Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

The Final Passover, the First Communion
Scripture: Luke 22:14-20
Code: 42-269

Let's open the Word of God, open your Bible to Luke chapter 22...Luke chapter 22. Of course Jesus said many things that are remarkable, many things that are stirring and stunning, all of them absolutely true. Among the many unforgettable statements that Jesus made, one of them that is so very important is this statement, "No man takes My life from Me. I lay it down by Myself." That is a stunning statement.

You might assume that the Jewish leaders took the life of Jesus. You might assume that the Romans took the life of Jesus. And while the Jewish leaders wanted Him dead and the Romans executed Him, no one took His life from Him. He laid it down by Himself. It was a willing sacrifice in complete submission to and agreement with God the Father. God chose His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to be the final Passover Lamb, to pay the penalty for sin for all who would believe.

Our Lord Jesus came to die. He knew He would die. He knew how He would die, on a cross being lifted up. He knew where He would die, in Jerusalem. He knew at whose hands humanly speaking He would die, the leaders of Israel and the Roman soldiers. He knew when He would die, He would die on the Passover day in the middle of the afternoon on a Friday in A.D. 30 in the month of Nissan on the fourteenth day as God's Passover Lamb. He would die at the very same hour Passover lambs by the tens of thousands were being slaughtered. He knew every detail about His coming death.

And so He lived it every day in vivid limitless anticipation. The cross loomed in front of Him every conscious moment of His life. He knew perfectly what the plan was. He knew perfectly where and by whom and when it would happen.

Not only that, He made sure by supernatural power that He orchestrated every act to lead Him to the very hour in which He would die. He had complete control over all His enemies and all His friends.

As you study the account of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, there's some stunning characters in the drama. There are some very compelling persons, unforgettable, really. The chief priests, the scribes, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, all the various sects of religious and political Israel, they all play unique roles. There is the role, of course, played by Satan who moves inside of Judas to lead Judas to the treachery of his betrayal. And then there is the role of Judas who is the singular figure in all of human history for the wretchedness betrayal of the perfect Son of God. And then there is Annas and then there is Caiaphas, those who held the office of high priest who were the

manipulators of a corrupt and false religious system who wanted Jesus dead because He was disturbing their system and tampering with their economic prosperity.

And then there is that tragic woeful Pilate who executed a man he had publicly declared to be innocent. Compelling figures all. You can throw in Herod, puppet king, a non-Jew, an Idumaean who had a royal title and very little power. They're all compelling characters, enough to build a drama around. But when you come to Luke 22 to 24, the story of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, they become little moons that disappear in the blazing sun of Jesus Christ. Even the Apostles, compelling characters as well. Peter, John, and the rest, they all fade under the blazing light of the Son of God. And as you go through these chapters and these characters come and go and play their roles in the drama that unfolds, it is Christ that captivates the heart and the mind, eclipsing everybody else.

We see Him humiliated and yet majestic. We see Him suffering and yet exalted. We see Him punished and yet innocent. We see Him hated and yet loving. We see Him subjected and yet sovereign. He moves through these events in the divine will and by the divine power on a divine schedule, established before time ever began. He is headed inexorably and willingly to the cross to die as God's chosen sacrificial lamb. He will be the innocent substitute for sinners, bearing the full wrath of God against all their sin. This is why He came, to give His life, He said, a ransom for many.

No, Jesus is not a victim. Jesus is not a life gone bad, a nice attempt at morality and religion that somehow made a wrong term. Everything He did was in perfect accord with the divine plan. And just think of it, the plan before the foundation of the world, that's when He is first identified as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. He has been anticipating this since before there was time. And then through all the millennia of human history until finally it is Thursday night, the day before the actual crucifixion. All of His anticipation would now reach its apex.

On this Thursday night of Passion Week, the fourteenth of Nissan, the day of Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread, this is the time when everything He had ever anticipated is now more vivid than its ever been. He will die in a few hours as God's Passover Lamb. But before He dies, He is going to meet with His Apostles and He is going to end something and begin something.

Look at verse 14 of Luke 22. "And when the hour had come, He reclined at the table and His Apostles with Him, and He said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.' And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves, for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the Kingdom of God comes.' And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of Me.' And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in My blood.'"

