

# **Maundy Thursday**

## **The Superiority of the New Covenant**

*Luke 22:20; Jeremiah 31:31-34*

**Rev. Freddy Fritz**

March 24, 2016

# The Superiority of the New Covenant

## Scripture

Jesus' final meal was with his twelve apostles on Thursday night. Jesus earnestly desired to eat the last Passover meal with his disciples, and then institute the first Lord's Supper with them.

There were several stages in the Passover meal, which was spread out over a period of hours and interspersed with conversation. The meal opened with a prayer thanking God for his preservation, deliverance, protection, goodness, and blessing. Next came the first of four cups of diluted red wine, known as the cup of blessing. That was followed by a ceremonial washing of the hands, symbolizing the need for cleansing from sin. It was most likely at this point that the disciples began arguing among themselves about who was the greatest (Luke 22:24). In response, Jesus washed their feet (John 13:3-5) and instructed them concerning humility. The next element was the eating of bitter herbs, dipped along with pieces of bread into a paste made from fruit and nuts. That act symbolized the bitterness of Israel's slavery in Egypt. Then they sang Psalms 113 and 114, the first two of the Hallel Psalms (113-118), after which they drank the second cup of wine. After that the father of the family, or as in this case Jesus as the head of the table, explained the meaning of Passover. Then came the main meal, consisting of the roasted sacrificial lamb and unleavened bread, after which they drank the third cup of wine. The ceremony closed with the singing of the remainder of the Hallel Psalms (115-118), and the drinking of the fourth cup of wine.<sup>1</sup>

It was during the Passover meal that Jesus instituted the

---

<sup>1</sup> MacArthur, John F (2014-10-01). Luke 18-24 MacArthur New Testament Commentary (MacArthur New Testament Commentary Series) (p. 280). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

Lord's Supper. When they came to the main course of the meal, consisting of the sacrificial lamb and the bread, Jesus referred to the bread as his body, which was given for them. And then they drank the third cup of wine, which Jesus referred to as the cup that was poured out for them and is the new covenant in his blood.

This evening I would like to focus attention on the meaning of the cup that is the new covenant in his blood.

Let me read about the institution of the Lord's Supper in Luke 22:14-23, although our focus this evening is Luke 22:20:

<sup>14</sup> And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup> And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." <sup>20</sup> **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>21</sup> But behold, the hand of him who betrays me is with me on the table. <sup>22</sup> For the Son of Man goes as it has been determined, but woe to that man by whom he is betrayed!" <sup>23</sup> And they began to question one another, which of them it could be who was going to do this. (Luke 22:14-23)

## Introduction

A Passover meal lasted several hours. Jesus instituted the first act of the Lord's Supper when he referred to the bread, which was part of the main course of the meal, as his body, which was given for us. After a significant amount of time, Luke records that **likewise** Jesus took **the cup after they had eaten**, and said, "**This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood**" (22:20). By calling the cup of wine "**the new covenant in my blood**," Jesus was intentionally contrasting his upcoming sac-

rificial death with the blood sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

Commentator Kent Hughes helps us understand the significance of the Old Covenant. After the people of God left Egypt and were on their way to the Promised Land, God gave them a Covenant, that is, a promise that he would be their God and they would be his people. He gave them the Ten Commandments (in Exodus 19 and 20), and further regulations about how they were to live as his people (in Exodus 20:18-23:33).

The Covenant was confirmed in Exodus 24. After the Covenant was read to the people of God, they all “answered with one voice and said, ‘All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do.’ And Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord” (24:3-4). Verses 5-8 says:

<sup>5</sup> And he [i.e. Moses] sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord. <sup>6</sup> And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. <sup>7</sup> Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.” <sup>8</sup> And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

Exodus 24 teaches that half of the blood was thrown against the altar, and the other half of the blood was thrown on the people. There was blood everywhere. What did it mean?

The Old Covenant was inaugurated with a massive amount of blood for two reasons. First, the blood emphasized the seriousness of sin. And second, the blood emphasized that the payment for sin is death. But, the weakness of the Old Covenant was that it depended upon man’s promise of obedience to the Law of God. All the people promised, “All the words that the Lord has spoken we will do” (24:3), and again, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient” (24:7). But they could not obey – not even for a single day. That is why blood sacrifices were required

daily, as people continually were reminded of the utter inadequacy of their obedience in the Old Covenant.

