

The Lord-Supper and Cup of New Covenant

The Upper Room

Matt 26:26-29: ²⁶And out of their eating, after taking bread and blessing *it*, Jesus broke *it*, and after giving *it* to the disciples, He Said, “Take *it*. Eat *it*. This is My body.” ²⁷And after taking a cup and giving thanks, He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you, ²⁸for this is My blood of the covenant, the *blood* concerning many, being poured out for the forgiveness of sins. ²⁹But I say to you, I will surely not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day whenever I may drink it with you new in the kingdom of My Father.” (SWB)

Mark 14:22-25: ²²And out of their eating, after taking bread and blessing *it*, He broke *it* and gave *it* to them, and He said, “Take *it*. This is My Body.” ²³And after taking a cup *and* giving thanks, He gave *it* to them, and they all drank from it. ²⁴And He said to them, “This is My blood of the covenant, the *blood* being poured out on behalf of many. ²⁵Truly I say to you that no longer *and* in no way will I drink from the fruit of the vine until that day whenever I may drink it new in the kingdom of God.” (SWB)

Luke 22:14-20: ¹⁴And when the hour happened, He reclined and the apostles with Him, ¹⁵and He said to them, “With passion, I desired to eat this Passover with you before that which is for Me to suffer. ¹⁶For I say to you that I will surely not eat it *again* until out of whoever it shall be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” ¹⁷And after grasping a cup and giving thanks, He said, “Take this and divide it for yourselves, ¹⁸for I say to you that I will surely not drink *from* now on—while I am away from it, that is, away from the fruit of the vine—until from which the kingdom of God will come.” ¹⁹And after taking bread *and* giving thanks, He broke *it* and gave *it* to them, saying, “This is My body, which for your sake is being given. Do this for the My-remembrance-above.” ²⁰And the cup likewise, after that which is to eat, saying, “This cup *is* the New Covenant in My blood, which for your sake *is* being poured out.” (SWB)

1 Cor 11:23-26: ²³For I took away from the Lord that which I also handed over to you, that the Lord Jesus, in the night in which He was being betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and after giving thanks, He broke it and said, “This is My body which is for your sake; do this for the My-remembrance-above.” ²⁵And

¹ **Luke 22:19** English translations have grossly altered this text by treating the accusative-single possessive adjective ἐμὴν (“my”) as if it were a genitive-single personal pronoun ἐμοῦ (“of me”), and by ignoring the prefixed accusative preposition ἀνά (“again” or “above”) on the compound verb ἀνάμνησον. The net result of these hermeneutical decisions is to incorrectly render a translation of this command as “Do this in remembrance of Me.” (Also, 1Cor 11:24-25) This alteration of the text, which is uniformly carried by all English translations (with the exception of SWB), is truly a case of forcing the text to conform to one’s theology, as opposed to conforming one’s theology to the text. Jesus was not commanding a remembrance in the minds of His disciples. The accurate (SWB) translation begs the question, “What exactly are we supposed to be doing for the sake of the Jesus-remembrance-above?” The answer to this question is Paul’s purpose for writing Romans. In v. 13:3, Paul also used the imperative form of the verb ποιέω (“to do”) to command his reader, “Do the [intrinsic] good!”

The full meaning in this statement and command in Luke 22:19 is that the followers of Jesus would “become united with Him in the likeness of His death” (Rom 6:5a) for the purpose of “the Jesus-remembrance-above.” In other words, the followers of Jesus are to “Do this!” also—that is, they are to die-to-self—“for the My-remembrance-above.” Not coincidentally, the same verb ποιέω (“to do”) is used by Paul (e.g. Rom 13:3 and 16:17) relative to the “the obedience from faith” (Rom 1:5, 16:26) into the realm of “spiritually spoken worship” (Rom 12:1).

likewise, *He took* the cup after the meal, saying, “do this, as often as you might drink it, for the My-remembrance-above.”²⁶ For as often as you might eat this bread and drink this cup, you declare the death of the Lord until from which He comes. (SWB)

The *lord-supper* is a corporate celebration of Christian fellowship, which the Lord Himself commanded His church to do on a regular basis. The term itself—the *lord-supper*²—is found only one time in the Bible (1Cor 11:20). The *lord-supper* is named such not because the Lord hosts the dinner, which indeed He does, but because the Lord is the very substance of the dinner. This celebration only has relevance to a child of God, that is, a Spirit-regenerated believer. The bread and the wine of this repetitive liturgical event are separate physical elements that combine to represent a sign that points each participant to his or her “*spiritually-spoken service of worship*” (Rom 12:1). The two consumables of this physical meal, the bread and the wine, point individually to the role of the believer and the role of God, respectively, in this cooperative spiritual service of worship.

