

In remembrance of me

1 Corinthians 11:23-24

Pastors Tim Melton & Whyley Jenkins, Jr.

This is my body

I want to begin by saying that the meaning of the bread in the Lord’s Supper is not always agreed upon amongst Christians. So, as I explain the view we have here at Immanuel, I do not want you to feel bad if you disagree. What you believe about the bread of the Lord’s Supper will not determine where you spend eternity. It is, however, important if we are to understand how Jesus wants us to celebrate the Supper. So, I respectfully ask that you listen as I attempt to explain what I believe Jesus meant when he said, ***“This is my body”***. Paul says it this way:

“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’” (1 Corinthians 11:23-24)

Historically, there are many views about the Lord’s Supper. But when it comes down to it, there are three main views of what Jesus meant by ***“this is my body”***.

View	Transubstantiation	Consubstantiation	Memorial / Spiritual
Meaning of “This is my body”.	The bread actually transforms into the substance of Jesus’ body. It is literally his physical body, though it tastes like bread.	The bread does not actually become the body of Jesus Christ, but the true body of Christ is present “in, with, and under” the bread.	The statement <i>“this is my body”</i> is a figure of speech. By faith we remember what Jesus did.

This morning, I want to give you three reasons we believe and teach the Memorial view of the body of Christ.

1. Jesus constantly spoke in figures of speech

If Jesus constantly spoke in figures of speech, why should we be so sure that he means his literal body here? Jesus said, ***“I am the light of the world.”*** Did Jesus mean he really was the sun itself? No, he meant that he illuminates our hearts spiritually. Jesus calls his disciples the salt of the earth. Does he mean that we are sodium? No. He means that we are those who, by our holiness and faithfulness to God, despite the culture around us, somehow preserve and season the world.

Jesus says that if your right hand causes you to sin, you should cut it off, and if your right eye causes you to sin, you should pluck it out. Should Christians literally do these things? To literally do this would be silly, as my left hand and left eye can still sin. Jesus means that we are to take drastic measures to keep ourselves from sin. In the same way, Jesus physically stood and held a piece of bread. His body held the bread. They surely understood that the bread was not transforming into his body. I think this is a simple yet profound way of seeing this. Many people claim that the church has always believed it was his literal body. But Church history shows that it is not true. There was disagreement about it from the earliest times. Tertullian, the early Christian writer who was born in 155 AD, says this: *“Having taken the bread and given it to his disciples, Jesus made it his own body, by saying, ‘This is my body,’ that is, the symbol of my body. There could not have been a symbol, however, unless there was first a true body.”* Tertullian calls the bread a symbol. The point is that there were those in the early years of Christianity who did not think the bread was literally Jesus’ body.

2. God frequently commands his people to remember things through symbolism

So, if you take a look at the bread in the Lord’s Supper as a possible symbol, then you might ask yourself, does God do things like this often? In other words, is there a pattern of symbolic remembering in the Bible? The answer is an overwhelming yes. God uses symbols constantly. God told Noah that the rainbow would be a sign of his promise not to flood all of humanity again. He told Abraham to circumcise all the males so they would remember the agreements God made with him. He told the Israelites that they should stack up stones in the Jordan to remember how God had dried up the river so they could cross. Again and again, he orders feasts, the Sabbath, gender and marriage, the temple, and so many other things with a symbolic meaning to them. The very moment Jesus was giving the bread to his disciples, they were celebrating the Passover. In the Passover, a lamb’s blood was given to save each family from the judgment of God. There was no literal death angel coming over them at that moment. They were celebrating the Passover to remember what God had done. That is why seeing ***“this is my body”*** as a symbolic statement makes perfect sense.

3. The point of the Lord’s Supper is to do this in remembrance of Jesus

²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper that you eat. ²¹ For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. ²² What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? (...) ²⁷ Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. ³¹ But if we judged ourselves truly, we

would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 27-32)

Paul was not happy because the Corinthians were not remembering what the Lord's Supper was really about. They were not sharing their bread with the poor. They were doing things that offended God, and God was bringing judgment on them. Some people say that if you do not see the bread as the real physical body, then you are being disrespectful. Paul says that if you do not remember what this Supper means you are being disrespectful and are in danger of judgment. We often think of Jesus as somehow only loving. People were sick and dying because the sin of despising the Lord's Supper is serious to God. God is the same in both Testaments. Yes, the Corinthians all made mistakes and were not perfect, but mistreating others, for whom Christ's body was broken for, was and is very serious. Just think. All they did was not share in the Supper and they were sick and dying. God takes our sin seriously. Jesus died to eliminate discrimination, abuse, and all forms of injustice between believers. If the powerful, wealthy or well educated despise the weak, then they will meet the God who defends them. Take this symbol seriously. Not by seeing it as a piece of Jesus physical body, but as a symbol of Jesus giving himself up for his brothers and sisters. Remember the body broken and symbolized by the bread. So how can we do this? To be able to do this in remembrance of him we need understand why he compared his sacrificial death to broken bread. I believe Jesus means for the bread to symbolize at least five things, when he says **"this is my body"**:

