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REVISIONING THE LORD'S SUPPER AS A COVENANT RENEWAL MEAL

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BY
CHRIS JONES
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When Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me" in Luke 22:19, the question would soon have to be answered by the Christian community as to exactly what they would be celebrating. Since the earliest days of the church, Christians have grappled with this statement of Christ. The Lord's Supper has been a subject of much exegetical and theological debate as to the nature of the Supper, the frequency of its celebration in the life of the Church, and its sacramental or nonsacramental nature.

This essay will come to the Supper from another angle. For a long period of time the debate has centered around the concept of the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. Since the sixteenth century, Christians have been divided on whether Jesus is truly, mystically, and sacramentally present in the elements of the bread and wine. Some have simply asserted that the Lord's Supper is purely a memorial service. Paul Blowers challenges the simple memorial view of the Supper by stating, "it was never merely a repeated funeral for the martyred Jesus."¹ Blowers points out that the Lord's Supper was viewed as a multilayered *mystērion* by the earliest Christians.² The simple debate that devolved into the either/or of the sacramental versus the memorial view may have clouded some biblical concepts that can be recovered by rigorous

¹ Paul M. Blowers, "The Lord's Supper as Covenant Renewal," *Leaven* Vol. 22.4.6 (2014): 196.

² *Ibid.*

exegesis and by reading the Bible as a complete story. A reassessment of the biblical data and renewal of emphasis may help this impasse.

This essay proposes that looking at the Supper through the lens of the Old Testament covenant meals will give theologians, ministers, and lay people a new perspective on what exactly happens during the Supper. This discovery has practical ministerial applications. If the Lord's Supper is truly a covenant renewal meal it gives new emphasis to the Sunday assembly and the shape of that assembly.³ For many free-church and Zwinglian influenced churches the view of the Supper as a covenant renewal will challenge the view of the Supper as being purely a memorial.

To achieve an understanding of the Lord's Supper as a covenant renewal meal some groundwork will need to be laid down. Part of this foundational work will be exploring the possibility of antecedents for the Lord's Supper, found in the Jewish Scripture, as a lens through which to understand the institution narratives found in the Synoptic Gospels as well as Paul. It will pick up those antecedents and explore the possibility of understanding the Lord's Supper in sacrificial terms. The establishment of a connection between the Lord's Supper and sacrificial terms is critical due to the connection of sacrifice and covenant. Because this concept of sacrifice and covenant is so important, this essay will show the relationship between sacrifice and covenant in the Jewish Scriptures. After this, the pertinent phrases of Jesus from the Last Supper will be investigated in light of the subject of this exploration. Lastly, the essay will consider the Supper in light of covenant renewal and explore the ramifications of this understanding for practical ministry.

ANTECEDENTS TO THE LORD'S SUPPER

³ Ibid., 196.

Hartmut Gese points out the following concerning the background to the Lord's Supper:

Even if we hold that the Lord's Supper had its origin in a specific situation in the life of Jesus, we cannot ignore the assumptions and the traditions that lie behind it. Deriving an observance from a situation is not an alternative to understanding it in terms of tradition. Neither is it the purpose of a historical investigation to ignore what is specific and distinctive. By investigating the origin of the Lord's Supper in the pre-Christian tradition, we are not overlooking what is distinctive; we are seeking to understand it correctly.⁴

Gese skillfully points out that an investigation into the Lord's Supper will not rob the Supper of its Christian distinctiveness, or its central role in the life of the church, but the purpose of understanding the Supper's background is to bring more meaning and significance to the Church. One must consider how the earliest Christians would have understood the Lord's Supper in light of the revealed Scripture of Israel. It is a legitimate pursuit to delve into the possible traditions and assumptions that shaped the early Christian understanding as to what exactly took place at Jesus's Last Supper, and how that understanding related to the celebration of the Lord's Supper in the life of the Church.

The Passover Feast and the Lord's Supper

The most obvious antecedent through which to filter the action of Jesus is the Passover feast of the Jews.⁵ The Passover is a fitting backdrop for Jesus to institute the Lord's Supper due to the Jewish expectations swirling around the Passover feast. Joachim Jeremias demonstrates the Passover, in the time of Jesus, was a feast looking ahead toward a final deliverance in which the

⁴ Hartmut Gese, "The Origin of the Lord's Supper," *Essays in Biblical Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1981), 117.

⁵ This paper assumes that Jesus saw the Last Supper as a Passover meal (Luke 22:15–16, Mark 14:12, Matt 26:17-19).

Exodus from Egypt was only a prototype.⁶ Jeremias also points out that Messianic hopes and expectations were tightly bound to the time of Passover.⁷ Understanding the Jewish expectations that were connected to Passover will shed light on the words and actions of Jesus at the Final Supper.

One could propose that the understanding of the Lord's Supper is multilayered, and the Passover gives one lens through which to observe the Lord's Supper.⁸ Jeremias points out that the Lord's Supper is to be considered in light of the Passover Seder due to fourteen parallels witnessed between the Gospel accounts and the Seder customs.⁹ In 1 Cor 5:7–8 Paul makes it clear that Jesus' sacrifice is connected with the Passover lamb. For the thesis of this paper, examining the Passover as a possible background to the Supper is helpful due to the Passover's connection to covenant renewal. The Passover celebration immediately followed the renewal of the covenant with Joshua (Josh 3:7–5:12). The Passover feast also accompanied the covenant renewal and reform of Josiah (2 Kgs 23). Taking note of the close connection between the Passover feast and the times of covenant renewal in the Jewish Scriptures demonstrates the importance of examining the Passover for the purpose of connecting the Lord's Supper with covenant renewal.

Since the Lord's Supper occurred during the Passover feast of the Jews, it will help to examine what is known about the structure of the Passover meal during the time of Jesus. According to the Mishnah, the Passover meal had a basic fourfold structure: a small preliminary

⁶ Joachim Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1966), 206–207. Also see Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), 66–67.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ For a more robust discussion on the other possible Jewish undercurrents for the Lord's Supper see Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (New York: Doubleday, 2011).