If you wanted to title this, you could title it simply, “The Final Passover, the First Communion...the Final Passover, the First Communion.” Needless to say, this is epoch, this is massive, this is monumental, this is a turning point in all redemptive history. To put it another way, this evening Jesus brings to an end the Old Covenant and the Old Testament and inaugurates the New Covenant and the New Testament. He goes from Passover, the last legitimate Passover, to the Lord’s table, the first new memorial feast. He ends millennia of a celebration looking back to God’s delivering power in Egypt and inaugurates a new memorial, looking back to the cross and the deliverance far greater accomplished there.

The passage breaks into two parts. The first part is about Him celebrating the Passover. The last two verses about Him instituting the Lord’s table. So a simple way to outline it, the Final Passover, the First Communion.

Let me tell you a little bit about the Passover. Israel had been in Egypt in bondage for over 400 years. They had been oppressed and enslaved. God delivered them by the leadership of Moses through a series of plagues. You can read about them in the opening chapters of the book of Exodus. Finally Pharaoh was so distraught at what was happening in his nation, that he let them go. The final plague, you remember, was the death of the firstborn, the angel of death came and killed the firstborn in every family, the firstborn of man and animal unless you had sacrificed a lamb and splattered the blood on the doorposts and the side beams. Then the angel of death passed by.

There’s a simple principle that comes through in that and it is this, to be delivered from judgment requires death. That’s the first thing to think about. To be delivered from judgment requires death. Second, critical, that death can be the death of a substitute. That death can be the death of a substitute. God was saying, “I will spare you, I will deliver you from this judgment if there is the death of an innocent substitute.” The message of the Passover is God delivers through the death of an innocent substitute. From then on, all sacrifices and this is not the first sacrifice, but from then on all sacrifices were clearly indications that God delivers from judgment by the death of a substitute. But the animal sacrifices weren’t that substitute. No person was ever delivered from divine judgment of any animal. The repeated sacrifice of animals was simply a continual symbol of the fact that God does deliver by the death of an innocent substitute but no animal was ever satisfactory to God and so the sacrifices went on and on and on and on by the millions. And the people waited for a sacrifice that would be satisfactory to God which all those unsatisfactory sacrifices pointed.

That day came on that Friday when God chose His Lamb and offered Him as a sacrifice, a substitute for sinners and poured out His wrath on that innocent substitute. As we come to the verse that we read, verse 14, it is Thursday night of Passover week. Passover begins with this Thursday night, followed with seven days of the unleavened bread feast which also commemorated the exodus out of Egypt. Millennia have gone by, waiting for an adequate sacrifice. Millennia have gone by with

people's hearts hoping and hoping and hoping but never being satisfied that a true and final sacrifice had come. But one more day, a few more hours on Friday at exactly the hours of slaughter between three and six when all the Passover lambs had to be killed, the Lamb of God would die in that same period of time.

Slain not by a priest like the rest of the lambs but by God and by His own willing self-sacrifice. He became the perfect sacrifice for sin and this became then the last Passover. No longer did there need to be animal sacrifices pointing, pointing, pointing, pointing to the one who would come because once He came, the shadows all disappeared in the reality.

Remember now, Peter and John had been sent away by Jesus from the group of the Twelve to get things ready for the Passover. So there was a lot to prepare. We went through that a couple of weeks ago. They had gone away to an unknown place. They had met a man without a name, carrying a pitcher of water. They were to follow him, he would go to a house, they would go to that house, unnamed. They would meet a man who was unnamed. They would have the Passover there, they would prepare it there. Later one Jesus would come with the ten.

Why all the secrecy? Jesus had to get into a position where the crowds would leave Him alone. He had to also get in a position where the streets were empty to people so that no one would know where He was going. He had to keep the secret from His disciples because Judas was looking to betray Him at the most convenient moment he could. He wanted his money and he wanted it fast and he wanted out. And so Jesus had to keep the secret from Judas who would have easily discerned that a perfect place to capture Jesus would be in a room, in an upper room, where the streets were empty of people and He was only there with His Apostles and they could move in and take Him with no muss and no fuss and no public scrutiny. Jesus had to protect Himself for that night from Judas, from the crowds, and so no one knew except Peter and John and they never came back to tell the rest.

Jesus is controlling all the contingencies in every detail at every step to effect His purpose. He does not want to be arrested before this night because He has to accomplish so much on this night. Remember now, the Passover is instituted by God. If it is now to be eliminated, it must be eliminated by God. Not just anybody can shut that down, nor can just anybody inaugurate the new memorial that we know as the Lord's table, or communion. He must do it.

