

Reformation
& Revival



A Quarterly Journal for Church Leadership

Volume 6, Number 3 • Summer 1997

The Last Passover, the First Lord's Supper, and the New Covenant

S. Lewis Johnson, Jr.

Atonement may be the most important word in Christian theology. There is no question that it is one of the most important words, for it refers to that which Jesus Christ accomplished in the restoration of the shattered relationship between sinners and a holy God. The price demanded by heaven for the restoration of the relationship was the death of the Son of God. It is this fact that liberal Christianity has been unable to accept and still is unable to accept. Some years ago Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, one of the twentieth-century giants of theology, put his finger on the essential difference between genuine Christianity and its liberal imitation. Warfield wrote,

119

Liberal Christianity has always . . . sought to keep the word *Christianity* and the word *redemptive*, but eliminate the historic Christian conviction that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, in His sacrificial death on the cross, wrought the reconciliation of men with God. For faith in a crucified Redeemer whose life is a ransom for sinners they have substituted a Christlike attitude, or a religious feeling, or even membership in the redemptive community.

It has been said that liberal Christianity lacks the power to originate a church and can only exist as a parasite, growing upon some sturdier stock. I believe this to be true, but whether it is true or not, there is no doubt but that liberal Christianity is not Christianity at all. The man who believes that he is redeemed by the blood of a divine Savior dying for him upon a cross is of a totally different character from the man who thinks that he may redeem himself by a Christlike attitude wrought out from within his own being.¹

Warfield goes on to say,

There is indeed no alternative. The redeemed in the blood of Christ, after all is said, are a people apart. Call them "Christians" or call them what you please, they are of a specifically different religion from those who know no such experience. It may be within the rights of those who felt no need of such a redemption and have never experienced its transforming power to contend that their religion is a better religion than the Christianity of the cross. It is distinctly not within their rights to maintain that it is the same religion as the Christianity of the cross. On their own showing it is not that.²

Many passages in the New Testament give our Lord's own teaching on His death. For example, in Matthew 20:28 our Lord said, "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." In John 10:11 He says of Himself, "I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep," the thought again being that of an atoning sacrifice.

None of the many passages on the atonement is clearer than the passage describing the last genuine Passover Service and the first observance of the Lord's Supper.

And while they were eating, Jesus took some bread, and after a blessing, He broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matt. 26:26-29).

He contends that His death is a voluntary, propitiatory ransom price paid vicariously for culprits under judgment.

This passage, as well as the ones cited above, overthrow all so-called "moral influence" theories of the atonement, often traced to Peter Abelard. There is some doubt about Abelard's position,³ but he has generally been thought to have taught that the Lord's passion so displays the love of God that it moves men to serve Him in loving response. In other words, an atoning substitutionary ransom price was unnecessary; the cross as a supreme example of God's love awakening a response of love in us is sufficient. As Lane says, "The idea that the cross awakens a loving response on our part is true as far as it goes, but manifestly fails to do full justice to Romans 3:19-26."⁴ What about the penalty of sin and the righteous judgment of God?

The passages cited above represent a different religion and ultimately establish a particular atonement, effected by a penal, substitutionary sacrifice. And it is here that the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism may be plainly seen. The point at issue is: Did Jesus Christ, the Messiah, offer Himself a sacrifice to God to make the salvation of all men possible, or did He offer Himself to secure infallibly the salvation of His people? The Arminians affirm the former, the consistent Calvinists the latter. As Toplady said, "Payment God cannot twice demand, first from my bleeding Surety's hand, and then again at mine."

Arminianism is a theological system of contingency, or conditionalism, "a scheme," Cunningham has said,

for dividing or partitioning the salvation of sinners between God and sinners themselves, instead of ascribing it wholly, as the Bible does, to the sovereign grace of God,—the perfect and all-sufficient work of Christ,—and the efficacious and omnipotent operation of the Spirit.⁵

Does not this mean that the work of atonement is limited? Well, yes, of course, but both of these viewpoints limit

the atonement. Those who believe in a grace that is sovereign limit the intent of the atonement, relating its intent to the electing grace of the Triune God, while Arminians limit the efficacy of the atonement, admitting that their atonement does not save all for whom it was intended. Which is the more biblical—and better? To preach an atonement designed for everyone, while admitting that it does not save everyone, is to limit its power, or as Warfield says somewhere, to evaporate its substance. Those who limit the atonement are also simply confessing a belief in the power of the atonement of Christ, a power so great that it renders certain the salvation of all for whom it was offered.⁶

The Lord's Supper was instituted at the time of the observance of the last Passover by the Lord and His apostles (cf. Matt. 26:20-29). The occasion, usually a very festive one, was shattered by the Lord's announcement, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me" (v. 21). Psalm 41:9, "Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me," has come to its ultimate reference. The calm revelation of Judas' treachery is made without vindictiveness. Stress rests rather on the fact that the death of the Son of Man is in harmony with the divine plan and purpose, for Jesus follows His shocking revelation of betrayal with the words, "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" (v. 24). The striking juxtaposition of the divine predetermination, reflected in the words, "The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him," with the full responsibility of Judas, reflected in the words, "It would be better for him if he had not been born," underlines the harmony of divine sovereignty with human responsibility for sin. Spiritual inability is due solely to human sin, and sin does not lessen responsibility, as if the more unable we are to do that which is right, then the less liable we are for sin's

judgment, for if that were the case, then the more sinful and enslaved a man becomes, the less he would be responsible.

