

WE GATHER TO REMEMBER

Mark's gospel, which we have finished reading and studying this past week is the shortest of the four inspired accounts of Christ's life while on earth. There are 28 chapters in the gospel of Matthew covering this information, 24 chapters in Luke, and 21 in John. Mark's gospel is related in just 16 chapters.

That being the case, you can expect, and will usually find things given in a very concise form. That holds true with the account of Christ's instituting the Lord's Supper. Mark relates it for us in just four verses—found in **chapter 14, beginning in verse 22...**

And as they were eating, he took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." 23) And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. 24) And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25) Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."

Of course, as you know, the occasion of Jesus doing this was in connection with the observance of the Jewish Feast of Passover. The purpose of that observance was to remember the Passover, the singular event that resulted in the Jews being set free from their captivity in Egypt about 1500 to 1600 years earlier. That deliverance is related for us in the 12th chapter of Exodus. Keep in mind that the Jewish calendar was a lunar calendar and that the month of their deliverance would be the first month of their year. God told Moses to instruct the Israelites that on the 10th day of that month every family was to take a lamb, either from the sheep or the goats and this would be used as their sacrifice. It was to be a male lamb and it was to be one without disease or defects.

They were to keep that lamb until the 14th day, which would, of course, make it the 2nd Sabbath day of the month, and they were to kill the lamb, and take its blood and sprinkle it upon the doorposts and piece supporting the wall above the doorposts. They were to also take the lamb, and roast it, and then along with unleavened bread and a paste or salad of bitter herbs, they were to eat it that night. All of it was to be eaten, and what was not eaten was to be burned.

Then God told Moses to tell the Israelites, that that night, on the 14th day of the month, God would pass through the land, and He would strike dead the firstborn of both man and beast in every home where there was no blood. Those homes marked by blood, God would pass over without doing the people any harm, hence the name Passover.

In **verses 24-28**, Moses went on to say,

You shall observe this rite as a statute for you and for your sons forever. 25) And when you come to the land that the LORD will give you, as he has promised, you shall keep this service. 26) And when your children say to you, 'What do

you mean by this service?' 27) you shall say, 'It is the sacrifice of the LORD's Passover, for he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt, when he struck the Egyptians but spared our houses.'" And the people bowed their heads and worshiped. 28) Then the people of Israel went and did so; as the LORD had commanded Moses and Aaron, so they did."

From our Biblical records, it does not appear that the Jews actually did keep this annual feast, at least not on a consistent basis. We do know that by the time of Christ, that it had become a regular observance and the most important holy day in the Jewish year. We also know from the four gospel accounts that Jesus observed the feast that year, not on the Sabbath day itself, but on the evening before the day of preparation. The Jews referred to Friday as "the day of preparation," inasmuch as they had to prepare for the Sabbath day when they were not allowed to do any work, not even to light any fires in their homes. We know from the gospels that Jesus was put to death on this day of preparation, which was Friday of course. That meant that he observed this feast at the beginning of that day, which was what we would call Thursday evening. In this case Jesus shared the Passover meal with his disciples on the day that the lambs were to be slain.

I thought this might be of interest to you; it is a description of how the Passover Feast was observed by the Jews in the time of Christ. I took this from brother Everett Ferguson's book, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity*. [Brother Ferguson's description]

It was during the course of that observance that Thursday evening, that the Lord appropriated two of the elements of that feast—the unleavened bread and the cup of wine, which according to 1 Corinthians 10:16 was presumably the third cup, the so-called cup of blessing. It is the time and manner in which we give thanks to God. What Christ did was to give those elements a new reference. With the idea of deliverance from captivity very clearly in the background, Jesus brought a new meaning to those two elements. He told them that the bread was his body; or that it was a symbol for his body. The cup, or wine, was his blood, the blood of a new covenant with God that was to be made through His death.

Then Jesus said something very significant. He said, "*Truly, I say to you, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.*" Which of course in a prophetic kind of way pointed towards something that was to happen less than two months later. And so with the coming of the Holy Spirit, the kingdom of heaven that John the Baptist and Jesus and Jesus' disciples had talked about so much came into existence.

And that is why the early church, which was what the kingdom of heaven was called, began a regular, weekly observance of what Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:20 calls the Lord's Supper. We read about that observance in **Acts 2:42**. There, the writer, Luke, tells us that after about 3000 people obeyed the gospel for the first time, that "*They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*" That expression, "the breaking of bread" had reference to that observance of the Lord's Supper.

This was something done, under the instructions of the apostles, each first day of the week. In **Acts 20:7**, we read about a gathering of Christians in the city of Troas, which was a major port city on the Northwest coast of what we would call Turkey today. Paul, accompanied by Luke, met some other people there, and together they shared in the Lord's Supper. Luke writes: *"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them, intending to depart on the next day, and he prolonged his speech until midnight."* Notice, that passage tells us two very important things.

- first, that this was something done on the first day of the week;
- second, that the breaking of bread was the purpose for their coming together.

As we've already seen, when Paul wrote to the Corinthians, in his first letter, he talked about the Christians in that ancient city coming together to share in the Lord's Supper. We learn that they had a specific time when they did this, and from 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 we learn that day was the first day of the week.