There's more even than that. There is some critical final instruction for the Apostles recorded in John 13 to 16. There is a monumental prayer that Jesus offers in John 17. There is a time to expose Judas and to dismiss him. There is a confrontation with Peter about Satan wanting to sift him. There is an argument about the greatness among the disciples about who is going to be the greatest and Jesus has to humble them. He gives them an illustration of humility by washing their feet at this very event. There are other words of warning that He gives. It is a full, full agenda for this night. He will not be

arrested until it is over. And when it's over, He leaves. He goes to the Garden and He is there arrested, but only after this event.

Now just a little word of help. As we go through this section in chapter 22, you might wonder what the sequence is. You get a little confused if you do that. Luke is thematic. Even Matthew and Mark, we can't follow in an exact precise chronology. We know what happened on that night because we have it in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But we aren't sure exactly at what moment everything happened. There's a Passover meal. There's the institution of the Lord's table. There's the teaching of John 13 to 16, the prayer of John 17. We know that. There's the confrontation of Peter, the confrontation of Judas, the movement of Satan into Judas. All of these components are there, but we don't have a sequence. Take it as one event that lasted for hours and hours and while they were eating, all these conversations and all these things were going on and we can't be exact or precise about the exact sequence. Luke, as I said, is not so much concerned with chronology, neither are the other writers, as he is with the events themselves. But all the components are crucial, the order is not.

Luke, by the way, is brief...I might add that. Luke is brief. He gives a very brief treatment of the Passover. But understand this. When Luke wrote his gospel, it's 30 years later. So for 30 years the Passover has been abrogated. For 30 years Christians have not celebrated the Passover. So there's no point in going back and making a big issue out of the Passover. It's been set aside for 30 years. Well the Jews have been celebrating the Passover 30 years because they rejected their Messiah. And Luke is also brief about the Lord's table, very brief. Verses 19 and 20, just two verses on the Lord's table. You say, "Well maybe he could have said more about that." Ten years before Luke wrote, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. Ten years before Luke, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians and in chapter 11...actually 10 and 11...gives a full treatment of the Lord's table which would have been known to everyone. It's not important then in the purposes of the Holy Spirit of God to give us anymore than this. We don't need going forward to know anymore about the Passover. We can go back into the Old Testament and find out a lot about it. We don't need to know anymore here about the Lord's table because the full treatment of the Lord's table is found in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11. So Luke is brief.

But nonetheless you have these two elements. Let's just take the passage, break it in half, okay? Number one, the final Passover...the final Passover, verses 14 through 18. Verse 14, "When the hour had come.." This is not my hour, this is not his hour, we're not talking about an epoch here, we're not talking about the hour of the cross, it's the hour when Passover starts, sunset...sunset, the hour that signaled the end of the afternoon and the beginning of darkness.

This is important traditionally. Sunset is the demarcation point when Passover is supposed to begin traditionally. It was very important to Jesus because He couldn't be roaming the streets when there was still light. The place had been set. It is unknown to everybody until they show up there in the dark. Jesus arrives with the ten who for the first time see the place and meet Peter and John, ready to have the Passover. Verse 14, "When that hour had come, He reclined at the table and the Apostles

with Him."

This is a long meal. You know, when we eat we put our feet under the table. You know, when they ate, they put their feet away from the table. And they were on a kind of a couch that went toward the table and they would put their head on their elbow or change positions or whatever. The further away from the table your feet were, the better. And that's the way it worked. They lounged at the table. The prolonged meal went on for hours and hours and hours, including all kinds of conversation and instruction as you well know. Both Matthew and Mark indicate the reclining position to indicate that this is a prolonged meal.

Now that's different. You know, through the years of this traditional development of the Passover, it changed a lot because the original Passover, if you go back to Exodus, was to be eaten with your loins girded, your shoes on, your staff in your hand standing up in haste because it was a commemoration of the exodus, it was a hurry up and get-out-of-town event. As you well know, Pharaoh decided to go after them and ended up having himself and his entire army drowned when God shut the sea on them. But the custom had changed from being a hurried kind of celebration to being a very prolonged one. And so they would be relaxed in a prolonged, very long meal, discussing matters related to the Passover and the goodness of God.