It is important that the full meaning of each element be understood. In the absence of this understanding, the *lord-supper* becomes a rote mechanical exercise that either has no meaning or is assigned unbiblical meaning. First and foremost, the liturgical celebration is not an end in and of itself. There is no intrinsic value in the consumption of a physical piece of bread and sip of juice, except that they act as a road sign to point the believer to the spiritual worship that God desires and expects should be a regular and defining part of every believer’s faith walk. This corporate meal is a physical reminder to each individual believer, “*Do this for the My-remembrance-above!*” Therefore, “*as often as you do this*”,

- The broken bread, a symbol for the body of Christ, points to a dying-to-self and a mortification of the body of sin (Rom 6:11), “*the message of the cross*” (1Cor 1:18, 2:4), “*your declaration of the Lord’s death*” (1Cor 11:26), “*becoming united into the likeness of His death*” (Rom 6:5), which is according to “*the obedience from faith*” (Rom 1:5, 16:26).
- The wine, a symbol for the blood of Christ, points to newness of life toward God (Rom 6:11), “*the proclamation of Christ after having been crucified*” (1Cor 1:23, 2:2-4, Rom 16:26) “*until out of which He comes*” (1Cor 11:26), “*becoming united into the likeness of His resurrection*” (Rom 6:5), your speaking of “*the rhema of Christ*” (Rom 10:8, 17), “*a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God*” (Eph 5:2), which is in perfect accord to the will of the Father (John 18:11) and “*the mind of Christ*” (1Cor 2:16) and the working of the Holy Spirit (John 15:26).

The physical elements, the bread and the wine, are usually the focus of the liturgical *lord-supper*, but the *vessel* containing the wine is often misunderstood as being only incidental to the *lord-supper*, a mere utensil. But the *cup*³ is an important biblical term that has not been well understood by the church. In terms of the *lord-supper*, the symbolic meaning of *the cup*, the vessel itself, is usually overlooked in church teaching and doctrine, much to the disadvantage of every believer who regularly celebrates this right of

² **1Cor 11:20** κυριακὸν δεῖπνον (“*lord-supper*”). The apostle John also called it ὁ δεῖπνον (“*the supper*”; John 13:2, 4, 21:20). Here Paul used the accusative-single form of the rare adjective κυριακός (*kuriakos*, means “*pertinent to belonging to the Lord*”; BDAG, p. 576; 0 LXX, 2 NT; also Rev 1:10). This single Pauline usage of this adjective is often glossed in English translation as if Paul used a genitive-single form of the vastly more common cognate noun κύριος (*kourios*, means “*lord*” or “*master*”; 8605 LXX, 716 NT, 274 Paul, 66 1Cor), thus always incorrectly glossing Paul’s accusative adjective as “*the Lord’s*.” Paul had a very special reason to vary this one time from his common usage of the noun. Unfortunately, the commonly used name—The Lord’s Supper—loses Paul’s purpose in using the rare adjective to emphasize the Lord as the substance of this supper.

³ ποτήριον (*potairion*, means “*cup*”; 33 LXX, 31 NT, 6 Paul, 6 1Cor)

Christian fellowship. The referential meaning inferred by the symbolic *cup* must be understood as represented in the three Synoptic Gospels by the Lord both in His words to His disciples during the Passover meal in the Upper Room and in His subsequent fervent prayers to the Father at Gethsemane.

