



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Matthew 26:26–29

1 Corinthians

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II:
The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper”

TRANSCRIPT

It’s time for us to begin. Let’s open our class with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we give Thee thanks again for the privilege of opening the Scriptures and pondering them and the great truths that are found within them. We thank Thee for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the ministry that he has had not only in the past, but also in the present. We thank Thee for his death, his burial, his resurrection, the finished work of Calvary, and the unfinished work at the right hand of the throne of the majesty on high, ever living to make intercession for us, to secure all of the blessings for which he has paid with his divine life on Calvary’s cross.

And we thank Thee for the confidence we have that those blessings are ours and shall be ours not only now but also throughout all of the ages of eternity. We thank Thee for the daily provisions of life, the supply of our needs. We thank Thee for the presence of the Holy Spirit, who is with us constantly to instruct us, to guide us, to encourage us, to comfort us, upon occasions when we need comfort.

We thank Thee for this tremendous provision that has been made for the saints of God. And we pray for the whole church of Jesus Christ. We pray Thy blessings upon each one, upon the families of those who are represented here, we also ask, Lord, Thy blessing. And for those who may

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

have members of their family who do not know our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we pray for them. We ask that the Word of God may come to them in power and conviction and conversion.

And we pray for those who are troubled by various trials of life. We all have them, all ultimately shall have them, all face death if our Lord does not come. We pray, Lord, that Thou sustain us and enable us to give a good testimony to the grace of God through Christ. We ask, Lord, that our study this evening, as we consider one of the great passages of the Word of God, that the spirit may be with us, that he may instruct us and encourage us and inspire us for fruitful testimony and service for our Lord in our day.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Well, I don’t know whether I can finish this message tonight, in one time, but I’m going to make an attempt, probably will not be able to but at least we’ll make an attempt. The subject is a big subject. It’s worth not one message but many. So we’ll do the best that we can.

The subject for tonight is the First Lord’s Supper; it is also the last Passover. So the title I have on my page is the Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper, because, as you know, the first Lord’s Supper arose out of a Passover service, the last Passover that was ever celebrated with divine blessing. Of course, there have been many Passovers celebrated since then. They are still being celebrated by Jewish people today. But when we talk about a Passover having valid, divine support and justification, the last Passover that was a valid Passover was the one of which we read in our study tonight.

We are expounding 1 Corinthians, but it’s necessary for us, in order to understand 1 Corinthians chapter 11, where Paul refers to the Lord’s Supper to have the background, and that is why last week we looked at the first Passover and then tonight we’re looking the last. We are skipping all of the intervening time and coming to the first Lord’s Supper. And we are looking at Matthew chapter 26, verse 26 through verse 29. Of course, we could look at each of the Gospel accounts that record this, but we’re going to use this particular one, the account of Matthew 26, verse 26 through verse 29. Matthew writes:

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’

Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’”

Now, the heart of the last Passover and the first Lord’s Supper is the atonement that Jesus Christ has come to accomplish. Atonement is one of the big words of Christian theology. I have lots of friends who like to come up to me and say to me, “By the way, Dr. Johnson, you mentioned atonement in the message tonight. And did you know that the term ‘atonement’ is found in only one place in the New Testament, and there it’s a mistranslation?”

Now, they don’t know the Greek text. They don’t know a whole lot about the Bible necessarily, but they heard a Bible teacher say that and it is true; that is, atonement, in the King James Version, occurs only once and in Romans 5. Where it is found, it is a mistranslation. It’s the word reconciliation, not atonement. And so I have to say, “Yes, I know that,” but atonement is a theological word. It’s the word that Christians have used down through the years in order to refer to theological truths that concern the death of Jesus Christ. And so when we use the term “atonement,” we are not saying it’s in the Bible. We are saying it’s a theological word that does valid, genuine service, just like the term, Trinity. We have to use that word over and over again because all Christians, if they are Christians, believe in Trinitarian doctrine. If you don’t believe in the divine Trinity, as the Christian church has taught it, you are not a Christian, because it is absolutely essential to hold the truth of the Trinity. That may be so that you’ve lived in some outlying place and you don’t use the term trinity and you don’t understand the term trinity. But if you are a Christian, you hold to the truths that are represented by the term trinity.

