (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1990), 950.

94 Ibid., 953.

95 Ibid., 952.

...Jesus' Word did not return to him void, it created what he intended, prayer, self-examination, and a personal encounter."⁹⁶

The context of Jesus' institution of the Lord's Supper is imperative to grasp. He offers it to those who know they have betrayers' hearts. "In the Gospels a measure of gravity is in order in approaching the Lord's Table... . Sobriety is the right way to begin the service, joy is the right way to end it, if the Supper's forgiveness is believed...."⁹⁷

This does not exhaust this event. For the Lord's Supper does not only confront the true disciples, but it also confronts the false disciple, the betrayer. "*The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.*' And Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, 'Surely it is not I, Rabbi?' He said to him, 'You have said it yourself'" (Mt. 26:25, 26). John's Gospel adds, "Simon Peter therefore gestured to him [i.e. John], and said to him, 'Tell us who it is of whom He is speaking.' He, leaning back thus on Jesus' breast, said to Him, 'Lord, who is it?' Jesus therefore answered, 'That is the one for whom I shall dip the morsel and give it to him.' So when He had dipped the morsel, He took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. And after the morsel, Satan then entered into him. Jesus therefore said to him, 'What you do, do quickly'" (Jn. 13:24-27). Jesus' first revelation that the betrayer was one who had dipped his hand with Him in the bowl did not specify anyone in particular but only generally that it was one of the twelve. They had all dipped in the bowl with Jesus. Peter probably across the table asks John, who is beside Jesus, to privately ask the identity of the betrayer. Jesus responds, to the one I give the morsel or "sop." Wright notes that the sop was "the most tasty morsel of food being served at the feast." It was most

"...often picked up by the host with his thumb and finger, and handed directly to one of the guests. ...'It is...a mark of special respect for the master of the feast to hand to a guest portions of what is before him, or to insist on putting morsels or sops into his mouth with his own hand.' ...The meaning of what Christ did then was most certainly to extend love and friendship to the very one who was going to betray him. The act has been described as if the Lord were saying to the traitor:

Judas, my disciple, I have infinite pity for you. You have proved false, you have forsaken me in your heart; but I will not treat you as an enemy, for I have come not to destroy but to fulfill. Here is

⁹⁶ Ibid., 953.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 952.

my sop of friendship, and ‘that thou doest do quickly.’”⁹⁸

Edersheim notes that according to Jewish etiquette and protocol that the seat of honor would have been to Jesus’ left or above him in the seating row.⁹⁹ Consequently, we must see that Jesus affords to Judas every honor—seating and sop (Ps. 41:9). Such makes Judas’ betrayal and infamy all the more reprehensible, but in Jesus we must see Him blessing His enemy. All that He does He does knowingly that Judas is His betrayer.

Yet Jesus will not let Judas commit his crime without one last call to repentance. *“The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born” (Mt. 26:24)*. First, we must note that Jesus’ statement is a clear warning of the weight of the crime of His betrayal. By such it is a clear call to repentance, to forsake such a woe begotten purpose and plan. It is framed by His “*woe*” as a cursed plan, damned before it is perpetrated. Such is what we find repeatedly—God’s provision of a way out, His call to repentance. Such is the character of the God’s general calling in the Gospel that whosoever may come. Jesus honors His betrayer and then He warns him.

There is a second element in Jesus’ words. It is the weighty issue of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility. In His warning He states, *“just as it is written.”* In other words, God had decreed¹⁰⁰ that the Son of Man would be betrayed. Though decreed the betrayer would be fully responsible and culpable for his betrayal and his damnation. Bruner observes, “Divine sovereignty does not cancel human responsibility—in this one verse Jesus says this as clearly as it is said anywhere else in Scripture.”¹⁰¹ Martin notes, “Judas was never really Christ’s man. He fell from apostleship, but never (so far as we can tell) from genuine relationship to the Lord Jesus. So he remained ‘the son of perdition’ who was lost because he was never ‘saved’. His highest title for Christ was ‘Rabbi’ (Mt. xxvi. 25). He lives on the stage of Scripture as an awful warning to the uncommitted follower of Jesus who is in His company but does not share His spirit (cf. Rom. viii. 9b); he leaves the Gospel story ‘a doomed and damned man’....”¹⁰² Jesus names Judas “the son of perdition (*apoleia*)” (Jn. 17:12) which signified one as heir to spiritual and eternal destruction. The same word is used with regard to the “*vessels of wrath*” that they have been

⁹⁸ Wright, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands*, 67, 68.