There are three movements of thought in the account of the Supper: (1) the preparation of our Passover for His Passover (vv. 17-20); (2) the designation of the betrayer (vv. 21-25); (3) the institution of the Lord's Supper (vv. 26-29). We are concentrating our attention on the third of the movements.

The Ceremony of the Bread (v. 26)

The Passover ritual involved a preliminary course, with a word of blessing spoken by the paterfamilias over a first cup of wine. The preliminary dish consisted of green herbs, bitter herbs, and a sauce made of fruit puree, set on a table containing also a bowl of salt water to remind the participants of the tears shed while they were slaves in Egypt. Then the meal proper was served, but not yet eaten. A second cup of wine was put upon the table, while the second part of the ritual, the explanation of the meaning of the Passover by the paterfamilias, takes place. The first part of the *Hallel*, Psalms 113-114, was sung here. At that time the third feature itself took place, "grace" was spoken by the paterfamilias over the unleavened bread, the *aphikomen* (half of a cake of unleavened bread). It was probably at this point that our Lord instituted the Lord's Supper. The meal itself consisted of the paschal lamb, the bread, the bitter herbs dipped in the sauce, the *charoseth*, and the lamb wrapped together. After prayer a third cup of wine was drunk. It is this third cup that is most likely the cup of the Lord's Supper, for it was called by the Jews, just as Paul calls the Christian cup, "the cup of blessing" (cf. 1 Cor. 10:10). Finally, the service was closed over a fourth cup, amid praise and the singing of the remainder of the *Hallel*, Psalms 115-118. It is against this background that Matthew gives his account of the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper.⁷

As Klaas Schilder has so beautifully put it, standing behind the element of the bread is the Passover lamb, which by virtue of the lamb's typical place in the history of the deliverance from Egypt condemns Jesus to death. He knows what the bread represents. "Two lines meet in the guest chamber," Schilder points out, "that of the Old and that of the New Testament." He adds later, "Now the switch is thrown over. . . . Nothing can be out of line, or the place becomes one of disaster."⁸

In verse 26 Matthew states that Jesus "took bread, gave thanks and broke it." The partaking of the bread is first, since it represents the body of Christ, the necessary means of the incarnation. The breaking of the bread refers to His death. As someone has said, like a good surveyor with a transit compass, we must begin at the right place, and that place is suggested in the clause, "(He) gave it to His disciples." The Son's sovereign initiative in His work in our behalf is denoted thereby.

In the clause that identifies the bread as representative of the body of Christ the word "is" is the copula of symbolic relation.⁹ Just as the field represents the world in 13:38, so the bread represents the Lord's body. Our Lord's other uses of metaphors and figures of speech, such as speaking of Himself as a door, a vine, or the good shepherd make it plain that this use, too, is metaphorical. "The fact that the elements in the Lord's Supper are still called 'bread' and 'the cup' after they are partaken of (1 Cor. 11:26-28) also suggests this," as Stein notes.¹⁰ And how can the bread be His body in His hand?

Luke's account at this point adds the words, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (22:19), words that are not found in Matthew or Mark. Because the words are not found in the two gospels, some have questioned the authenticity of them. The words, however, are found in the earliest account of the Lord's Supper, in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (cf. v. 24).

There is here that which might legitimately be called an act of arrogant audacity, if one bears in mind the situation. The celebration of the Passover was the celebration of the mighty deliverance of the children of Israel from the bondage of Egypt, a celebration of the mighty acts of the God who appeared to Moses at the burning bush and defined Himself to Moses in this way, "I am the Lord. I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob as God Almighty, but by My name, the Lord, I did not make Myself known to them. I also established My covenant with them to give them the land of Canaan, where they lived as aliens" (Ex. 6:2-4). He further told Moses, "And I will bring you to the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you for a possession; I am the Lord" (v. 8). In other words, the God who was to be remembered in the celebration of the Passover was Yahweh, the covenant-making and covenant-keeping God. What presumptuous confidence and boastful audacity to call upon the members of the nation that possessed "the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises" (Rom. 9:4) to transfer their worship, as they might have thought, from the God of their fathers to Jesus of Nazareth, and to lay aside their ancient covenants for a new covenant, to replace the annual celebration of the impressive ritual of the Passover for a simple feast of remembrance in bread and wine. It was as one has said,

