

The Last Supper: What It Means, Early Church Practices, & Prophetic Significance

by Roy A. Reinhold May 4, 2002

We should all know with certainty now, that the Last Supper was not a Passover Seder. It was a final meal Yeshua (Jesus) shared with His disciples; where He instituted a completely new ceremony, and commanded that believers "do this in remembrance of Me."

I was praying a few weeks ago for others in the evening as is my custom, and the Lord spoke to me the following:

Why lekhem (regular bread) and not matzah (unleavened bread)? Why the bread of the promised land and not the bread of desert wanderings?

Why a new ceremony?

It is not enough to only remove false illusions (in disproving a Passover Seder).

Why the bread of prosperity and not the bread of adversity?

Why the true bread of life?

Why regular bread and not unleavened bread?

Many great teachers profoundly use the Passover Seder as a metaphor for the crucifixion related events, and I have personally been blessed by their teachings. On the eve of fulfillment of the Passover Seder, why did Yeshua (Jesus) institute a new ceremony with new meanings and actions? The answer is that this new ceremony of the bread and wine is the essence of the New Testament teachings about the Messiah. Let's look at John 6:26 to 6:63 for the meaning of Yeshua's (Jesus) saying, **"My Father gives you the true bread out of heaven..... I am the living bread of life that came down out of heaven, if anyone eats this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh."**

Although Roman Catholics and others believe in a cannibalistic transubstantiation, where they believe that after the priest blesses the host it actually changes into the literal body of Christ, the Bible does not show this to be the case. Yeshua's words were symbolic and not literal when He said, **"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life; and I will raise him up on the last day."** (John 6:54) Just a few verses later (6:63) He said, **"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words I have spoken to you are Spirit and are life."**

Through faith in Jesus' shed blood and sacrifice we have forgiveness of sins and healing, and through His resurrection we have the promise of eternal life. **We are saved by grace through faith and not of works lest any man should boast.** Yeshua is the true bread of eternal life unsullied by the sin nature passed down from Adam. He came not baptizing in water, but baptizing with the Holy Spirit and Fire. This true bread from heaven is the entrance to God our Father and the Spirit of life. Which is it that gives life? According to John 6:54 it is eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus that gives life, and in John 6:63 it is the Holy Spirit that gives life. The answer is clear that we obtain salvation by grace through faith in Jesus as the true Messiah; and by that salvation we are blessed with the Holy Spirit who gives us eternal life. **Eating the flesh and drinking the blood is symbolic--we are not cannibalistic.** However, we symbolically remember the sacrifice of Yeshua's flesh and spilled blood by participating in the bread and wine ceremony. Before I cite a few verses from John 6, let me say that every verse in this chapter in both the Greek manuscripts and in the Peshitta Aramaic uses the words for regular bread and not unleavened bread (in Greek: arton/artos, in Peshitta Aramaic: lakhma, in Hebrew: lekhem). **In 100% of all these verses, in all manuscripts about Yeshua being the true bread that came down out of heaven, it is regular bread and not unleavened bread.** All the following select verses from John 6:26 to 6:63 are from the NASB.

John 6:27 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man shall give to you, for on Him the Father, even God, has set His seal.

He is talking about spiritual food and not literal food that gives life.

John 6:32-33 Jesus therefore said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven(regular bread), but it is My Father who gives you the bread out of heaven(regular bread). For the bread of God(regular bread) is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world."

John 6:35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life(regular bread and not unleavened bread); he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst."

Yeshua (Jesus) is the true bread (regular bread and not matzah or unleavened bread) sent down from heaven for the salvation of mankind. Again He is speaking symbolically that those who come to Him will not hunger spiritually and will not thirst spiritually. Everyone on earth hungers and gets thirsty in their fleshly body, so it ought to be obvious that He is speaking symbolically. As it is written in **Colossians 1:26-27 "....that is the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations; but now has been manifested to His saints, to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory."**

When a person is saved by grace through faith in the Messiah Yeshua, that person becomes born again, their spirit is made new, and God Himself comes to live in them in their spirit. When the Bible talks about being "in Christ Jesus", it is referring to that changed person who has God living in their spirit. We talk about the anointing of the Holy Spirit, but as truly saved people we are in Christ Jesus and He is in us in our spirit. That saving faith is eating the true bread which comes down out of heaven.

This is the true gospel of the kingdom of God.

John 6:38-40 For I have come down from heaven, , not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son, and believes in Him, may have eternal life; and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.

