

# The Feast

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New Testament records of the good news about Jesus include some details about the Passover feast shared by Jesus and His disciples the night before He was sacrificed. During and after the meal, Jesus taught them, encouraged them, challenged them, warned them, washed their feet and sent Judas out to prompt the priests to begin the process of presenting Him as a sin Offering.

Some people call that gathering “the last supper.” Some call it “the Lord’s Supper.” That night, they were calling it “the feast of matzah,” the feast of unleavened bread. A modern version of the ancient matzah bread used for the meal is debatably either a matzo: a cracker-like, thin, flat bread (western Jews like it this way) or a softer, more pita-like bread (preferred by Yemenite or Iraqi Jews). To fulfill the requirement imposed by Yahweh on the menu, the bread simply could not contain yeast. The entire meal had to be made “in haste,” not patiently waiting for dough to rise (Exodus 12). This was their last meal before the sacrifice of the first born of every Egyptian household that did not have blood smeared over their doors. The next day the descendants of Jacob started their journey out of Egypt to the land Canaanites were living in.

Wine was a required part of the meal also. It is also a subject of modern debate, based on presence of alcohol in the beverage or not. This debate is raised by Believers who consider alcohol to be an intolerable evil that they suggest was never present in any grape juice Jesus drank.

Yahweh commanded His nation to celebrate the Passover Feast every year forever in Exodus 12:14. Jesus, while keeping it on the night He was betrayed into the hands of the rulers of Israel, instructed His disciples to receive the bread and wine portions of the meal as His body and His blood. He told them to eat the bread in remembrance of Him. Paul added a quote that none of the gospel writers did: that His followers should, as often as they drink, also use the cup of wine to remember Him (1 Corinthians 11:25). He picked out two parts of the menu to make reference toward Himself. He was the Lamb of God, Who would take away the sin of the world. He could have mentioned some use of lamb meat to remember Him by. He was the Man of sorrows, and the bitter herbs that were the required part of the meal given to remind the Jews of the bitter Egyptian lives Yahweh delivered them from could have spoken something of His character and sacrifice. His emphases were only the bread and the cup.

Most modern Jews who are inclined to keep a semblance of the Passover celebration are usually not too exacting in keeping all of the requirements. They exclude especially the inconvenience of killing a lamb or goat at sunset, roasting the entire animal (head, legs, and guts included) over a fire, and destroying by fire all that is not consumed by daybreak. Some Believers keep the festival. Their customs are usually even more abbreviated than modern Jews’ newer traditions, unless they are Jewish Believers.

The feast of Passover is just once a year, though. The Lord's Supper, Communion, the Mass, Eucharist, (the names the celebration has received are much fewer in number than the methods of observing it) has almost unlimited possibilities for frequency and style. Variations include requirements that the wine is alcoholic, that the wine is not alcoholic, that the bread has no yeast, that the bread has yeast, that the celebration is every week, or only once a month, that it is done every day, that it is done on certain days to honor certain dead Believers who have been canonized by the Roman church as saints, that it is done on December 25 to commemorate Jesus being born (Christ-mass: you should study that one...), that it must be served by a priest, that anyone can call for the meal and serve the elements, that only Believers are welcome, that only members of the denomination are welcome, that anyone is welcome, that it must be during a full meal, that it is simply a small bit of a cracker and a thimble full of juice, that everyone must drink from the same cup, that the bread should be torn from a loaf and dipped in the same cup, that it is a symbol that has no power, that people should expect to be healed of diseases when they eat it, that when it is presented by a Roman Catholic priest, it becomes an actual sacrifice of Jesus' blood and flesh that pay for the sins of the communicant since their last celebration of mass, that if a person dies having sinned without having had the mass / eucharist offered for their sins, they are likely to be purged by fire of their sins in Purgatory (or perhaps go completely to hell), that if the Roman church wants to condemn someone to hell, they simply cut them off from the eucharist (ex-communicate them) and leave them separated from the sacrifice, that if you have sinned lately you have to repent from the sin before you eat the bread and drink the cup or you might die, and many ceteras. The list of possibilities really is longer than the sentence you just read.