According to Josephus, no less than ten men, or no more than 20 would eat one lamb. There was a reason for that in some sense and that is because you had to eat the whole lamb. No piece of the lamb could be left. Exodus 12 verses 4 and 43 to 46 indicate that they had to eat the whole lamb. So from 10 to 20 men were to eat one lamb. This is 13, Jesus and the twelve.

Now here's the way a Passover would have gone in Jesus' day. And we have lots of indications of this in history around the time of our Lord. They would start with a prayer of thanks, the prayer of thanks, thanking God for His preservation, deliverance, protection, goodness, blessing, just a very general prayer.

Then would come the first cup of red wine. There would be four at every Passover. The first cup comes right after the initial thanks. And by the way, it was doubly diluted with water, doubly diluted with water because, of course, drunkenness was a sin and no commemoration of the work of God would in any sense want to impinge upon anyone's ability to think and reason by making them at all inebriated. And so, it was doubly diluted with water. This first cup of red wine was called the cup of blessing...the cup of blessing, in which they would speak of the blessings of God.

Then they would wash their hands. And it is both a useful washing of the hands and a ceremonial washing of the hands in which they would recognize the need for cleansing. If they're going to commemorate the deliverance of God, they want to make sure their hearts are right before God, and so they go through a kind of an external washing of the hands as a symbol of their cleansing.

This is very interesting to me because some time after this ceremonial washing, this is kind of an aside, some time after this ceremonial washing in which they are affirming their need for cleansing and purity and holiness, Luke 22:24 says, “There rose a dispute among them as to which of them was regarded to be the greatest.” So whatever cleansing went on the outside, not a whole lot went on on the inside. Now they certainly weren’t dealing with pride and ambition and self-will and competition and envy and jealousy. And it is most likely at that moment, at that point when this big argument is going on by a group of very proud and self-centered men that Jesus rises from the table, according to John 13, and in an expression of rebuking love, puts a towel around His waist and washes their feet. This unforgettable act of selfless, humble service is a rebuke to their selfish pride. And it is very likely in connection with that same expression of pride that verses 25 and 26 are spoke, “And the kings of Gentiles lord it over them, those who have authority over them are called benefactors, but not so with you. Let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest and the leader as the servant.”

So I only say that little tangent because it came after they had gone through a ceremonial cleansing which hadn’t really affected their hearts at all. And before that evening was over and before Jesus was through with them, He would not only model selfless humility, but He would instruct them in that great legacy in John 13 through 16.

So, starts with thanks, the first cup, and then the ceremonial cleansing. The next thing is the eating of bitter herbs. Bitter herbs symbolizing the bitterness of being in slavery in Egypt for all those centuries. There would be pieces of bread also dipped in a paste made out of fruits and nuts, kind of ground together into a brown paste. They would dip pieces of bread in the herbs and the paste and eat that, reminiscing about the bitterness of the people of God in captivity before God set them free.

After that would come the singing of the Hallel. The Hallel is a sequence of psalms from Psalm 113 to Psalm 118. Psalms of praise and thanks to God. Here they would sing 113 and 114. They would sing the first two. And then would come the second cup of doubly diluted wine. At this point the father of the family, if it was in a family, or the head of the table in the case of Jesus, would give the Haggeda(?) which is the explanation of the meaning of all of this, the showing forth, the telling forth. After the second cup of wine, an explanation of what this feast was about, they would then eat the lamb with unleavened bread. That’s the main meal.

After that would come a third cup of doubly diluted wine, followed by the singing of the Hallel 115 to 118. And then a fourth cup of wine and it was over.

Now that would be strung out for hours and intermingled with all conversation. So they ate the Passover and through it they listened and they talked and they acted and the interacted and Peter was confronted and Judas was confronted and Satan entered Judas and Jesus dismissed Judas and He taught and gave warnings and promises and the whole evening went that way.