⁹ Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 42–61.

meal, the Passover liturgy, the main meal, and the concluding rights.¹⁰ If this pattern reflects first-century custom, one can reason from this information that the breaking of bread by Jesus would have occurred before the main meal, but the cup that Jesus offered would have occurred after the main meal as Luke tells us in Luke 22:20.¹¹ Jesus clearly departs from the Passover liturgy when He pronounces that the bread is “My body which is given for you” and by calling the cup “the new covenant in my blood.” There is a definite continuity and discontinuity as one compares the celebration of the Passover to what occurred in the Lord’s Supper narrative of the Gospels.¹² One can quickly discern that the early Christian community did not understand the Lord’s Supper to be a re-creation of the Passover feast because the Passover is a yearly feast, and the Lord’s Supper was at least a weekly celebration in the early Church.¹³ By the synoptic tradition’s singling out the bread and the cup from the Passover setting it becomes obvious that those elements will be the focus of this new celebration. Only after the crucifixion and resurrection, could the earliest Christians understand exactly the referent to which to attach the Last Supper of Jesus. One cannot understand the Last Supper without the passion and resurrection of Jesus. Also, it should be noted that one of the fullest explanations of the meaning

¹⁰ Cf. *m. Pes.* 10.5. I have used the translation by Hebert Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Introduction and Brief Explanatory Notes* (1933; repr. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 150–51. Also see E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 B.C.E.–66 C.E.* (London: SCM Press, 1992) for a discussion on judicious use of the Rabbinic sources to construct a view of practices in the time of Jesus.

¹¹ There is great debate as to the reliability of the Mishnah in giving an accurate description of the Passover during the first century. For a more skeptical approach to the Mishnah’s description of a first century Passover see Joseph Tabory, “Towards a History of the Passover Meal,” *Passover and Easter: Origin and History to the Modern Times* (ed. Paul F. Bradshaw and L. A. Hoffman; Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame, 1999), 63. Brant Pitre tends to give more credence to sources such as Philo and the Mishnah in their depiction of a first century Passover. For Pitre’s view see Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 318-319.

¹² For a discussion of the Last Supper as a Passover meal see Johnathan Klawans, “Was Jesus’ Last Supper a Seder?,” *Bible History*, 12 January 2017, <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/people-cultures-in-the-bible/jesus-historical-jesus/was-jesus-last-supper-a-seder/>

¹³ I. Howard Marshall, *The Last Supper and the Lord’s Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 155.

of the cross is given by Jesus at the Last Supper. It appears that the cross and Supper are inseparable and both cast meaning on one another. The sacrificial death of Jesus can be connected to the Passover, and the Passover provides a beautiful background by connecting the work of Jesus as a type of new exodus.¹⁴ Also, one cannot ignore the deficiencies of the Passover liturgy as the *Sitz im Leben* for the Lord's Supper *in toto*.¹⁵ When one considers the deficiencies of the Passover as being the only antecedent for the Lord's Supper, it is evidence that a more holistic approach must be attempted at understanding the background of the supper. The Passover is just one of the many lens through which to view the Lord's Supper.

The *Todah* Offering and the Lord's Supper

Another possible Old Testament lens through which to view the supper is the thank (*todah*) offering of Israel. The thank (*todah*) offering is important to this current investigation due to connection of this sacrifice to the Davidic Kingdom. As will be demonstrated below, the *todah* sacrifice would be especially connected to God's covenant with David. The thank offering, more specifically, was usually offered by someone that had been delivered from great peril. According to Leviticus, the *todah* was a subset of the peace offering (*sh'lamim*) (Lev 7:11–17). The *sh'lamim* offering was multifaceted and the Hebrew word behind this offering has been interpreted as peace offering, communion offering, or fellowship offering.¹⁶ Specifically, the *sh'lamim* is broken down into the thank (*todah*) offering, vowed (*neder*) offering, and the

¹⁴ For a fuller discussion of the motif of Jesus as a type of "New Moses" see Dale C. Allison Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993).

¹⁵ Stephen C. Barton, ed. *The Cambridge Companion to the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 146.

¹⁶ Philip P. Jenson, "The Levitical Sacrificial System," in *Sacrifice in the Bible*, ed. Roger T. Beckwith and Martin J. Selman (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1995), 30–31.

freewill (*nedaba*) offering (Lev 7:11–17).¹⁷ The general occasion for a peace offering would be for the following reasons: for an unexpected blessing, for deliverance when a vow was made, and for general thankfulness.¹⁸ Jacob Milgrom points out that the purpose of all of the types of the peace offering is to “provide a ritual by which all the Israelites could acknowledge the miracles of their lives and express gratitude for them.”¹⁹ Usually the *todah* sacrifice was offered by someone who had been delivered from peril and came to God with a heart of thankfulness. Examples of *todah* being offered in the Hebrew Scriptures would be Jonah promising to offer a *todah* in the Temple if he is delivered (Jon 2:3–10), and Hezekiah offering up a *todah* song at his deliverance from his life-threatening illness (Isa 38).²⁰ There are four compelling reasons to consider the *todah* as a background to understanding the Supper and they are the following: the Passover and *todah* sacrifice were closely related to one another in Jewish thought, Justin Martyr connects the Supper with the leper’s thank offering, the concept of the New Exodus and its connection with the Davidic covenant, and the possible connection between 1 Cor 10:18 and the *todah* sacrifice.

The Todah Sacrifice and Passover

¹⁷ Gary A. Anderson, “Sacrifice and Sacrificial Offerings,” *Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 1.878.; Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 218–19.

¹⁸ Milgrom, *Leviticus 1-16*, 218–19; John H. Walton and Andrew E. Hill, *The Old Testament Today: A Journey From Original Meaning to Contemporary Significance* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 76.

¹⁹ Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus: A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 28.

²⁰ Tim Gray, “From Jewish Passover to Christian Eucharist: The Story of the Todah,” *Lay Witness* (Nov–Dec, 2002), 20.

C. John Collins posits that the early church (immediately after the Apostles) began to see the Lord's Supper in terms of a Christian sacrifice.²¹ If Collins's assertion is true, it becomes evident that the Passover provides an inadequate background for this understanding. The weekly repeated pattern of the Lord's Supper demonstrates that the early Christians saw the Supper through an augmented Passover lens or through multiple Jewish antecedents. Jutta Leonhardt points out that in Philo's writings about the Jewish festivals the Passover feast was special because the laity had the purity of priests and could offer the sacrifice.²² Leonhardt goes on to propose that the entire Passover feast can be categorized as a time of thanksgiving and a festival of thanks-offering.²³

Stephen Pimental and Brant Pitre claim that both the Passover and the *todah* were peace offerings.²⁴ The closest scriptural connection between the Passover and the peace offering can be found in 2 Chr 30:21–22 which states:

the sons of Israel present in Jerusalem celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great joy, and the Levites and the priests praised the Lord day after day with loud instruments to the Lord. Then Hezekiah spoke encouragingly to all the Levites who showed good insight in the things of the Lord. So they ate for the appointed seven days, sacrificing peace offerings and giving thanks to the Lord God of their fathers. (NASB)

This passage shows that during the seven-day cycle of the feast of Unleavened Bread there were peace offerings being performed. It cannot be stated for sure that the Passover meal and the peace offering were one and the same, or that the Passover feast was a subset of the peace

²¹ C. John Collins, "The Eucharist as Christian Sacrifice: How Patristic Authors Can Help Us Read the Bible," *Westminster Theological Journal* 66 (2004): 1.

