

THE LORD'S SUPPER FOR CONSISTENT PRETERISTS

Let's first read Jesus and Paul on the Lord's supper.

Let's consider Jesus' words from Luke's account of the *example* in 22:15-18, then his account of Jesus' *explanation* in verses 19-20. (I don't have time to deal with it here, but, yes, I'm convinced that the Lord's supper wasn't only instituted during the passover, but also, more importantly, that the Lord purposely pictured that what He was establishing for them was His own personal extension or continuation of the passover ceremony that would be more regularly observed [I believe weekly] by them in memory of Him while He was away for the next forty years (a generation); so I see Luke's account like this: verses 15-18 and verses 19-20 are concurrent, one being the example and the other being the explanation.)

To His apostles Jesus said, ¹⁵"I have greatly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer, ¹⁶for I say to you that I will by no means again eat this until it's fulfilled in God's kingdom [or, per v. 18, when God's kingdom arrives].'" ¹⁷And having taken a cup, having thanked, He said, 'You take this and share [it] among yourselves, ¹⁸for I say to you that I will by no means again drink of the fruit of the vine until God's kingdom [or, per Matthew's acct, 'My Father's kingdom'] arrives.'" Now to verses 19-20... ¹⁹"Having taken a loaf, having thanked, He broke, and He gave [to them] saying, 'This is My body which is being given on your behalf; do this in My remembrance.'" ²⁰And likewise [i.e. after he drank just as He ate, vv. 15 & 20] ... [of] the cup saying, 'This—the cup—[is] the New Covenant in My blood which is being poured out on your behalf [i.e. for the remission of their sins, per Matthew's acct].'" Now, from Luke's mentor,...

Let's consider Paul's words in First Corinthians 11:23b-32.

"The Lord Jesus ... took a loaf, ²⁴and having given thanks, He broke, and He said, 'This is My body given on your behalf; [whenever you eat] do it in My remembrance.'" ²⁵Likewise ... [He took] the cup, saying, 'This—the cup—is the New Covenant in my blood; whenever you drink, do it in My remembrance.'" ²⁶Whenever you eat the loaf and drink the cup, you reenact the Lord's death until He arrives. ²⁷Consequently, whoever eats the loaf or drinks the cup of the Lord improperly will be guilty of the Lord's body and blood. ²⁸So let a person approve himself after scrutiny, and then let him eat of the loaf and drink of the cup. ²⁹For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment against himself if he doesn't fully consider the body; ³⁰this is why many among you are weak and sickly, and quite a few are sleeping. ³¹But if we were thoroughly considering ourselves [i.e. the body, v. 27], we wouldn't be [in a state of] being [thusly] judged. ³²However, being judged by the Lord [means that] we're being disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world."

There are several points that need to be considered from these passages and others, but a stage must first be set; since this material is directed toward a full preterist audience, these are merely reminders of concepts we already agree upon that need to be kept in mind for this study.

1. The church of the first generation Christians was the betrothed bride of Christ.
2. The apostles comprised the foundation (i.e. the beginning portion) of that bride.
3. The marriage of Christ to His bride occurred ca. the time of the events of Judaism's AD 70 demise.
4. The wedding was the time of the anointing of the Most Holy Place (Daniel 9:24 & 27). Therefore...
5. The wedding also accomplished Daniel's "reconciliation for iniquity" via the remission of sin (9:24).

Firstly, consider the import of the aorist verbs "eat" and "drink" in Luke 22:15 and 18.

The aorist tense indicates a punctiliar action, i.e., as opposed to a linear action, it's an act that transpires at a given point in time; think of it in the past tense: *I ate*. *I drank*. By doing this, it becomes clear that this tense refers to an action that occurred at a particular point in time; i.e. it was not an ongoing action. So...