⁹⁹ Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus, the Messiah*, 928.

¹⁰⁰ Luke records: *“For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been **determined**; but woe to that man by whom He is betrayed!” (22:22)*. His use of “*determined*” (*horizo*) establishes clearly that it had been bound by God, a definite establishing of the event, thus decreed.

¹⁰¹ Bruner, *Matthew, A Commentary, Volume 2, The Churchbook, Matthew 13-28*, 954.

¹⁰² Ralph P. Martin, “Judas Iscariot,” *The New Bible Dictionary*, J. D. Douglas (ed.) (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), 674, 675.

“prepared for destruction (apoleia)” (Rom. 9:22). Judas had been the treasurer of the twelve (Jn. 13:29). His “pilfering” (Jn. 12:6) of their treasury revealed his avaricious character. John revealed Judas’ deceitfulness as he schemed complaining that the precious perfume used to anoint Jesus could have been sold and the money given to the poor when in fact he ached that it would not be available for him to pilfer (Jn. 12:6; Mk. 14:4, 5). Foiled, Luke records that Satan entered him, and he approached the chief priests with his plan of betrayal and negotiated the price (Lu. 22:3ff.; cf. Jn. 13:27; Mt. 27:9). His motivation for betrayal seems to have been his own greed and covetousness, but clearly we see that Judas was not forced to betray Jesus, rather he did it freely motivated by his own greedy heart. Still, we are faced with the mystery—Judas freely charged headlong into his betrayal of Jesus constrained by his own avarice nature for it was written, it was decreed by God, that it would be so.

It would be well that we glean from this a great humbling as we come to the Lord’s Supper. We are at the Supper by the Lord’s effectual calling, election, and choice. The difference between Peter’s denials and betrayal and that of Judas is distinguished in that Jesus interceded for Peter (Lu. 22:31, 32). Peter’s repentance is not caused first by Peter but first caused by Jesus’ intercession! If we come truly to the table as the disciples of Christ, we come because He has called us; He has chosen us to come. In the words of the Apostle Paul, *“But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10)*. Such realization should always humble us as we come to the Supper. It should help to rightly prepare our hearts.

Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is one of Christ's gifts to His Church. It is one of the two Protestant sacraments alongside and following baptism. The Supper as a sacrament celebrates the mystery of Christ's union and presence with His people. For when we have Christ we have all that belongs to Him. The Supper was given as a sign of Christ's spiritual presence and His redemption of His people. By its celebration Christians experience and receive the strengthening grace of God because of Christ and through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's indwelling in Christ's elect is the evidence of true faith and salvation, and in the Supper the Spirit of grace not only dispenses His strengthening grace but also is the spiritual presence of Christ at the Supper. By faith the communicant is nourished by the blessings of the Gospel. The Supper announces that as real as the emblems of the Supper are so are the blessings and presence of Christ. The believer's faith is the personal conviction that these blessings of Christ are for "me!" As the early church gathered to be instructed in the Apostles' teaching, joined together in prayer, and blessed with the joy of fellowship, they gave priority to the celebration of the Lord's Supper at least each Lord's Day. Therein, every believer is moved from the on-looking side-line to center-stage participation, and with each one's participation each proclaims, "I believe!" Each *proclaims the Lord's death until he comes*.

Each of these twenty-one studies has been prepared with the prayer that every believer might more deeply drink of this fountain of grace. The Supper has become for many churches a brief intermission, a pause in the important things of worship, or a brief time for meditation, but the waters of the Lord's Supper are deep. We need to dive deeper and drink longer of its experience and blessings.

May the Gospel's blessings be upon you as you celebrate the Supper of our Lord!