

## “THE NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD”

Luke 22:1–38

Key Verse: 22:20

“And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, ‘This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’”

Are you absolutely sure about anything? In this postmodern world, relativism is rampant. We’re taught to question authority and to second-guess everything and everyone. People aren’t sure about much of anything anymore, not even reality itself. But in today’s passage, we learn about a covenant Jesus made that we can be *absolutely sure of*. The event in today’s passage is called “the Last Supper” or “the Lord’s Supper.” It was a Passover meal, but Jesus transformed it into something new. In fact, he shows that this meal was just a shadow of what he came to do. In this study we want to learn about the new covenant in his blood, and how and why each one of us needs to enter into this sure covenant with Jesus. May God speak to us through his word.

Luke begins by showing that it’s not the people, but the religious leaders (1–2), along with Satan’s work in Judas (3–6), that lead to the death of Jesus. Still, it’s hard to understand. After all the miracles and grace Jesus has shown, how could one of his own *betray* him? Betrayal is always deeply hurtful.<sup>1</sup> Outwardly, Judas is among the Twelve. But he has a different idea about what the Messiah should do, and Jesus isn’t doing it. Still, the wickedness of the treachery of Judas is unimaginable. Luke explains it simply: “Satan entered into” him. It’s not just an explanation; it’s a warning. Satan can still get a hold of anyone who doesn’t truly accept what Jesus came to give us.

It looks like the religious leaders, Satan and Judas are dictating events. But really, it’s God working out his own divine will. Read verse 7 (ESV). In Greek, “had to” is the same as the word “must” Luke has repeatedly used to describe Jesus.<sup>2</sup> At this annual Passover Feast, it’s no accident. It must happen. It’s God’s will that Jesus be sacrificed as the Passover lamb (1 Cor.5:7b).<sup>3</sup> Luke depicts Jesus as being in control of everything. Look at verse 8. Only Luke tells us that it’s Peter and John who get sent to prepare the Passover meal. It was more preparation than we might imagine. First, a

---

<sup>1</sup> This strong word “betray” is repeated in this chapter five times. The Greek root is translated as “deliver” in this same sense in Luke another eight times (9:44; 18:32; 20:20; 21:12,16; 23:25; 24:7,20) and several more times in Acts (3:13; 8:3; 12:4; 21:11; 22:4; 28:17). Betrayal always accompanies following Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> 2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 19:5; 22:37; 24:7,44.

<sup>3</sup> “Passover” is repeated in this passage six times (1,7,8,11,13,15).

lamb had to be purchased. Then, it had to be taken to the Jerusalem temple. There, people had to stand in one of three long lines and wait their turn. A priest would slit the animal's neck, remove its entrails, then pass it down a long line of priests where all the lamb's blood would be poured out. A final priest would offer the lamb at the altar and return it to those who brought it. Then at home, the lamb would be cooked for hours, while herbs, bread and wine would also be prepared for the evening meal.

Look at verse 9. Peter and John don't mind the menial work, but they are well aware that their team has no place to stay in Jerusalem, no room to cook in, no table or utensils, and that reserving such a room would be costly. How does Jesus respond? Look at verses 10–12. It reminds us of a rendezvous of spies in a clandestine operation. Either Jesus knows that this particular house master will be willing to give them his upper room, or Jesus has worked out the details with him in advance. In any case, Jesus is keeping this location super secret. He doesn't want anyone, not even the Twelve, to know where it is. Why? He's got something of utmost importance he wants to share with them there, and he wants no interruptions. Just like the incident with the donkey, the two disciples go and find it just as Jesus tells them (13). It's further training, not only to trust and obey him, and serve others, but also to live with the faith that Jesus is Lord.

Read verse 14. Luke again shows how Jesus is fully in charge of what's happening. Luke also refers to the disciples as "apostles." It points to how Jesus is about to send them out with his gospel message. These men still haven't fully grasped what he's about. In fact, they're all too weak in themselves to follow him. But Jesus has faith that God will change them and make them his "apostles," his "sent ones," his witnesses (24:48). His discipleship was fruitful not due to clever methods, but because of his faith in God and fully dedicated teaching.

Read verse 15. The words "earnestly desired" is an idiom<sup>4</sup> showing how passionate Jesus is about this. He's been waiting for a long time for this moment (cf. 12:50). He repeatedly told his disciples how he would suffer (9:22,44; 17:25; 18:31–33). Now, he finally has the chance to explain what it means. Read verse 16. He says this meal they're about to eat is going to be "fulfilled in the kingdom of God."<sup>5</sup> Eating this last meal with them isn't sorrowful; it expresses his faith in the future kingdom.<sup>6</sup> Likewise, each time we take communion, we're not just looking back; we're proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor.11:26).