Related to the account of this historic meal, Jesus spoke of something He would do at some punctiliar/aorist point in the future; i.e., corresponding perfectly to the whole Hebrew wedding motif with a son leaving his betrothed to build a home for them in his father's land, Jesus said that, as He had just then eaten/drank something with her, He promised His betrothed that He would again eat/drink with her in His Father's kingdom. In fact, immediately following this is when Jesus went into the John 14 spiel about returning for her once all things were ready (vv. 1-3). (I doubt if any in my audience have doubts about there being a connection between the Lord's supper and marriage betrothals, but just in case you do, all you have to do is search the web to find gobs of information about it.) Anyway...

The reason I'm emphasizing the tense of what Jesus said is twofold: {1} to prepare you for something very significant I'll share in a few moments, and {2} to demonstrate that many seem to have never considered the possibility that Jesus wasn't talking about a continual eating/drinking of the supper with the children of the union He created in AD 70; i.e., just as there was the aorist eating/drinking in AD 30, so there was an aorist eating/drinking in AD 70.

Secondly, consider the import of the aorist verb "gave" in Luke 22:19.

We've often taught or have heard taught that one of the aspects that was perfect in God's timing of all things coming to fruition had to do with the impressiveness of the Greek language in the first century; one of things about Greek is that it tends to be very specific, there being five words for "love" is a case in point. Now did you know that there are at least two different Greek verbs translated as "gave"? One of those is *edidou* which is in the imperfect tense (meaning it refers to something ongoing, to an action that extends over a period of time &/or repeats itself as is found in the case when Jesus was "giving" or handing out bread in the Luke 9:16 miracle of loaves and fishes); the other one (the one chosen by the Spirit here) is *edoken* which (like the words "eat" & "drink") is in the aorist tense (meaning it refers to a single, one-time giving or handing over). The point? If it isn't clear already, this means that...

When, to these members of His betrothed, Jesus "gave" the loaf ("arton" means "a loaf"; cf. 1 Cor. 10:17) and the cup of the fruit of the vine (which incidentally is the more relevant emblem related to this study), He passed each of those to one of them for them to share it among themselves, an action among the Hebrews that depicted a close fellowship. Oh, and, yes, just as He ate of the loaf, Jesus drank of the cup, for He would not "again" drink until in His Father's kingdom, the same thing He said in reference to the bread. So He passed (*edoken*) each of those to them, telling them to "do this," that is, do what He had just done. (Some will say that the "do this" imperative was only in reference to the keeping of the supper in general, but Jesus said it twice, once after He exemplified for them what do with regard to each emblem.) Even though the cup is what we'll need to focus on momentarily, notice also...

What we just discussed corresponds perfectly to the word the Spirit chose for "broke." Again, if one compares Luke 9:16 with Luke 22:19, he can see that there are also at least two different Greek terms for that word: *kataklaō* refers to the idea of breaking something down into pieces as Jesus did with the five loaves for a great multitude, while *klaō* merely refers to a one-time breaking or breaking off as one would break off a piece of a whole for himself. Concerning the cup, Matthew has Jesus commanding all of them to drink from it, while Mark said that they all drank from it; this means that just as Jesus exemplified the eating part of His passover meal by breaking off a piece to eat, He also drank from the cup He took, passed it to them (*edoken*), commanding them to "do this," what He had just done: drink from it, which is how they shared it per Luke 22:17. My point? Well...

All of this points to their cultural betrothal custom of one on one, man to woman, one party to another singular party—in this case Jesus betrothing to Himself the corporate body of His apostles who would of course add to that bride-body over the next 40 years as they brought in the members of the remnant.

Let's bring all this information so far together by considering the actual custom, which will emphasize the significance of the cup that was introduced into this supper, something that wasn't actually in the original passover.

When it came to betrothals and marriages among the Jews of Jesus' time (and even still now among some), they had the custom that the man and woman would each drink from a singular cup at two different times to depict/picture the initiation and consummation of the covenant made between them—that they were in agreement/unity concerning this pledge to each other. Upon their promise to one another at the time of the betrothal, they'd each drink from the cup of *erusin*; then later, at the time of the wedding proper, they'd each drink again of another singular cup, the cup of *nisuin*. (Mind you: there wasn't/isn't one specific cup named *erusin* and one specific cup named *nisuin*; the two parties involved could use the exact same drinking vessel on both occasions [and they probably often did], but at the betrothal it was called *erusin*, while at the marriage it was called *nisuin*.) The two parties drinking from the cup of *erusin* ceremonially represented their oneness in "initiation," while the two parties drinking from the cup of *nisuin* ceremonially represented their oneness in consummation.) Now...