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

Now, that is a term not found in the Bible, but it is a very sound theological term. It’s the way by which the Christian church has come to put together the teachings of the Word of God concerning our Trinitarian God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Atonement, therefore, may be a very genuine word, although it’s not found in the Bible. That happens to be my viewpoint. Atonement is a word that comes from the word the word ‘at’ and the word—and old Middle English word, ‘onement’. We don’t use onement today but at-onement; that is, at-one. So atonement is the way by which men may come to be at one with God. It may be the most important word in Christian theology and could be debated, and I’m sure there are some that do debate just that very point and stand for that affirmatively.

What we mean by the term atonement is that it is a word that refers to what Jesus Christ did in restoring the shattered relationship between sinners and a holy God. He brings them to the place where they are at-onement; that is, atonement. The price that was demanded, according to Scripture, to bring this to pass was his death.

Liberal Christianity has always resented the doctrine of the atonement, as I just mentioned to you. They would like to take the term Christianity and keep that for themselves, and they would even like to use the term redemption, which can mean some things beside the redemption that’s taught specifically in Scripture. They would like to eliminate the historic Christian conviction that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, wrought the reconciliation of men with God, accomplished atonement. Faith in a crucified redeemer whose life is a ransom for sinners, they do not like. They have substituted for that a Christ-like attitude. And if a person has a Christ-like attitude, then he is a legitimate Christian in their eyes. Or they substitute religious feeling or even membership in the redemptive community. And the redemptive community is a particular professing Christian church, to which they may belong. That’s the redemptive community. And if you’re a member of the redemptive community and you have your name on the rolls, then you are a Christian, although you may not know anything about the ransom that Jesus Christ accomplished on Calvary’s cross, paid there with his own blood in order that we might be redeemed.

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

It has been said by some of the finest Christians theologians that liberal Christianity lacks the power to originate a church. Now, I believe that with all my heart. I think that is true. Liberal Christianity does not have any power to create a church. Now, I know what you think. Well, I know lots of liberal churches. Of course, you do. But they probably, all of them, came into existence because someone back there, perhaps three or four centuries, sometimes fourteen or fifteen centuries ago, preached the gospel of redemption through the bloodshed on Calvary’s cross. And so now what we have in those churches is like a person who has a perfume bottle—I don’t have one. It is an illustration [that] I did not make up from personal experience. I saw it somewhere, but it did strike home with me. It’s like a perfume bottle out of which the perfume has vanished. And if you take the top off it will smell. Smells like the perfume, but there is no reality there. And so what we have in so many of our professing Christian churches today is the perfume bottle of Christianity. It smells like Christianity. It may even look like it. The people may even have faces that appear to be part of the redemptive community—but the reality is not there.

The man who believes that he is redeemed by the blood of a divine Savior—I hope you believe that. “The man who believes that he is redeemed by the blood of a divine Savior, dying for him upon a cross, is of a totally different character from the man who thinks that he may redeem himself by a Christ-like attitude. There is all the difference in the world between them,” Benjamin Breckinridge Warfield is responsible for that statement, but it is absolutely true.

If you are a Christian, you have deep down within your heart the sense that you were lost and that Jesus Christ shed his blood on Calvary’s cross that you might be redeemed for hellfire and you now enjoy a relationship with our Lord which you trace back not to joining a church, not to your baptism, not your Christ-like attitude, or anything like that, you trace it back to what Christ did on Calvary’s cross. That’s Christianity. That’s the fundamental fact. And, you know, if you are around Christians, you can almost always sense the flavor of one who is a genuine Christian as over against the person who is the perfume bottle of Christianity who talks about his church or when he was baptized or various other kinds of things that are not the reality.

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

Now, this is a passage that tells us something about the fundamental reality of what Jesus Christ has done. There are other passages in the New Testament that one could turn to in order to see the truth expressed the Lord Jesus back into the 20th chapter of the same Gospel in verse 28 said, “Just as the son of man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.”