Yeshua (Jesus) is the true bread of life from heaven, and we behold Him by faith; and as the verse above states, we who believe in Him have eternal life. Is this eternal life in the spirit or in the fleshly body? I don't see many believers being caught up to heaven without dying (until the rapture comes), therefore He is speaking about eternal life in the spirit. When a person dies as

a believer they immediately are in the spirit body separated from their fleshly body and go to heaven. They arrive there in Paradise, which is the area surrounding the heavenly city of Zion. They are greeted by relatives and even others like Abraham who likes to work greeting newcomers of the faithful. What did Jesus mean then by "raising up the dead on the last day", if we in our spirit body never die? When we are saved, we are a new creation in our spirit. However, our soul and our body are not made perfect like our spirit. Salvation here on earth is only a down payment. After being saved, in our life we go through the life-long process of sanctification to perfect our soul and body (or not, depending on the free will choices we make). The soul is your mind, will and emotions; and the soul is the energy interface between the spirit and the body of flesh. Since there are so many people who've been falsely taught that as humans we are a dual-nature being, where the spirit and soul to these people are the same thing, I guess one verse to dispel this false dual-nature teaching is worthwhile.

1 Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We have the downpayment of salvation now, and at the rapture, all believers from all time will receive the full salvation together. They will all receive their perfected body and perfected soul brought back to go with their already perfected spirit, and God will put them back together again, for forever. God was talking to the **believers** at Thessalonica when Paul wrote: **1 Thessalonians 5:9-10 For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we are awake (living) or asleep (dead), we may live together with Him.**

Whether our body and is alive or dead/asleep, we as believers have eternal life in our spirit. The future salvation stated above when speaking to the already saved, was that the full payment comes to all believers at the same time at the rapture. When God raises our body from the dust to perfection, fuses back in our soul that was asleep as a new perfected soul in a perfected body, and we in our perfect spirit are fused back in with the perfected body and perfected soul, then we have the full payment. It takes these perfected believers to the perfect state that Adam and Eve were in before the fall.

2 Corinthians 5:5 Now He who prepared us for this very purpose (our spirit body in heaven with God) is God, who gave us the Spirit as a pledge (down-payment).

John 6:48-51 I am the bread of life(regular bread and not unleavened bread). Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he shall live forever; and the bread also which I shall give for the life of the world is My flesh.

John 6:40 ...every one who beholds the Son and believes in Him, may have eternal life;....

Is not the above what Yeshua spoke about in the bread and wine ceremony too? This is my body.....do this in remembrance of Me. This is my blood.....do this in remembrance of Me.

Why regular bread and not unleavened bread? Why the bread of prosperity and not adversity in the wilderness? Why a new covenant?

John 10:10I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.

3 John 2 Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers.

2 Corinthians 3:16-17 But whenever a man turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.

Yeshua came to be the sacrifice for our salvation, and the salvation benefits start while we are here on the earth. They aren't for heaven only. We have access to speak to God and know that He hears our prayers. We can hear His voice (all believers) as the still small voice speaking to us, from Spirit to our spirit. We can receive His help and guidance now. He came that we might have life abundantly now and in heaven. It is not the bread of adversity (although there are tests and trials), it is the bread of prosperity, the bread of life. As at the Last Supper, it is symbolically the **consecrated bread that was on the table of showbread in the Tabernacle and Temple, that only the priests could eat.** This showbread was not unleavened bread, but consecrated regular bread.

1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you were once not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

Yeshua (Jesus) was the true bread from heaven, that is He came from heaven and didn't have the leaven (sin nature) passed down from Adam. At the Last Supper He was consistent with what He repeated multiple times in John 6, that He was the true artos/lakhma/lekhem bread (regular bread and not unleavened bread) from heaven.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.

Many people today seek to gain approval from the world by supposing that "all avenues go to God", but that is not true. Yes, people can keep the commandments or the Noahide covenant, and reap the benefits in this life. God is just and is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. He will bless and open doors for the person who may not be saved in Yeshua our Messiah, but who has turned their heart to seek God. The point is that the blessings of God are not given only to the saved ones, however, direct access to God the Father is reserved for those who are "in Christ Jesus."

Why regular bread and not unleavened bread?

The impure leaven in this world is the sin nature passed down from Adam. Yeshua is the second Adam who imparts the pure leaven from heaven in those who are saved. They become a new creation when saved, which is why we use the term "born again". When we are saved, our spirit is made new, and we receive the pure leaven in our spirit, even though our body and soul are not yet perfected.

Hebrews 9:14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

The pure bread from heaven is Yeshua who was without blemish, and the leaven of Yeshua for us is the word of God and the Holy Spirit in us who are saved. Because our spirit is made new in Christ Jesus, we have unbridled access to the Father.

John 4:23-24 (Yeshua said) "But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is a Spirit; and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."