Once they drank from that second (*nisuin*) cup, having thereby initiated and consummated their "transition" or "transformation" from being two separate people to becoming/being one person, then it (like the wedding ceremony) was a *once-and-for-all-time event* that pictured the forever fulfillment of their commitment to one another; i.e., they didn't continually week after week or month after month or year after year repeat the ceremony of their consummation; nor did they thereafter continue that ceremony by including all of their offspring in it. So...

The clear picture I see is Groom-Jesus betrothing Bride-Church to Himself, telling her that He, after He finished building/creating her—the church (cf. Mat. 16:18) as an unblemished bride, would drink again with her, indicating (not some literal drinking again, but) the fulfillment of His promise to marry her ... upon the demise of the unfaithful Old Covenant wife, of course. By the way, this leads to...

Thirdly, consider the import of the word Jesus chose for "new."

As with "gave" and "broke" earlier, there are at least two different Greek words for "new": *neos* refers to something new in time, something brand new that didn't exist before, while *kainos* refers to a *neos* that has essentially come into its own, something that has found its self, its goal, its purpose, something that, through its life experiences or its molding by others, has become its most useful self; we could say that it has discovered or reached the point of fulfillment—its consummation. With that in mind...

We can look at *erusin* as being the *neos* (the initiation of something) and *nisuin* as being the *kainos* (the consummation of that something); so, being a well-established custom, the literal drinking of the cup of *erusin* (the *neos*) represented/foreshadowed its "end" (the *kainos*)—the wedding of the Lamb and His betrothed. There didn't need to be a literal drinking of the cup of *nisuin* at AD 70, for that which was real/spiritual/eternal—that which the cup of *erusin* foreshadowed—had come! By the way...

This same *kainos* Greek word is the one found in the phrase "the New Covenant." See, just as the kingdom actually existed since the arrival of Adam (when we might say it was a *neos* kingdom) and then found its consummation (its *kainos*) with the arrival of Jesus (the Second/Last Adam), so the covenant existed since the arrival of Adam (Hosea 6:7) and then found its consummation with the arrival of Jesus (Rom. 5:14). I.e., the Old Covenant wasn't a completely separate covenant all its own from the New Covenant, but the New Covenant is the goal, purpose, and fulfillment of the Old Covenant. So when Jesus said in Luke 22 that the cup of the fruit of the vine was His New Covenant in His blood, the idea was simply that His sacrifice and shed blood was what ratified the perfect/eternal covenant that was always in the mind of God as the finished product of all His work. Just as a cup is of no use without a drink element, and a drink element is of no use without a cup, so the New Covenant has no value without Jesus' blood, and Jesus' blood has no value without the New Covenant. And this New Covenant was/is the eternal marriage covenant between Christ and His bride which in turn made it possible for the kingdom to find its fulfillment (cf. Eph. 1:10). All things have become *kainos* (Rev. 21:5)! ☺

Another thing that made all this "new" is that, in this consummated kingdom and eternal covenant, there would be, as Jesus said, "the remission of sins," the fulfillment of the old, annual forward-rolling of sins; i.e., the type (the *neos*) found its anti-type (its *kainos*) in the "reconciliation of iniquity" within the true Most Holy Place—the finished Kingdom of God/Christ/Heaven. Whatever blemishes were found in the faithful-till-death saints at the Lord's coming were, for them, washed away, and His righteousness was imputed to them (cf. Gal. 5:5), fulfilling as well Daniel's prophecy of perfect righteousness (9:24). So...

Fourthly, the next obvious term to consider from Luke's and Paul's accounts of the institution of the Lord's supper is Paul's "until He arrives" phrase.