In, John chapter 10 and verse 11 in putting it in another way by using another figure, the Lord Jesus, when he is giving some parables that had to do with the life of a shepherd, makes this statement in verse 11 of John chapter 10, “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep.” That is the fact that makes true Christians. None is clearer, however, in my opinion, than these words our Lord spoke when he instituted the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. This overthrows all kinds of moral influence theories. Various types of theory by which we were supposedly taught that Jesus Christ did not die as a blood sacrifice for our sins the judgment of our sin, eternal judgment, was not poured out upon him, but rather Jesus Christ simply died in order to give us an illustration of how we ought to love and how we ought to live. Moral influence is the only thing that we are supposed to find in the death of Jesus Christ. No, we find a satisfaction of divine justice in the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross. That’s what makes Christianity.

Now, I think—and this is one of the reasons that I think I’m going to take a little more time tonight and finish up next time—that this establishes the fact that the work of Jesus Christ is a particularistic work. It establishes what I call particularism.

Now, when we say “particularism,” I mean that the intent of the death of Jesus Christ was to save a people, a specific people, a people elected from eternity by the Father. The Son came to pay the price for them and the Spirit of God is the one who works today and has worked down through the years to bring those very ones for whom Jesus Christ died to him, and that he does and so we—I speak of particular redemption. I do not mean that are not some who are genuine Christians who are not particularistics, but I think this is New Testament teaching, concerning the death of Christ.

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

So I want to say a few words about that because I think that’s very important. This is the place where the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism centers. The question is this: Did Christ offer himself a sacrifice to God to make the salvation of all men possible, or did he offer himself to secure infallibly the salvation of his people? Arminian Christians affirm the former; that is, that Christ offered himself a sacrifice to God to make the salvation of all men possible. Calvinists affirm that he offered himself to secure infallibly the salvation of his people.

I was reading, this past week, a statement again that I had overlooked, at least it was not in my mind. It was a statement by a Baptist theologian, a very well-known man by scholars, G. R. Beasley-Murray, who probably was recognized by the evangelical world as one of the outstanding students of eschatology, who was also an outstanding scholar. Beasley-Murray, in some comments on a book on Revelation, has this to say in reference to the statements of Revelation chapter 1 and Revelation chapter 5, verse 9 and 10. He is citing the passage in which reference is made to the Lamb of God being sacrificed and creating a people as a result who belong to the Lord God. And he says this, “It is in keeping with the Passover theology of John that the sacrifice of the lamb, led not simply to a general emancipation of men but to the creation of a people of God.”

In other words, the work of Christ, according to the Passover teaching, is directed towards a specific people, the church of Jesus Christ and the other redeemed down through the years. Those are the ones for whom Christ came to die to make their salvation secure for time and for eternity. As a matter of fact, the very first thing said about our Lord was, “And thou shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.” He came with that specific purpose, to save a distinct people.

Now, I don’t know who those people are. I am not even sure every one of you in this room is one of them. In fact, like most evangelists, I probably should say, probably there are some here or not, but I don’t even know that. I hope that everyone here is one who really stands out as a person who believes that Christ offered a ransom for your sins. And you know that, and it means something

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

to you and adds flavor to your life. There’s real perfume in your bottle. But, nevertheless, it’s for that he might save his people from their sins.

Now, Arminianism, as you can tell from that statement, is a theological system of conditionalism, a scheme for dividing or partitioning salvation of sinners between God and the sinners themselves. Instead of ascribing salvation wholly to God, Arminians describe it to God and man. In what sense? Well, that the decision by which we come to Christ is the decision of my free will and, thus, God cannot act until I act. I don’t believe that. I don’t believe the Bible teaches that.

