



## Being a Covenant Church for the Glory of God, Part 3

*Series: The Sign of the New Covenant*

Matthew 26:26-29

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Over the last couple of weeks, we have been talking a great deal about covenant, and especially about the New Covenant in Christ's blood that creates His church, a new people, a forgiven people who have had their sins forever atoned for by the sacrifice of Jesus and who have been delivered from the wrath of God, a people who are born from above and given the Holy Spirit, a changed people, a people who trust and believe God, who desire to be obedient to God, who want to love God with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, and who want to love their neighbors as themselves.

And we have talked about how the covenant that we have with God, through Christ, should lead us to live in covenant with one another as the church. WSBC can only exist in a meaningful way by means of a covenant commitment by all of us to believe in and trust Christ as Savior and Lord, to worship God, to love each other in gospel ways, and to make Christ known in this world – TOGETHER – as a specific church that testifies to the existence of the invisible church and the eternal church to come.

And so this morning we are going to come full circle. We are going to share this morning in the covenant signs and promises that make us the people of God, here, together. We are going to look at the sign of the New Covenant that Jesus made with the disciples and with us in the Lord's Supper and share in that sign together and then we are going to affirm together our church covenant. Let's think first about the significance of the

**The Setting for the New Covenant** The setting for the giving of the sign of the New Covenant was a meal that was a sign of the Old Covenant – Passover. Passover was one of, if not the most important religious celebrations in the nation of Israel. And here's why. Passover was at the heart of the Jewish identity. The Passover defined who Israel was and

established them as God's chosen nation, as God's people. Passover was an annual celebration of God's deliverance of the Hebrews from the tyranny of enslavement to Pharaoh and the formation and identification of the nation of Israel as His covenant people. It was that night in which God brought His final judgment upon the nation of Egypt – the death of all of the firstborn in the nation. God had instructed the Israelites to sacrifice a lamb and to put its blood on the doorposts of their homes and when the angel of death descended upon Egypt, he would “pass over” every home where he saw the blood. It was as a result of this judgment that Pharaoh and Egypt let Israel go.

Each year, the nation of Israel would celebrate God saving them in this way. Through the sharing of a symbolism-laden meal, the faithfulness of God was recounted around the table. There were several important items involved in the Passover.

Of course, there was the lamb that they would have selected four days earlier, which had to be taken to the temple to be sacrificed by the priests between the hours of 3 and 5 pm and its blood poured out as a sacrifice, in remembrance of how God, seeing the blood of the lamb painted on the doorposts of their homes, passed over the houses of the Israelites when He brought the plague of the death upon the firstborn of Egypt. That lamb would be sacrificed and then prepared for the meal. There was the unleavened bread that was symbolic of the haste with which they left Egypt, the afflictions they endured there, and being unleavened, it was also a picture of the leaven of Egypt – the sin and the idolatry – which they were to leave behind. There was a bowl of saltwater set on the table to remind them of their tears shed in slavery and to remind them of the Red Sea which parted when the Lord delivered them. There was the mixture of bitter herbs that was a reminder of the bitterness of Egypt. There was a paste of apples and dates and pomegranates and nuts all crushed and smashed together and mixed with vinegar, called charoseth, into which they dipped the bitter herbs and the bread. It symbolized the mud that they used to make the bricks. Into that charoseth there would be put some sticks of cinnamon to remind them of the straw they used in the making of the bricks as well. And then there were the four cups of wine that would be drunk at different times throughout the meal. Every part of the meal was symbolic and was eaten with the story of the first Passover recited and explained to all present. Such was the symbolism of this meal – a sign, a remembrance of God's deliverance of the nation and making them His people.

