THE NEW COVENANT IN JESUS’ BLOOD

Luke 22:1-38

Key Verse 20

“In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new convent in my blood, which is poured out for you.”

Thank God for blessing our study of Matthew’s gospel concerning the Last Supper, Jesus’ prayer at Gethsemane, his arrest, trial, death and resurrection. Now we want to study Luke’s version of the last part of Jesus’ life on earth. Today we will think about Luke’s account of the Last Supper, which is so meaningfully written. Let us delve into Luke’s mind through the Holy Spirit and deeply understand the new covenant in Jesus’ blood.

In verses 1-6 it says, “Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, was approaching, and the chief priests and the teachers of the law were looking for some way to get rid of Jesus, for they were afraid of the people. Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. They were delighted and agreed to give him money. He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.” In chapter 21, Jesus told his disciples about the signs of the end of the age with his promise of returning to the earth in power and great glory. It was a Wednesday evening. Jesus would die on Friday, two day later. Now Jesus was preparing for his death on the cross for the sins of mankind, which would be the focal point of God’s redemptive work as a crucial event in human history. Jesus’ whole life was heading to this point, but the last two days of his life would be critical in the preparation for his crucifixion. Definitely, Satan would try to tamper with this marvelous work of God. At the beginning of Jesus’ earthly messianic ministry, Jesus defeated the devil’s temptation. Then the devil left him until an “opportune time” (Lk 4:13). Now Satan appeared again to do his work. finding this opportune time. He entered into Judas, who would betray Jesus and sell him for the thirty silver coins, four-months wages of an ordinary worker. Satan’s aim was that Jesus might not die on the cross by his own accord as he predicted, but die helplessly like being stoned or being arrested and killed secretly. Satan’s preparation seemed to be thorough by putting Judas and the religious leaders under his control.

Then how did Jesus prepare for the plan of God? In verses 7-13 it says, “Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover Lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, ‘Go and make preparations for us to eat the Passover.’ Where do you want us to prepare for it?’ they asked. He replied, ‘As you enter the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you. Follow him to the house that he enters, and say to the owner of the house, “The Teacher asks: Where is the guest room, where I may eat the Passover with my disciples?” He will show you a large upper room, all furnished. Make preparations there.’ They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the Passover.” In these verses, the word “prepare” or “preparation” is written four times. This was a supernatural preparation in a city crowded with more than two million people. The preparation was done in secret even among the twelve disciples, except Peter and John, so that they would not know the place to the last moment and Judas would have no time to let this place known to the religious leaders right away. Jesus would eat the Passover, the last Passover meal with his disciples, before his arrest, for in that last meal Jesus had to reveal the profound meaning of his death on the cross. What a preparation! What timing! God is always above Satan’s tactic. We remember that at the time of Jesus’ birth, Herod tried to murder the baby Jesus, but God let Joseph and Mary to escape with the baby to Egypt. As for us, it is very important to carefully follow Gods’ leading at each step of our life, while the devil tries to lead us in a subtle way. So Proverbs 3:5 says, “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.” And 5:21 says, “For a man’s ways are in full view of the LORD, and he examines all his paths.” God leads us at each of our steps in the full view of our life, while we see only its partial view. How important it is to carefully obey the word of God at each time!

Now let’s see what Luke wrote about the last Passover meal. In verses 14-16 it says, “When the hour came, Jesus and his disciples reclined at the table. And he said to them, ‘I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.’” Reclining at the table means having a prolonged meal. “I have eagerly desired” is “with desire I have desired” in other translations. That is the Greek expression of emphasis. Jesus had great yearning to eat the Passover with his disciples, not to enjoy the Passover food, but to disclose the amazing truth of God at the table hidden for long ages past. And Jesus planted in them the hope of eating the Passover in the kingdom of God.

 Then in verses 17 and 18, “After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, ‘Take this and divide it among you. For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” Now we are to know the procedure of the Passover of the Jews. It started with the cup of thanks and washing of hands for ceremonial cleansing. Next was dipping pieces of bread in the bitter herbs and the paste made out of fruits and nuts, being reminded of the bitterness of slavery in Egypt for all those centuries. It was followed by the singing of Hallel, Psalm 113 and 114, and the second cup. After the second cup, the father of the family would explain the meaning of all this regarding the Passover. Then they would eat the main meal of the lamb and unleavened bread. After that would come a third cup, followed by the singing of the Hallel Psalm 115 to 118. Then a fourth cup and then it was over. So verse 17 is related to the first cup, the cup of thanks. Jesus again planted the hope of drinking of the fruit of the vine in the kingdom of God.

Now in verses 19 and 20 it says, “And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” In the Old Testament, the bread they ate at the Passover meal was the bread of affliction (Dt 16:3). Now Jesus changed the meaning of the bread from the bread of affliction to the bread of his own body that gives life to the world, which can be said of the bread of life, the true bread from heaven, or the bread of God (Jn 6:32-35). Taking the bread of life is to feed on Jesus as he said in John 6:57, “Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.” Jesus also said in Matthew 4:4, “It is written: ‘Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” And Jesus said in John 6:63, “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.” God really wants us to feed on Jesus by taking his words of life and truly live.

Here in verse 20 Jesus said, “In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.” “In the same way” is giving thanks.