The Bible teaches, in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, that salvation is of the Lord. Therefore, I don’t deny the will. I have a will. I have an obtuse will. One that frequently is opposed to the will of God, and I must suffer discipline for it. You have a will. We all have a will but, unfortunately, our Bible tells us the will is enslaved to sin. A mind of the flesh is enmity against God. It’s not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be, so then they that are in the flesh cannot, cannot please God. Suppose I preach a gospel that Jesus Christ came to offer himself a sacrifice to make the salvation of all men possible, but it’s impossible if the Spirit of God does not work in my dead spiritual being and bring me to life. That’s what we celebrate. That’s what we shout about, because we realize that if it depended upon me, as a person who is one of the fallen individuals born into this world, I would not turn to the Lord God.

So you see what we really come down to is the question of the grace of God. The grace of God extended toward those who cannot turn of themselves and it turns them to respond to the gospel. If you are sitting in the audience tonight and you are a genuine Christian, you, of all people on the face of this globe, ought to be constantly, always, evermore thankful to God for what he has done in your heart. “A natural man receives not the things of the Spirit, they’re foolishness to him,” Paul says. Neither can he know them if spiritual discern?

So my Arminian friends, I don’t deny your Christianity if you believed in Christ. You just don’t understand what’s happened to you. You just don’t really understand what has happened to you. You know why I know that? I was there one time. I was born a Pelagian, believed in salvation

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

by works. I was born again as an Arminian, did not understand what really had happened to me, and then after understanding what had really had happened to me, that God had truly saved me, I had to fall over and acknowledge, well, I’m sympathetic with those people that are called Calvinist. I call them simply those who believe in sovereign grace. That’s, to my mind, is sanctification, to come to understand that very important truth. I don’t divide or partition salvation between the sinners and the Lord God. I ascribe it wholly to what the Scriptures do, to the sovereign grace of God, the perfect and all-sufficient work of Christ and the efficacious and omnipotent operation of the Holy Spirit in our heart.

Well, someone says to me “Well, evidently you believe in a limited atonement.” Well. I don’t like the term “limited” because it seems to suggest that the grace of God is not full and great and sufficient for all. It is sufficient for all. Any believing person who comes to the Lord God will be received by him. It’s sufficient for all. And I don’t know the elect. The elect make themselves known by the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts. If I must answer the question, yes I believe in a limited atonement, but I would like to tell you Arminians who don’t understand the grace of God that you do, too. You do, too. I admit you are better politicians than we are. As a matter of fact, we don’t need politics because we want to trust the Lord God, so we leave it in his hands.

So you have plastered us with the term “limited,” but I say to you, your atonement is limited also because your atonement, which you say is intended for everybody, doesn’t save everybody. In other words, it is not all-powerful. My atonement that I celebrate is all-powerful. It saves everyone intended by the Lord God in Heaven. So I like that atonement. I love its power. It celebrates the great power of our God in Heaven.

I do not want a God who is frustrated in his purposes. I do not want a God who cannot do what he intended to do. And so I must say, yes, my atonement is limited, but it is sufficient for all. And if you are in the audience, for example, tonight and you don’t know whether you are saved, if you come to Christ, you will be received if you come in faith believing in the atoning work that he’s accomplished.

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

And if you should say to yourself, “Well, I don’t want to come to a God like that,” then, of course, you have no excuse. You are getting precisely what you want, aren’t you? So you shouldn’t complain about this wonderful atonement, this atonement that is so efficacious that I’m preaching. To preach an atonement that is designed for everyone, admitting that it doesn’t save everyone, is to limit its power. Or, as Warfield puts it—and I like these words—“to evaporate its substance,” because it’s not what it is set forth to be.

Calvinists limit the atonement because they believe in its power. So powerful it renders certain the salvation of all for whom it was offered. Which is more biblical? Well, there is no question in my mind which is more biblical. It is exegetically, theologically, obviously the teaching of the Scripture to the man who applies himself to the Word of God. Now, I don’t mean that you cannot run in the Bible and find eight or ten texts that apparently—if you haven’t studied this very much—apparently suggests universal redemption. But then you must be willing to listen and also study, and you’ll find that those texts teach precisely what we are talking about.