And now, here is a Galilean peasant, in a borrowed upper room, within four-and-twenty hours of His ignominious death which might seem to blast all His work, who steps forward and says, "I put away that ancient covenant which knits this nation to God. It is antiquated. I am the true offering and sacrifice, by the blood of which, sprinkled on altar and on a people, a new covenant, built upon better promises, shall henceforth be."¹¹

In putting aside the Passover and in establishing the Lord's Supper as the feast of remembrance for God's people, the Lord Jesus reveals His conception of His authority and of its meaning. What sense of authority and power does He possess that enables Him to command both Jews and Gentiles to lay aside the ancient God-appointed celebration of the festival of the Passover for the simple supper of remembrance? What enables Him to ask His small family of followers to lower their regard of the importance of Moses in the light of the regard they must have for Him?

By this substitution of the Lord's Supper for the Passover what could He have meant except that He is the Passover Lamb? Must He not have meant that the true sacrifice is His own sacrifice, soon to be accomplished on Calvary's tree? Can He have meant anything other than that the true safety of the soul is not in the blood of animals, but in His blood? It is His death that opens the door of deliverance from the guilt, condemnation, and bondage of sin for the Israel and Gentiles of God (cf. Rom. 2:28-29; 9:6; Gal. 6:16). One can understand with what joy and satisfaction the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "For Christ our Passover also has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7).

What did our Lord wish His disciples to remember in the observance of the Lord's Supper? Different answers have been given. "One suggestion," Stein offers,

is that Jesus wanted His disciples to petition God to remember Him and deliver Him. The emphasis of all four accounts, however, is not for the disciples to intercede with God on behalf of Jesus. In the present context such an interpretation is not possible. A more popular way of understanding this saying is to see it as instituting a continual memorial in which believers are to reflect back on the death of Jesus. Still another suggestion is to interpret the verb "remember" as meaning to proclaim. This fits well with 1 Corinthians

11:26, where Paul states, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." This suggestion understands the Lord's Supper as being primarily an evangelistic proclamation of the gospel. The best way of understanding this saying, however, is to see it as directed to and meant for the church. The command is best seen as ordering the continual celebration and recounting of Jesus' vicarious death and His forthcoming return. Just as the Passover was intended to celebrate-recount-recapitulate the exodus, so the "remembrance" of the Lord's Supper is intended to celebrate-recount-recapitulate the death of Christ, our Passover, and His future coming.¹²

The Ceremony of the Cup (vv. 27-28)

In these significant verses the apostle makes it plain that the new and final covenant is grounded in a blood sacrifice, just as the old covenant was (cf. Ex. 24:1-8). The four accounts of the Lord's Supper associate the cup with blood and with a covenant.¹³ Our Lord acts with sovereign authority in dispensing the cup and its contents representing the blood, acting as the sole source of the benefits of His work of redemption. The active verbs in the two verses, the verb "broke" used of the bread in verse 26 and the verb "offered" (lit., "gave") used of the cup in verse 27, may be intended to emphasize the voluntary character of the sacrifice soon to be made. And it should be pointed out that, after the beginning of the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus partook of neither bread nor cup. He appears to underline the point in Luke 22:17 where we read, "And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, 'Take this and *share* it among yourselves.'" He Himself needs no atoning ministry!

Everything to this point leads up to Matthew 26:28, where it says, "for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." Both Luke and

Paul add the adjective *new* to "covenant," linking closely the Lord's Supper to Jeremiah 31:31-34 (cf. Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). There may be some question as to whether Jesus explicitly used the adjective *new*, but it is clearly implicit in His teaching.¹⁴

The statement in verse 28, "this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins," may be, as suggested earlier, the most important atonement statement in Scripture, representing as it does the explicit teaching of our Lord Himself. The breaking of the bread had suggested the violent death of the cross, and the outpoured wine, red like blood, when combined with the breaking of the bread, suggested something similar to a twofold parabolic lesson, expressing the truth, "I must die sacrificially."

