

HELP IN UNDERSTANDING THE LORD'S SUPPER

Matthew 26:17-28 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Introduction: Why did the Lord choose bread and wine as symbols of what He wanted His Church to remember about Him? Why did the Lord choose that particular event or moment? To better understand why the Church has the Lord's Supper and why the use of the bread and wine, one can go back to the original purpose of the Passover Celebration that Jesus and His disciples were observing.

I. THE WINE:

1. There were a total of five cups of wine with four of them representing the four "*I wills*" of *Exodus 6:6-7*:
 - Cup number one (1): The Cup of Sanctification representing the first "*I will*" found in *Exodus 6:6*: "*I will bring you out from under the burden of the Egyptians...*" It was drunk at the very beginning of the meal.
 - Cup number two (2): The Cup of Judgment representing the second "*I will*" found in *Exodus 6:6*: "*I will rid you out of their bondage...*" and was drunk during the meal as they discussed the time of God's judgment on Egypt with 10 plagues.
 - Cup number three (3): The Cup of Redemption representing the third "*I will*" found in *Exodus 6:6*: "*I will redeem you with a stretched out arm...*" was blessed but put aside to be drunk toward the end of the meal.
 - Cup number four (4): The Cup of Praise (Celebration) representing the fourth "*I will*" found in *Exodus 6:7*: "*I will take you to me for a people...*" and was drunk at the end of the meal.
 - Cup number five (5): This cup was set aside for the Prophet Elijah, for it was said that Elijah would come someday at Passover to tell who the Messiah would be.

II. THE BREAD:

1. The bread was cooked quickly remembering that at the original passover there was no time for the bread to rise before the death angel came and then their freedom.
2. The bread had no leavening or yeast in it either as yeast or leavening represented sin and all household materials with yeast in them had to be removed before observing passover.
3. There was plenty of bread for the meal and at the Lord's time the bread was soft, much like tortillia bread of today. Today modern matza (bread) is thin and when baked it is hard with stripes and is pierced.

4. Three (3) pieces of bread were separated and blessed at the beginning of the meal.
 - The Top Piece represented God in Heaven.
 - The Bottom Piece represented humanity or people.
 - The Middle Piece represented the Mediating Priest, the one who was between God and mankind. It was wrapped in a piece of linen and hidden away until after the meal. It was called "akki-khomen."

III. WHAT JESUS DID THAT NIGHT (Matthew 26:26-27)

1. Toward the end of the meal Jesus picked up the middle piece of bread that had been hidden, unwrapped it from the linen, held it up, broke it into pieces and announced that the bread represented Him. Remembering what the bread, breaking of it, wrapping it in linen, hiding it away all represented (mediator between God and mankind). He then had each disciple take a piece of it thus identifying with Jesus, the "akki-khomen," God's appointed mediator.
2. Jesus then picked up the third (3) cup of wine (set aside) that represented God's Redemption and announced that the cup represented Him. It represented His blood that would be shed for the redemption of man just as the blood of the lambs was shed to redeem Israel at the passover of the death angel which brought about their freedom.

IV. BREAD AND WINE ALSO USED IN FRIENDSHIPS AND RECONCILIATIONS

1. Throughout the Bible bread and wine are referred to as being shared between friends in times of fellowship and signs of restored friendship (Abraham and Melchizedek).
 - *"The Lord preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies..."*
 - *"Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and dine with him and he with Me."*
 - Peter had denied the Lord three times. Later, Jesus appeared to Peter who had been fishing and invited him to come to shore and eat with Him. **Jesus had prepared a meal.** Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him for it was three times that Peter had denied ever knowing Jesus.

CONCLUSION:

1. The bread and wine served at the Lord's Supper is a reminder for today that Jesus is the mediator, the one who stands between almighty God and man. It was His blood that has made it possible for one to be redeemed, set free and to become a child of God. It is for each person to find that reconciliation with God and have fellowship with one another.
2. In observing the Lord's Supper, remember what each element represents.
 - The bread: the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus.
 - The wine: the shed blood of the innocent for the guilty, bringing redemption and salvation.
 - The reconciliation with the Heavenly Father and the fellowship with fellow Christians.