Gethsemane

Matt 26:39, 42: ³⁹And after going a little [further], He fell upon His face praying and saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass away from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you [will].” ...
⁴²Again, out of a second departing, He prayed, “My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to pass away unless I should drink it, [then] let Your will be done.” (SWB)

Mark 14:35-36: ³⁵And after going a little [further], He was falling upon the ground and He was praying, in order that if it is possible, this hour would pass away from Him, ³⁶and He was saying, “Abba, Father, all things are possible in You. Take this cup away from Me. Yet not what I will, but what you [will].” (SWB)

Luke 22:41-43: ⁴¹And He was withdrawn from them by about a throw of a stone and, after placing a knee, He was praying, ⁴²saying, “Father, if you determine it, take this cup away from Me. Nevertheless, let not My will, but Your will happen.” ⁴³Then an angel from heaven was seen with Him, strengthening Him. (SWB)

These Gethsemane passages have often been exegeted by commentators who suggest that the human will of Jesus was struggling with the divine will of the Father. For example, one commentator paraphrases Jesus words by writing, “If you are willing to remove this cup for me, then well and good, but not my will....”; and, “Jesus is requesting a potential alteration in God’s plan, where the cup of wrath is dispended with—but only if it is possible and within God’s will. ... in effect, Jesus says, ‘If it is necessary, it is necessary. But if there is another way, could it be...?’” (Bock, *Luke*, p. 1759-60, emphasis added) This interpretation does not hold the cup in its proper biblical context—the *cup* is not, per se, a “cup of wrath” (also, Bock, p. 1763)—nor does it reconcile with how dearly Jesus held to this cup, which the reader will appreciate fully in the final incarnate words spoken by Jesus during the final moments preceding His death on the cross.

Contra much commentary, the term “cup of wrath” is not a biblical term. Such a reference is to confuse the distinction in the Trinity, which Scripture is careful to preserve. Rather, Scripture reveals “*a cup is in the hand of Yahweh, and the wine foams fully mixed, and He pours from this.*” (Ps 75:8), “*from the hand of Yahweh, the cup of His anger*” (Isa 51:17), “*the cup of the wine of wrath*” (Jer 25:15), “*the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger*” (Rev 14:10), and, “*the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath*” (Rev 16:19). By the Scriptures, wrath is a genitive of product produced by the wine, and wine is a genitive of content relative to the cup.

Accordingly, Scripture clearly reveals that *the wrath of God* is directly associated with the wine, and only thereby more indirectly with the cup. (e.g. Ps 75:8, Isa 51:17, Jer 25:15, Rev 14:10, 16:19) This distinction is important insofar as understanding the respective roles within the Triune God; the Father’s will insofar as the law of God, the Son’s role as the Judge who renders judgment in accord with the law of God, and the Holy Spirit who execute the Judge’s judgment in accord with the law of God. Therefore,

- Cup = the Father’s will as per the law.
- Wine = the Son’s judgment as per the law.

- Wrath = the Spirit's execution as per the law.

In this regard, it is helpful to consider the one and only use of “*cup*” in the Gospel according to John, wherein Jesus responds after Peter has cut off the right ear of the temple servant with his sword: “*Then Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put the sword into the scabbard. The cup which the Father has given to Me, shall I not drink it?’*” (John 18:11 SWB) Clearly then, *the cup* is a figurative reference to the will of the Father. In this Gethsemane reference, Peter has just meted out judgment upon the temple servant. Jesus responded by healing the servant, and in this manner reminding Peter, “*I did not come in order to judge the world, but in order to save the world.*” (John 12:47) In John, it is clearly revealed that the *cup*, which has been given to the Son by the Father, is filled with judgement against the sins of mankind. Judgment is the rightful purview of the Son in His divine role as the Judge, but Jesus did not come to judge. He came to save. Therefore, according to the will of the Father, the content of the *cup* was to be consumed instead by the sinless Son on behalf of sinful mankind.

In order to properly understand the full symbolic meaning and referential significance of this *cup*, it is helpful to review the three Synoptic Gethsemane passages together, so that their harmonization might reveal a more detailed picture. In terms of their variation, Matthew shows clearly that Jesus agreed with His Father; to paraphrase, “Only I can drink this cup. Only I can accomplish Your will.” Mark gives insight into Matt 26:39; to paraphrase, “Let’s get this done with!” Luke clearly shows that the human will of Jesus was being supernaturally strengthened.⁴ Additionally, the three Synoptic Gospels present several interesting variations in the authors’ choice of the verbs used to render this important passage.