²² Jutta Leonhardt, *Jewish Worship in Philo of Alexandria* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 29.

²³ *Ibid.*, 29.

²⁴ Stephen Pimental, "The Todah Sacrifice as Pattern for the Eucharist," *Inside the Vatican* 16.3 (March 2008), 46–47; Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 336. See also Richard Averbeck, "Peace Offering," *NIDOTTE* 4:141.

offering. What can be determined is that there were similarities between the Passover meal and the peace offering. Both in the Passover feast and in the peace offering the worshipper was allowed to eat the sacrificed victim. One can take this a step further by looking at the *todah*'s similarity with the Passover meal. Passover and the *todah* had elements that separated them from the peace offering such as the following: unleavened bread, an assumed narrative of deliverance, and the requirement to consume the sacrifice entirely on the day it is offered.²⁵ The Passover feast also employed Ps 116, which is part of the Hallel Psalms, and it follows the *todah* pattern.²⁶ In Ps 116 the psalmist laments his suffering to the point of death (v. 3) and prays that God would deliver him (v. 4).²⁷ When God delivers the psalmist the response is a sacrificial meal in which wine is consecrated (vv. 12–13), and the sacrifice described in the final section is classified as a *todah* sacrifice (v. 17).²⁸ Josephus sheds more light on the possible connection between the Passover and *todah* when he says the Israelites "offered sacrifices of thanksgiving (χαριστηρίους) because the divine will had brought them again to the land of their Fathers and to the laws of this land."²⁹ Josephus gives a possible direct link to the *todah* and Passover by calling the sacrifices offered during the time of Passover thanksgiving sacrifices. The Greek word χαριστηρίους that Josephus uses to refer to the sacrifices during Passover will be important later in this essay due to its connection to early Christian language used to refer to the Lord's Supper. One can see a possible connection between the Passover meal and the *todah*

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Stephen Pimental, "The Todah Sacrifice as Pattern for the Eucharist." *Inside the Vatican* 16 no. 3 (March 2008), 46.

²⁷ Ibid., 47.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Flavius Josephus, *Josephus: The Complete Works*, trans. William Whiston (Nashville: Nelson, 1998), 351; "Flavius Josephus, *Antiquitates Judaicae* B. Niese, Ed.," <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0145>.

offering. Since the Passover feast was connected to the *todah* offering in the time of Christ, it is not a giant leap to consider the *todah* sacrifice as one background to understanding the Lord's Supper.³⁰ Reasons to connect the Passover to the *todah* are the following: both in the Passover and the *todah* sacrifice the laity could participate in the sacrifice, both celebrations allowed for the celebrants to eat the sacrificed victim, both sacrifices marked a time of thanksgiving due to God's deliverance, 2 Chr 30:21–22 connects the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a time marked by peace offerings, one of the Hallel Psalms sung at Passover has been categorized as a Psalm to be used in the liturgy of the *todah* offering, and Josephus refers to the offerings during Passover as thanksgiving sacrifices.

Justin Martyr and the *Todah* Offering

Justin, in his dialogue with Trypho, makes a connection between the thank offering made by a leper in Lev 14 with the Eucharist. Justin's attitude toward the Eucharist is important because it dates to the middle of the second century and gives us an early insight into the understanding of the Lord's Supper by the generation that comes immediately after the apostolic age. In making the case for a connection between the Eucharist and the *todah* sacrifice, the following quotation from Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* is critical for the argument:

“Likewise,” I continued, “the offering of flour, gentlemen, which was ordered to be presented for those cleansed from leprosy, was a type of the bread of the Eucharist, which our Lord Jesus Christ commanded us to offer in remembrance of the Passion that he endured for all those souls who are cleansed from sin, and that at the same time we should thank God for having created the world, and everything in it, for the sake of mankind, and for having saved us from the sin in

³⁰ For a more robust discussion on the possibility of the Lord's Supper as having a *todah* background see the objections of Joachim Jeremias and answers to those objections by Hermut Loehr. For the negative opinion see Joachim Jeremias, “Ist das Dankopfermahl der Ursprung des Herrenmahls?” *Donum Gentilicium: New Testament Studies in Honour of David Daube* (ed. E. Bammel et al.; Oxford, 1978), 64–67. For the rebuttal to Jeremias see Hermut Loehr, “The Eucharist and Jewish Ritual Meals: The Case of the *Todah*.” *Early Christianity* 7.4 (2016), 474–480.

which we were born, and for the total destruction of the powers and principalities of evil through him who suffered in accordance with his will.

Thus, as I stated already, God speaks through Malachi, one of the twelve prophets, concerning the sacrifices you then offered up to him, I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord and will not receive your sacrifices from your hands. For from the rising of the sun even to its going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a clean oblation; for my name is great among the Gentiles, says the Lord, but you profane it.”

By making reference to the sacrifices which we Gentiles offer to him in every place, namely, the bread of the Eucharist and the chalice of the Eucharist, he predicted that we should glorify his name, but that you should profane it.³¹

Justin makes a direct reference to the leper’s thank offering for healing as a type of the Eucharist. This provides early evidence that Christians in the mid-second century were making a connection between the thank offerings of Israel and what takes place at the Lord’s Table. In his *Dialogue with Trypho* 41, Justin also quotes Mal 1:10–12 in reference to a pure sacrifice that would continue into the Messianic age, and many of the prophets pointed toward an age when the thank offering would continue. Justin actually uses sacrificial language and directly connects it to the Lord’s Supper in that same passage. In *Dialogue with Trypho* 41, Justin refers to the bread as ἄρτος τῆς εὐχαριστίας.³² Hartmut Gese quotes from *Pesiqta de Rab Kahana* and claims that in rabbinic thinking Malachi 1:10–12 was interpreted as a *todah* offering.³³ “In the coming Messianic age all sacrifices will cease, but the thank offering [*todah*] will never cease.”³⁴ According to *Leviticus Rabbah* 9:7 and *Pesiqta Rabbati* 12 many rabbis looked to the ending of the sacrificial system of the Second Temple period to give way to a Messianic Age that would

³¹ Justin Martyr, *St. Justin Martyr Dialogue with Trypho*, trans. Thomas B. Falls (Washington D.C.: Catholic University Press of America, 2003), 62-63.