At some point, I think at the beginning, verse 15, He said to them, just having reclined, “I’ve earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”
This is very strong language, by the way. You can’t get it in the English. In the Greek it would read like this, “With desire, I have desired.” And whenever the Greeks want to emphasize something, they repeat it, like from glory to glory, or grace upon grace, or desire upon desire. It’s just a way to intensify. This is emphatic, this is passionate. It’s as if Jesus is saying this has to happen, this is essential. I have earnestly desired, I have desired with desire to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

This is no surprise that He is going to suffer and He knows exactly when and He knows it’s hours away. He knows He’s going to be arrested in the night. He knows He’s going to be put through mock trials during the day. He’s going to be put on a cross. He’s going to be dead before the sun goes down and in the grave. He knows that. This is no surprise. But on this last night, He will fulfill all righteousness and the Passover is still God’s will, it is still God’s command, Exodus 12 has not been revoked. And this Passover, and He celebrated one every year of His life, this one would be more powerful, more emotional, more vivid, more dramatic than any Passover ever in His life because everything was about to burst upon His head in only a few hours and He was to be the slaughtered lamb of God to take away the sins of the world. I can’t even imagine the power of the emotion He was feeling but it began to surge and well up even at this time when He began the Passover with strong, strong desire to do this. He knew He was the Passover Lamb, this was the final Passover, the final great picture of His death. And His death was imminent. Those emotions swelled and it was nearly overpowering to Him.

A few hours later when He went into the Garden, He was sweating, as it were, great drops of blood as the trauma to His own physical body began to cause His capillaries to disintegrate. The power, vividness of these emotions are beyond our comprehension. He had seen lots of animals sacrificed all His life and knew that one day He would be that sacrifice. But it was all imminent at this moment. His suffering must have been of supernatural proportions.

He says then in verse 16, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer, for I say to you, I will never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.” I shall never again...very strong language, again the strongest possible Greek negative, *ou me*, never, ever, ever will I eat this Passover. This is the last Passover.

It’s the end of Passovers. It’s over. This is His last meal before His cross. But it is more importantly His last Passover. He ate the lamb and then became the lamb. Will there ever be another Passover where Jesus eats with His own? Yes. Back to verse 16, “Until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God,” means that the Kingdom of God is going to bring about a fulfillment that could include another Passover and will, verse 18, “I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the Kingdom of

God comes." Both verses indicate that yes there will be another meal, yes another time when we gather around His table and celebrate the Passover. Yes, Jesus will convene such an event in the future.

What's He talking about here? He's talking about some spiritual meal, some spiritual Passover? No. No. They would have understood it very simply in the future, in the fulfillment of the Kingdom of God, "I will eat and I will drink with you," that's eschatological, in the millennial Kingdom, in the thousand-year reign of Jesus on earth when He returns and sets up His Kingdom, in that millennial Kingdom there will be a reinstitution of the Passover. Not to point back to the exodus, but to point back to the cross because the Passover was designed not only to commemorate the exodus, but to point to the sacrifice of Christ. There will be in the millennial Kingdom when the Lord comes back, judges the ungodly, takes the godly into the Kingdom, the saints are already in heaven, come back with Him, all saints populate His glorious Kingdom for a thousand years, Revelation 20 says, it says it six times, it's a thousand years. During that period of time Ezekiel tells us in Ezekiel 40 to 48, a temple will be built in Jerusalem.

The Lord will reign over the whole earth, a temple will be built in Jerusalem. And in that temple there will be ceremonies and there will be sacrifices and there will be a Passover. Ezekiel 45:21 says there will be a millennial Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread. In the Kingdom, God will then redo these things and everyone will know their true meaning, everything will point back to the Lord Jesus Christ. But until the millennial Kingdom, He will never celebrate the Passover with His people again. There is no legitimate Passover until the Millennial Passover.

I know Jews all over the world celebrate the Passover today. It means a lot to them traditionally and historically, and that's fine. But if you reject Jesus Christ, your religion is false, your Passover is meaningless.

In chapter 22 of Luke, look at verse 28, just to remind you that our Lord did not completely leave out eschatology when He got to chapter 22. Chapter 21 was all about the future and He's still talking about His Kingdom. Verse 28, "And you are those who have stood by Me in My trials and just as My Father granted Me a Kingdom, I grant you that you may eat and drink at My table in My Kingdom and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Yes there is a future Kingdom, yes there is a future of salvation for Israel, yes the saints will gather together, yes we will eat together at a table, yes it will be a celebration of the Passover and we will all know that the Passover was completely fulfilled in the death of Christ and therefore abrogated as a memorial and replaced by the Lord's table.

This...back to our text...was wonderful news to the Apostles if they were able to grasp it. He had spent all of the night before on the Mount of Olives, as you remember, telling them about the future, the whole of chapter 21. And now He reiterates again, yes there is a Kingdom, yes My death is not the end, yes I'm going to die but I'm going to rise again, I'm going to return to heaven but I'm going to

come back and establish My Kingdom. There is hope. His death is not the end. He will be back on earth but not until His coming to set up His Kingdom.

