

Maundy Thursday

April 2, 2026

Covenant Meal/ Exodus 24:3-11; Hebrews 9:11-22; Matthew 26:17-30

When God made covenants with His people, it often involved the shedding of sacrificial blood. When God made His covenant with Abram in Genesis 15, Abram literally cut the animals in two and laid them in such a way that the Lord could pass through the middle of them.

It was no different when God made His covenant with the people of Israel through Moses. This covenant was also sealed by the death of a sacrificial victim.

Its lifeblood was poured out both upon the altar and upon the people while Moses spoke the words in Exodus 24:8: **“Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”**

What was the point of all this blood and death? For one thing, it was to show the seriousness of sin. Sin has consequences. Remember God’s warning to Adam? “In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die”

St. Paul says that “the wages of sin is death” The sacrificial rites reminded God’s people that sin was a serious matter, that they should not “think of sin but lightly.”

The rites also showed the extent of God’s wrath toward sin. God doesn’t just wink at our sins. He is holy and hates sin. He is angered by the disobedience of His people. And because He is also a just God, He cannot let sin go unpunished.

There must be blood. There must be death. God’s wrath needed to be satisfied. But because God does not desire the death of the sinner, He provides a substitute for the guilty.

Thus, these sacrifices—as horrifying as they were—were also reminders of the depths of God’s love. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He would prefer that people would turn from their evil ways and fear, love, and trust in Him alone.

These bloody sacrifices were simply a means to an end. As the Scripture says in **Psalm 51:16-17** “For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. ¹⁷The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.”

God’s fervent desire has always been to have fellowship and reconciliation with His people.

That is why He goes to such great lengths to establish His covenant with the people. And this becomes even more apparent by the fact that in many cases where sacrifices were offered, a meal followed.

After Moses confirmed the covenant by throwing the blood from the basins on the people, he and Aaron, Aaron's sons, and the seventy elders of Israel went up and they **“beheld God, and ate and drank.”**

They enjoyed table fellowship with the Lord, the God of Israel. And this was no small thing, especially considering the fact that no man can see the face of God and live (Exodus 33:20).

And yet, here were Moses, his brother, his brother's sons, and seventy of Israel's chief people dining in the presence of God.

Clearly, this was a significant event in the life of Israel. A foundational event, in fact. And one that would be remembered throughout all the generations of Israelites. God had fulfilled His promise to Abraham.

He had led His children out of Egypt and had established His covenant with them, as He had once done with Abraham.

We are reminded tonight that this first covenant was only temporary. It was incomplete. The blood of bulls and goats could only sanctify for the purification of the flesh. Something more was needed. Something more was coming.

Through the mouths of His prophets, the Lord taught His people to look for “something more,” for a new covenant that He would make with them.

Jeremiah 31:31-32 “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.”

This covenant would surpass even the glory of that first covenant, for it would be characterized by the forgiveness of sins. **Jeremiah 31:34** “For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

A new and greater covenant also meant that a new and greater mediator and sacrifice would be needed. **Hebrews 9:22:** “For without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”

Who else could make such a sacrifice but the holy and spotless Son of God? Who else could secure “an eternal redemption” for sinners except the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ?

So, it was Christ Jesus, born of Mary’s flesh, who became “the mediator of a new covenant” (Hebrews 9:15), shedding His precious blood on Calvary for all for sinners.

As Moses sprinkled blood on the altar to make atonement for the people, so Christ, our greater Moses, made atonement for the sins of all people as His blood was splashed upon the altar of the cross.

And by His innocent blood, the righteous anger of the Father has been satisfied forever. For every sin that Adam and his fallen sons and daughters commit, for every infraction of the Law of God, for every sinful desire, there now stands a perpetual sacrifice in the cross.

But remember—Moses not only threw the blood on the altar; he also threw it on the people. Jesus Christ has done the same for you. His blood has been sprinkled on you in your Baptism.

So, you are covered. Your sins are no longer a stench in the nostrils of God. They no longer stand against you to accuse you or condemn you, for you are in Christ Jesus.

As a confirmation and pledge of the covenant that He has made with you, your greater Moses has also instituted a covenant meal.

On the eve of His crucifixion, Christ met with His disciples to celebrate the Passover. And like Moses before Him, He instituted this new covenant.

Matthew 26:26-28 “Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” ²⁷And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, ²⁸for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

His blood, not the blood of some ox or goat, is what is being poured out on the altar of the cross for guilty sinners.

Tonight, we come not to celebrate an old covenant, but the new covenant in Jesus' blood. We rejoice that God has made His covenant with us through the death of his holy Lamb, Jesus Christ.

He has established the salutary gift of the Lord's Supper for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Like Moses and Aaron and his sons, and the seventy elders of Israel, we, too, **“behold God and eat and drink”** (Exodus 24:11). Here we have Table fellowship with our God.

This is truly God's mountain—Mount Zion, where we behold God and live. We receive the gifts of forgiveness, eternal life, and peace. Amen.