---

<sup>4</sup> In Greek, it's literally "with desire I have desired."

<sup>5</sup> See verse 30; 14:15; Rev.19:9; cf. Isa.25:6–9. Also, the word "fulfilled" is repeated in this passage three times (16,37); Jesus uses it elsewhere another four times (4:21; 21:22,24; 24:44).

<sup>6</sup> Jesus mentions this "kingdom" in this passage four times (16,18,29,30).

Look at verses 17–18. Jesus repeats that drinking the cup looks forward to the kingdom coming. For those who followed him in this life, despite all the trials, it'll be the greatest heavenly toast of all time. But for now, it's a time of suffering. Read verse 17. Notice how it's one cup, and Jesus wants each one to drink from it. This one shared cup represents the cup of suffering Jesus himself is about to drink (42). Having each one drink from it isn't just a ritual; it points to how each one there will "participate" in, share in, have fellowship in Christ's sufferings (1 Cor.10:16–17; 1 Pet.4:13). It's "the fellowship of sharing his sufferings, becoming like him in his death" (Phil.3:10, NIV). And it's how they, and we, truly become one. Also, through sharing the cup, we share our one living hope: the coming of our Lord Jesus and his kingdom.<sup>7</sup> We tend to gravitate to our own kind. But race, ethnicity, culture, or life stage don't really make us one. Only a gospel-centered fellowship, sharing Christ's sufferings and our hope in him, can make us one.

Read verse 19. Here Jesus finally explains what his upcoming death means. He will be giving his own body for us. It's not an abstract idea to ponder. He wants us to receive his body given for us: to eat it, digest it, like eating a piece of bread. It's something no one else can do for us. Each person needs to accept personally what our Lord Jesus has done for us.

He adds, "*Do this in remembrance of me*" (cf. 1 Cor.11:24). Until now, the people were to eat the Passover to remember how God saved them from bondage in Egypt. Jesus now says to use this meal to remember how he gave himself for us. The phrase "in remembrance of me" means it's easy to forget. When we forget what Jesus has done for us, we start getting into all kinds of spiritual trouble. We don't need to wait for a communion service or Easter retreat. I can remember what Jesus has done for me every day, in my personal devotions, and throughout the day. To remember the overflowing grace of Jesus in his life, Apostle Paul wrote down all his past sinfulness, then wrote: "The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost" (1 Tim.1:13–15). Like Paul, it's good to write it all down and remember the grace of Jesus personally.

Read verse 20. "And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.'"<sup>8</sup> This is probably his most important explanation about his suffering. The words "new covenant" especially stand out. A covenant is more than a contract or promise; it's a most solemn commitment. To understand this "new covenant," let's briefly review the old one. God gave his people the Passover covenant while they were slaves in Egypt. It was their last chance to get

---

<sup>7</sup> Eph.4:4; Tit.2:13; 1 Pet.1:3–4,13.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Matt.26:28; Mark 14:24; 1 Cor.11:25.

out of there. God said he would send the angel of death throughout the land to strike down the firstborn of every human and animal. It was God's tenth and final plague on all the gods of Egypt. This plague was on both the Egyptians and the Israelites. The only way to escape the angel of death was to sacrifice a lamb and put its blood on the doorframe of one's house. When the angel of death saw the blood, it would "pass over" that house. For this covenant to work, the people needed faith in God's promise of the blood of the lamb. Later, God brought them to Mount Sinai and had Moses read his Book of the Covenant to them; they promised to obey God's words, and Moses sealed the covenant with them in blood (Ex.24:8; Heb.9:18–20).

This first covenant foreshadows Jesus, our Passover Lamb. At this Passover, he's about to pour out his own blood to make this new covenant with us. Like the first one, it's a covenant in blood, and it sets us free from all captivity and oppression (4:18–19). It's a covenant that makes us God's own, and a covenant of faith. But this new covenant is also radically different. Israel's main story is how they broke that first covenant. Though God was so kind and loving, they rebelled and disobeyed him over and over again. But, through his prophet Jeremiah, God promised to make a "new covenant" with his people. God initiated this commitment. This covenant would be written not on stone tablets, but on people's hearts. People's sinful hearts would be changed. They would truly know God and love him. Most of all, they would experience forgiveness.<sup>9</sup> This new covenant is for anyone who accepts it, Jew or Gentile (Gal.3:27–28).