First, only Luke used the verb *boulomai* (“to determine”).⁵ Contra Bock, Part A of Luke 22:42 is not an *aposiopesis*, that is, a sudden breaking off in speech. Rather, Jesus used *boulomai* in the protasis of a first-class conditional statement that demands affirmation: “*Father, if you determine it, ...*” This affirmation happens in the apodosis properly understood: “*... then take this cup away from Me.*” Part B of Luke 22:42 makes the affirmation in the apodosis crystal clear: “*Nevertheless, let not My will, but Your will happen.*” The key here is to understand that Jesus held this cup as dear to His relationship to His Father. To give up this cup for the sake of the disciples was to sell all He had. (Matt 13:44)

Second, whereas Matthew used the third-person imperative form of the verb *parerchomai* (“to pass by” or “to pass away”), Mark and Luke used the second-person imperative form of the verb *parapherō* (“to

⁴ **Luke 22:43** An angel is observed strengthening Jesus. Luke used two verbal modifiers, *autō* (“with/to Him”) and *enischouōn auton* (“strengthening Him”), to modify the passive verb, *ōphthei* (“was seen”). Therefore, both modifiers infer the same observer(s) that saw the angel. So, the question becomes, is *autō* a dative of indirect object, in which case the object is Jesus observing the angel, thus rendering “*the angel appeared to Him*” or “*the angel was seen by Him*”? Or is *αὐτῷ* an instrumental dative of association, in which case the object is the disciples observing the angel and Jesus together, thus rendering “*the angel was seen with Him*”? The preferred choice here must weigh in favor of the more likely object relative to the periphrastic-dependent-verbal participial phrase *enischouōn auton* (“strengthening Him”). Since It seems unlikely that Luke intended that Jesus observed Himself being strengthened by the angel (the periphrastic participle is a bit non-sensical in this case), it must then be inferred that the angel was seen by the three disciples, and that they also, then, observed the angel strengthening Jesus. Thus, *αὐτῷ* is glossed as an instrumental dative of association, “with Him.”

⁵ **Luke 22:17** βούλομαι (*boulomai*, means “to determine” or “to plan”; 128 LXX, 37 NT, 2 Luke, 14 Acts) means “to plan on a course of action” (BDAG, p. 182.2b) with “the thought of ‘purpose, intention, not mere will, but will with premeditation’ (Hort on Jas 4:4), which frequently underlies its usage.” (Moulton and Milligan, p. 115).

remove” or “*to take*”). Relative to both compound verbs, the prefixed preposition *para* bears its genitive sense as a “marker of the point from which an action originates, *from*.” (BDAG, p. 756.A3) This is in keeping with the ablative preposition *apo* (“*away from*”) that is used in all three of the Synoptics following these compound *para*-verbs. The point here is that this is not a transient cup that comes and goes. Rather, it is a cup that Jesus had always grasped tightly to. Jesus cherished this cup with His entire being. But He knew that this cup must soon be taken “*away from*” Him according to the will of His Father. Jesus was not asking anything contrary to the will of the Father in His fervent prayers. Rather, He was commanding the Father in 100% affirmation of the will of the Father, “Take this *cup* away from Me!”

This is the same *cup* that Jesus had just represented symbolically to His disciples in the *lord-supper* as “*the cup of the New Covenant*” containing “*the fruit of the vine*.” (Matt 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18) In these Synoptic passages, both in the *lord-supper* with the disciples and later at Gethsemane in His fervent prayers to the Father, it can be understood that this *cup* is a figurative reference to the will of God, and the content of this cup is the figurative reference to the righteous judgment of God. But if Jesus was to drink this cup of judgment (John 18:11), what was His meaning in commanding the Father, “*Take this cup away from Me!*”

Jesus was the personification of the *cup*, the will of the Father, during His earthly ministry. Jesus knew he must be separated from the *cup*, the will of the Father, in death according to the will of the Father in order to attain to His (Jesus) desire to drink again from the cup of the New Covenant with His disciples in the kingdom of God. Jesus was not saying to the Father, “If it is possible, take this suffering away from Me.” That would be like saying, “If possible, let there be another way to accomplish the forgiveness of the sins of those whom you have given to me.” May it never be! Only the death of Jesus, Him alone, His spilled blood, would be able to accomplish the forgiveness of sins. Jesus knew that this was the Father’s determined plan and He avidly affirmed the Father’s will in these Synoptic passages.

