

“The New Covenant in My Blood”

Exodus 12:1-4, 11-14; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

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Let us take just a few minutes to reflect on a few words that Jesus said at the Last Supper. When he ate with his disciples that final time, he lifted a cup, and he said: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” The cup, of course, did not contain blood. It contained wine. So what did Jesus mean?

We know, of course, that he was referring to the blood that he himself would spill, the next day, as he went to the cross to bear our sins and the sins of the world. But his disciples did not know what was to come. Even if they had been paying attention when Jesus predicted his death and resurrection – several times – they probably had no idea just how bloody his death was going to be. In the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus does not mention his blood *at all* until we get to the Last Supper. Not once! I suspect that when Jesus lifted the cup filled with wine at that Passover meal, and said it was “the new covenant” in his blood, the disciples at that meal had *no idea* what he was talking about.

The disciples knew that blood had saved their people in the past. Remember the story of the first Passover? The Israelites were in Egypt. They were enslaved, oppressed under Pharaoh’s heavy yoke. God appointed Moses to lead them all to freedom. Pharaoh stood in the way. God sent a series of plagues upon the Egyptians – disasters, displaying the power of God, to persuade Pharaoh to let the people go. There were ten plagues: frogs, gnats, locusts, and so on. Finally, God declared that every firstborn son throughout the land of Egypt would die. Every single last one of them would all die, all in one night, as the Angel of Death passed through the land. But God instructed the Israelites to mark their doorposts with the blood of a lamb. Any house marked with the blood of a lamb would be spared. It would be *passed over*. It happened as God said it would. There was tremendous wailing throughout the land of Egypt, as son after son died throughout the land – *except* in the houses of the Israelites. That final plague was what made it possible for the Israelites to leave the land of Egypt and head for freedom, across the Sea of Reeds. God had liberated them; God had rescued them; God had *saved* them.

It was the *blood* that made the difference. The blood of a lamb ... sacrificed to bring *salvation*.

Tomorrow we will remember how a bloody Jesus died on a cross. *That blood matters*. Just as the blood of a lamb saved the *Israelites*, so does the blood of a Lamb save *us*. The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Our sins. Yours and mine. Christ’s bloody death on the cross leads us to *freedom*, just as the blood on the doorposts led the Israelites to freedom. Christ’s bloody death on the cross liberates us, rescues us, *saves* us. Let us lift the cup ... the New Covenant ... in his blood.

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