It's already pretty well established among us full preterists that the "fulfilled in God's kingdom" phrase and the "when the kingdom arrives" phrase are equivalent in event to the "coming of Christ" phrase: Jesus Himself said to some folks in His Matthew 16:28 audience that not all of them would be dead when He arrived in/with the kingdom. So since we've discussed at length how that Jesus fulfilled His promise to come back for His betrothed and marry her (which transpired around the time of the events of the AD 70 demise of the Old Covenant wife), then, when Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians about how, in their observance of the Lord's supper, they essentially reenact the Lord's death until He arrives, it shouldn't be difficult to understand/accept that he anticipated the cessation of its observance upon the fulfillment of what it pictured, viz. that which the Lord died in order to start bringing to fruition; as we said often, the death of Christ was the beginning of the end, not the end itself (the end being thus a cross-determined end, a payback or vengeance for His death). Incidentally, when Jesus said on the cross, "It's finished," He was talking about all He could do in His earthly work, for we find another "It's finished" statement in Revelation 21:6 by Yahweh after Jesus concluded His heavenly work and brought fully achieved salvation to mankind (cf. Rev. 11:15). The thing is this: especially after all of the above...

There's now no reason to try so hard to work around the normal meaning of "until." With all that we've discussed so far being what was in the mind of first-generation Christians, I very seriously doubt it ever crossed their minds that Paul didn't mean the usual/casual "until." I'm not saying at all that Paul was even indirectly indicating that they COULD NOT continue observing it if they so desired (*as long as they, especially in view of Hebrews 9:9-10 & Romans 14:17, didn't bind this earthly ritual upon post-fulfillment Christians as if they'd otherwise commit a cardinal sin*); I'm merely saying, *especially since the supper accounts taken together connect the concept of "fulfillment" with the idea of "until He comes,"* that there's more to indicate that "until" means "until" in the usual fashion than that it doesn't mean what it normally means. I.e., after the arrival of their Lord, they really could cease from their observance of this ceremony with impunity. Why? Because the supper was a memorial for while He was away finishing up His heavenly work; then, when He arrived for the wedding (and, by the way, the Greek word here is *erchomai*, the word for "arrival," not *parousia* the word for "presence"), that last aorist drink of the cup of *nisuin* was fulfilled, not to be drunk again, especially not with the children from the union just created. Why? Because, AFTER the "arrival," His "presence" would continue with them/us forever.

Just as with the subject of baptism and its direct connection to suffering and even martyrdom, something else very significant is this:

The Lord's supper (not the Lord's "suffer," though that would fit here 😊) was something observed often during the transition, aka the time of waiting and purification.

See, by their regularly recalling to memory the mortifying death of their Lord, it served to be a constant reminder of not only the minuteness of their suffering, but also the purpose of it, i.e. to purify them as the Lord's bride: In the very context of Paul's Lord's supper paragraph, he began it by saying that there must of necessity be divisions among you. Why? In order that who are approved may be recognized (v. 19). Then he went on to discuss how that there were those in the church being (present tense) judged, making them weak and sickly, even leading to the point of actual death. (No, I don't believe during this time of the supernatural [cf. Acts 5:1ff] that Paul was speaking spiritually here; in fact, it makes no logical sense to me *at all* that God would make His children spiritually weak, sick, and dead—He was working for the opposite).

Our first-generation brethren, those who, as Jesus' wife, became our mother, suffered and suffered much, with the apostles like Paul, taking the brunt of it. Why? Because she, as the betrothed, was fulfilling the picture of the purification period of Hebrew women. Again: picture – fulfillment; picture – fulfillment; picture – fulfillment! And on and on it goes with the spiritual/eternal being the finished product, not more or continued picturesque ceremonies, rituals, and rites. And to say that the Lord's supper is the fulfillment of the passover goes against what we teach in every other situation, viz. that types aren't shadows of more types, that rituals aren't fulfilled in more rituals, that physical signs always find their fulfillment in spiritual realities: first-the-natural-then-the-spiritual principle (cf. 1 Cor. 15:46). As I deal with in my baptism study (that other of the two sacraments of the church), Jesus came to rid us ceremonies, rituals, and rites ... not continue them or create new ones. Anyway...