³² Rev. W. Trollope, ed., *S. Justini Philosophi et Martyris cum Tryphone Judaeo Dialogus* (Cambridge: Pitt Press, 1846), 84.

³³ Hartmut Gese, “Origin of the Lord’s Supper,” 133.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 133.

focus on a *todah*-centric sacrificial system. There is a universal aspect of the *todah* that is found in Justin's thoughts when he makes reference to the Gentiles. In connecting the lines of thought, one can see that Mal 1:10–12 has a history of being interpreted as a *todah* sacrifice, and in Justin's *Dialogue with Trypho* 41 there is an early Christian source connecting the passage from Malachi directly to the Lord's Supper.

New Exodus, The Davidic Kingdom, Covenant, and *Todah*

The period of Second Temple Judaism was shaped by a hope for vindication. N. T. Wright frames the situation in the following terms:

The great story of the Hebrew scriptures was therefore inevitably read in the second-temple period as a story in search of a conclusion. This ending would have to incorporate the full liberation and redemption of Israel, an event which had not happened as long as Israel was oppressed, a prisoner in her own land.³⁵

This hope for liberation is tied together with the expectation of a new exodus in which the Messiah would become a new Moses.³⁶ Israel was waiting for God to conclude his story of redemption in the messianic age. The old covenant that Moses established was put in place with a burnt offering, peace offering, ratification of the covenant, and a fellowship meal in the presence of God on Sinai (Exod 24:9–11).³⁷ Understanding the method in which God established the old covenant with Moses may shed light on how God would form his new covenant in the age to come. Jeremiah speaks of a new covenant that God would establish with all Israel.

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to

³⁵ N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 217.

³⁶ Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Jewish Roots of the Eucharist* (New York: Doubleday, 2011), 28–31.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people” (Jer 31:31–33 NASB).

A few striking details stand out in this text. First of all, God will establish a new covenant with His people and therefore it is differentiated from the covenant made with Moses. Secondly, this covenant is made with the two southern tribes found in Judah and the ten northern tribes. Isaiah 11:11–13 also speaks of a restoration of the twelve tribes of Israel to the land and a time of renewal.³⁸ This would be a difficult task because of the scattering of the ten northern tribes by the Assyrians in 722 BCE. The new covenant will also focus on the internalization of the covenant.

As was presented prior, there is a possible connection between the *todah* and the Passover, and this is an important point when one considers the concept of a new exodus. N.T. Wright points out the expectation of the new exodus and its connection to the Passover when he states the following:

“Passover looked back to the exodus, and on to the coming of the Kingdom. Jesus intended this meal to symbolize the new exodus, the arrival of the kingdom through his own fate. The meal, focused on Jesus’s actions, with the bread and the cup, told the Passover story, and Jesus’s own story, and wove the two into one.”³⁹

Wright shows that the Passover feast was a natural time for Jesus to inaugurate a new exodus and a true return from exile. Another piece of the puzzle that helps this connection come into focus is the LXX version of Jer 38:7–9 (MT’s Jer 31: 7–9). According to the Septuagint, the prophecy of Jeremiah concerning the new covenant explains that the establishment of this new covenant would come during the feast of

³⁸ Jason A. Staples, “What do all the Gentiles have to do with “All Israel”? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25–27.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130, no. 2 (2011), 277–280.

³⁹ N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1996), 559.

Passover.⁴⁰ The *todah* and Passover both have connections to the concept of the new exodus and the establishment of a new covenant.

Part of the expectation of a new exodus is bound up in the expectation of God's placing of a Davidic King back on the throne of Israel.⁴¹ In 2 Sam 6 the text tells of David bringing the Ark of the Covenant to Zion, which leads to God making an everlasting covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7. This covenant made with David would also shape much of the expectations of Second Temple Judaism in that the new exodus was tied together with the return of the Davidic King.⁴² Of the importance of the Davidic covenant Michael Barber states the following: In all of this, then, we see how the Davidic covenant is not simply a private oath sworn to David. It is a climatic event in the history of God's covenant dealings with mankind in the Old Testament. Through the Davidic king, God will restore his covenant relationship with humanity that was lost since Adam fell at the dawn of time.⁴³

This future return from exile and new exodus will also be marked with a change in the entire focus of the cult of Israel. The Old Testament comes to an end in the book of Malachi with a possible prophecy about sacrifice in the age to come to focus on the *todah* sacrifice. Earlier in this essay it was demonstrated that rabbinical interpretations of Mal 1:10–12 with that of Justin Martyr connected this passage to the *todah* sacrifice and the Lord's Supper. If those assumptions are correct, one can see Malachi, as one of the later prophets of the Jewish Scriptures, looking

⁴⁰ Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 388.

⁴¹ Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 52–57.

⁴² Mark L. Strauss, *The Davidic Messiah in Luke-Acts: The Promise and its Fulfillment in Lukan Christology* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 294.

⁴³ Barber, *Singing in the Reign*, 57.

forward to a time of the *todah* sacrifice as the only sacrifice remaining in the messianic age to come.⁴⁴

Scott Hahn proposes that the covenant made with David concerning the kingdom will be shaped by the *todah*, and this covenant looks forward to a universal opening to all nations so that even the Gentiles will be able to truly worship God.⁴⁵ The fulfillment of the Davidic covenant will be marked by *todah* and will include all the nations. In this new time of deliverance, the Deuteronomic covenant will finally reach its main objective of the circumcised heart with an internalization of God's teachings. According to Barber:

The *todah* Psalms are principally a request to be delivered from suffering. Deliverance is not understood as the alternative to the self-offering of the individual, but as the acceptance of his sacrifice, since it reveals that the Lord has truly heard his prayer. The *todah* represents the internalization of and, thus, fulfillment of the Deuteronomic covenant.⁴⁶

Barber connects the internalization of the Deuteronomic code with the *todah* centric worship during and after the reign of David. A time of deliverance, renewal, and heart transformation will mark this new epoch in God's dealings with Israel.

