

What Did Jesus Mean by "*This is my body*" and "*This is my blood*"?

Luke 22:1-23

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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." And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

- Luke 22:19-20, ESV

As He celebrated Passover with His disciples, Jesus instituted the sacrament, or ordinance, known as the Lord's Supper, or Communion. He took the unleavened bread, broke it and said, "*This is my body, which is given for you.*" Then, He took the cup of wine drunk after supper and said, "*This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.*" What did Jesus mean by these words of institution and what is the significance of them for the church's celebration of the Lord's Supper today?

First of all, it's very important to keep in mind that Jesus was celebrating the Passover with His disciples when He said these words. So, when He said "this," He was pointing to elements of the Passover meal:

1. The unleavened bread: Symbolically leaven/yeast represented sin, and the bread was also striped and pierced. Jesus said that this bread represented or pointed to His body, without sin, which would be striped and pierced for them. (See [Isaiah 53:5](#))

2. The cup: The wine of the Passover, which was red, called to mind the blood of the Passover Lamb. But Jesus said, "*This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.*" Just as the blood of the Passover Lamb shielded God's people from judgment during the Passover at the time of the Exodus, so the blood of Jesus shields us from God's wrath, for He bore the wrath of God in our place.

But the bread and the wine had other meaning as well. Jesus had said that He was the bread of life, the true bread sent down from heaven to give life to the world. Bread was life, the basic necessity and the most constant item in the diet of the ancient world. Wine was a symbol of joy and celebration, while Jesus said it represented blood, which is the penalty for sin.

It's also important that Jesus gave them the bread to eat and the wine to drink. They took the elements and internalized them. Literally, the bread and the wine would become part of the disciples; it would be incorporated into their very being. The body of Jesus - His life - and the blood of Jesus - His death - must be ours, truly and eternally, or we have no life and we have no forgiveness.

The next time you take the Lord's Supper, perhaps this coming Lord's Day, think about what Jesus is giving you in this supper. He is giving you Himself. He calls us to feast our souls on Him, even as we feed our bodies bread and wine.