That's why Paul writes, 1 Corinthians 11, he gives the whole order for the Lord's table, he says, "Do this until He...what?...comes." And then when He comes and establishes His Kingdom, we'll celebrate the Passover and the Lord's table with the Lord Himself. It will probably be an evening very much like this only it will encompass all of us in some wondrous way as He again reiterates the memorial of the Passover which looked to the cross, a memorial of communion which looks at the cross as well. Yes He sees His suffering. Yes He sees His coming glory.

And then the Passover begins, verse 17. "When He had taken a cup and given thanks..." How did this start did I tell you? Thanks and the first cup. So the meal begins. He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves." This is the first cup of the four, accompanied by thanks. The Greek verb for thanks, *eucharisteo*is the Greek word from which we get eucharist which means to give thanks. And the Lord's table is often called the eucharist. This is called the cup of blessing. Paul refers to it, the cup of blessing which we bless is it not the blood of Christ, 1 Corinthians? But this is the cup of blessing. The head of the table extols God for His goodness, extols God for His mercy, for His provision, for His fruitfulness through the years. And typically, traditionally the head of the table would also affirm the glory and righteousness of Israel. While I think Jesus probably did the thanks part, but I seriously doubt that He extolled the glory and righteousness of Israel. But He did in the traditional way give thanks to God. And then He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves." This is an idea of simply conveying to them how they all share in the goodness and the fruitfulness and the blessing of God. And these...these men with the exception of Judas, were true recipients of God's saving goodness.

And again He expresses this urgency in verse 18, "For I say to you..." and He uses the strongest negative again, *ou me*, "for I say to you, I will not never, ever, ever drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the Kingdom of God comes." He says this twice to drop the curtain permanently. It's over until it's reinstituted in My Kingdom. It's over.

They will see each other again. They will see Jesus. They will sit at His table again as will we. The wine is a symbol of fruitfulness, blessing and joy, reflecting God's goodness to His people in delivering them from bondage. And there will be a future for Israel, a redeemed Israel. In the future we'll again celebrate the Passover and the goodness of God. A cup of blessing then looks past the imminent judgment that's about to fall on Jerusalem. One stone is not going to be left on top of another, Jesus said earlier. The place is coming down, it's going to be destroyed. The people are going to be scattered. They're going to be lost until the final regathering in the future. But in the end, the Kingdom will come. There will be final blessing to the nation Israel and the Lord will gather them at His table.

That, my friends, was the final Passover. Any other Passover is pointless and meaningless. And God instituted it in Exodus 12 and God incarnate ended it on a Thursday night before His death.

So we come to the first communion...the first communion. Verse 19, “When He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them saying, ‘This is My body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of Me.’ And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in My blood.’”

At this point, I always feel pretty weak but I feel pretty weak to convey anything that comes close to the monumental transition that’s going on here, to bring to an end in just those simple statements the whole Old Covenant, the entire Old Testament, to pull the curtain down and to launch something brand new is stunning.

What happens here? I’ll tell you what happens. This is the end of the whole ceremonial law, all the dietary laws, all the Sabbath laws, in fact there’s no more Sabbath. Immediately after this, the church starts to meet...when? The first day of the week. This is the end of the ceremonial law. This is the end of all the ceremonies, all the rituals, all the rites, all those social things that separated the people, the Israelite people, from the Gentiles. They’re all gone. The moral law doesn’t change because God doesn’t change.

This is the end of all the rituals. This is the end of all the sacrifices. This is the end of all the altars, all the temple had to offer. This is the end of the priesthood. This is the end of the holy place. This is the end of the Holy of Holies and God would split the curtain from top to bottom and throw it wide open for anybody and everybody to walk in and out. This is the end of everything that they new in all of their religious life that was symbolic. No more ceremonies, no more rituals, no more priests, no more sacrifices, no more altars, no more temple, no more holy place, no more Holy of Holies, it’s all gone. He dies, He rises, they meet on Sunday and they are a priesthood and there is no more sacrifice ever until the Lord institutes some memorial sacrifices and the Passover in the Millennial Kingdom.