Possibility thinking, as the Arminians use it, does not work for them any more than it does for Robert Schuler. Isn’t he the man that talks about possibility thinking? The New Testament talks about a substitutionary sacrifice. And we’ll talk about that. If you will just think about that for a moment; that if our Lord’s sacrifice is substitutionary—even my enemies will frequently say—I mean my friendly enemies—even my friendly enemies will say, “Yes, I believe in substitution,” but their substitution is not the kind of substitution that I’m thinking about. The substitution I’m thinking about is that Christ has borne my judgment, my judgment to the full. Thus heaven has nothing with which it can accuse me. Nothing upon which may judge me. Christ has borne my judgment. All for whom he has substituted are sure to be saved. It’s an elaborate introduction, isn’t it? I just love this. I may not even finish the introduction. It just gets better the more I think about it.

William Ames was one of the great men of New England but by absence really. He was a Britisher and he was a student, in fact a convert of William Perkins, another great English theologian. I think everyone recognizes Perkins as a great theologian. Everyone recognizes Ames as a great

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

theologian. Ames was an individual who was very prominent in that Synod of Dort behind the scenes and was recognized as a magnificent theologian. He wrote a book called *The Marrow of Theology*. It was the most influential theology book in New England in the earlier days of the United States of America. Ames’ *Marrow of Theology* was the one theology book that men studied. And, in fact, presidents of universities told them that they should read the *Marrow of Theology* in the early days of this country. Ames was known as something of a giant-killer of debate and so he framed a little syllogism on the intent of the atonement that grounded the atonement in the sovereign power of a God who cannot be baffled or beaten by man in the certain accomplishment of his intentions.

I won’t read the Latin for you. I’ll just translate it for you. This is what he wrote, “For whom it is intended, to them it is applied but not to all is it applied.” We know that. Men die lost. Countless thousands die lost. So for whom it is intended, to them it is applied but not to all is it applied. My friends, I agree with that, too. Therefore, *ergo*, not to all, is it intended. Think about it. For whom it is intended, to them it is applied, but it’s not applied to all. Therefore, not to all is it intended. Isn’t that simple? That’s just the whole point of the matter.

The extent of the atonement, that is, the purple people for whom it’s intended and who ultimately enjoy it, the intent of the atonement—the extent of the atonement is set by the intent of the atonement.

Now, some of you know that one of my—one of my many heroes is John Owen. And I’m going to give John Owens’s conundrum. I’ll just give what he has—I may add a word or two, but this, I think, is something that, so far as I can tell, is unanswerable. If you’ll just think about it, we ought to make everybody study this, read it, ponder it and not for a moment or two, but over and over again. This is what Owen wrote—Owen was the greatest, many people feel, the greatest English theologian. Jim Packer would say that. He said, “The Father imposed his wrath due unto, and the Son underwent punishment for either.” Now, what he’s saying is the Father exercised his wrath toward or due unto, would be better, and the Son underwent punishment for either, all the sins of all men, (2) all the sins of some men, or, (3) some of the sins of all men. It doesn’t seem to be any other

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

alternative. All of the sins of all men he died for, all the sins of some men, or some of the sins of all men.

Owen then says, “In which case it may be said that if the last be true (that is, some of the sins of all men) all men have some sins to answer for, and so none are saved. Second, that if the second be true (that is, all of the sins of some men) if the second be true, then Christ in their steads suffered for all the sins of all the elect and the whole world, and this is the truth. Third, if the first be the case, all the sins of all men, why aren’t all men free from the punishment due unto their sins?” In other words, if he has died for the sins of all men—all the sins of all men, why aren’t all men free from the punishment due unto their sins? Why not have universalism?

You answer—I’ve had them answer me this way. I can remember when I used to say this. I can remember when I used to say it. “I thought I had the answer.” You answer because of unbelief. Owen says, “I ask, ‘Is this unbelief a sin, or is it not? If it be, then Christ suffered the punishment due unto it or he did not. If he did, why must that hinder them more than their other sins for which he died?’” In other words, if he died of all sins he died for unbelief. Why should that be singled out, because that is the root of all sin? If he did not, he did not die for all their sins. So I think you can see, if you just think about it, that he died for all the sins of some men. All the sins of all men? No—universalism. Some of sins of all men? No—they have sins for which they must suffer. All the sins of some men, Jesus Christ has died for.