One passage that pulls the streams of thought of the new Davidic King, new covenant, and new exodus is found in Zech 9:9,11.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your *king is coming to you* (italics mine); He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey. As for you also, because of the *blood of My covenant* (italics mine) with you, I have set your prisoners *free from the waterless pit*. (italics mine)” (Zech 9:9,11)

⁴⁴ See George L. Klein, “An Introduction to Malachi,” *Criswell Theological Review* 2.1 (1987) 24. for an examination of the dating for Malachi.

⁴⁵ Scott Hahn, *Letter and Spirit* (New York: Doubleday, 2005), 66.

⁴⁶ Michael Barber, *Singing in the Reign* (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road, 2001), 79.

Zechariah connects the coming of the king to the images of a blood established covenant and freedom from bondage. Zechariah is casting an eschatological vision of a day when the king would come and a covenant would be established to release the prisoners from Sheol.⁴⁷

All of these hopes of new exodus, the realized Davidic Kingdom, and the internalization of God's law find their perfect fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The hope of the new exodus is marked by following: a Davidic king coming to power, establishment of a new covenant, the expectation of the new covenant being established at Passover, and the *todah* sacrifice as the only sacrifice to remain during this epoch. It is also important to note the connection of the Passover and *todah* in the coming of the new exodus.

1 Corinthians 10:18 and the *Todah* Sacrifice

The most compelling and complete case one could make in connecting the *todah* sacrifice to the Lord's Supper is the proverbial smoking gun of a direct scriptural reference linking the two. One possible direct scriptural link to the Lord's Supper and the peace offering is found in 1 Cor 10:18. Connecting the Lord's Supper to the peace offering is important due to the fact that the *todah* offering was a subset of the peace offering. Johnathan Klawans points out that 1 Corinthians 10:18 underscores the seriousness and legitimacy of Israel's sacrificial service and connects the Eucharist as similarly serious, legitimate, and efficacious.⁴⁸ In 1 Corinthians 10:18 Paul states, "Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar?" This passage is interpreted by some as referring to the peace offering. The reason for this

⁴⁷ The term pit is used to refer to Sheol in the following passages: Ps 28:1; 30:3; 143:7; Isa 38:18; Ezek 31:16.

⁴⁸ Johnathan Klawans, "Interpreting the Last Supper: Sacrifice, Spiritualization, and Anti-Sacrifice," *New Testament Studies* 48 (2002): 11.

interpretation is that only the peace offering would be shared by the people of Israel. The other sacrifices of Israel would only be eaten by the priests. The peace offering is the only offering that could be consumed by the laity.

If this is referring to the peace offering, as Gordon Fee asserts, it would be very fruitful to this study because the context of this passage is Paul's teaching on the Lord's Supper.⁴⁹ In verses 16–17 of that same chapter Paul says, "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." Paul is linking the taking of the Lord's Supper and the sharing (*koinonia*) in Christ with the sharing of the altar of Israel.

C. John Collins believes this passage forms the backbone of the basis of sacrificial language in the earliest Christian writers as they relate to the Lord's Supper.⁵⁰ Gordon Fee makes the point that 1 Cor 10:18 is specifically referring to a peace offering such as found in Deuteronomy 14:22–27.⁵¹ The logic for seeing this passage's connection to the peace offering is found in the fact that only in the peace offering could the laity actually partake in the sacrifice from the altar. If Fee is correct in his interpretation, it would make a definite connection between the peace offering and the Lord's Supper. This could explain how sacrificial language arose very early in the history of the Church surrounding the Lord's Supper.

Looking at the Supper through the lens of the Passover and the *todah* sacrifice is very helpful in trying to understand how the earliest Christians viewed the Lord's Supper. The *todah* sacrifice is an important possible antecedent to the Supper because of the following: the *todah*

⁴⁹ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 470–71.

⁵⁰ Collins, "The Eucharist as Christian Sacrifice: How Patristic Authors Can Help Us Read the Bible," 3.

⁵¹ Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 470–71.

had an assumed narrative of deliverance, it was connected with covenant making, and its celebration of table fellowship in the presence of God. Also, it was believed by some that the Messianic age would be identified as a *todah* centric epoch in the history of redemption. In the next section of this paper, the focus will turn to sacrifice and covenant. It will be observed that covenants and covenant making were many times accompanied by sacrifice and table fellowship.

COVENANT AND SACRIFICE

One attribute of the Hebrew scriptures that is very helpful for the investigation laid out in this thesis is the connection between sacrifice and covenant making. This connection is important due to the fact that God had promised in Jeremiah 31 to establish a new covenant with all of Israel. It is important to observe the connection in the Hebrew scriptures between covenant and sacrifice as we follow those lines into the New Testament.

Ps 50:5 states, “Gather to me the faithful ones who made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” The covenants that God established in scripture were established by sacrifice and confirmed in the eating of meals.⁵² Throughout the narrative of the Jewish Scriptures God forms and ratifies his covenants by sacrifice.⁵³ In the story of Laban and Jacob found in Genesis 31 the idea of covenant, sacrifice and meal are connected. According to John Mark Hicks the very purpose of God leading Israel out of Egypt was to form a covenant with Israel so that communion could be experienced in the wilderness.⁵⁴ In Exod 19–24 the ideas of covenant, sacrifice, and fellowship meal are displayed in great detail. Exod 19:3–8 exhibits God’s desire to

⁵² John Mark Hicks, *Come to the Table: Revisioning the Lord’s Supper* (Orange, CA: Leafwood, 2002), 27.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 28–29.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

form a covenant with Israel, a covenant ratified by blood sacrifice and a meal in Exodus 24. Because of this sacrifice and covenant, Moses and the elders are called into God's presence to experience this sacrifice and covenant making. On Mount Sinai the following takes place: the word of God is spoken and the people affirm it (Exod 24: 3), Moses writes down the words of God (Exod 24:7), sacrifices are offered (Exod 24:4–6), the words are read by Moses (Exod 24:7), the people affirm the covenant along with blood being sprinkled from the sacrifice (Exod 24:7–8), and Moses and the elders sit and eat in the presence of God (Exod 24:9–11). In this example of covenant making we see many of the same elements that are found in the *todah* sacrifice of Israel. Just as the example of God's covenant with Israel on Mount Sinai, so also in the *todah* we see sacrifice and a meal in the presence of God. The idea of meal and covenant being closely linked sheds light on our current investigation due to the fact that Jesus identifies the cup of the Lord's Supper with the "new covenant in my blood." Richard Hays directly connects the institution narrative in Matthew's Gospel with Exod 24 when he states the following:

Just as Moses and the chief men of the people ate and drank in the presence of God, so also the twelve disciples (Matt 26:20) eat and drink in the presence of God in order to celebrate and solemnize the covenant of which Jesus speaks—a covenant that foreshadows an eschatological future ("that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom") in which God's presence with Israel will be fully realized and celebrated.⁵⁵

With the echoes of Exod 24 playing in the background of Matthew 26 one can see the close connection between the establishment of the old covenant with sacrifice and the establishment of the new covenant with sacrifice. God established his covenant with Israel at Sinai through animal sacrifice, and he forms his new covenant through the sacrifice of Jesus and his blood.