Greek verb for thanks is *eucharisteō*. From this Greek word we get “eucharist”, which means to give thanks, and the Lord’s table is often called the eucharist. Paul refers to the cup of blessing in 1 Corinthians 10:16. This cup in verse 20 must have been the third cup offered after the main meal. And the cup symbolized Jesus’ blood in which the new covenant was made for the forgiveness of sins. According to Jeremiah 31:31-34, the new covenant is the covenant of forgiveness and salvation, while the old covenant or the first covenant was the covenant of damnation, condemning sinners as they broke the law. It is written in Jeremiah 31, “‘The time is coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘when I will make a new covenant…It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers…because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them…I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts…I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.” In quoting words of Jeremiah, the author of Hebrews mentioned the forgiveness of sins two times, in 8:12, “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” and in 9:17, “Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.” And Hebrews 9:22 says, “In fact, the law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of the blood there is no forgiveness.” The tabernacle and everything used in its ceremonies were cleansed with the blood. Yet it was impossible for the blood of animals to take away sin (Heb. 10:4) but the innocent blood of Christ. How precious is the blood of Christ, through which God forgives our sins! There is no remedy for sin; no intellect, education, or money can work for sin, but the blood of Christ. It is as we studied in Psalm 103, “Praise the LORD, O my soul and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all our sins…He will not always accurse, nor will he habour his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities…as far as the east is from the west, so far as he removed our transgressions from us” Christian life is to dwell in this grace of forgiveness of sin, repenting our sins at each time when the word of God points it out so that any sin problem may not block us from our relationship with the Lord.

And Ezekiel 36:26, 27 says, “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” Paul expressed it this way in Romans 8:2, “…through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” And in 2 Corinthians 3 Paul compared the ministry of Moses, which is the ministry of the law and condemnation, to the ministry of the Spirit, which brings righteousness, freedom, and transformation with ever-increasing glory. And the ministry of the Spirit is through the gospel. And Paul also said in Galatians 5:16-18, “…live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want/to keep you from whatever you want to do. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.” So Christian life is to live by the Spirit dying to myself as new covenant people, keeping the grace of forgiveness and salvation.

As we thought of in verses 17-20, it is truly wonderous that in these verses we see the final Passover and the first communion, the first Lord’s table, or the last old covenant and the first new covenant. This was a tremendous change. This was the end of the whole ceremonial law: all the dietary laws, all the Sabbath laws. In fact, there was no more Sabbath. After this, immediately the church started to meet and worship God on the first day of the week. This was the end of all the ceremonies, all the rituals, all the rites, all those social things that separated the people, the Israelite people, from the Gentiles. They were all gone. Even the temple worship was gone, which was huge to them. We know that Jesus was falsely accused of the sin of speaking about destroying the temple and Stephen was also accused of speaking against the temple and was stoned to death. The temple would be destroyed in AD 70. They were gone. But the moral law does not change because God does not change.

Some Christians think that the tithe is the Old Testament teaching and this was also gone in the New Testament era. That’s not true. First of all, God’s command of the tithe was not to restrict people but to pour out his blessing upon them. In Malachi 3:8-10 God says, “Will a man rob God?...In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this…see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and poor out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” And in Luke 11:42 Jesus said to the hypocritical Pharisees, “Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practiced the latter without leaving the former undone.” Actually, in the teaching of the New Testament God wants one’s whole self from those that have received the grace of Jesus who offered his whole life-blood for sinners. Romans 12:1 says, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.” A legalistic Christian life is not a blessing, but a pitiful life. In fact, offering a tenth from the heart is basic as one’s acknowledgement that all things came from God. Jesus says in Luke 12:34, “Where your treasure is there your heart will be also.” One prominent servant of God said, “Unless one’s pocket/wallet repents, it is not a true repentance.” Our life in Christ is that we divorced Mr. Law and married Mr. Grace, serving in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code (Ro 7:4-6). May we know the blessing, joy and devotion of the life of the New Covenant on the ground of the grace of forgiveness and salvation.

In verses 21-38, the time of the Last Supper was not just a graceful time, but a troublesome one with the announcement of Judah’s betrayer, the disciples’ disputing as to which one of them would be the greatest among them, Satan’s sifting them, the prediction of Peter’s disowning Jesus, the anticipation of the persecution from the world. Yet, Jesus was full of truth and grace and hope. Jesus said concerning Judah’s betrayal, “The Son of Man will go as it has been decreed, but woe to that man who betrays him.” He said to the competing disciples in human ambition, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.” The people of the new covenant are to be humble imitating the example of Christ. Jesus was also positive for them despite their worldliness and weaknesses. He said to them continually, “You are those who have stood by me in my trials. And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” What a vision! And Jesus knew Simon Peter’s failing yet also believed his turning back. He said, “Simon, Simon, Satan has asked to sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, Simon that your faith may not fail. And when you have turned back, strengthen your brothers.” What a faith and hope!

Jesus also knew that the world would react to his disciples different after his death, while the people of the world were welcoming them most of the time while he was in the world. It is as Jesus said in John 15:18-19, “If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” We see the conversation between Jesus and his disciples in verses 35-38: “Jesus asked them, ‘When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?’ ‘Nothing,’ they answered. He said to them, ‘But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don’t have a sword sell your cloak and buy one.” The sword is not for fighting but for self-defence. It is about human preparation in this hostile world. And then Jesus says, “It is written: ‘And he was numbered with the transgressors’; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written in me is reaching its fulfillment.” In this world, Jesus was treated as a sinner, being despised and rejected, which was the fulfillment of prophecies written in the Scriptures. Then the disciples said, “See, Lord, here are two swords.” “That’s enough,” he replied. In this world, human preparation is needed for self-defence, but fundamentally they had to depend on God, who would protect them completely.

We thank and praise God for the new covenant for which Jesus offered his body and blood to give life to people through the forgiveness of sins. May we live as his covenant people living in his grace of forgiveness of sins and by the Spirit with joy and freedom and devotion, in humbleness and full trust and hope of his kingdom.