Recall in Luke’s rendering of the *lord-supper*, wherein Jesus used both the noun *epithoumēa* (“*passion*”) and the cognate verb *epithoumēō* (“*to desire*” or “*to lust*”) to say, “*With passion, I desired to eat this Passover with you before that which is for me to suffer.*” This was Jesus’ emphatic expression of His passion to die for His disciples, so that they might share in His resurrection life. Contrary to much commentary about Jesus’ fervent prayers at Gethsemane, which wrongly suggest that Jesus was experiencing His humanity with anxiety and even fear about the suffering that lay just ahead, this emphatic expression in the Upper Room was an explicit affirmation of His resolve and unmitigated courage to drink from His Father’s cup (John 18:11), that is, to accomplish all of the Father’s will. Not only was there no anxiety or hesitation, but Jesus was desperate to accomplish it.

Thusly, we can now understand the meaning of Jesus following these imperative commands: “*Yet not what I will, but what you will.*” So strong were Jesus words in His prayer to the Father that He risked impeding upon the purview of the Father, the will of God. This final statement in His fervent prayer was simply to state the obvious, that regardless of Jesus passion and impatience to move toward the New Covenant sharing of resurrection life with His disciples, it was the Father’s will and not His own that determined His fate, the judgment that He would soon drink for the sake of His disciples.

In His second prayer—“*My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to pass away unless I should drink it, [then] let Your will be done.*” (Matt 26:42)—Jesus was acknowledging that the cup could not be taken away from Him until He drank the will of the Father into His own death on the cross. Jesus’ desire was God’s end-purpose, that is, to drink from *the cup of the New Covenant in the kingdom of God* with His disciples, who would become *vessels of honor* (Rom 9:21), *vessels of mercy* (Rom 9:23), speaking the

perfect will of the Father, “*the rhema of Christ*” (Rom 10:8, 17). But the Father's immediate desire was His near-purpose in the death of His own Son for the forgiveness of sins of all those whom He foreknew and predestined to become children of God (Rom 8:29).

There first had to be forgiveness of sins if there were to be children of God who might drink from *the cup of the New Covenant* with the Lord Jesus. Accordingly, in so many words Jesus was saying,

"Abba, Father, take Your cup from Me! Separate Me from Your will! Let Us get on with Your near-purpose, Your desire into My death, that I might have Your end-purpose, My desire to drink new from Your cup in the kingdom of God with those You have given to Me. For this purpose, I am eager to drink from the *cup* of Your judgment, that You might then take the cup away from Me and separate Me from Your will into death, that I might finally drink with Mine from Your cup of the New Covenant."

The Cross

The full impact of this “taking away” can be heard from the cross in the ninth hour, when Jesus spoke His final words, “*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*” (Matt 27:46, Mark 15:34; SWB) Then a soldier gave Jesus a drink of sour wine, which symbolized the judgment of the Father against the sins of the world and the looming death of the Son and His separation away from the will of the Father. (Matt 27:48, Mark 15:36, Luke 23:36) Luke wrote that Jesus breathed his last breath, saying, “*Father, into your hands I commend My Spirit.*” (Luke 23:46 SWB) The apostle John wrote, “*Therefore, when Jesus received the sour wine, He said, ‘It has been finished.’; and after bowing the head, He handed over the Spirit.*” (John 19:30 SWB)

These anguished words preserved in the four Gospels represent the final sips that Jesus drank from the cup, His last words, whereby, according to the will of the Father, the Son of Man volitionally released the Spirit, remaining obedient into death on the cross. In this historical moment at Calvary just outside of the walls of first-century Jerusalem, at approximately 3:00 pm on the afternoon of April 3 in the year 33 AD, we witness the very moment that the cup of the Father’s will was taken away from the lips of the Son as He handed over the Spirit. Don’t miss the cooperative nature of this moment. The Father took the cup as the Son handed over the Spirit. But this separation would not last long.

The Cup of the New Covenant

The *cup* was restored to the Son three days later, and in this present age the children of God may drink from this *cup* in the mouth-to-mouth exchange with the Son according to the believer’s “*obedience from faith*” (Rom 1:5, 16:26) and the working of the Spirit into “*the proclamation of Christ after having been crucified*” (1Cor1:23, 2:2-4, Rom 16:26). For the first time since the Fall, mankind has been restored to his rightful place as representing the image of God on earth, according to the will of the Father and through the intercessions of the Son and by the working of the Spirit. This restoration is through the broken bread of the body of Christ and the cup of the Father’s will and the wine of His righteous judgment at the supper table of the Lord, the spoken rhema of Christ. This is the *lord-supper* and the *cup of the New Covenant*.

Hallelujah!