⁵⁵ Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 134.

Covenant and Sacrificial Language in the Institution Narrative

If one is to posit that the Lord's Supper is possibly connected to covenant making and covenant renewal the most obvious place to look would be in the institution narratives of the Lord's Supper. This essay will not try to work back to an original narrative or pit the "Lukan-Pauline" narrative over and against the "Markan-Matthean" narrative of the Supper. This current study will look at basic elements that appear in all of the narrative traditions of the Supper.

The Blood of the Covenant

All four accounts of Jesus' words over the cup of the Last Supper agree in claiming that Jesus takes a cup of wine, and speaks words of interpretation over it in which he identifies "my blood" with the establishment of a "covenant."⁵⁶ In the accounts of Mark and Matthew, Jesus explicitly says that this "blood is being poured out for many" while Luke and 1 Corinthians connect the blood with the formation of a "new covenant."⁵⁷ What does it mean for Jesus to establish a new covenant in his blood? How would the first-century reader understand these words of Jesus in the context of the Jewish Scriptures? What does Jesus mean by stating that his "blood is being poured out for the many?" These important questions must be addressed if one is to work toward an understanding of the narrative as it relates to covenant.

The basic issue at play is the connection of Jesus' blood (*haima*) to the establishment of a covenant (*diathēkē*). As was mentioned prior, Exodus 24 gives us a full picture of God forming a covenant with His people through blood sacrifice and then celebrating that covenant through table fellowship. Many commentators point to Exodus 24 as a background to understanding

⁵⁶ Brant Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 92.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

Jesus' words concerning his blood and covenant.⁵⁸ Pitre acknowledges that Exodus 24 is the most explicit connection to the words of Jesus in the institution narrative, but it is not the only background passage.⁵⁹ The following is the main passage that many believe is in the background of Jesus' words:

Then He said to Moses, "Come up to the Lord, you and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and seventy of the elders of Israel, and you shall worship at a distance. Moses alone, however, shall come near to the Lord, but they shall not come near, nor shall the people come up with him." Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the Lord and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!" Moses wrote down all the words of the Lord. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. He sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the Lord. *Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar* (italics mine). Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" *So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words"* (italics mine). Then Moses went up with Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel, and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself. Yet He did not stretch out His hand against the nobles of the sons of Israel; and they saw God, *and they ate and drank* (italics mine). (Exodus 24:1–11)

The similarities in the account found in Exodus 24 and the Lord's Supper institution passages are striking. In the Markan-Matthean account of the Supper, Jesus' identification of the cup with "my blood of the covenant" (*to haima mou tēs diathēkē*) parallel the words of Moses "the blood of the covenant" (*haima tēs diathēkē*) found the LXX of Exodus 24:8.⁶⁰ The original

⁵⁸ Craig Keener, *The Historical Jesus of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 300.

⁵⁹ Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 93.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 94.; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 134.

readers would have certainly understood Jesus' words to have a connection to the covenant ceremony at Sinai.

Another similarity is found in the image of Jesus' blood being "poured out" in sacrifice in the Markan-Matthean accounts. This image is similar to the blood of the peace offering being "thrown against" or "poured out" on the altar as is reported in Exodus 24:6.⁶¹ The image of Jesus' blood being poured out and the blood being poured upon the altar at Sinai are pictures of sacrificial libations of blood.⁶²

Next, one symbolic action that Jesus accomplishes at the Last Supper is eating in the presence of the twelve disciples. Pitre proposes the twelve disciples of Jesus represent the twelve tribes of Israel.⁶³ One can see the connection between the Last Supper and Moses' covenant ceremony at Sinai when it is observed that Moses forms the covenant with the twelve tribes of Israel. In Exodus 24:4 we witness Moses build an altar with twelve pillars to represent the twelve tribes of Israel. The connection between the forming of the new covenant through the blood of Jesus with his new community of twelve is obvious when one considers that Moses ratifies the covenant with God in blood with the twelve tribes of Israel.

It should be remembered that Jesus speaks of his blood and the covenant in the context of a banquet. Moses' covenant ceremony culminates in a heavenly banquet where Moses and the elders of Israel are invited to ascend the mountain and eat in the presence of God.⁶⁴ In putting the Exodus 24 text in summary, the reader can observe that burnt offerings and peace offerings are

⁶¹ Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 94.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid., 95.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

offered to God. Blood is poured out to bind Israel to the covenant, and a banquet is participated in to celebrate this new covenant relationship.

Jerry Hwang focuses on Paul's statement in 1 Cor 11:25 of "the new covenant in my blood" in relation to covenantal feasting.⁶⁵ Hwang points out that past scholarly studies focused on the words "new covenant" in its relation to Jer 31:31.⁶⁶ Hwang asserts that what scholars have overlooked in the past was the genitival relationship between "blood" (τὸ αἷμα) and "covenant" (τῆς διαθήκης).⁶⁷ This is important due the fact that this genitival connection between blood and covenant only appears in the LXX version of Exod 24:8 and Zech 9:11.⁶⁸ Hwang goes on to conclude that Paul's argument in 1 Cor 10 is centered around covenantal feasting as it relates to the abuses of the Corinthian church and the Lord's Supper.⁶⁹

In summary, several aspects of the Institution Narrative of the Lord's Supper present us with significant parallels to Exod 24. The following are the most obvious parallels: Jesus' identification of the cup with "my blood of the covenant," the image of Jesus' blood being "poured out," the celebration of this covenant meal with the twelve disciples, and the context of the blood of the covenant with a banquet meal. Michael Barber sums up these connections by stating the following:

all four accounts have Jesus linking his blood with the motif of a covenant while celebrating a meal mirrors not only Moses' words concerning the "blood of the covenant" but also the fact that the ceremony in Exodus 24 culminates in a sacred

⁶⁵ Jerry Hwang, "Turning the Tables on Idol Feasts: Paul's use of Exodus 32:6 in 1 Corinthians 10:7," *JETS* 54.3 (September 2011), 586.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

feast (Exodus 24:8-11). These points of contact are too strong and numerous to be written off as mere coincidence.⁷⁰

When one considers the connection of the phrase “my blood of the covenant” to Exod 24 and Zech 9 some fruitful insight starts to emerge. The phrase “my blood of the covenant” refers to the atoning blood of Jesus as well as a future release of the captives.⁷¹ The future release of the captives achieved by the blood of Jesus is reminiscent of the bloody sacrifice of the Passover lamb on the occasion of the Exodus.⁷² By attaching the “blood of the covenant” to the cup, Jesus is pointing the disciples to the atoning nature of his blood as well as the new exodus achieved by the release of the captives.