That the sacrifice of Christ is the ratification of the new covenant,¹⁵ as the blood of the covenant Moses sprinkled upon the people of Israel in the ceremony described in Exodus 24 ratified the old covenant, has enormous significance for the body of Christ. The new covenant belongs to the covenantal history of salvation, having its roots in the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants, both unconditional in nature and guaranteed of ultimate fulfillment by the promises of the Lord God. The new covenant, set forth preeminently in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and 32:37-44, but also set out in such places as Isaiah 61:8-9; Ezekiel 16:60-63; 36:24-32 and 37:26-27, and treated fully in the Epistle to the Hebrews, reiterates and expands the basic Abrahamic and Davidic promises (Ezek. 16:60-63, "in the days of thy youth") and supplies the redemptive ground of the biblical covenantal promises, especially of the forgiveness of sins. The promises are now firmly founded upon the accomplished atonement of the Son of God and only await the divinely determined time of fulfillment. In the meantime the redeemed, the heirs of the promises, are being gathered into the flock

of the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ, by the ministry in effectual grace of the Spirit of God. That the consummation is certain is seen in the unconditional nature of the new covenant provisions. The reiteration of the divine determination in Jeremiah 31:31-34 is impressive: verse 31—"I will make"; verse 33—"I will make," "I will put," "I will write," "I will be"; verse 34—"I will forgive," "I will remember their sin no more." There is no abandonment of the responsibility of belief on the part of the recipients of the covenantal blessing, but there is the comforting assurance that the promises include the gift of faith with them (cf. Rom. 3:1-8; Eph. 2:8-9; Phil. 1:29, etc.). "Jeremiah," H. Cunliffe-Jones has written, "found that the absence of the knowledge of God was the source of all that was wrong (8:7) and the presence of a knowledge of God was the source of all blessedness."¹⁷ That blessedness God promises to supply to the inheritors of the new covenant promises who then will experience deliverance from the wandering heart, the plague of the race since Eden.

Jesus states in verse 28 that the blood of the covenant is "poured out for many." Matthew's "for" is the rendering of the preposition *peri* (NIV, "for"), but both Mark and Luke use *hyper* (NIV, "for"). Paul, in 1 Corinthians 11:25, says, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood," simply identifying the cup with the covenant, the following prepositional phrase supplying the manner of the identification. The wine contained in the cup represents the blood which is the seal of the covenant.¹⁸ The statement here suggests that to drink the cup is to enter into the covenant established in the blood of Christ. This indicates a seriousness in the participation in the Lord's Supper that is rarely stressed. To partake is to recognize that one is professing a covenantal relationship with God.¹⁹

The prepositions used by the authors in the phrases to explain the object of the shedding of the atoning blood dif-

fer. Matthew 26:28 uses the phrase “for many,” the preposition “for” being the rendering of the Greek preposition *peri* (NIV, “for”), while Mark 14:24 and Luke 22:20 use the phrases “for many” and “for you” respectively as renderings of the preposition *hyper* (NIV, “for”). Paul’s statement is not parallel with Mark and Luke, although he does use *hyper* (NIV, “for”) in connection with the bread, saying, “This is My body, which is for you” (NIV, 1 Cor. 11:24).

While the use of the preposition *peri* (NIV, “for”) by Matthew is not as clearly a reference to substitution as the use of *hyper* (NIV, “for”) by Mark and Luke, there is no denial of substitution. The references of *hyper* in Mark and Luke are harmonious with the concept of substitution. The fundamental idea of the preposition *hyper*, however, is *in behalf of* and, thus, connotes the idea of representation, although there is abundant evidence in classical and Hellenistic Greek that it also denoted proxyship in the sense of *in lieu of*, an idea close to the idea of substitution, the well-known illustration being that in the papyri of one who writes or signs in the name of an illiterate person, that is, for his benefit as his substitute. Paul’s use of the preposition in 2 Corinthians 5:14 seems clearly substitutional. I would conclude that our Lord’s words in Mark 14:24 and in Luke 22:19-20 refer to His coming death as a representative death for the many, but a representative death that shades into and implies a substitutionary death.²⁰

If, then, the wine of the Lord’s Supper is “My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many,” what is meant by this most important statement? In the simplest terms the death of our Lord is a penal substitutionary sacrifice that ratifies the new covenant with “the many.” The expression, “the many,” is derived from Isaiah’s language concerning the Servant of Jehovah’s ministry, particularly in Isaiah 53:11-12, where the very term “many” is found. The Servant’s death was violent (cf. vv. 6-9, 10, 12), penal and substitutionary

(vv. 6, 10-12).²¹ The “many” in the light of the context of the chapter are those now believing Israelites who, in the future, reflecting on their past unbelief acknowledge their sin and guilt and the saving ministry of the Messiah. That “the many” refers to the elect of God is plain from the context of Isaiah 53, for in verses 11 and 12, where the term is found three times, the text of verse 11 states that the righteous Servant, the Messiah, will justify them,²² a reference that can refer only to believers. It seems plain to me that there is no reason to take the word *many*, which actually occurs five times in the great prophecy, in any other sense than in the sense of the believing elect. The passage affords no support for the contention that the soteriological passages using the term *many* refer to all men, or all persons, without exception, or each and every person who has ever or ever will live.

The term “poured out,” derived from Isaiah 53:12, where its Hebrew equivalent is used, is important. It signifies a violent death, the death of a sacrificial victim, although in this case a willing victim, for it is Isaiah’s Servant of the Lord who Himself “poured out His soul unto death.”