Now, that is about as long an introduction that I’ve ever given to message—forty-minute introduction. [Laughter] But the message is going to take longer. In fact, I told Martha when I was coming over—well, before I was coming over this afternoon after I finished thinking about this, that it may be that I cannot finish tonight.

She said, “How long do you think it will take?”

I said, “Well, about two hours,”

And she said, “Well, we’ll see who leaves.” [Laughter, Johnson laughs]

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

Well, I’m not confident enough in you to preach a two-hour sermon, supposedly one hour, and I would hate to see you leave.

So I want to now turn to our passage because this is what we are talking about, all of what I’m talking about is found right here when we read in verse 26 of the ceremony of the bread,

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’”

Now, the institution of the Lord’s Supper takes place at the time of the observance of the last Passover, by the Lord and his apostles. The Passover ritual involved these things. I’ll just review them for you because they do bear on understanding a few points. The ritual involved a preliminary course with a word of blessing by the *pater familias*. The *pater familias* is the one who is master of ceremonies. The *pater familias* means the father of the family, and that was the job of the father of the family to superintend the observance of Lord’s Supper. And at a particular point in the service it was his responsibility to give an explanation of what was transpiring every year as they observed the Passover account.

The first dish that they brought out was begun by a first cup of wine. So they began with a cup of wine and then the preliminary dish was brought out, and it consisted of green herbs, bitter herbs, and a sauce made out of fruit puree, set on a table containing also a bowl of salt water to remind them of the tears shed while they were slaves in Egypt. Then the meal proper is served but not yet eaten.

A second cup of wine was then put on the table while the second part of the ritual, the explanation of the meaning of the Passover by the *pater familias* takes place. You remember in Exodus, God told them that when they observed the Passover, they were to recount to the members of their family and others who may have taken the Passover with them why this service was instituted, the history of it, and what it means. And so there was a biblical exposition every time the

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

Passover was observed, if it was observed according to Exodus chapter 12. So he would explain. And they would also sing the first part of the *{hallelu}*, Psalm 113 in verse 14 would be sung here and, later on, the remainder of the *{hallelu}*, Psalm 113 through verse—through Psalm 118, I believe.

Then at that time the third feature of the ritual took place, the partaking of the dinner itself. Grace was spoken by the *pater familias* over the unleavened bread, the *{afikomen}*, which was half a cake of unleavened bread. It was probably at this point that our Lord instituted the Lord’s Supper because it was at this point, after the time of prayer, that the third cup of wine was drunk. So at this point they had the paschal lamb, the Passover lamb, the bread, the bitter herbs dipped in the sauce, the *{keroseth}*, and the lamb wrapped together. Then the third cup of wine was drunk after prayer.

And it’s this third cup that’s most likely the cup of the Lord Supper, because it was called, by the Jewish people, the cup of blessing. And that’s precisely the term that Paul uses in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, verse 10, the cup of blessing. And then finally, the service was concluded with a fourth cup of wine, amid praise and singing of remainder of the *{hallelu}* Psalms 115 through verse 118.

Now, it’s against this background that Matthew gives his account. And when we read here, and as they were eating, we are thrust into the midst of this particular service, the Passover service. “As they were eating Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it.”

Now, there are some very interesting things that one thinks about this, because when we think about all of those years, those centuries from the time that Moses first celebrated the first Passover with the Israelites who had to come out of Egypt and now after so many centuries, they are sitting down for what will turn out to be the last valid Passover.

