

This Is My Body. This Is My Blood.

The eating of the passover lamb brought to an end the passover feast and it was now that the Lord Jesus instituted a new feast of remembrance, the service we call 'Communion' or 'The Lord's Supper'. This ending of one and beginning of the other is important. Christ is the passover sacrificed for us, and as we have seen, the passover lamb was a type of Christ. Christ being the fulness of that shadow and the fulfilling end of that type, the passover feast had its accomplishment in Him and being finished is brought to its end for all time.

'Take, eat ...'

Now a new feast of remembrance is instituted to be observed by the Lord's people and designed to draw our thoughts often to the Saviour's suffering and sacrifice on our behalf and for our redemption. We are told Jesus first took bread, then blessed it, then break it, and finally distributed it to His disciples, telling them, 'Take, eat: this is my body'. Afterwards he did the same with a cup of wine, called 'the fruit of the vine', telling them, 'This is my blood'.

Christ's body and blood

The breaking of the bread is for us a representation of the broken body of the Lord Jesus; broken on the cross where He was bruised, wounded and crushed under the weight of our sin. Taking the bread from the Saviour's hand and eating it symbolises taking and receiving Christ in His death by the hand of faith, and feeding on Him spiritually, and our union with Him. The wine represents the blood of the Lord Jesus shed on the cross when His hands, feet and side were pierced. Drinking the wine symbolises receiving the blood of Christ for forgiveness of sin, remission of sin, and cleansing of conscience.

United with Christ in His death

These two emblems, bread and wine, are symbols of Jesus' broken body and shed blood. We note that in the Lord's appointment of this ordinance He conveys the spiritual significance of His body being broken and His blood being shed. The Lord's suffering and death lies at the heart of our union and communion with Him. The blessings obtained for God's elect are, first, reconciliation with God in and through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all; and second, all the blessings of the everlasting covenant secured by His blood, therefore called 'the new testament in my blood'. All our blessings are founded on Christ's death.

Personal and particular

Luke and Paul emphasise the personal nature of the blessings accruing from the Lord's death with His words, 'this is my body given for you'. Yet we note, too, that the Lord specifically speaks of His blood being 'shed for many'. The 'many' for whom Christ's blood is shed are all the elect of God, in every age, who were ordained to everlasting life in God's eternal councils, given to Christ in covenant agreement, and justified by Him upon the merits of His death and resurrection. These are also the many sons He will bring to glory having procured their forgiveness, honoured God's justice and made satisfaction to the law for all their transgressions.

Anticipating glory

Finally, in our verses the Lord tells His disciples that He 'will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God'. Within the coming hours the Lord would be arrested, tried and delivered to Pilate to be crucified. His death was imminent and this feast was the final occasion of rest, ease and celebration with His friends. However, for their encouragement, and ours, the Lord tells them that a time is coming when He and His people will commune together in eternal rest, ease and celebration, never to be disturbed, in the new heaven and new earth where God reigns.

A gracious reminder

The importance of the Lord's Supper for Christ's church and people is to bring our minds back regularly and frequently to the suffering and death of our Saviour. In fulfilling the types and symbols of the old dispensation our Saviour left us with an ordinance for solemn reflection upon His willing sacrifice, and heartfelt gratitude for His substitutionary atonement. It is a feast to be treasured and enjoyed until He comes again, and must not be neglected.

Amen

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