Salvation in Yeshua our Messiah enables the new birth where we have a perfected spirit. We have access to the Father in our perfected spirit "to boldly come to the throne of grace to find help in time of need." This is the spiritual bread that came down out of heaven (regular consecrated bread and not unleavened bread).

Historical Early Church Practices

Bellarmino Bagatti is a prolific writer and Franciscan in Israel. Dr. Michael P. Germano cites his book for the following in an article on the BibleArch website in the Perspectives section (July-September 2001, volume 4 number 3) (where he argues that the Last Supper was a seder):

The Christian Passover in Judeo-Christianity became an annual event, at the beginning of the fourteenth of Nisan, observed, in accordance with the traditional Hebrew calendar on the evening and in the manner set by Jesus. As ancient Christianity fragmented into many independent groups multiple forms of this event came into being. The question of when these matters occurred and what comprised the precise practice of the early Church in regard to this memorial continues to invite scholarly debate and Christian passion.

Every indication is that from that very night early Christians continued this practice. Indeed, according to Bellarmino Bagatti the practice was so much a part of Judeo-Christian praxis that as late as the time of Constantine the Great they continued to argue that the traditional day of Nisan 14 for Christian Passover was not capable of change (Church From The Circumcision: History and Archaeology of the Judeo-Christians. Bellarmino Bagatti translated to English by E. Hoade, Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1971, reprinted 1984).

There is ample historical basis for knowledge that the early church celebrated the Last Supper annually as the 14th of Nisan was beginning. According to Bagatti, they even argued the point of the annual celebration up to the time of the Nicean council in 325 AD, even though the western church became increasingly anti-semitic and Greek-ized, and changed the early practices of the church. That doesn't mean that the early church under the leadership of the apostles only celebrated the bread and wine ceremony one evening a year; it is just that the early church did as **Jesus had said, "do this in remembrance of Me."**

The early church celebrated the Last Supper annually at the end of the 13th of Nisan and beginning of the 14th of Nisan, as it was instituted by the Lord Yeshua Himself. It is the only new ceremony He instituted. Why? Because it was a new covenant with a new God-ordained ceremonial aspect to it, and as an annual rehearsal or miqra to portray or rehearse an important prophetic event in the future. Bagatti noted that oftentimes the churches would celebrate it at a communal meal and have the bread and wine ceremony and foot-washing ceremony at the end of the meal. In other words, like the Passover seder, Yeshua (Jesus) gave us the broad outline ways of annually celebrating the Last Supper bread and wine ceremony. The apostles instituted this annual Last Supper Bread and Wine ceremony in the church, and it was only later when the ravaging wolves in sheep's clothing came in that they changed things. Scripturally and historically one needs to keep the only ceremony Yeshua (Jesus) instituted for the church. All other church holidays are man-made.

Paul addressed the elders of Ephesus and said the following: **Acts 20:29-30 I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them.**

If you e-mail me about this article and cite what some church father said after about 130 AD, I will tell you that you are probably citing those who came in later and changed things. Many of these are called a "Saint" in the catholic church, and when you read their actual writings, they were rabid anti-semites who were full of hate toward jews. These were the ones educated in Greek philosophy, who using syncretism, melded their pagan philosophies into church practices. Most of the changes happened in a 50 year period after the apostle John died, when there was no longer a witness to the actual events in Jesus' ministry. What the apostle Paul prophesied in Acts 20:29-30 actually came to pass within 100 years. It is a sad fact of church history. These changes were possible, because later leaders had no background in the context of Judaism; therefore, they used as their context basis the Greek philosophy in which they had been educated. The false "dual-nature of man" teaching came from Greek philosophy.

Prophetic Significance of the Last Supper Bread and Wine Ceremony

Just as the Passover was a prophetic rehearsal for the coming of Yeshua nearly 2000 years ago as the Passover Lamb, so there is a specific prophetic significance to believers celebrating the bread and wine ceremony annually on a specific day--the evening just after the 13th of Nisan ended at sundown, which is the evening of the 14th of Nisan in the Hebrew calendar. The Last Supper and bread and wine ceremony as rehearsed annually on a specific day portrays the future Marriage Supper of the Lamb. After the rapture of the church, there is a Bema judgment of believers by Yeshua (Jesus): **2 Corinthians 5:10 For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.**

After the Bema judgment of our Messiah, then the marriage supper of the Lamb takes place in heaven.

Revelation 19:6b-9 Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the linen is the righteous acts of the saints (true believers -- holy ones). And he said to me, "Write, Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God."

This marriage supper of the Lamb takes place in heaven before Yeshua comes to reign on the earth as shown sequentially in Revelation 19. First the marriage supper of the Lamb after the rapture and Bema judgment of believers (Rev 19:6-9), and then heaven opens and Yeshua comes to the earth to conquer and reign. **Revelation 19:11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war.**

The marriage supper of the Lamb or related things are also mentioned in other places.