And it was in the context of this meal, which He shared with the disciples, that Jesus gave to them the sign of the new covenant of eternal salvation, the new exodus, that He came to accomplish – the exodus of God’s people from the tyranny of sin, of Satan, from the spectre of God’s wrath against sin and the eternal judgment of Hell, all of which was only foreshadowed in the Passover, which would be accomplished by the mighty hand of God in the person of His Son, upon the cross – a far greater exodus of which Moses’ exodus was just a faint glimmer. How would this be accomplished? How would God save sinners for eternity? What did the Passover really look forward to? What did the system of sacrifices, that covered sin for a time, really look forward to? Here, in the backdrop of the Passover, Jesus would give to His disciples,

**The Lord’s Supper – The Sign of the New Covenant (26-29)** Matthew says, starting in verse 26: **“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:26–28, ESV)** Only two elements of the Passover meal are mentioned, only two are redefined and reinterpreted in light of the Christ’s coming death – the bread and the wine.

First He took the bread **and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”** In describing His body as the broken bread, Jesus is making unmistakably clear that He is to be violently killed. This breaking of the bread is significant. He is pointing to his death as the fulfillment of Isaiah 53. You know the words: **“But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned—every one—to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.” (Isaiah 53:5–6, ESV)** The wrath of God would fall upon Him in our place. In that sense He would be broken for us. When Jesus tells His disciples: **“Take, eat; this is my body.”** – He is saying, “This is what I am going to do for you. This bread is a symbol of the My body, My life, My all that I am going to give for you.” “Take what I am about to do for you as your own.”

Then He took the cup, the wine. He said to them: **“Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”** Jesus is making something else unmistakably clear – that the covenant that He was ratifying with His blood

would bring the thing that was most needed for His disciples and for all of us – the eternal forgiveness of sins. What the old covenant could only promise – through the blood of lambs, bulls and goats that covered sin for a time – the new covenant accomplished – eternal forgiveness and the transformation of the heart and soul. It would take the ultimate sacrifice of the Son of God to fully deal with sin for eternity and to give eternal peace with God, something the OT sacrifices only foreshadowed. It took the new covenant to save people for all of eternity.

Jeremiah wrote of it: **“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, 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. 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. 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.”** (Jeremiah 31:31–34, ESV) God promised a new covenant, one that would transform God’s people in a remarkable way – writing the Law upon their hearts, a deeply personal covenant in which all of His people would know Him intimately and which would, above all else, finally bring full and true and eternal forgiveness of sins.

But when Jeremiah predicted this new covenant, no blood was mentioned and that’s odd since all covenants were sealed by blood. And, on this night, with intense feeling, Jesus explains why. The new covenant would not be sealed with the blood of a lamb or of bulls or goats but with the very blood of the Son of God, with His own blood – **this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.** “When I pour out my blood, you will be forgiven,” Jesus says. And this covenant of new life, of salvation, of forgiveness of sins, of intimate fellowship with God would not be promised only to those who were ethnically of Jewish descent, but to the many – His elect – from every tribe, nation and tongue. Jesus would die for the many, not for the few. He dies for a multitude that no man could number. What He would do on the cross, would be to bring about the realization of the prophecy that Jeremiah had made 600 years before.

The Lord's Supper is different and better than the Passover meal. Some things are not repeated. For instance, there is bread and wine, but no lamb. Why? Because Jesus Christ, Himself, is the Lamb of God, the Passover Lamb, the sacrifice for His people. Why no charoseth or the bitter herbs that symbolized the bitterness and hardship? Because Christ has taken away the bitterness of our sin and bondage. Why no saltwater symbolic of the tears? Because the fruit of faith in Christ is joy.

Do you see it? Forgiveness could finally be fully given. Sin could be forever conquered. Communion with God fully accomplished. Real atonement made for His people finally and forever because Jesus would take upon His righteous head our sinfulness before God. By the blood Jesus, God would not just simply "pass over" our sins. In this new covenant in Christ's blood, they would be dealt with forever, paid for by Jesus Christ. What amazing love! That's the covenant of salvation God offers in Christ.

But with the the bread and the wine, Jesus is not only describing in visual terms the fullness of the reality of what He would and did accomplish on the cross but He is also -- this is important -- symbolically telling His disciples what they and any must do in order to receive the benefit of His sacrificial death -- take and eat, take and drink. He emphasizing that they must know and believe. Eating and drinking is symbolic language for faith. Just as food must be eaten and wine must be drunk for it to nourish our bodies, so must the truth of Christ's redemptive work be personally received to benefit our souls. What is faith but spiritual eating and drinking, receiving deep into your souls the truth of what Christ has done, staking your spiritual life and sustenance on the bread of His body broken and given for you, on the wine of His blood shed for you? He gave Himself for us, we must believe. This is the gospel! This is the covenant that Christ makes with us, to be our Lord and Savior and us to be His people.

