

The Cup of Redemption

Perhaps the defining Christian sacrament is communion. Also called The Lord's Supper, partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine in commemoration of the death of Jesus in payment for our sins is a pivotal part of Christian practice.

Whether the cup is elaborately decorated or simple and plain, the ceremony of remembrance with His "blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" is a most holy part of worship.

But the cup of communion did not originally stand alone. As Paul Harvey might say, here's the rest of the story.

It is clear from the gospel accounts that Jesus and his disciples were celebrating a Passover meal at His last supper. The preparation of the upper room, the bitter herbs, the time of year—all indicate that this was not just any meal. It was a Passover Seder, a meal commemorating the Exodus from Egypt.

There would have been unleavened bread, a specially prepared lamb, and four separate cups of wine for each participant. Yes, four! Each cup had a particular significance, with its own particular title. While specific explanations may vary, the cups generally fall into four categories.

The first cup in a Seder is called the cup of sanctification. Sanctification means set apart, or holy. Heb. 10:10 says that "we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once and for all."

The second cup is called the cup of wrath. Ten drops are dipped from the cup in commemoration of the ten plagues of Egypt. Jesus referred to this cup when He prayed, "My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will." (Matt. 26:39)

The cup that is commemorated in communion is the third cup. This is the cup of redemption. Indeed, in Col 1:14 scripture says, "In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."

But there remains one more cup. However, Jesus didn't drink this cup that night. After the third cup, the cup of redemption, He said, "I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. 26:29)

You see, the final cup is called the cup of hallel. Hallel is the Hebrew word that we get hallelujah from. The final cup will be the cup of praise. That cup is reserved for the marriage supper of the Lamb, when there will be rejoicing and praise as never before.