It is necessary to say a further word about “the many.” In the light of the context it is clear that “the many” must include the believing members of the nation Israel, for they were in mind particularly in the passage in the Isaiah passage, as well as in the Upper Room when the apostles met with our Lord. And, after all, it is with “the house of Israel and with the house of Judah” that the new covenant is first made (cf. Jer. 31:31). There are reasons, however, for the extension of the covenant to others, for the new covenant reiterates and expands the basic Abrahamic and Davidic covenant promises, although its stress rests upon the personal redemptive blessings, especially the forgiveness of sins. In the fundamental covenant made with Abraham it was stated, “and in you all the families of the earth shall be

blessed" (Gen. 12:3). From this text and its application by the Scripture authors in the remainder of the Bible it is clear that the Abrahamic promises comprehend the inclusion of Gentiles (cf. Isa. 42:1, 6; 49:6; 60:3; John 10:16; Rom. 16:25-27; Eph. 2:11-22; 3:5-6).

It is in Romans 11 that Paul most fully develops his teaching that Israel and the Gentiles both have glorious futures. In his famous illustration of the olive tree, representative of the divine messianic promise program, the apostle explains his understanding of the history of salvation. While there is a remnant of saved Israelites in the people of God, the vast majority of the nation are blind in their unbelief (vv. 1-10). In the meantime by the fall of Israel worldwide salvation has come to the Gentiles by their grafting into the olive tree (vv. 11-12). But the Gentiles are warned that unbelief will bring unsparing judgment; after all, they are the unnatural branches of the olive tree (vv. 13-24). The olive tree of messianic blessing belongs to Israel, and it is much more to be expected that the natural branches will be regrafted "into their own olive tree" (v. 25). God is able to graft them in "again" (v. 23), the apostle has asserted. Thus, the apostle declares that it is more to be expected that Israel will be returned to messianic blessing than that Gentiles shall be saved. And this, Paul says, with the full understanding and in the full glow of the mighty turning of the Gentiles to God through His ministry! So the reader is not surprised to read in verse 26, "and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob.' And this is My covenant with them, when I take away their sins" (vv. 26-27). The following paragraph, verses 28-32, with "a finely balanced antithesis"²³ in verse 28 and a chiasmus in verses 30-31, represents a "reiteration and confirmation" of verses 11-27.²⁴ In this way the apostle in his philosophy of history explained what God is doing in the present age. Later in this same epistle (Rom. 15:7-13) he further

explains to the Romans the divine rationale of the ministry of the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, to the patriarchs and to the Gentiles. He writes,

Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. For I say that Christ has become a servant to the circumcision on behalf of the truth of God to confirm the promises given to the fathers, and for the Gentiles to glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, "Therefore I will give praise to Thee among the Gentiles, and I will sing to Thy name."²⁵ And again he says, "Rejoice, O Gentiles, with His people."²⁶ And again, "Praise the Lord all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise Him."²⁷ And again Isaiah says, "There shall come the root of Jesse, and He who arises to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles hope"²⁸ (Rom. 15:7-12).

While all the accounts of the Lord's Supper understand the reference to the blood of the covenant as atoning for sins of the people, it is Matthew who appears to see this the most clearly, for he specifically says that the blood is poured out "for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:28).²⁹ This is the marvelous purpose of the atoning work of our Lord. If, when He was preparing the apostles for His departure from them, He said to them in effect, "Never, as long as you live, forget My death; never forget My broken body on that cross and the spurting and flowing of My blood." In reality He was saying to them, "The time shall, no, must come when what I have done will accomplish its purpose in mankind, when I will be reunited with you and all who so trust in Me." "The communion would stand as the expression of Christ's mistaken estimate of His own importance," Maclaren has said, "if there were not beyond the grave the perfecting of it, and the full appropriation and joyful possession of all which the death that it signifies brought to mankind."³⁰

Many years ago Donald Grey Barnhouse, the well-known pastor of Tenth Presbyterian Church in Philadelphia, was preaching one Sunday morning on the witness of the Holy Spirit in conversion (cf. Rom. 8:16). A twelve-year-old boy sitting in the gallery was listening very intently, Dr. Barnhouse said, as he spoke on God's treatment of our sin. "When I came to my summing up," Dr. Barnhouse said, and those familiar with Barnhouse's preaching will remember him often doing this, gathering many of the great promises into one impressive sentence, "I put all of the promises into a single sentence. Our sins are forgiven, forgotten, cleansed, pardoned, atoned for, remitted, covered; they have been cast into the depths of the sea, blotted out as a thick cloud, removed as far as the east is from the west, cast behind God's back."³¹

Barnhouse said at the close of the service he went to the front door to greet those attending. "Just as I was turning away from greeting one group of people," he said, "the boy caught my sleeve and said, 'Good sermon, Doc!' I smiled and he continued, 'Gee, we're sure sittin' pretty, aren't we?'" That, Barnhouse said, was an example of the witness of the Spirit with our spirit.