Do This!

When Jesus commanded, “Do this!” the question would soon have to be answered by the Christian community as to exactly what they would be celebrating.⁷³ When considered in the cultic actions of Israel, the command to “do this” (*touto poieite*) (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24–25) takes on new meaning.⁷⁴ Barber contends that the phrase “do this” has cultic connotations that connect Jesus’ commands with the cultic actions found the Jewish Scriptures.⁷⁵ Two passages from the Jewish Scriptures that bring out this possible cultic connection are Exodus 29:31–33, 35 and Numbers 15:8–11, 15.

⁷⁰ Michael Barber, “The Historical Jesus and the Cultic Restoration Eschatology: The New Temple, the New Priesthood, and the New Cult” (PhD diss., Fuller Theological Seminary, 2010), 601.

⁷¹ G. K. Beale and D.A. Carson, eds., *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 382–383.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, *God Is Near Us* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 58.

⁷⁴ Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 417.

⁷⁵ Barber, “The Historical Jesus and the Cultic Restoration Eschatology,” 673–674.

“You shall take the ram of ordination and boil its flesh in a holy place. Aaron and his sons shall eat the flesh of the ram and the bread that is in the basket, at the doorway of the tent of meeting. Thus they shall eat those things by which atonement was made at their ordination and consecration; but a layman shall not eat them, because they are holy. “*Thus you shall do (LXX poiēseis...houtōs)* to Aaron and to his sons, according to all that I have commanded you; you shall ordain them through seven days. (Exodus 29:31–33, 35)

When you prepare a bull as a burnt offering or a sacrifice, to fulfill a special vow, or for peace offerings to the Lord, then you shall offer with the bull a grain offering of three-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with one-half a hin of oil; and you shall offer as the drink offering one-half a hin of wine as an offering by fire, as a soothing aroma to the Lord. Thus it *shall be done (LXX houtōs poiēseis)* for each ox, or for each ram, or for each of the male lambs, or of the goats. As for the assembly, there shall be one statute for you and for the alien who sojourns with you, a perpetual statute throughout your generations; as you are, so shall the alien be before the Lord. (Numbers 15:8–11, 15)

When considering Jesus commands to “do this” one can see the possible connection between Jesus words and the cultic, repeated actions in the sacrificial system of Israel. When Jesus utters *touto poieite* during the institution narrative one could possibly hear the resonant echoes of God’s command in Israel’s priestly ordination rite (Exodus 29), and God’s special instructions for burnt offerings and peace offerings (Numbers 15). This opens the possibility that Jesus command to “do this” has cultic implications and can be connected to the concept of sacrifice. Jeremias strengthens this possible connection by connecting *touto poieite* with Exod 29 and Num 15 as well as the Qumran texts.⁷⁶ Jeremias asserts that *touto poieite* is specifically designated to be used as a repetition of a rite as is evidenced in the Jewish Scriptures and the Qumran texts.⁷⁷ With this in mind, one could understand that Jesus meant the Supper to be a repeated rite that had sacrificial connotations.

⁷⁶ Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, 251–252.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 252.

Remembrance

When Jesus told his followers to “do this,” he specifically told them to do this in “remembrance of me.” Pitre proposes that the concept of “remembrance” is connected to the Jewish Scriptures and the idea of ritualized reenactment.⁷⁸ Pitre states, “the ritualized reenactment of the Passover sacrifice that set the exodus in motion is consistently associated with the remembrance of the original saving event.”⁷⁹ With Jesus’ command to repeat his actions “in remembrance of me” (*anamnēsin*) in mind, one might compare the following passages from the Jewish Bible with the words of Jesus:

Also in the day of your gladness and in your appointed feasts, and on the first days of your months, you shall blow the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; and they shall be as a *reminder* (italics mine) (LXX ἀνάμνησις) of you before your God. I am the Lord your God. (Numbers 10:10)

Now this day will be a memorial (LXX μνημόσυνον) to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance. (Exodus 12:14)

There is a direct parallel between Num 10:10 and Jesus’ words “in remembrance.” In Num 10 there is a connection to sacrifice and the concept of remembrance. The sacrificial ritual was intended to help the worshipper remember the mighty saving acts of God in the past and appropriate those acts to the present. Remembrance in the Jewish Scriptures was not simply recalling a past event from Israel’s history, but it often entailed extending the efficacy of that past event into the present.⁸⁰ An example of this past-coming-to-the-present motif can be found in Exod 6:5–6. God “remembers” the covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and because of his remembering he delivers Israel from Egypt.

⁷⁸ Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 419.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Barber, “The Historical Jesus and the Cultic Restoration Eschatology,” 631.

The fact that Jesus states “do this in remembrance of me” during the Passover adds even greater significance to his words. Barber states, “Given the Passover context of Jesus' meal, it may be significant that the word ἀνάμνησις, closely resembles the term μνημόσυνον used for the Passover (Exod 12:14)”⁸¹ This is important when one considers Rabbinical teachings from the Mishnah concerning the Passover such as the following:

In every generation a man must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt, for it is written, *And thou shalt tell thy son in that day saying, It is because of that which the Lord did form when I came forth out of Egypt* [cf. Exod 13:8]. Therefore we are bound to give thanks, to praise, to glorify, to honour, to exalt, to extol, and to bless him who wrought all these wonders for our fathers and for us.⁸²

Those that participated in the Passover feast were to take the great saving acts of God by liberating Israel from Egypt, and bring those actions present into their own contemporary context. In some sense, the worshipper at Passover in the time of Jesus was with Moses and the Israelites on the great night of the original Passover. Pitre says that Passover “memory” is not a mere recollection of past events, but it is best understood as a participatory commemoration.⁸³ Connecting this concept of “remembrance” from the Jewish Scriptures to the context of the Lord’s Supper can shed light on the words of Jesus and how the original readers of this text would have understood it. “Remembrance” would certainly be connected to sacrificial concepts in the Hebrew framework. David Garland aptly summarizes this realization for the Lord’s Supper by stating:

The memorial requires Christians reenact ritually what Christ did at his last meal to betoken his death and to explain its significance. The repeated imperative, ‘do this unto my remembrance,’ then, commands ritual remembrance of this

⁸¹ Ibid., 603.