Our Lord Jesus, sitting at that table, must have had some very interesting ideas. Now, I don’t pretend to be a mind reader of the Lord, but I think, if you will think about it, that he must have thought this. As he looked at the lamb, what did he think? Well, as he looked at the lamb he would think, “This represents my condemnation for the sins of my people.” So looking at the lamb, it condemned him. They ate it, gladly and happily, as they thought about the past and what God had done with them. But he looked at it as that which signified to him and signaled that it was the time for

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

him to suffer. There is another thing that one must—our Lord must have thought about when we think about this. Klaus Skilder, Dutch theologian, who’s now with the Lord but lived in the 20th century. He mentions this. He said, “Two lines meet in the gas chamber, but now the switch is thrown over.”

Now, at this point we move from truths that have primary reference to the old covenant to truths now that have primary reference to the new covenant. This is a critical once and for all time in which things are changing. Our Lord will in three days hang upon the cross of Calvary. The veil of the temple will be rent in twain from top to bottom. The Mosaic Law will be done away with. The Passover service itself, as previously separated, will be done away with. We enter a new age. So the switch is being thrown over. The altar, the great figure of the Old Testament—what’s the figure of the New Testament? The Table of the Lord. That’s the figure of the New Testament. That’s why every Sunday we have a table to remind ourselves, to be reminded, of what Christ has done for us, for me, in dying for me. It has been said so many times, until this point all eyes looked forward to the coming of the Redeemer. From now on, eyes will look back to that first coming of the redeemer by which he accomplished our salvation. So eyes looked forward; now we look backward.

“Jesus,” we read, “took bread and broke it.” That’s first. He does that first, because this is a necessary means to the incarnation. Our Lord has taken a body. He has come as the second person of the Trinity, taken to himself human nature to be the God-man that he may stand for us and, at the same time, may stand infallibly for us, certainly accomplished what he intended to accomplish. He’s not frustrated. Never frustrated. He accomplishes specifically with the will of God. How this atonement, how this perfectly fulfilled intention of the atoning work glorifies our Savior, our great sovereign Lord.

You know it makes it so much more wonderful to be able to trust him and know that all of his purposes are going to be carried out perfectly. That means a lot to me. The longer I have lived—and I have lived a long time—the more I appreciate that. I know that my death is near at hand. I know that the one in whom my trust is, is able to surmount all of the problems that I will have and

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

bring me safely home. That’s the kind of atonement that he accomplished on Calvary’s cross crying out, “My God, My God why hast thou forsaken me?” The Father didn’t say this, but I say this, for Lewis, that’s why; for all the rest of the people, too, who are part of our Lord’s great saving work.

We read, “As they were eating Jesus took bread, he blessed it and he broke it.” I think that breaking of the bread signifies his death. It’s intended to represent that.

And then we read, “He gave it to the disciples.” Someone said, “Like a good surveyor with a transit compass, we must begin at the right place.” And we begin at the right place here because we read, “As they were eating Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it and he gave it to the disciples. “They didn’t reach out and get it, but he gave it to them.” Even in the Passover service, even in the Lord’s Supper, we represent the fact that it’s God who takes the initiative in our salvation. That’s what makes a Calvinist. Let’s eliminate the word “Calvinist.” That’s what makes a biblical Christian. That’s what makes a biblical Christian. He believes in the initiative of God in his salvation and he also in the perfection of his work. So he gave it to the disciples. Doesn’t say he broke bread and they reached out of their free will and took the bread. No, he broke the bread. He gave it to them.

And he said to them, “Take. Eat. This is my body.” That’s what we do at the Lord’s Table is that we take the elements and eat because we are feeding upon the sacrificial work of our Lord Jesus Christ. We’re celebrating that fact but we are also being ministered, too, by that fact, what Christ has accomplished. All the salvation that is ours, it’s so full, so free. It lasts forever. All of the blessings keep coming. We feed upon him and what he has done for us.

There has been a lot of controversy over this. I don’t want to go into this tonight because we’ll probably say a few words about it next week. What is meant by this is my body. As you know in Reformation days and since that time, there has been a great deal of controversy over the significance of, “This is my body.” Is it really his body? By the words of consecration of a priest, does the bread truly become the body of Christ? And the wine, does it truly become the blood of Christ? There’s been a number of different interpretations given. The Roman Catholics, that is their interpretation. The Lutherans have a different interpretation—John Calvin and the other Reformed people, because

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

the Lutherans were Reformed too. The Calvinistic, Reformed people have a specific interpretation. And the Antibaptists and some of the Reformed, had a fourth and I have mentioned a thing or two about them next week, the Lord willing. This is my body.