The Great Supper (v. 29)

The Last Passover and the Long Abstinence. Our Lord declares that there will be no more drinking of the wine until the coming of the Father's kingdom. A long abstinence has followed the last Passover, but the hope of the Shepherd's flock is not dimmed. In fact, the words are words that convert the memorial into a prophecy. The covenant looks on to a new day, and the implications are large. The family of the Redeemer may look forward to the time when the paterfamilias will be with His family again. In fact, the vow itself is comforting, for it suggests that in the meantime He will live only for the kingdom that is coming and its citizens. Then,

as Luke puts it, the Supper will find its fulfillment (Luke 22:16).

The Consummation of the Kingdom. The new covenant does look on to the new day. We are not surprised, for the context of its initial appearance in the Word of God in Jeremiah 31:31-40 is filled with prophetic implications of the coming messianic kingdom, a kingdom that embraces the fulfillment of the Abrahamic and Davidic promises, even touching the ancient land (cf. Jer. 32:36-44; Ezek. 16:60-63; 36:26-32; 37:26-27).³² Then, as Luke says in his account of the Supper, "For I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (22:16). Simply put, the Passover and the Lord's Supper culminate in the messianic reign of Jesus Christ.

"The celebration of the Lord's Supper," G. C. Berkouwer writes in concurrence,

will always stand in this eschatological light, in the sign of this urgent, "not yet," in the sign of expectation and prospect. The Lord's Supper and the "with you" comprised in that Supper are oriented toward a different "with you" in a new presence (*parousia*), toward the ultimate fulfillment in the kingdom of God.³³

The Lord's Supper, then, is not simply a memorial service of remembrance. It is also a festival associated with the fulfillment of the days of our Lord's abstinence from partaking of the elements of remembrance. It is a festival of anticipation, as Paul underlines 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). And it is a festival of eternity, for our Lord gives indication of its continuance in heaven, when He says, "until that day when I go on drinking³⁴ it new with you in My Father's kingdom." That promise is of great encouragement to us as we live in what we believe are

difficult days of departure from the Word of God on the part of a large number within the professing church of Jesus Christ.

"If He died," Maclaren says,

as the rite says when He did, and if dying He left such a commentary upon His act as that ordinance affords, then He cannot have done with the world; then the powers that were set in motion by His death cannot pause nor cease their action until they have reached their appropriate culmination in effecting all that it was in them to effect. If, leaving His people, He said to them, "never forget My death for you, My broken body, and My shed blood," He therein said that the time will come, must come, when all the powers of the Cross shall be incorporated in humanity, and when the parted shall be reunited. The Communion would stand as the expression of Christ's mistaken estimate of His own importance, if there were not beyond the grave the perfecting of it, and the full appropriation and joyful possession of all which the death that it signifies brought to mankind.³⁵

The Convention of the Redeemed. The cross, with its broken body and poured out blood, the communion with its bread and wine and its eating and drinking, lead on to the coming and the kingdom, as Good Friday via Easter leads on to Epiphany. In the meantime we serve, worship and feed on the bread and wine of our salvation. The day will come when He will drink the fruit of the vine "with you in My Father's kingdom." Thus, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, who offers the priestly sacrifice instituting the new covenant in blood, explaining its meaning as the Great Prophet, looks on to the gathering of His people at His advent as King of Kings in the kingdom of God, "My Father's kingdom," as He says in verse 29. Does He need this festival? He says He will drink the fruit of the vine again with His own

in His Father's kingdom. Well, no, He does not need this, but He desires the love, submission and society of His redeemed people, and in marvelous condescension counts it His joy to feast with us. And Paul's marvelous prophecy expresses our side of the eternal festival with the words, "and thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17). This is what Maclaren was thinking about when he wrote of a state in which, unless the universe is really a godless chaos, a man shall have all that he wants, but only want what he ought to want.³⁶

In this way and with these words the Lord shed "the light of victory" over what at first appeared to be a calamity. In the Supper He explains the meaning of His death so that the apostles may see it as "not just the fulfillment of the Passover alone but of the whole Old Testament sacrificial worship."³⁷ The *passio magna* is not defeat; it is glorious overcoming victory.

Author

Dr. S. Lewis Johnson held professorships at Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, Deerfield, Illinois, and Dallas Theological Seminary before formal retirement.

Endnotes

- 1 Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield, "The Essence of Christianity and the Cross of Christ," *The Person and Work of Christ*, ed. by Samuel G. Craig (Philadelphia: Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1950), 30.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Cf. A. N. S. Lane, "Abelard, Peter," *NDOT*, 1-2.
- 4 Ibid., 1.
- 5 William Cunningham, *Historical Theology* (London: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1969 [orig. ed., 1862]), II:377.
- 6 Tom Wells, *A Price for a People: The Meaning of Christ's Death* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992).