⁸² Herbert Danby, *The Mishnah: Translated from the Hebrew with Brief Explanatory Notes* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publisher, 2011), 150-151.

⁸³ Pitre, *Jesus and the Last Supper*, 420.

foundational saving event (cf. Exod 12:14; Ps 77:12—12; 105:5). It is related to Jewish liturgical remembrance that praises and proclaims the mighty acts of God.⁸⁴

By looking at the words of Jesus at the institution of the Lord's Supper, a fuller picture starts to emerge. Jesus statements concerning his blood and the blood of the covenant definitely have a connection to sacrifice and covenant. The command to "do this" also carries with it cultic connotations of an action that would be repeated with sacrificial overtones. Jesus declaration to "do this in remembrance of me" also firmly connects the words of institution with the Jewish Scriptures' narrative concerning sacrifice and cultic ritual actions. One can conclude that the words of institution further buttress the hypothesis that the Lord's Supper is connected to sacrifice and covenant.

CONCLUSION

When reading the words of Jesus and the Institution Narrative for the Lord's Supper it becomes evident that the words of Jesus were not uttered in a vacuum. When Jesus spoke them, there was a capital of language that was built up from the Hebrew Bible and possibly the intertestamental literature. When Jesus spoke those few words, they would have been read and filtered through the past experience of Israel. If we ignore that tradition of covenant, sacrifice, and ritual we will rob the words of Jesus of their real power.

It is evident from this exploration that Jesus' words of institution were connected to the past covenantal rituals of Israel. Specifically, one can easily see the connection between the words of Jesus at the Last Supper and the covenant formed with Moses at Sinai in Exodus 24. The similarity in language, especially between the LXX and the Institution Narrative, is too great

⁸⁴ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 548.

to be a coincidence. With that thought in mind, the concept of covenant making, sacrifice, and table fellowship are tied to the Lord's Supper.

Also, the Church Fathers early in the life of the church started to use sacrificial language in reference to the Lord's Supper. This sacrificial language may sound strange to our modern ears but one must consider how that language developed early in the life of the church.

Alexander Campbell once said:

I have endeavored to read the Scriptures as though no one had read them before me, and I am as much on my guard against reading them today, through the medium of my own views yesterday, or a week ago, as I am against being influenced by any foreign name, authority, or system whatever.⁸⁵

One can appreciate Alexander Campbell's devotion to the Bible and to the Bible alone, but a student of the Bible may be deprived of great insight and wisdom from generations of Christians from the past if we take this stance. It would be prudent to consider the views of the Christians who lived immediately after the writing of the New Testament to mine some insight from their knowledge and interpretation of Scripture. It cannot be denied that early Church Fathers such as Justin Martyr and Ignatius were using sacrificial categories for the Lord's Supper at a very early date in the history of the Church. Ignatius stated concerning the Supper, "Be ye careful therefore to observe one eucharist for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ and one cup unto union in His blood; there is one altar,..."⁸⁶ The question must be taken on as to just how did these sacrificial categories arise so quickly among the Christians living within a few decades of the writing of the last book of the New Testament canon. The best answer to this question can be found in going back to the Bible and being open to the possibility that the Supper

⁸⁵ Cecil K. Thomas, *Alexander Campbell and His New Version* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 117.

⁸⁶ J. B. Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Fathers* (New York: MacMillan, 1889), 564.

was meant to be much more than a mere memorial service or as Blowers put it not just, “a funeral for the martyred Jesus.”⁸⁷

It also logical to consider the concept of the *todah* sacrifice being a type of fulfillment of the new covenant and the sacrifice *par excellence* of the new Davidic King. Some scholars, as was displayed prior in this essay, believe that Jesus was bringing a true return from exodus and the Messianic Age would be marked by *todah* sacrifice. If this view was in the water of Second Temple Judaism, it would not be a stretch to believe that some early followers of Jesus may have filtered their view of the Lord’s Supper through that expectation of *todah*.

Also, compelling evidence for the connection of the Lord’s Supper as viewed as a sacrifice comes from the Apostle Paul. 1 Corinthians 10:18 may be the closest connection in the Bible between the Lord’s Supper and sacrificial categories. One must strongly consider the possibility that Paul is connecting the Lord’s Supper with the peace offering of Israel and in doing so is giving a strong argument for the important of the Supper in the life of a Christian. The proposal of this essay is that a new and fresh look should be taken on the Lord’s Supper and the concept of covenant and sacrifice.

First of all, we must realize that the Lord’s Supper is a time in which we eat in the presence of God. Just as Moses and the elders went up to Sinai to eat in God’s presence we do the same on Sunday when we gather around the Table of the Lord. The Lord’s Supper is best understood as a time of remembrance of that great narrative story that we celebrate. There is also a sacrificial element to the Supper. Dennis R. Lindsay points out that the Christian worshipper brings the offering of bread and wine but most importantly gives himself as a living sacrifice.⁸⁸ The true sacrificial nature of the Supper is found in that we bring the elements to the table and

⁸⁷ Blowers, "The Lord’s Supper as Covenant Renewal," 196

⁸⁸ Dennis R. Lindsay, “Todah and Eucharist: The Celebration of the Lord’s Supper as a ‘Thank Offering’ in the Early Church” *Restoration Quarterly* 39,2 (1997): 90–91.

offer up our lives before God. Just as the knife was used to cut up the victim, the word of God cuts up the worshipper as they bring their life as the sacrifice.

The Supper is also a time of covenant renewal. It was at the original Supper that Jesus connected the new covenant with his sacrifice. The Table is connected to the sacrifice of the cross. One could theorize that the Lord's Supper should be a time for believers to renew and reflect on their vows made at their baptism. Just as the *todah* celebrated the worshippers' communion with God and their fellow Israelites, we celebrate our communion with God through the blood of Jesus and our unity as the body of Christ as we assemble together. One of the most important aspects that we could bring to our assemblies is that communion with one another and communing in God's presence is something we should celebrate and desire. To understand the Lord's Supper in that light we not only tell the story of Scripture proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes, but somehow, we become part of that grand narrative of salvation.

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