What do the Book and the Spirit have to say? It must be noteworthy that Jesus instructed the disciples to pay special attention to the bread and the wine. He added the ceremonial foot washing to the evening's otherwise very traditional set of events. This added March 1, 2015 part was obviously pretty important that night - Peter was told he would have no part with Jesus if he did not allow Him to wash his feet. How does that fit into what we should do in recreating or remembering the evening?

Paul gave some instructions, both practically and theologically, to the congregations in Corinth that are valuable to those looking for answers about what we must consider requirements and what we can expect as benefits and dangers with regard to celebrating the Lord's Supper. Please read 1 Corinthians 11:17-33.

As you consider what to extract from the monolog, instead please have in mind that it was not a monolog. It was a dialog, and we are only blessed with one side of the conversation. Paul was not sitting in his study thinking about how to lay a foundation of orthodoxy (healthy beliefs) and orthopraxy (healthy practices) about communion, as I am. He was writing a letter to some Believers in congregations he had planted a few years earlier (Acts 18). His comments were in response to the report of a delegation from Corinth who visited him (1 Corinthians 16:17), informing him of the divisions that were forming in the congregations and various bad habits some had been practicing.

If you read Christian creeds through the ages of the Church, you see different emphases of important points, or exclusions of seemingly important points in them. Creed

is a word that is related to belief. Credence or credibility mean believability. Incredible means not worthy of being believed. Creeds are lists of beliefs. I don't know of one that lists every belief of the writers, though some sects or cults or denominations have written extensive books of law that attempt to cover every possible subject. Generally, a written creed is a response or reaction to doctrines or practices that the creed writers consider erroneous. The creed may have other basic ideas that are stated, but the creation of one is usually sparked by the appearance of a contrasting action or teaching, and is a protective statement for followers to maintain as "the truth."

Please, in the same way, do not read the letter of response to these congregations' various ill behaviors as the beginning and end of the heart of God regarding how we should interpret the narratives of Jesus telling His friends and followers to receive Him through the cup and the bread. The Spirit has something to say on every matter that the Bible brings up. One example of this is one of the New Testament-style manifestations of the Spirit of prophecy. Prophecy in the style of Moses, or Samuel, or David or Nathan came with a different set of expectations and rules of encounter than the New Testament version does. One example is that in the covenant Yahweh made with His new nation through Moses, He instructed them to kill prophets whose words did not come to pass as predicted.

Luke recorded a prophecy by Agabus in Acts 21:10 & 11 regarding Paul that stated he would be bound by Jews and handed over to Romans. In verses 26 through 36 of the same chapter, Luke recorded what really happened. Instead of being bound by the Jews and handed over to the Gentiles, the Jews were interrupted from murdering Paul by some Roman soldiers who, therefore, saved his life. Luke made no statement about the inaccuracy being an offence that deserved being stoned. Not even a mention that everyone was disappointed because the New Testament standard of excellence related to a prophet's announcing of the future was not met.

Another work of prophecy as evidenced in the New Covenant is the interpretation of current events by a person who is being shown something either in the written word God has given, or in some words the Spirit is speaking to the prophet at the moment. The written word-based interpretation is what was happening when Peter interpreted the events in Acts 2 by mentioning a Scripture written through Joel. The second type, based on a word being spoken by the Spirit of Jesus at the moment, would be like what Paul experienced in Acts 23:11, when he was given an interpretation of the events of his imprisonment and trial as God's intended means of catapulting him into a ministry of declaring the Kingdom of Heaven in the city of Rome, before the heads of the state, with whom he would therefore have an audience that he would not easily have acquired otherwise.

The Spirit has not told us everything that we need to know through the Book. Some of the things that He did include in the Book are hidden from being useful without the Spirit giving us understanding. Jesus told His disciples that He taught in parables to keep some people from understanding (Matthew 13). Paul wrote some excellent revelation about this subject to the congregations at Corinth in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16. Please read it now.