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| 1. Parable of the 10 virgins -- Matthew 25:1-13 | 22:2-14 |
| 2. Dinner of wealthy man -- Luke 14:15-24 | 5. Wedding feast -- Luke 12:35-40 |
| 3. Promise to the apostles -- Luke 22:28-30 | 6. John the baptizer's witness -- John 3:29 |
| 4. A king gave a wedding feast for his son -- Matthew | 7. Christ and the church -- Ephesians 5:23, 25, 27, 32 |
- and probably more places.

The bread and wine ceremony portrays salvation here on earth for believers too, and the foot-washing ceremony portrays God's appointed leaders in the church with having a "one who serves" mentality. However, these ceremonies ultimately portray the future marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven. I should briefly mention the significance of Nisan 14, in the evening as the 14th is beginning, for prophetic significance. As I have shown elsewhere on this website in the article, Why Rosh Hashanah is the Rapture!, that the rapture is not going to take place on the evening of Nisan 14, but on 1 Tishri as a prophetic fulfillment of the fall feast of Rosh Hashanah. Why then institute a new ceremony for the new covenant and command "do this in remembrance of Me?", on a specific day? We know that the prophetic fulfillment of all the feast days occurs exactly on that day as observed annually in the Jewish calendar. So what will happen on the earth as the Marriage Supper of the Lamb takes place in heaven on Nisan 14? I don't have the full answer for that yet. As the Lord reveals it to me, perhaps it will be a topic for a future article.

Prototype Last Supper Bread and Wine Ceremonial for Annual Observance

The basics of ceremonial observance for the annual celebration of the Last Supper Bread and Wine Ceremony should include the following.

1. Observance of the annual ceremony as Yeshua instituted on the evening of the 14th of Nisan as the 14th is beginning.
2. A communal supper for the church or family. This doesn't have to be an expensive meal and can be a wonderful pot-luck meal.
3. After the meal is finished, the leader blesses the bread and breaks it for the people and passes it out. Regular bread should be used and quality uncut French bread type loaves are ideally suited for it.
4. After the bread, the leader blesses the wine and distributes it.
5. A sermon or reading of the scriptures on why we celebrate this event, and what it means for Yeshua to be the true bread from heaven, plus the significance of the wine. This could be broken in 2 parts and the historical events about the crucifixion week and their meaning, covered before the bread and wine; and the present and future meanings covered after the bread and wine ceremony.
6. (optional) The pastor or family leader does foot-washing (for people who accept it, not forcing anyone). The pastor or leader can do the elders and employees or selected congregants, but limited to about 12. They can then go on to wash the feet of any others. Short coverage of why we do foot-washing.
7. Hymns or songs as appropriate anywhere in the ceremony.

Of course, a church or family can add other things as they desire. The above is just a bare-bones outline of the annual ceremony. Why did I write (optional) for step 6, the foot-washing? The reason is that Paul did not mention foot-washing in 1 Corinthians 11:23-34, nor is it mentioned in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke which cover the Last Supper. Therefore, it seems reasonable to me that the essence of the Last Supper Bread and Wine ceremony is the bread and wine; and while foot-washing may be a good idea at the annual celebration on the evening of the beginning of Nisan 14, it was not emphasized as much as the bread and wine. That emphasis may be because celebrating the bread and wine ceremony throughout the year would not include foot-washing.

Dates for Annual Observance of Bread And Wine Ceremony from 2002

The dates below are for 14 Nisan in the evening, just after 13 Nisan has ended.

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|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 2002 March 26, Tuesday | 2013 March 24, Sunday |
| 2003 April 15, Tuesday | 2014 April 13, Sunday |
| 2004 April 4, Sunday | 2015 April 2, Thursday |
| 2005 April 22, Friday | 2016 April 21, Thursday |
| 2006 April 11, Tuesday | 2017 April 9, Sunday |
| 2007 April 1, Sunday | 2018 March 29, Thursday |
| 2008 April 18, Friday | 2019 April 18, Thursday |
| 2009 April 7, Tuesday | 2020 April 7, Tuesday |
| 2010 March 28, Sunday | 2021 March 26, Friday |
| 2011 April 17, Sunday | 2022 April 14, Thursday |
| 2012 April 5, Thursday | |

Last Notes: In most cases, many other scriptures could be given to buttress the points in these articles, but in order not to copy most of the Bible in this article, I limited scriptural evidence to what was necessary to make the points. Please feel free to print, copy, or distribute this 3-part article, and no request for permission is needed for you to use it. Roy.