

# Communion Notes

October 2021

## 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

### *Abuses at the Lord's Supper*

<sup>17</sup> Now in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. <sup>18</sup> For, to begin with, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you; and to some extent I believe it. <sup>19</sup> Indeed, there have to be factions among you, for only so will it become clear who among you are genuine. <sup>20</sup> When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord's supper. <sup>21</sup> For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. <sup>22</sup> What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I commend you? In this matter I do not commend you!

### *The Institution of the Lord's Supper*

<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, <sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, 'This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' <sup>25</sup> In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

### *Partaking of the Supper Unworthily*

<sup>27</sup> Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be answerable for the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> Examine yourselves, and only then eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For all who eat and drink without discerning the body, eat and drink judgement against themselves. <sup>30</sup> For this reason many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves, we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

<sup>33</sup> So then, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. <sup>34</sup> If you are hungry, eat at home, so that when you come together, it will not be for your condemnation. About the other things I will give instructions when I come.

## Luke 22:14-22

<sup>14</sup> When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. <sup>15</sup> He said to them, 'I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; <sup>16</sup> for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' <sup>17</sup> Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; <sup>18</sup> for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' <sup>19</sup> Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' <sup>20</sup> And he did the same with the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. <sup>21</sup> But see, the one who betrays me is with me, and his hand is on the table. <sup>22</sup> For the Son of Man is going as it has been determined, but woe to that one by whom he is betrayed!'

## Introduction

This is a fourth Heart-Stuff talk looking at some core applications and outcomes of *Koinonia*-Fellowship within us and among us.

Today I'm speaking about the way Jesus instructed his church to affirm, demonstrate and celebrate our spiritual fellowship in him as the crucified and risen saviour. It's about Holy Communion or Lord's Supper or Eucharist.



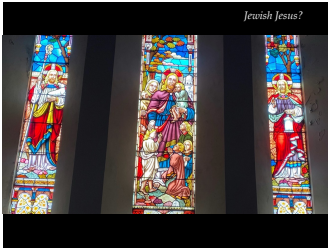
Two weeks ago I began my sermon on the 'Kingdom of God' by asking:

**Q1:** "What was the greatest theological discovery or learning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?"

**A1:** Jesus was a Jew.

Afterwards I realized that our church windows dating from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century illustrate very well why Jesus being a Jew might have surprised people around that time.

In the western windows at the back of this building are three depictions of Jesus installed around this time. What is striking is that they all



feature blond hair and blond beards. The same applies to the Jesus of the Ascension in the eastern window at the front of the building.

Jesus appears very Anglo-Saxon or a Californian beachboy long before surfing?

There is no attempt to reflect his Middle Eastern heritage or culture. He is even dressed for the colder climate of Northern Europe!

The reason I return to this awkward reality today is that just as Western Christianity evidently removed Jesus from his first century Jewish context and remodeled him as a mild-mannered North European thereby distorting and obscuring his teaching, such also happened to what he instituted in Baptism and Holy Communion.

The good news on this is that in the last century a great deal has been learned about Jesus as a Jew and how this can be appreciated in his teaching.

That particularly applies to Holy Communion. A great deal of credit for this goes to French monasteries in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century quietly studying ancient texts.

In a few brush strokes what happened is that when Christianity moved from the Jewish world to the Graeco-Roman world, Christians began to think like Greeks. Jesus was heard as a Greek philosopher and Greek philosophy along with Roman organization was applied to everything, including Holy Communion.

We got to the point in the Middle Ages where the thought of Aristotle was applied to explain what the words of Jesus meant and what was achieved in Holy Communion. For centuries you needed a degree in meta-physics to understand what was happening at the communion table! It was made very mysterious!

And, 'Jesus wept!'<sup>1</sup>

## Development

I want to try and roll some of that back this morning by outlining a few Jewish features of Holy Communion that may just open it up for us all in a new way. Just two key Jewish concepts may change everything!

The first is a facility in classic Jewish Culture for what is described by the Greek term 'Trans-signification.'

It is the facility to assign the significance of one thing to another. Or simply say, "Let this be that." such that we behold and treat that as this.