- 7 The description of the likely celebration of the supper is taken from Joachim Jeremias' *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London, 1966), 57-60, and Alfred Edersheim's *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953 [orig. eds., 1883, 1886]), II:490-512.
- 8 Klaas Schilder, *Christ in His Suffering*, (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Publishers, 1978) I:157-58.
- 9 The verb *eimi* often means *to signify* (cf. 1 Cor. 11:25; John 8:12; 10:9; 1 Cor. 10:4; Rev. 1:20), as does the verb *to be* in English.
- 10 Cf. Robert H. Stein, *Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois, and Leicester, England: InterVarsity, 1996) 207-208. "The fact that the elements in the Lord's Supper are still called 'bread' and 'the cup' after they are partaken of (1 Cor. 11:26-28) also suggests this," Stein remarks, adding, "If the disciples were asked during their participation in this meal, 'Where is the body of Jesus?' it is extremely unlikely that they would have pointed to the bread. They would have pointed to Jesus their host." The explanation of the fact that the bread and wine never appear to have heard the words of the priest in the transubstantiation is found, so the Church of Rome claims, in the distinction one must make between "substance" and "accidents." The "substance" is the true reality; the "accidents" are the appearances, the perceptible characteristics. The former changes; the latter do not. As Cyril of Jerusalem said, "Judge not by the taste, but by faith." That was the advice given Alexander Whyte, the well-known Scottish Presbyterian minister and principal of New College in Edinburgh, by Cardinal Newman. He told Whyte that "the substance of the bread and wine was converted into the substance of the very flesh and blood of Christ," the appearances, or accidents (shape, size, color, taste, etc.) remaining the same, but the senses were to be denied.

Years ago in the early years of my Christian life I read Father Charles Chiniquy's book, *Fifty Years in the Church of Rome*, a vivid account of his conversion to Protestantism. He also wrote a book titled *Forty Years in the Church of Christ* and other works. I remember him puzzling over whether, when a mouse upon occasion nibbles on the bread upon the altar, the mouse really nibbles on the body of Christ. Later I read somewhere that Thomas Aquinas, perhaps the greatest philosopher and theologian of the medieval church, was asked that very question and that he had replied in the affirmative.

- 11 Alexander Maclaren, *The Gospel According to St. Matthew: Chapters XVIII To XXVIII*, in *Expositions of Holy Scripture* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1906), II:245.
- 12 Stein, 209.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Ibid., 210.
- 15 Gleason Archer's comments on the word *covenant* here are apropos. "The term for *covenant* employed in the New Testament is *diatheke*, the word used constantly in the LXX for *berit*. Since the ordinary Greek word for 'contract' or 'compact' (*syntheke*) implied equality on the part of the contracting parties, the Greek-speaking Jews preferred *diatheke* (coming from *diatithemai* 'to make a disposition of one's own property') in the sense of a 'unilateral enactment.' In secular Greek this word usually meant 'will' or 'testament,' but even classical authors like Aristophanes (*Birds*, 439) occasionally used it of a covenant wherein one of the two parties had an overwhelming superiority over the other and could dictate his own terms. Hence the biblical *diatheke* signified (in a way much more specific than did *berit*) an arrangement made by one party with plenary power, which the other party may accept or reject but cannot alter. Johannes Bohm (in Kittel's *TWNT*, II:137) defines it as: "The decree

- (*Verfuegung*) of God, the powerful disclosure of the sovereign will of God in history whereby he constitutes the relationship, the authoritative divine ordinance (institution) which introduces a corresponding order of affairs." Cf. G. L. Archer, Jr., "Covenant," *Baker's Dictionary of Theology*, ed. by Everett F. Harrison, Geoffrey W. Bromiley and Carl F. H. Henry (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 143-44.
- 16 The twofold application of the blood in the sealing of the covenant of the law, as Childs suggests, may indicate "a twofold aspect of the covenant. On the one hand, the blood dashed on the altar in place of a sacrifice speaks of God's gracious forgiveness in accepting this as an offering. On the other hand, the blood scattered on the people binds them in a blood oath," and we might add, a blood oath of obedience, for the Law of Moses was just such a legal covenant. Cf. Hebrews 9:18-22. See Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus: A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974), 506. Cf. W. H. Gispen, *Exodus*, trans. by Ed van der Maas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1982), 238-39.
- 17 H. Cunliffe-Jones, *The Book of Jeremiah* (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1960), 197.
- 18 Cf. Archibald Robertson and Alfred Plummer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1953), 247. The authors suggest that the adverb "mystically" is an equivalent of the prepositional phrase. Paul's version, contrary to both Mark and Luke, has no allusion to Isaiah 53. Cf. Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 555.
- 19 Cf. C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1968), 269.
- 20 Cf. the excellent appendix by M. J. Harris in the third volume of *DNTT*, III:1171-1215 and the note on the meaning