Some years ago when I was still in the insurance business, and I was converted, in rejoicing in the Lord, and I was reading everything I could. I ran across a book that said, *Forty Years in the Church of Rome*, by a Catholic priest, Father Chiniquy—famous book—I didn’t know it was a famous book. It was a big, thick book. It was very interesting, and I read it all the way through. During the course of it he spoke of about how he had come from Roman Catholicism to faith in Christ after forty years in the Roman Catholic Church. He said one of the things that he had been puzzled over was when he pronounced the words of institution or consecration and the bread became the body of Christ, since he ministered in an old—up in the Midwest, I’ve forgotten the name of the place right now. I’ll have to go back and look at my book—but in an old, drafty cathedral, he said occasionally while the bread was on the board above, pronounced to be the body of Christ, a mouse would come out, from the side and nibble on the bread. And it raised a theological question for him. Does he really nibble on the body of Christ, the real body of Christ? And he puzzled over that, but this was in the 19th century, but Thomas Aquinas, six or seven centuries before that had already not only thought about it, he had pronounced on it. And he said specifically, “If a mouse or another animal comes out and nibbles on the bread, he nibbles on the body of Christ.” So that was Roman Catholic doctrine. He was puzzled by it. “This is my body.” Aquinas was very consistent, and then he said, “And this do in remembrance of me. This go on doing in remembrance of me.”

We mentioned that two lines meet in the gas chamber. Where Jesus is seated that of the Old, that of the New Testament, mention the switch being thrown over. But what is specifically stated here is that our Lord has accomplished everything that is to be accomplished, by his obedience to the truth of the Word of God.

I don’t know whether you have thought about this or not, but our Lord must observe that Passover perfectly. He must observe it in such a way that the Old Testament is legally fulfilled. And

“Paul and the Lord’s Supper: Part II: The Last Passover and First Lord’s Supper” by S. Lewis Johnson
Copyright © 2007 Believers Chapel, Dallas, Texas. All Rights Reserved.

the switch that is thrown over must be thrown over at the precise point in which there is no violation of the Old Testament, and there is now the new covenant ministration given to take its place.

Nothing can be out of order, out of line, or there is disaster. Christ obeys the law perfectly. And my friend Skilder has said, “Neither an ultra fastidious Jew nor an eager angel can detect the slightest departure from the law in him.” And so in the case of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, our Lord says, “Take. Eat. This is my body.” And now the Passover service is moved to the side, relegated to the past, and there takes its place now the Lord’s Supper, celebrating not simply Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt but now celebrating the deliverance from sin which our Lord has accomplished.

Well, our time is up. We’re going to have to stop at the point. I’m not apologizing for saying what I said to you about—in the beginning, about the fact that we celebrate, I celebrate, an atonement in which the Fathers’ intent is accomplished. I know, however, it was very difficult for me to bring myself to acknowledge what I saw that the Word of God taught for some time. And I remember the statement of my newspaper friend, Irving Crystal, “When we lack the will to see things as they really are, there’s nothing so mysterious as the obvious.” And I suggest to you simply this, that you give yourself to the study of the Word of God and then ask God to give you the strength to follow what you see in Holy Scripture.

We have a great and triumphant Savior, who is our representative, who has accomplished this perfect work for you and for me. And we have the confidence that we can rest in him for time and for eternity. May God enable all of us in this room to do so. Let’s bow in prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for Thy Word. We thank Thee for these great truths. We pray that Thou ought by Thy grace give us the courage, the understanding, the moral fiber, the will moved by the Holy Spirit to give obedience to Thee and to Thy Word. And, Lord, we ask, too, that Thou wilt give us a love, not only for our fellow believers but for the lost with who we are brought into contact. Use us, O God, as instruments to accomplish the work that Thou art doing.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.