

You have probably heard me say this before – that if there is one time when Christians should gather and celebrate the Lord’s Supper, it is on what we know as Maundy Thursday, which some call Holy Thursday.

We call it Maundy Thursday, because it comes from the Latin word *mandatum* which means to command. It is the night that we remember the command of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ to celebrate the Lord’s Supper, also called Holy Communion or simply the Eucharist – which means thanksgiving – until he comes again. It is a command from our Savior.

Our Savior’s institution of the Lord’s Supper as he celebrated the Passover with his disciples is something that is recorded in all four gospels. As we read in Matthew 26:26-28: *“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”*

The Gospel of Mark records it this way: Mark 14:22-25: *“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take, eat; this is My body.” Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.”*

The record in Luke is similar. And in John we just have recorded his celebration of the Passover with his disciples. As I have said before, all the Gospels compliment and complete one another, to give us a fuller picture.

Now, turn with me to our Epistle lesson from this evening – 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, which I would like to read again. (READ). For a few minutes I’d like to look at the Apostle Paul’s summary of the institution of the Lord’s Supper.

The first thing that we see is that Paul received his information directly from the Lord Jesus himself. *“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you ...”* Remember, Paul was a young man who was not an eyewitness to the life and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He had been called by Christ himself on the Damascus road as he was on his way to persecute Christians – to arrest them and put them in jail. It was here on the Damascus road that the Lord Jesus commissioned him as the Apostle to the Gentiles.

We can safely say that the Lord Jesus revealed to the Apostle Paul exactly what happened at that Passover meal with his disciples when Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper. Paul tells us that he received it from the Lord and now he is delivering it to the Christians at Corinth who were not conducting themselves in a worthy manner when celebrating the Lord’s Supper.

It is not our purpose to look at what they were doing – simply to note that Paul was addressing a problem in the Corinthian church, especially as it relates to the Lord’s Supper, and so he is delivering to them exactly what they should be doing – and in doing so tells them exactly what happened that night.

He then, importantly, sets the timing of the event – “*that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed ...*” This was clearly the last night of our Savior’s life. Soon he would leave the Passover meal, go the Garden of Gethsamane where he would be betrayed by Judas – one of his chosen disciples – and then be arrested, tried and crucified.

Remember, that Jesus had told his disciples many times that he was going to Jerusalem to die for the sins of those who believe in him. All that he has told them over the past three years was about to be fulfilled. And one of his last acts was to institute what we know as the Lord’s Supper.

Also, it is important to note, that it was in the context of the Passover meal. This was something that the Jews had celebrated on and off for over 1,000 years, and they are still celebrating it today.

The Passover meal commemorated their deliverance from Egypt, when the Angel of the Lord “Passed over” and those houses that did not have the blood of the sacrificed lamb on the door post had their first-born die.

Again, as we compare Scripture with Scripture, we know that this foreshadowed the blood of the true lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ who shed his blood for us and our salvation. And all of this, while ordained and planned in the council of the Trinity was now being fulfilled in time on the last night of our Savior’s earthly life.

We then see that the Apostle Paul described the two elements involved – bread and wine. “*that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”*”

Again, we see a few important things for us to consider. First, our Savior took two everyday elements – bread and wine – and set them apart for special use. When I prepare to serve you the bread and wine – I set them apart for special use. The term that we use is called “consecration” – which simply means to set apart.

This is why we finish the elements that are leftover after everyone has partaken of the Lord’s Supper – because they indeed have been set apart.

Second, we see that these two common elements – bread and wine – represent his body and blood. As Protestant Christians we believe that there is a spiritual presence of Christ in the elements – again, that is why we just don’t throw them away when we are finished.

Note what Paul says about the bread: *this is My body which is broken for you*. Our Savior went through one of the most excruciating deaths ever devised by the sinful mind of man. He was beaten to within an inch of his life, he was nailed to a cross and he basically suffocated under his own weight ... *this is My body which is broken for you*.

And then about the blood: *This cup is the new covenant in My blood*. We know, again, as we compare Scripture with Scripture – that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. We believe, without apology, that we have our salvation in our faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

Again, we have to compare Scripture with Scripture. We know that under the Old Covenant, the people of God were forgiven their sins through a series of sacrifices that God had ordained. But we also know that these

sacrifices also looked to the one final and perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ – where his body was broken and his blood was shed. This is the New Covenant, and it was sealed with his own blood.

As Paul continues – he reiterates the words of the Lord Jesus Christ with both the bread and wine – *do this in remembrance of Me... This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.*”

There a lot of churches that do not have weekly communion. The church that I grew up in had it eight times a year – how they got that number, I don’t know. Some have Holy Communion only a few times a year. Many REC churches, along with others have it once a month.

But the important part of why we celebrate it weekly and on special occasions like tonight is that we are reminded again, and again, and again of what it took to secure our salvation. It took the broken body and the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ – *do this in remembrance of Me... This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.*

I believe that as sinful human beings we need to be reminded of this again and again. I don’t think we can be reminded of too much – and that is one of the reasons we have weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper.

There is, however, one other important thing that our celebration of the Lord’s Supper does and it is the concluding words of the Apostle Paul – a commentary by him, if you will: *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”*

Again, two more important facts. Every time we celebrate the Lord’s Supper: *“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.”*

The essence of the Gospel is the Christ died for our sins. As we have seen in our study of 1 Timothy 1:15: *“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ...”* Later on in this same letter to the Christians at Corinth, he says: 1 Corinthians 15:3-4: *“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures,”* Again, his body was broken and his blood was shed for us and our salvation.

And, there is one other important aspect of our celebration – *you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.* This is the blessed hope that we all look forward to – the glorious reappearing of our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We confess it each week in our Creeds – he is coming again – and he is coming in glory, majesty and victory, not as a suffering servant as he did the first time. He is coming – *“And he shall come again with glory to judge both the quick and the dead”* as we confess each week.

So this what we see in that which we celebrate each week – The Lord’s Supper – and the reason that we do it. We do it in remembrance of what Christ has done for us and our salvation – and it reminds us that he is indeed coming again in glory. Praise be to God.