

We believe that all believers are welcome to share in the Lord's Supper. It is a time of commemoration and proclamation of His death until He returns, and should be preceded by solemn self-examination. We also believe that the elements of bread and wine are symbolic of the body and blood of Christ. The bread symbolizes His perfect life and the body in which He actually bore our sin on the cross. The wine represents His blood which was shed for the remission of our sins, and is also a sign of the New Covenant of grace.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:24-25

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

I don't know your take on communion. I don't know your conviction, your history, your perspective. I know we have people here who grew up believing that God does a miraculous work when the bread and cup are given making what you consume the actual body and blood of Christ, and those who believe these are merely symbolic representations of those, and some of you have very little clue what communion is beyond that one weekend a month these guys have a grown up break time at a halftime where they pass out snacks. Some of you celebrated every week, ,,.....whatever you experienced, it is my conviction that the communion we see painted in scripture, is far less mystic than the church eating Christ's body and blood and yet far more sacred than what we often embrace as mere symbols. There is something that connects within communion that is unique. But only if we embrace it.

The world's first communion was actually an ancient celebration known as Passover. Jesus wasn't inventing a new ritual in the Last Supper, but rather commandeering an old one and adding to it newfound clarity. Passover celebrates the grace of God in passing over the homes of Hebrew men, women, and children who were enslaved in Egypt. God would deliver them, and the blood of a lamb painted on their doorpost was an indication this house is covered. And we know how the story goes and how God's people were liberated from bondage.

At a typical Passover dinner, a family would have already sacrificed a lamb reminding them of the price necessary for their covering. Jesus inserts himself into the story. He says this is MY body and MY blood. Jesus is forecasting the sacrifice he would undergo for the redemption of God's people. Isaiah 53 speaks of him when it says.

- Isaiah 53:7

He was oppressed and afflicted,
yet he did not open his mouth;
he was led like a lamb to the slaughter,
and as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
so he did not open his mouth.

Jesus sees his work as the new exodus, and then makes himself the focal point of Israel's great memorial meal.

Understand how, after hearing what Jesus said at the Last Supper, his disciples must have felt. They had participated in Passovers every year since birth. But now, Jesus is saying this bread is his body, the cup his blood. After the resurrection they must have sat in shock as the pieces came together. Their eyes fully opened.

Movies attempt to capture this type of reveal. In the Matrix when Neo realizes he is the one, in the Truman show, when Truman picks up on the fact the world is watching, Dorothy when she realizes that all her life was lived in black and white compared to the vibrant color of Oz. Jesus' disciples recognize the meaning behind the meal they had annually taken part in. They see the same meal, with new eyes.

My hope is that we see the practice of taking communion at MBC with similar wonder after we study this key component of what it means to be the church.

1. First off, this is a meal for believers. We are not eating to get full, as you can tell by the measly portions we serve each month, but rather to remember what was done for us. We participate in this meal together, not in isolation. And everyone who believes in Christ is welcome. We do not have any denominational requirements or specific hoops one has to jump through before partaking in the Lord's table with us. We see this table open to any follower of Christ, so whether this is your first time to mbc or you are a regular, as a Christian this is for you.
2. It is a time of reflection - 1 Corinthians 11:28-29 says **Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. Clearly this is a big deal. Reflecting on Christ's sacrifice, and our relationship with him during this time is key.**
3. Communion is a powerful symbol of Christ's sacrifice. Our Articles rightly say "We believe that the elements of bread and wine are symbolic of the body and blood of Christ." though some Christians are convinced that the bread becomes Christ's body and the juice becomes his blood during the Lord's supper, we see no evidence this was what Jesus meant when he said "This is my body, this is my blood". Interestingly enough, in the 1600's people would parody the Latin translation of "This is My Body, This is My Blood" - "Hoc est Corpus" to be the phrase a magician would use to turn one thing into another. They would twist Hoc est Corpus to say Hocus Locus to indicate, a magical miracle had taken place. We see the bread to be bread and the juice to be juice, both symbolizing something far greater. When he took part in the Passover with his disciples, it seems apparent that both he and they understood the language of Christ to be symbolic, But significant, and so do we.
4. So what should you think about during communion? That's the beauty, because the early church streamlined the massive meal of Passover to a powerful and significant moment identifying what Jesus did for us on the cross. The Bread represents his body. When we take this we remember the giving up and death of Christ's human body for you and for me. Though we use bread and not Matzos, the Passover bread reflects what we should be recalling during this time. Passover bread is pierced, bruised, and lined with stripes. It is broken for those who share in it. We remember this was Jesus' fate as well: **Isaiah 53:5 says But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.**
5. The cup is significant as well. In the Passover meal there were actually 4 cups of wine that were shared before the whole event was accomplished. Each of

these cups were symbolic and important to the retelling of the passover story.

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 1. The first cup is the cup of sanctification - God reminding that he will bring the slaves out
 2. The second cup is right when the meal is started The cup of Praise - Praising God because he will accomplish what he promised us
 3. After the meal all participants partake of the third cup, which is called "Cup of Redemption." At the Last Supper, Jesus referred to this cup in Matthew 26:28: "For this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." This is the cup that we as Christians partake of at communion. We have been partaking of the third cup! We drink the juice **recognize** the redemption accomplished for us by Christ. His death for our life. Our unrighteousness exchanged for his righteousness.
7. The final cup is the cup of the Kingdom

The fourth cup taken at the end of the observance is commonly called the "Cup of the Kingdom." This is where Jesus made a change in the Passover meal, which He observed as the Last Supper. He apparently refrained from drinking the fourth cup. We read in Matthew 26:29, "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

It became obvious that Jesus did not want to drink of the fourth cup because everything He did was to fulfill prophecy. Since the kingdom was not to be established yet, He skipped that cup and sang a hymn and left.

This isn't in our communion observation, but it should be how we leave. Some have called the third cup the cup of betrothal and the fourth the wedding cup. John 14:2 In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

When we leave communion, we should be leaving with passion as we await our love to return. Until then, we sip from the reality of His Kingdom. We live to honor him. We taste his transformation, not in completion. Not yet. But looking forward to his return. is the cup of the Kingdom. When we join his Kingdom work we are sipping from the cup in advance. Not in completion, not yet.

May we, whenever we take the Lord's supper, do so remembering what Christ has done for us, that he is with us, and what he promised do in returning to us.