Jesus is the mediator of this new covenant (Heb.7:22; 9:15). What's more, the new covenant in his blood is better than the old one and makes it obsolete (Heb.8:6–7,13). The new covenant in his blood is based not on works of the law but on God's abundant grace, given to us by God as a gift.<sup>10</sup> The blood of Jesus, shed "once for all,"<sup>11</sup> is our only ticket out of our slavery to sin. Nothing and no one else can do that for us. The new covenant in his blood saves us from God's judgment and wrath: not our good deeds, not our best efforts, not even all our sincerity—only his shed blood (Rom.5:9). "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace..." (Eph.1:7). His blood ransoms us for God (Rev.5:9) and cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). His blood purifies our conscience from all kinds of dead legalism (Heb.9:14). His blood brings us near to God, assures us of God's forgiveness, and gives us peace with God.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>9</sup> Jer.31:31–34; Luke 1:77; Heb.8:8–12.

<sup>10</sup> Rom.3:24,28; 4:16; 5:2,15,17,20; 11:6.

<sup>11</sup> Heb.7:27; 9:12,26; 10:10.

<sup>12</sup> Eph.2:13; Heb.10:19; Rom.5:1.

At the heart of this new covenant is God's forgiveness. Luke emphasizes the forgiveness only Jesus brings.<sup>13</sup> We need to repent to receive it, but we can't just "repent ourselves into" it. For God's justice to be satisfied, our forgiveness can come only through the sinless blood of Jesus.<sup>14</sup> God forgives anyone who receives his blood by faith (Rom.3:25a). So we need to accept his blood shed for our sin. When we do, we enter into a personal blood covenant with him, sealed with the Holy Spirit.<sup>15</sup> And accepting his blood unites us, because we acknowledge that we're all the same sinners, desperately in need of his shed blood: no one is greater or lesser. This blood covenant with Jesus helps us grow in his grace of forgiveness as gracious, forgiving people.

Elsewhere, the Bible describes this new covenant in his blood as holy, unshakeable and eternal.<sup>16</sup> Wow! In fact, it's the only thing we can fully rely on. When it's time to enter heaven, contrary to popular opinion, the only thing God will be looking at is whether or not we received the shed blood of Jesus by faith.

In verses 21–22 Jesus gives a dire warning to Judas, knowing already that he's about to betray him. It's out of his shepherd's heart, to somehow help him repent before it's too late. Then, in verses 23–24 the disciples' conversation devolves from questions about who would betray Jesus to a dispute about which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. Though he's about to give his own body and blood and earnestly wants them to understand it, Jesus still teaches them patiently. They need to be different from worldly rulers, and instead, learn the true greatness of his own humble servanthip (25–27). Despite their current condition, Jesus shares his respect for them, and his faith and hope to assign them positions of glory in his kingdom (28–30). He then turns to Simon Peter. Jesus knows how his disciples are all self-reliant, and how Satan is seeking to destroy the faith of them all. But he shares what he's prayed for Peter, that his faith would not fail, and that after turning away and coming back, he would strengthen the others (31–32). God would indeed answer this prayer. For now, Peter says he's ready to go with Jesus to prison and to death. But in order to help him know himself, Jesus predicts that he'll deny three times that he knows him (33–34). Finally, Jesus prepares his disciples for the time of persecution they're about to face. But they misunderstand that they need to get ready for a human fight (35–36,38). Jesus knows that in all these things God's word about him being treated as a transgressor is going to be fulfilled (37).

In our culture it's popular to be our own person, self-reliant, not obligated to anyone. But does it give anyone absolute assurance? No, real assurance doesn't come

---

<sup>13</sup> 1:77; 3:3; 5:20–24; 6:37; 7:47–48; 11:4; 17:3–4; 23:34; 24:47; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 10:43; 13:38; 26:18.

<sup>14</sup> Lev.17:11; Heb.9:22b; 7:26.

<sup>15</sup> 2 Cor.1:22; 5:5; Eph.1:13–14; 4:30.

<sup>16</sup> Heb.10:29; 12:27–28; 13:20.

from our superiority, loyalty or cleverness, nor does it come from any person we try to depend on. Nothing in this world, nothing any human can do, can give us real assurance. Read verse 20 again. This Easter, may God help us personally accept the new covenant in the blood of Jesus, which gives deep assurance of God's forgiveness, peace with God, and living hope in heaven.