So we come to the institution of the New Covenant. Jesus instituted the New Covenant at that first Lord's Supper. By doing so he asserted that he did what all the people of God in the Old Covenant could not do, namely, that he was able to keep perfectly the terms of the covenant. He completely obeyed God and the New Covenant is totally dependent upon Jesus fulfilling the terms of the Covenant. Our salvation no longer depends upon the continually sacrificed blood of the Old Covenant but on the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus' blood, which is "poured out for you."<sup>2</sup>

### Lesson

The New Covenant inaugurated by Jesus on that Thursday night in Jerusalem was foretold in Jeremiah 31:31–34:

<sup>31</sup> "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. <sup>33</sup> For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup> And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Kent Hughes suggests that the New Covenant inaugurated by Jesus is superior to the Old Covenant in four ways.<sup>3</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 318–319.

<sup>3</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, 319–321.

## **I. The New Covenant Gives a Superior Heart (31:33a)**

First, the New Covenant gives a superior heart.

God says in Jeremiah 31:33a, “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.” The problem with the Old Covenant was that it was external. Its laws were written on stone (Exodus 32:15, 16). They provided no internal power to obey them. To be sure, there was great benefit in memorizing God’s Word. But the writing of the law on the heart was beyond human power. Something far more radical was needed – a spiritual heart operation.

And that is what God does for us in the New Covenant. God says in Ezekiel 36:26, “And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.” The Spirit regenerates us, he gives us a new heart, and God’s law is no longer external but internal (cf. John 14:15–17; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

## **II. The New Covenant Gives a Superior Relationship (31:33b)**

Second, the New Covenant gives a superior relationship.

God says in Jeremiah 31:33b, “And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” The Old Testament echoes this repeatedly, though it was only fulfilled in a remnant.

But this is perfectly fulfilled in all who partake of the New Covenant, through which believers actually become God’s possession and possess God. “I will be their God” means he gives himself to us. And “they will be my people” means he takes us to himself!

## **III. The New Covenant Gives a Superior Knowledge (31:34a)**

Third, the New Covenant gives a superior knowledge.

God says in Jeremiah 31:34a, “And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest.” The Old Covenant was corporately entered into by a nation, including many who did not know God personally.

But those who experience the New Covenant are born into a relationship with God that results in faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus defined eternal life by saying, “And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent” (John 17:3). Those who are partakers of the New Covenant all know God, “from the least of them to the greatest.” No one needs to say, “Know the Lord” to such persons, though at the same time this is a command and an invitation to a lost world.

#### **IV. The New Covenant Gives a Superior Forgiveness (31:34b)**

And finally, the New Covenant gives a superior forgiveness.

God says in Jeremiah 31:34b, “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” This is precisely what the Old Covenant could not do. Under the Old Covenant, sins were never completely forgiven because they were never truly forgotten. They were covered, awaiting and pointing to the true forgiveness through Christ’s death.

The New Covenant brings total and complete forgiveness!

### **Conclusion**

The New Covenant gives us a superior heart, relationship, knowledge, and forgiveness.

So, let us remember that when we come to the Lord’s Supper. Jesus instituted a superior covenant by his once-for-all sacrificial death on the cross. His body that was given and his blood that was shed gave us a New Covenant of salvation that is superior – and eternal. Amen.





# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and **membership** in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike **maturity**,  
equip them for their **ministry** in the church  
and life **mission** in the world,  
in order to **magnify** God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/Sermons)
2. [www.sermoncentral.com/contributor\\_profile.asp?ContributorID=11181](http://www.sermoncentral.com/contributor_profile.asp?ContributorID=11181)
3. [www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?SpeakerOnly=true&currSection=sermonsspeaker&keyword=Freddy%5EFritz](http://www.sermonaudio.com/search.asp?SpeakerOnly=true&currSection=sermonsspeaker&keyword=Freddy%5EFritz)

Please give your input and leave your feedback at websites 2 and 3 when requested to do so. This helps with evaluation and planning of sermons.

## Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

*Answers for Life!*

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: [Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org](mailto:Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

Web site: [www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org](http://www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org)