- of *huper* by E. K. Simpson in *The Pastoral Epistles: The Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), 110-12. Both authors, while acknowledging that the emphasis in *huper* is on representation and in *anti* on substitution, yet a representative many be a substitute and is such not infrequently.
- 21 Alexander Maclaren, in discussing this passage, said, "I insist upon no theory of an atonement. I believe there is no gospel, worth calling so, worth the preaching, worth your believing, or that will ever move the world or purify society, except the gospel which begins with the fact of an atonement and points to the cross as the altar on which the Sacrifice for the sins of the world, without whose death pardon is impossible, had died for us all." Cf. his *The Gospel According to St. Matthew: Chapters xviii to xxviii in Expositions of Holy Scripture* (London: Hodder and Soughton, 1906), 249. It seems, however, to me that in these statements of our Lord concerning the Supper there is sufficient reason for affirming a penal substitutionary theory of a voluntary sacrifice by our Lord for our sins. His theory is that of universal redemption, but it is a theory, if unrecognized.
- 22 Joachim Jeremias, in an important article (*TDNT*, VI:536-45), has stated that the Hebrew word (*ha*) *rabim*, with the meaning *many*, should be given the inclusive sense, that is, the meaning of *all*, since the Hebrew and Aramaic have no word for *all*. In this article I do not have the space to discuss the question in detail. Tom Wells, in his helpful book, *A Price for a People* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), has discussed the matter in some detail, making the point that one may accept Jeremias' judgment that *many* refers to the totality of a community or group, however small or large, or *all* of a given group. The family of God is such a group, and it is clear from the use of the term in Isaiah 52:13—53:12 that in its five uses

- there it refers to *all* of a given group, the elect of Israel, for in the future they confess their failure in the past to discern their Messiah, but now have come to understand. The many includes all of that group in thorough harmony with the usage of the Hebrew term for *many*. If one needs further evidence, a simple look at the context will bring conviction, for in 53:11 the prophet states that all of the many are justified by God's "righteous Servant," the Messiah. The word could not refer to everyone without exception. Cf. J. Jeremias, *polloi*, *TDNT*, VI:536-45.
- 23 James D. G. Dunn, *Word Biblical Commentary: Romans 9-16* (Dallas: Word, 1988), 693.
 - 24 William G. T. Shedd, *A Critical and Doctrinal Commentary on the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967 [reprint of 1979 ed.]), 351. Cranfield, however, sees verse 32 as an explanation of verses 30-31 and a conclusion of the argument of chapters nine to eleven as a whole. Cf. C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, Ltd., 1979), II:586.
 - 25 See 2 Samuel 22:50; Psalm 18:49.
 - 26 Deuteronomy 32:43.
 - 27 Psalm 117:1.
 - 28 Isaiah 11:10.
 - 29 The word *eis* (NIV, "for") indicates the goal of the pouring out of the blood. It was done to accomplish the forgiveness of sins.
 - 30 Alexander Maclaren, *Matthew*, II:255.
 - 31 Donald Grey Barnhouse, *God's Heirs* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963), 103-105.
 - 32 Two articles, looking at the new covenant in different ways, are Walter C. Kaiser's "The Old Promise and the New Covenant" (*JETS* [1972]), 15:11-23, and Marten H. Woudstra's "The Everlasting Covenant in Ezekiel" 16:59-63 (*Calvin Theological Journal* [April 1971], 6:22-47. What

seems clear is that the new covenant includes a definite reference to the messianic kingdom that follows, and our Lord's words seem to support this. It is also significant that the apostle Paul in his well-known statement, "and so all Israel shall be saved" (Rom. 11:26), goes on to cite from passages that include Jeremiah 31:33-34, it evidently being the apostle's mind that it is then that the new covenant promises find fulfillment. He adds in verse 27 in support, "And this is My covenant with them when I take away their sins," words from Jeremiah 31:33-34.

- 33 G. C. Berkouwer, *The Sacraments*, trans. by Hugo Bekker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1969), 191-92.
- 34 The two occurrences of the word "drink" occur in two different Greek tenses. The first occurrence (NIV, "drink") is in the aorist tense in the subjunctive mood, representing the action simply as an event, but the second occurrence of the verb (NIV, "drink") is in the present tense, a tense that usually suggests durative, or continuing, action. If that is true in this context, it might suggest the continuance throughout eternity of the enjoyment of the festival of remembrance. The suggestion may lay too much weight on the contrast in tenses, but the celebration will be an eternal one. Mark contains the same contrast in tenses (cf. 14:25).
- 35 Maclaren, 255.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 258.
- 37 Berkouwer, 196.