This is the sign of the people of God. Jesus, with this meal, the symbol of His saving death on the cross, rendered the Passover obsolete, totally fulfilled in Him alone. That meal that once symbolized the creation and constituting of the people of God, the identity of the people of God as those delivered from the bondage of Egypt, was superseded by a new meal that signified the true composition of the people of God, of the church of Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper and what it represents -- the death of Christ for the forgiveness of His people's sins and the personal response of faith by the human heart to that truth --

symbolized by eating the bread and drinking the wine is what defines and constitutes the people of God today and forever.

And it comes with a great promise: ***“I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”*** (Matthew 26:29, ESV)

So certain is Jesus that His death would accomplish the salvation of His people so completely and perfectly that He stated as an unchallengeable fact that one day He would drink the wine of blessing with His disciples again in the consummation of His Father’s kingdom. He is confident of what His death will accomplish. This is the covenant of salvation that Jesus makes with us. I will be your God and you will be My people. I will die for your sins; you will die to yourself and to your sins. I will give you forgiveness and eternal life; you must repent and believe. I will give up my life and pour out my heart; you will give me your heart and soul.

There is no way of knowing what went through Jesus’ mind as He established the Lord’s Supper. I imagine it is mixture of so many things – intense love, intense agony, satisfaction, joy, determination, devotion and more. My mind fails to grasp it.

But I do know what we should be feeling and thinking when we take hold of the bread and the cup. **Love** – deep love for the One who has loved us unto death. **Thanks** – profound thanks that defies description for the atonement that Jesus made for us. **Wonder** – deep wonder that Christ could love sinners such as us in that way. **Acceptance** – a thorough acceptance in the beloved before God not because of what we have done but because of what He has done. **Devotion** – unflagging devotion and willing submission to our Lord who did not count His life to great a price to pay in order to save us and take us to Himself. **Faith** – faith that our sins have been dealt with once and for all. **Hope** – confident hope that we will see Jesus face to face and this meal that we celebrate right now will His spiritual presence will be consummated with His full and unhindered presence in a day to come for all of eternity. **Blessedness** – great blessedness that we have been given hearts to believe in Christ, to be made a part of the people of God and to have God as our Father and Christ as our Lord. **Worship** – a heart of praise to magnify and raise high the name of Christ.

In a moment, we are going to share together in the Lord's Supper, the sign of the covenant of salvation that we have in Christ and I want you to do so in a serious and understanding way. Don't just take the supper because everyone else around you is and you may feel out of place or embarrassed if you don't. I want you to think about what you are saying when you receive the bread and the cup. You are confessing that you a sinner who needs forgiveness, a sinner who needs a Savior. You are confessing that the only Savior for sinful man, for you, is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. You are confessing through your eating of the bread and drinking of the cup that you believe with all your soul in Christ, that you are taking Him as Savior and are surrendering to Him as your Lord and that you desire to be obedient to Christ and to love and serve Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. Can you with a clear conscience take this supper today, in faith, trusting in Christ? This is no small thing, no tack on to a church service, no empty ritual. How you take this supper – with honest faith or in hypocrisy – is the difference between spiritual life and condemnation. So consider deeply what this is going to mean for you this morning.

To you here today who are not yet believers in Christ, I can only say this: Do you need a Savior? Here He is—take Him...

If you are uncertain if you should take the Supper this morning or if you realize that you are not in covenant with God, through real faith in Christ today, I want you to come and talk to me or one of our elders right now. Don't put this off...