So, back to verse 19, when He had taken bread and given thanks, this would come after the singing of the Hallel, they would have then sung Psalm 113, Psalm 114. The Lamb would be brought out, cooked and ready to be eaten, to be eaten with unleavened bread. And that’s exactly what it says. He had taken some bread. It’s the word *artos*, loaf. He had taken a loaf, given thanks and broke pieces off of it. In the Passover, the bread was called the bread of affliction, it was called the bread of affliction, *massah*, Deuteronomy 16:34, the bread of affliction, it commemorated their affliction in Egypt. It is no longer the bread of affliction. He’s going to transform it. It no longer points back to that.

Matthew adds, “As they were eating,” which indicates to us, that’s Matthew 26:26, that they’re in to the main meal, they’re eating the lamb with the unleavened bread which is what they did. Again,

thanks is given to God. They have one loaf and it says, “He broke it.” Just a footnote here. That’s not a symbol of His death. Sometimes in a poetic sense you hear His body was broken for us. Probably not a good thing to say because John 19:36 says, “Not a bone of Him was broken...not a bone of Him was broken.” And that fits the picture because according to the Old Testament law, Exodus says no bone in the sacrificial lamb eaten at Passover can be broken. That was part of without blemish, without spot. So when it says He broke it, it simply was a way to distribute it out of one loaf, a symbol again of their unity under the blessing and provision of God. He says, “From now on, this is not going to remind you of the affliction from which God delivered the people out of Egypt, this is My body which is given for you.” Matthew adds that He said, “Take, eat.” And it’s to be done, He said, in remembrance of Me.

The bread of affliction now becomes the bread that is the body of Christ. The new memorial is you have bread and you have a cup, those are the only two things He pulled out of the supper to identify as established as the new ordinance, it is the bread and the cup. The bread is the symbol of the body of Christ.

Now go back to verse 19. “This is My body,” please He does not mean this is actually His body as the Roman Catholic Church has said for centuries. That is ridiculous. In the first place, His body was there fully in tact. And the bread was in His hand. Look, Jesus said, “I am the vine,” we know what He meant by that. We don’t think He’s a plant. Scripture, He’s the rock, He’s the cornerstone, He’s the head. When He says He’s the head of the body, we understand that He is meaning that figuratively. “This is,” is a symbol, it’s a picture. We reject the foolishness of transubstantiation, that bizarre idea that when the priest blesses a piece of bread it literally becomes the actual physical body of Jesus which you eat. That’s bizarre nonsense. The Lutherans came along and tried to do a little better variation of that, came up with consubstantiation, and they said, well it isn’t the literal physical body of Christ, but it’s His spiritual body. It’s not that either. It’s simply a remembrance. It’s simply a symbol. Bread, earthly, fragile speaks of His body, earthly, fragile, subject to death as bread has the same declining properties of all things in the physical world. Christ took on human form, became subject to death. The bread reminds us that His body is given for you.

That phrase, “Which is given for you,” is the most important concept in the entire Bible, the most important concept in the entire Bible, it is the concept of substitutionary death. What did I tell you the Passover conveyed? One, you escape judgment only by death, the death can be the death of an innocent substitute. Here is the one who ends all sacrifices, for He offers the sacrifice which satisfies God. Passover lambs that week were chosen on Monday the tenth of Nissan, everybody had to pick their lamb on Monday to be sacrificed on the fourteenth. It was Monday that Jesus entered Jerusalem and God picked His lamb and His lamb was slain on Friday for us. The lambs that were slain in the millions throughout the centuries in the sacrificial system of Israel were all innocent, they didn’t sin, they didn’t commit sin. Animals can’t sin, they have no self-consciousness, they have no relationship with God, they have no personhood. They are a good illustration of the sacrifice of an innocent. But

here comes one who is innocent and who is a person, who is God Himself.

This is what Isaiah told us. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement that brought us peace with God fell on Him. By His stripes we are healed. This is what the prophet said. Isaiah 53 This is in anticipation of His substitutionary death. Matthew 26:28 said that Jesus talked about His life being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. God punishes Jesus for the sins of all who would ever believe. He provides for us an escape from divine judgment by bearing the penalty and satisfying God. And the stunning thing about it is how can you imagine that Jesus could bear the sins, the full wrath of God for all the sins for all who would ever believe and would do it in just a portion of three days. And the only answer to that is He's an infinite person who suffered infinitely. We can't begin to comprehend it. Sin can be forgiven only when just payment is made and the payment is death and the death can be the death of a substitute. And He is that substitute. "Do this," He said, "in remembrance of Me." It's simply a remembrance. He's not in the bread, physically or spiritually. It is a remembrance.