Like Paul as an individual, so the bride-church was filling up the sufferings of her Groom (Col. 1:24), so the supper gave them encouragement in the realization that the very thing they were memorializing, viz. the death of their Lord, would be avenged, simultaneously demonstrating to all who were in actuality His truly accepted people by liberating them (cf. 2 The. 1:4-10). Well, let's consider one last point:

Consider the Lord's supper in relation to the wilderness bread/water as it's related to the passover.

I know many or most of us have resisted the idea of the words of Jesus in John 6 to have anything at all to do with the Lord's supper, but stick with me for a moment or two. Let's summarize some points made in John 6:27-58. When some folks seeking free food found Jesus (vv. 23-26), He said to His audience that day to not be more concerned with food that perishes than for food that provides eternal life (v. 27). Still thinking about that miracle of loaves and hoping for another, they brought up the miraculous manna of Moses in the wilderness (v. 31). Jesus then essentially told them that Moses was only providing a picture of the real thing, because the real thing provides eternal life (vv. 32-33). When they, like the Samaritan woman who wanted to drink of the *water* that provides eternal life, asked for that eternal-life manna (v. 34), Jesus told them that **He** was that food (v. 35). After some disputation, Jesus repeated that He's the food or bread of life (v. 48) and that their forefathers, even though they ate of that miraculous manna of Moses, died (v. 49); but if they'd eat the true bread, the anti-type of Moses' manna, they'd live forever, and the true bread Jesus would give for that life would be His flesh (v. 51), and (just as one usually has something to drink with his food) that flesh would of course include His blood, for He went on to say that, unless they ate His flesh and drank His blood, they couldn't come into possession of that gift that would be provided on the last day when they were raised to that life (vv. 52-58). Now, besides the fact that we must admit that we can very easily see how a person would connect this conversation with the Lord's supper at least in an indirect manner, let's consider Paul.

In which First Corinthians chapter did Paul deal with the Lord's supper? Eleven? Yes, but not only; he started to touch on it in chapter 10 ... and not only in verses 16-17: In 10:1-6 Paul brought up the idea of that other "sacrament" of baptism in verses 1-2 (about their being baptized in relation to Moses) as well as both the manna and the water (vv. 3-4). And what did he say about them? He said they were all (undoubtedly unknowingly) eating/drinking of something "spiritual," viz. Christ. But because they, somewhat like those who came to Jesus for free food in John 6, were focused on fulfilling their physical appetites more than their spiritual ones in relation to their God Yahweh, nearly all, except the generation of 20 years old and under, died in the wilderness, not getting to inherit the promised land that, by the way, typified the inheritance of everlasting life in the eternal kingdom. From there Paul glided right on into introducing the topic of the Lord's supper in 10:16-17, which he would then deal with more at length in 11:17-34. So...

Was it merely coincidence that what Jesus talked about in John 6 mirrored very well what He said a little later in relation to the Lord's supper? Was it merely coincidence that, just before writing about the Lord's supper, Paul, as Jesus did, led into it with the whole manna incident? Was it merely coincidence the manna & water as well as the unleavened bread & fruit of the vine pointed toward the body & blood of the Christ? And was it merely coincidence that the manna & water ceased upon their entrance into the promised land after 40 years of wilderness wandering, especially since it seems to correspond so well to Paul mentioning in his discussion of the Lord's supper in the following chapter the idea of their observing it until the Lord's coming when He'd of course bring them their salvation or eternal life? It sure seems like a hard coincidence-pill for me to swallow. What about you? Oh...

Something else cool here is that, just as there was the cup of *erusin* at the beginning of the 40-year transition and the cup of *nisuin* at the end of it, there was specified a drinking of water from the rock at the beginning of the wilderness wandering and one at the end of it. Hmmm. Just a thought. So...

Let me end by saying this: Most of those who continue to observe "the Lord's supper" today don't even observe it the way Jesus instituted it; so even though they may think it's an admirable thing or that it should be bound on folks else they commit a cardinal sin, they've destroyed the picture of betrothal and what all it signified. So if we're going to observe it, I encourage it to be observed the way it was instituted.