We have present with us the Interpreter when we desire to get revelation from the Book. Some intellectuals have attempted to update the identities of "the Trinity" as the

Father, the Son, and the Holy Bible. The third person is still, however, the Holy Spirit. He will teach us everything (Jesus: John 14:26). We must seek His wisdom from above to grasp what is being said in the Book, and to have the revelation about how to interpret what is going on around us based on both the words in the Book and the words He is using to teach us with at any moment. Paul never read the King James Version of the New Testament. Surprisingly, perhaps, he still had a pretty effective ministry. He learned to listen to the Spirit. We need to learn the same lesson. We do not need to choose between the letter and the Spirit - we need to learn to understand the letter *by* the Spirit.

So, what did Paul write, and what does the Spirit have to say about it? In 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, he presented several points. One core point is his statement that his source of information about the meal was Jesus (verse 23). What Paul received as instruction on the Supper he passed on to the congregations. The four points he made in verses 23 - 26 are that there was a meal, before the meal was the bread, which was Jesus in some way, that after the meal there was the cup, which was Jesus' blood in some way, and that as often as they ate that bread and drank that cup, they were preaching about the sacrifice Jesus made for them.

He raised those points because of the fact that there were divisions among the Believers (verse 20). Because there were divisions, when they came together to eat the meal and the bread and to drink the cup, Paul informed them that they could not possibly be eating the Lord's Supper. At His Supper, some would not be taking the food and wine ahead of others arriving, leaving none for the late-comers, who by implication (verse 22) were poor. Also by implication, the pre-meal consumption of the food and wine was done by home owners. There was no middle class in Roman culture - there were peasants, and rulers and owners. At Jesus' Supper, there would be enough for all.

The bad social habits were having bad spiritual effects. The way the wrongdoers were having the meal that they were calling the Lord's Supper was causing them not to be worthy to eat the Lord's Supper (verse 27). The spiritual impact of this lack of discernment was having physical effects of sickness and death.

Some teachers teach that persons partaking of the bread and the cup with unrepentant sin or habitual sin is what Paul had in mind when he wrote this, and therefore, we should repent of all sin and examine our hearts to be sure that we are perfect or at least forgiven of all sin before we presume to eat the bread and drink the blood. While it is true that I should not steal my neighbor's wallet and then take communion without repenting, I suggest that the writing makes it clear that Paul had one sin in mind, and it was not theft or adultery.

From verses 18 through 34 Paul was rebuking people for coming to a meeting with division in their hearts toward other parts of Jesus' body. Please read what Paul wrote to the congregations in Philippi in chapter 2, verses 2 - 8. Esteeming another part of the body to be more important than me is difficult when I actually believe that I am really more important. Maybe I could think I am more important because I contribute more money to the congregation. I might think that my gift of prophecy is more valuable to the congregation than your gift of helps. I am an eye, you are only a little toe.

To respect a knife means something like being careful around it's sharp side or the point on it's end. To honor a knife means I display it in my living room. Esteeming someone's value (Philippians 2:3) means making a proper assessment of the value. The word is used in other Scriptures that translate it as ruling - having authority. I need to speak with decisive blessing when I declare you to be better than me. The opposite was being declared by the offending Believers in Corinth - they were declaring themselves to be more important.

The failure that caused the entire problem was summed up in Paul's description, "not discerning the body" (verse 29). The more discerning I become in identifying the gifts of the Spirit and the fruit of the Spirit in you, the more I am seeing Jesus manifesting in you by His Spirit. Do not forget that the man who wrote this letter encountered Jesus in an astonishing and blinding way. Their first conversation that we know about was when Jesus interrupted Paul's journey to Damascus, where he was intending to persecute the Believers who were there. Jesus (my imagination) pointed over Paul's shoulder when He asked him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4). Jesus clearly so identified Himself with His people that when He looked at them, He saw Himself! Paul understood the mystery because the Spirit opened his eyes to see it. When he looked at Believers, he wanted to see Jesus.