And then in verse 20, "In the same way," that would mean with thanks because that's the way He distributed the bread, so in the same way, with thanks, "He took the cup," this would be likely the third cup, the one that comes after the main meal. He would have used the bread during the main meal and then the main meal is followed by the third cup. The third cup He took after they had eaten. And that seals it as the third cup because they have completed the eating of the lamb with the unleavened bread. "And in the same with, with thanks, He said, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the New Covenant in My blood.'"

What can we say about the New Covenant in My blood? My, I'm going to have to say a little more about that, I think, next week. The New Covenant is everything. Now they knew that covenants were ratified by blood. Go back to Exodus 24, the whole nation of Israel, when God gave them the covenant of the Law said, "We will obey...we will obey...we will obey," and they sealed their covenant by being splattered with blood. They knew that blood, death, of an animal, an innocent substitute, was part of the sealing of a covenant. They also knew, Leviticus 17, the life of the flesh is in the blood, that atonement came through blood through death. They understood that sacrifice by death, shedding of blood, was part of accomplishing forgiveness of sin. Jesus says, "This now is not going to be a symbolic sacrifice part of the Old Testament, this is the real sacrifice, this is the blood not of the Old Covenant but the New Covenant.

What is the New Covenant? The New Covenant is the covenant of Jeremiah 31, Ezekiel 36, it's the saving covenant. It's the covenant of forgiveness and salvation, it's the covenant by which God forgives sinners and it's ratified in the death of Christ. God forgave sinners before Christ died. God forgives sinners since Christ died. But God forgives all sinners because Christ died. He ratified the covenant even though it was in effect before His death, as it's in effect after His death. He ratified it in His blood. That had already been applied before it even happened because He was the lamb slain

before the foundation of the world.

The New Covenant is the only Covenant that saves. The Mosaic Covenant, the Covenant of Law damns. This covenant, the New Covenant, saves. Jeremiah 31:34 says that it's the covenant by which God will forgive your transgressions and your sins.

How can God do that? Only when justice has been satisfied. You can only be delivered from judgment when death has been accomplished that satisfies God. It has to be the death of an innocent substitute who is satisfactory to God and that is Christ by God's own choice. God made Him sin who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. I've said this so many times, God treated Jesus on the cross as if He lived your life...so He could treat you as if you lived His. He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities.

So from now on, there's a new feast, the new ordinance, a new supper, the Lord's supper. The bread and the cup reminding us of the Lamb of God chosen by God, sacrificed for sinners, satisfying God's justice, a life poured out on our behalf so that our sins can be fully forgiven.

Paul sums this up in the best way. In 1 Corinthians 11, as he gives instruction that came from the Lord, verse 23, "I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread and 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 He took the cup also after supper saying, 'This cup is the New Covenant in My blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.'"
No more Passover. Now the Lord's table. And in a sense He presides over it every time we gather at His table. And we celebrate this once a year, but all the time, don't we? Frequently, often. And we will until He comes and we'll celebrate a new Passover and a new Lord's table with Him in His Kingdom. That is if you belong to Christ by faith in Him.

Our Father, again we come with hearts that are full. We are amazed at the glory and the wonder of the New Covenant, that You made a promise to us to forgive our sins based upon the penalty for our sins being poured out on an innocent substitute and You chose Your own Son to be that substitute. And He willingly went to the cross for the joy that was set before Him. We thank You, Lord, for such grace and love. And may we live our lives in a way that expresses that gratitude, to Your honor.

If you would like some Christian counsel, some help, if you're not sure you're a Christian, if you haven't really applied your heart to the truth of the gospel, our prayer room to my right in the front under the exit sign just to my right is open and we welcome you to come, talk to a counselor, get some help. Pick up a membership packet as you go, if you wish.

Father, we pray that You'll draw the hearts of those that are willing and open, made willing by Your Spirit to Yourself today. May we all embrace Christ with a fresh and new love. Thank You for that wonderful, wonderful reality of the cross. This is no accident, this is no plan gone bad. This is the triumph, when Christ was nailed on that cross, Satan in hell knew He had won, He had not lost, he had won the greatest triumph of the universe. He had ratified fully the New Covenant by which penitent, believing sinners are given eternal heaven and eternal joy. We rejoice in this glorious truth which is ours by Your goodness. In Christ's name, amen.

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