

MATTHEW 26:26-28
THE NEW COVENANT

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.

Many agreements are made in life. "I'll bring hotdish." "I'll bring salads." "I'll bring dessert." The basic meal is arranged. . OR "I'll come over Thursday, and we'll work on the baler then." The date is set. "Sure, I'll sell you my old lawnmower for \$40.00 You come and pick it up." The deal is made. Such agreements are often simple promises. Sometimes agreements in life are more formal—a signed contract is often needed to rent farm ground or pasture land, to buy a house, or to borrow money from the bank. At times in life maybe a sworn affidavit is demanded. Words like "covenant" or "testament" are used. The word "covenant" is related to the word "convene"—the meeting "convened" at 1:00 pm. In some cities, neighborhoods draw up covenants—"the exterior color of all houses in Morningside subdivision shall be earth tones." All come together in agreement. The word "testament" isn't much different, although a "testament" is often a signed document regarding personal goods—such as one's "Last Will and Testament." All of these may be two-sided or one-sided. Snow plowing contracts are two sided. Marriage promises are two-sided. A Will is one sided. Adoption is one-sided.

The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Sacrament of the Altar, is also an agreement, covenant, testament, or promise. It is one-sided. The Lord makes and carries all the details. You and I are not "players" at all in the agreement, other than that we reap the benefit!

Jesus and His disciples gathered in the "upper room" to celebrate Passover Festival. The very first Passover which was celebrated by Israel in Egypt involved the blood of a one-year-old male lamb or goat and without blemish. The animal was slaughtered and its blood painted around the doorframes of their houses. The blood of the lamb marked the home and spared its firstborn son from death (the tenth plague). The flesh of that same lamb was roasted over fire and eaten with unleavened bread. It was nourishment for the trip out of Egypt that night. This same celebration was commanded by God to be observed every year. Thus Jesus and the disciples so gathered. As they were eating—that meal was served in several courses-- Jesus took bread (naturally, unleavened bread), then spoke a special blessing over it. What those words of blessings were, we are not told. His blessing marked the bread as something special. He gave it to them saying, "Take eat, this is My body." He did the same with the cup from the fruit of the vine—that is, from grapes. (We do know this was grape wine, not grape juice. Fresh grapes and juice were not in season in the spring.) This too involved words of special thanks to God—words unknown. He gave them this special cup, saying "Drink from it, all of you. This is My blood of the New Covenant."

Covenant—Agreement—Promise. God had made a covenant with His people in the Old Testament. It involved their worship life and sacrifices-in-place-of-punishment for their sin. The sacrifices were innocent animal blood. The animal blood was but a "picture" of the blood to be shed by the real sacrifice for the sins of the world—Jesus, the Lamb of God. The Old Covenant and the animal blood did not accomplish forgiveness of itself. It pointed everyone ahead to the Promise of God's mercy, grace, and forgiveness in His Son.

Jesus at that supper was explaining that the new covenant from God in dealing with sin involved the price of His own holy body offered on the cross for sin, and His own blood poured out ("shed"), given, not taken, on the cross for sin. Therein is real atonement—making of peace—for our sins. In other words, "Take this. Eat it. Drink it. It is for you. You are spared from your slavery to sin and the devil, and the death which they bring. You are spared by My blood on the "doorframe" of your heart. You are set free. You are nourished by My-body-offered-for-you as you travel on your journey of life in this sinful world. I