Paul understood that people were sick and dying because they had first cursed part of the body of Jesus, some of the Believers they were meeting with as a congregation, by declaring them to be unimportant. The next step in their failure was that they had then eaten the body and drunk the blood that they had cursed. They were drinking and eating the damnation they had pronounced by words and actions over Jesus Himself. The unworthy manner was their dismissal of the value of parts of Jesus.

Condemnation and damnation are synonyms. What we have in our hearts is what the core of our sin is. If you see me do something stupid and wag your head in hopelessness over my lack of sense or of value or of potential, your physical response of wagging your head is an action that displays the fact that you have condemned me in my stupidity. Jesus looks at who He wants us to be and calls it forth. He declares our future and stands in that future, inviting us to move from our failures and past and to walk into that future. We see failure and write off hope. We identify people by their failures or successes, not by their destinies. Jesus has eternity in His mind when He looks at each step we take. We need to allow Him to work in us both the motivation and the ability to follow that example of agape and faith.

Please - never close the door on my future if you can avoid it. Especially if you plan to eat the bread and drink the cup...

Paul had already introduced the concerns he had in his heart about the way they ate the bread and drank the cup. Please read chapter 10, and verse 1 of chapter 11 of 1 Corinthians. While making other points about the lessons to be learned from Israel's national mistakes, Paul pointed out that the beginning of God's people eating and drinking Christ was when He was with them in the wilderness journey from Egypt to the land occupied by Canaan's descendants. His presence created access for them to partake of Spiritual Food and Spiritual Drink (verses 3 & 4).

Especially, Paul advised (10:14 - 11:1), do not become involved with any of the ceremonies or habits related to idolatry. Sacrificed items become related to, affected by, even empowered by, the spirit to which they were offered. One of the common practices in the Greek culture was to take the food items that had been used in idolatrous offerings and eat them. One reason to eat it was that it was a shame to let good food go to waste, since the idols had not consumed it.

Another part of the process of the idolaters' sacrifice was to receive some empowerment from the item that had been offered to the god it had been sacrificed to bless. Talismans would become empowered objects in this fashion. The Philippian girl mentioned by Luke in Acts 16 was possessed by a "spirit of python." The translators King James hired paraphrased this title rather than translating it into English. They misquoted Luke as saying that she was possessed by "a spirit of divination."

Divining is a form of witchcraft that uses some indicator of two or more choices as an answer to a question posed by the diviner. It is a "multiple choice" version of answering questions by consultation of a spirit, multiple spirits, or the spirit world in general. It is related to the word "divine," which refers to god or gods. Biblical examples include the Urim and Thummin (Exodus 28:29 & 30), stones that Yahweh instructed Moses to have placed in the High-Priestly breastplate of his brother Aaron as a means of determining the will of Yahweh. Another Old Testament example is 1 Samuel 14:41 & 42, where King Saul called for lots to be cast to answer a question. In the New Testament, the apostles were led by Peter to cast lots as a means of determining God's desired replacement of Judas as one of the twelve. Modern examples include Ouija boards or Magic 8 Balls. The issue is not that divination was a different form of witchcraft from demonic possession and demon-inspired prophecy. The point I am making by including the Philippian girl's description here is what is implied by Luke's use of the term that she was known by.

In Greek mythology/idolatry, an area near Mount Parnassus is called "Puthon" or "Python." In this area, there was a woman in the city of Delphi who was able to offer "oracles" spoken by gods through her and interpreted by prophets. She was protected by a huge dragon, or python. Apollo attacked the serpent and destroyed it, leaving it's body to rot, which is the source of the word "python" - "to rot." It is likely that the girl in Philippi, who encountered Paul and company (Acts 16), was offered to the Oracle at Delphi, the Python Spirit, as a slave to be empowered by the sacrifice of her life to the demon. This fits the pattern of empowerment of items, including people or food, by offering them as sacrifices. Paul's authority to cast the spirit out of her gave public evidence that the Spirit by whom he was empowered by the offering of his life was greater than the Oracle at Delphi. The impact on the city was a power encounter that continued with the public humiliation of the rulers of the city after the public wrecking of the jail they threw Paul into.