*Key Idea 1*

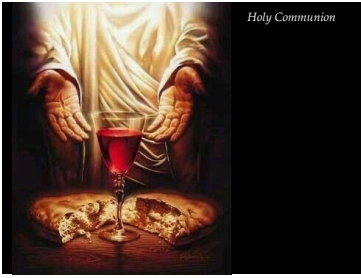
**Trans-signify**

"This is That."

An example is the scape goat. An ordinary goat was assigned to be the sin bearer for the people. The people gave it that significance and then drove it out of the camp to signify their rejection and cleansing of sin.

I was wondering about what special facility Kiwi culture might have and thought saying "She'll be right." as an expression of blind optimism that usually works out might be an example? *Ask?*

<sup>1</sup> Jesus 11:35 -KJV et al



So when we read Jesus saying about the bread:

“This is my body”

And about the wine

“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

He is giving the bread and the wine the significance of his Body and Blood.

This does away with theories of trans-substantiation and the like.

What it requires of us is to enter into that trans-signification to recognize the bread and wine as the body and blood of Jesus.

With that identification established, Jesus instructs us to do four things with the bread which connect him with the bread through the cross he was about to take up for us.

He tells us to:

- Take
- Bless i.e. = give thanks to God for providing it.
- Break
- Share with all who will receive.

Having said, “This bread is my body” the actions speak very clearly of God giving us Christ, who is broken for us and then shared by all who would receive him as their bread of life.

As in all instructions we have looked at, the Greek is clearly plural, we are to do this together and in doing this together affirm our shared life in Christ.

In various traditions veneration has developed for the physical bread and wine. Based on trans-signification it’s about honouring the symbolic value to which it has been consecrated and not because it has in essence become the body of Jesus Christ.

The second Jewish cultural facility I want to talk about concerns the way we understand the word translated as ‘Remembrance’ or ‘Memorial’.

Jesus commands us:

Do this in remembrance of me.’

What might English speakers think he is saying here?

Is this simply about not forgetting?

What is Jesus calling for?

The Greek word behind ‘remember’ or ‘memorial’ is our stepping stone to the distinctively Jewish facility for remembering.

*Anamnesis* is “Do not forget.” or, ‘no amnesia’.

*Key Idea 2*

ἀνάμνησις / **anamnesis**

= **‘Remember’**

Luke 22:19 1 Corinthians 11:24-25

The Jewish notion of remembering was more about evoking to the point where that moment in time is entered into. It would be like remembering your 10<sup>th</sup> birthday by doing what it took to reconnect with that moment and own it a new as if it were today.

It's what we may experience when a film or such takes us back in time so much that we feel we are there. Imagine reliving your first kiss, wedding day or some significant event?



That is what every practicing Jew lives each year at Passover. They are owning the moment of their people's liberation from slavery in Egypt and thank God for saving them there then. Every Jew owns the experience of having been a slave and being set free by God.

That is remembering as a shared spiritual event where past story is considered present in this generation.

Jesus was doing this, celebrating the liberating power of God past and present in a Passover Meal when he took bread and wine to point not to the past but to himself in the present. "This bread is My Body, This cup holds my life blood."

Once again this is all instructed in the corporate assuming a willing openness to *Koinonia*-Fellowship in Jesus, broken, poured out and raised to new life.

God is always at work building a people, joining generations, overcoming divisions, healing and feeding. A meal shared in the life of Jesus is a powerful part of that.

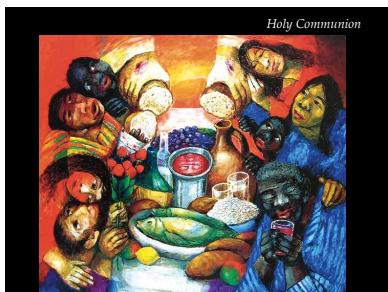


On the personal plain this mode of remembering in broken bread and poured out wine confronts us with God's love in the physical trauma of Jesus broken and poured out for us.

It's set up, it's declared and it's presented for us to receive.

## Conclusion

I hope that these two Jewish keys to Communion give helpful insight. Trans-signification and *anamnesis* or remembering.



But there remains mystery as even with these cultural facilities because as we experience, Jesus is present when we do this.

The spiritual climate changes as we enter into this provision resting on Jesus' Jewish heritage.

This is spiritual food for the journey of a disciple. This is how Jesus wants to be with his family, in a shared meal charged with love and joy as our shared worship to him.