Down through the centuries, Christians continued this observance, and even though many churches today have neglected, or relegated it to something done once or twice a year, or perhaps quarterly, the Scriptures would have us to keep this feast each every week, on that day that came to be known as the Lord's Day, on the first day of the week, the day Christ was raised from the dead. So around the world, on this day Christians gather together to worship God and one way we do that is by setting aside some time to remember; to remember what God and Christ did for us, some two thousand years ago.

Paul stresses this purpose or idea of remembrance when he wrote to the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper in **chapter 11**. In **verses 23-25**, Paul said: "

*For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24) 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.**" 25) In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of me.**"*

Often times, those words are engraved on the front of the tables from which the Lord's Supper is served. *"Do this in remembrance of me."*

Just as the Jews would gather together, each year, on the 14th day of their first month, and they would remember what God did for them hundreds and hundreds of years before, so we too have gathered this day to remember. We remember Christ. But what is it exactly that we are to remember about Christ? That is what I want to help you think about today before we share in this supper together, and I want to identify three things to remember about Christ: That we gather to remember who Christ is; we gather to remember what Christ did, and we gather to remember what Christ is yet to do.

First of all, as we surround this table today and each and every Lord's Day, we are called to remember who He is—the everlasting God.

- *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* John writes that about Jesus in **1:1**. John goes on to say, in verse 2, *“He was in the beginning with God.”*
- The apostle Paul says that Christ is *“the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, 16) who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.”* He is our creator.
- John went on to say there in the 1st chapter of his gospel, in verse 3: *“All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.”*
- This one we come today to remember is the One who in Titus 2:13, Paul calls, *“our great God and Savior.”*

Now why is that important, that we remember that He is the everlasting God? Well it is important because we do not come to worship someone who is just a man. That he truly became a man is without question, but He was not just a man. He is the eternal, everlasting God, who is deserving of our worship, and worthy of our praise. In Matthew 1, when Joseph, who would become Jesus' earthly father learned from an angel that the young woman he was engaged to was expecting a child, conceived not by intimate relations with him or any other man, but by the Holy Spirit, the angel told him,

“Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21) She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.” 22) and all this will take place to fulfill what the Lord spoke by the prophet, saying: 23) “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel” (which means, God with us).”

Second, we gather to remember, not only who he is, but what he did. Indeed what did He do? As John would tell us, the world could not contain the books that it would take to tell all that He did. What did he do?

- Well, for starters He gave up His equality with God (Philippians 2:6). Think about that and think about the incredible wonder of God taking upon Himself *“the form of a servant and being born in the likeness of men”* as Paul went on to say in verse 7.
- What did he do? Think about the all of the mighty and miraculous works that he did. As he told the messengers from John the Baptist, *“the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good news preached to them.”* Matthew 11:5.
- What did he do? Well, as Paul put it in 2 Corinthians 5:21, he who knew no sin, was made sin for our sake; that is he became the sacrifice for our sins. Just as the Jews were to take a lamb that was without spot or blemish, so Christ, who was without any sin, died in our stead.

- What did He do? He literally took our punishment. As the prophet Isaiah had foretold more than six hundred years before, *“But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his stripes we are healed.”* (Isaiah 53:5) **Verse 6** goes on to say, *“and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.”*

We gather to remember the death of our Savior, the Son of God. That’s what Paul said we do when we gather around the Lord’s table. **1 Corinthians 11:26** says, *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.”* By regularly partaking of this feast, as God intended for us to partake of it, Christians are keeping the memory of Christ’s death alive. We may be pressed and harassed, we may be sin-weary, and challenged in every way, but we will not let the memory of Christ’s sacrifice be lost. We will keep the fire going! Until, as Paul says, *“until he comes.”*

And that’s the third thing we gather to remember. We remember who He is, we remember what He did, and we remember what he is still going to do. That third day, that Lord’s Day morning, when the women went out to his tomb with the intention of giving his body a more proper burial, they were concerned with just how they were going to actually get into the tomb, since a very large stone had been rolled into the entrance. But when they arrived, they saw that the stone was already rolled away. They went in and found the tomb empty. They were told by one that at first they thought was a gardener; that He had arisen from the dead. Later the risen Christ appeared to some of them and later to the various apostles, and finally to all of the apostles.

And Luke tells us that for the next 40 days, Jesus spent time with his disciples teaching them and helping them to understand all that the OT prophets had said about him. And then the time came for him to return to the place from which he had come. He returned to heaven to be with God the Father and to sit at His right hand. But before he left, he told them that he would come again, so that he could take them to be with him.

And so now, for some two thousand years, Christians have been keeping an eye on the sky, so to speak, looking for that cloud unlike any other cloud ever seen, waiting for that trumpet sound, so loud that the dead will be awakened. We are waiting for the sound of Jesus’ voice once more, as he calls His people to rise to join him in the air. That’s what we gather to remember, that soon and very soon, we are going to see the Lord.

These are some of the things we remember as we gather around the Lord’s table, not just today, when it is as some call it, Easter Sunday, but every Lord’s Day. We gather...to remember. Let’s do that as we now enter into that time.

“See how the patient Jesus stands,
Insulted in his lowest case!
Sinners have bound the Almighty’s hands,
And spit in their Creator’s face.

With thorns his temples gor’d and gash’d
Send streams of blood from every part;
His back’s with knotted scourges lash’d.
But sharper scourges tear his heart.”