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If you received the Lord's Supper this morning, then through your participation in the signs of the New Covenant, you confessed and declared that you are in covenant with God, through faith in Jesus Christ. And as we have seen over the last couple of weeks, that covenant with God is meant to be lived out in covenant with other brothers and sisters in Christ in a loving, meaningful, real and honest way. It is meant to be lived out through a covenant commitment by all of us to believe in and trust Christ as Savior and Lord, to worship God, to love each other in gospel ways, and to make Christ known in this world – TOGETHER.

I want to invite you this morning to affirm or reaffirm our church covenant with me, with the other elders and with one another. I can't put into words how much I long for us to truly commit our hearts and lives to Christ and one another in this way. I don't know if I have ever wanted anything more than I do this. I know that we won't do this perfectly. I know that there will be bumps in the road... there always are. But how I long for us to make this commitment to one another and to the Lord. How I long for the promise of such a commitment. It is the midst of such a people, united in heart, united in covenant to God and to one another, that the blessing of God – real life, eternal life, satisfying life – flows to thirsty souls.

And I don't want you to do this out of obligation, but because you really desire to be a part of this kind of fellowship. I know we have guests with us today and it's too soon to ask you to make this sort of covenant. If you decide to pursue membership here, there will be opportunities for you to affirm this covenant in the future. But for those of us who are members or pursuing membership or are regular attenders -- if this is your church -- I am asking you to stand with me now and to affirm this covenant with me today. To confess and make these promises with a whole heart, not lightly but with sincerity. Will you do that? If you will, please stand with me and I am going to ask our elders to come and stand and face the body as we do this...

Having been brought by God's grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, we now, depending upon the Holy Spirit, establish this covenant with one another. In all we do, we will aim to glorify and enjoy the God of our salvation, from whom and through whom and to whom are all things: to Him be all glory forever! (1 Cor. 10:31; [Rom. 11:36](#))

We will eagerly maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace by walking together in love and in the Spirit and by putting away all bitterness, anger, and injurious speech. ([Eph. 4:3](#); [Gal. 5:16, 25](#); [Eph. 4:29, 31](#)) With humility and gentleness, patience and love, we will be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven us. ([Eph. 4:1-2](#); [Luke 17:3](#); [Col. 3:13](#); [1 Thess. 5:11](#); [1 Pet. 1:22](#)) We will carry each other's burdens, rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep. ([Gal. 6:2](#); [Rom. 12:15](#))

We will train our children in the instruction of the Lord, seeking to walk in a way that adorns the gospel of Christ before our family, friends, and neighbors ([Prov. 22:6](#); [Eph. 6:4](#); [1 Pet. 3:1](#)). We will strive to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age, as we wait for the blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ. ([Gal. 5:22-24](#); [Titus 2:12](#); [1 Pet. 1:14](#))

We will not neglect to gather together, but will support and treasure the biblical preaching of the whole counsel of God, the faithful observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and the loving exercise of church discipline. ([Heb. 10:25](#); [2 Tim. 4:2](#); [Acts 2:38](#); [1 Cor. 11:26](#); [Matt 18:17](#); [1 Cor. 5:13](#)) We will contribute cheerfully and generously to the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the advancement of the gospel both to our neighbors and the nations. ([Matt. 28:19](#); [Luke 12:33](#); [2 Cor. 9:7](#)) We will, when we move from this place, unite as soon as possible with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

In all these things, we rely on our God who has made a new and everlasting covenant with us, saying: "They shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. . . . I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. I will rejoice in doing them good . . . with all my heart and all my soul." ([Jer. 32:38-41](#))

We, the elders of WSBC, while living the above, also covenant with you that we will: lead the church as humble servants ([Acts 20:28](#); [Philippians 2:1-4](#)), appoint leaders that meet the biblical criteria ([1 Tim. 3:1-13](#); [Titus 1:5-9](#)), watch over your souls as men who will give an account ([Heb. 13:17](#)), equip you for the work of ministry ([Eph. 4:11-14](#)), administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, preach God's word ([1 Tim. 3:2](#), [4:11-13](#); [2 Tim 4:1-2](#), [Titus 1:9](#)), pray for you, and strive to be examples of faith that can be imitated for God's glory ([Heb. 13:7](#)).

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