Let's refocus on 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1. Paul made a point of saying that eating things sacrificed to idols had spiritual impact. He compared the effects of eating something that had been sacrificed to an idol and eating something that by a mystery represented the body of Jesus, which, by another mystery, represents the Believers who are eating it! He made a point of relating the cup to the sacrificed blood of Jesus and relating the bread to the sacrificed body of Jesus.

He declared that the Corinthians needed to be careful about allowing unbelievers to impose on them any faith in the eating of food that had been sacrificed to an idol. There was a difference between eating something that they had purchased from a public place that had been sacrificed, but then offered to God with thanksgiving and blessed, and sitting with an idolater and joining in their meal, which was eaten with the intent of obtaining something spiritual from the fact that the food had been sacrificed to the unclean spirit. The liberty of eating anything that had been blessed by the word of God and prayer (1 Timothy 4) was available to any Believer. The implied agreement with demons by eating a demonic meal that a neighbor was partaking of as part of the process of idolatry was wrong.

Our considerations of each other and our needs can exceed the considerations we would give ourselves or demand of others for ourselves. Sometimes they should. The more I extend provision and promotion and encouragement to the other parts of the body of Jesus the more I empower them and encourage them to be the support I need to advance in my own calling.

The better I become at discerning His presence and influence and gifts in others, the more I am accessing Him - the more I am, by faith, opening up the eternal doors to the realm where I have influence, and inviting the King of glory to come in. The more He can access my realm, the more it will become His realm - His Kingdom realm.

What about the wine? Beware of the imposition of laws that seem to have their origin in the idea that humans cannot be converted to behavior that is "fruit in keeping with repentance," (John the baptizer, speaking to Jewish leaders about the lack of any evidence that they had repented in preparation for the coming Kingdom: Matthew 3). Re-said, the Book and the Spirit seem to both speak of the ability of the power of God by His Spirit to redeem believers from the power of sin. People who submit themselves to the mind of Christ can have genuinely changed minds, which is exactly what repentance means. To repent (Strong's Greek #3340: *metanoeo*) means to think a certain way, to encounter an event or idea that confronts that way of thinking, and to then think differently. It does not mean to change behavior, but as John, the most expert witness ever on the subject of repentance said, it is properly *evidenced* by a resultant change in behavior.

If I teach Believers that they can never be liberated from addictions or the enslavement of stupid habits, I am denying the power of a quite mighty God, Who is able to deliver from any enemy or master. My point, therefore, is that fear of alcohol should not provoke me to outlaw it from people who are not enslaved but are free. As in the case of every liberty, the more freedom I walk in, the more danger I am in. It is also more likely that I will offend the enslaved or fearful if I walk in greater liberty.

Good behavior, the fruit of repentance, is empowered by the fruit of the Spirit. My mind is changed to believe that I need to do only what I see my Father doing, and His Spirit gives me faith, patience, self-control, etc., to manifest His Life in my life. I should be able to be kept from failure and stupidity if I listen to His Spirit.

When Jesus brought His friends to a wedding party, for some reason the wine ran out. For some reason, He remedied the situation, even though He was hesitant to do so.

What He contributed to the party was very surprising to the master who had been engaged to provide the catering services for the event. The man was surprised not just by how good the wine was, but that excellent wine was being served when most party hosts would have been offering wine of much lower quality. His statement about the tradition that was popular was that after the guests have had much to drink, most people then gave them wine that they would (presumably) not serve them before they had had quite a bit to drink already, (presumably) meaning that they would not be in a condition to notice, or at least care about, the lower quality.

The instruction to use wine in the Supper did not include any emphasis that it must be alcoholic. But some of the people Paul was writing to were getting drunk... (11:21).

What about the washing of each other's feet? Jesus instructed the people whose feet He washed to wash each others' feet. He was not talking about doing it that night, but later. Could He have meant during the next Passover, a year later? Could He have meant every time they ate the bread and drank the wine? What is the Spirit saying to you when you gather? What questions are you asking Him when you gather? When you gather, are you sharing a meal? More importantly, are you sharing the Lord's Meal?