1. Jesus' body is broken for us like a loaf of bread being ripped into pieces.
2. Jesus' body sacrificed is necessary for us in the same way that food is necessary. Without it we will not live.
3. Jesus' sacrificial death is shared by us all like the way you share a loaf of bread.
4. Jesus sacrificial death is provision for us, and we should give thanks just as you thank God for food.
5. It is a sign of a relationship with Jesus. Eating the bread which is a symbol of Jesus' broken body is God's promise to forgive us again and again, and our taking it is our promise to live lives that honor that sacrifice.

The significance of the blood in Scripture

Almost 400 years ago, in the year 1628, an English scientist named Sir William Harvey discovered that the blood in our bodies was hugely important; in his words, "a river of life". Because of this, doctors began to give human and even animal blood transfusions to those who had lost blood. From time to time a life was actually saved, but most of the time the patient died. Death from blood transfusion was so common that in the 17th century blood transfusions were outlawed.

Years later, in the year 1900, Dr. Karl Landsteiner, an Austrian biologist and immunologist, discovered that there are four different blood types. This finally would open the way for safe blood transfusion. Many lives were saved.

In 1915, Peyton Rous and Joseph Turner, two American scientists, discovered a solution that could be mixed with blood to keep it from clotting. From this point on blood could be stored or preserved for emergency use. The first blood bank was established by English army surgeon Oswald Robertson, behind the Allied army lines in France during World War I in 1917.

Blood is important. The American Society of Hematology states the following. Blood cells are transported throughout your body along with antibodies, hormones, and proteins. Blood carries oxygen and nutrients to the lungs and tissues, and then returns carbon dioxide from the body to the lungs so it can be exhaled. Blood brings waste products to the kidneys and liver. Blood regulates body temperature. Platelets in the blood help gather at the site of an injury, forming a platform on which blood clotting can occur and new tissue can develop. White blood cells attack various infected cells and tumors, while others specifically target bacteria, viruses, and other foreign materials. 7 to 8 percent of one's total body weight is blood. Blood is important enough that God put within our body's arteries, capillaries and veins that if laid out end to end would stretch 100,000 kilometers.¹ The blood in our bodies flows constantly. Our heart pumps about 6,800 liters of blood through our veins every day. Our blood truly is a "river of life".

God designed our bodies in this way. Blood was chosen by God to be the symbol of life itself and the price for which sin could be paid. In Leviticus 17:11 it says, ***"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it for you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood that makes atonement by the life."***

We see this thread of life, blood, sacrifice and salvation all throughout scripture. In the beginning Adam and Eve had perfect relations with God and with each other. There was no abuse, sin, lust, guilt, or any reason to hide. They were naked but felt no shame.

All of this changed in Genesis 3. Adam and Eve rebelled against God and their first actions recorded in scripture after their sin was to hide. Their innocence was lost and shame and guilt now became a part of their lives. They tried to cover themselves with leaves, but it was not sufficient to cover their sin and shame. In Genesis 3:21 it says this, ***"The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them."***

In this verse there was holy God, sinful man, and one other. It was the animal who was killed so that garments of skin could be made to cover the guilt and the shame of Adam and Eve. It was the first time we see an "innocent other" whose blood was shed to cover the sin of another.

In Exodus 12, this idea of the "innocent other" continues. It tells us of how the Hebrews, the descendants of Abraham, had been slaves in Egypt for generations. Moses, speaking for God, commanded Pharaoh to release God's people, but Pharaoh refused time and time again. God brought plagues against the Egyptians and against their false gods, but Pharaoh refused to obey and let the Hebrews go free. As the final judgment, God brought a plague of death that killed every first-born son in Egypt. On the night when death came over Egypt, God told the Hebrews to put the blood of a male lamb without imperfections and with no broken bones over the doorframes of their homes. By this

¹ the U.S. [National Institute on Aging](#) (NIA) calculates.

blood of an innocent lamb they were protected and the death passed over their homes. Once again, an “innocent other”, the blood of a lamb was shed to save the life of God’s people.

Because of this event the Jews were instructed to observe Passover each year to remember what God had done for them. In Exodus 12, the Jews were commanded to, **“Obey these instructions (of the Passover meal) as a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.”** It was to be a way of passing down, to generations to come, a testimony to the greatness of their God. It was an annual meal that spoke of God’s deliverance from the past, but also God’s ultimate deliverance in the future.

It was during a sacred Passover meal, on this reverent night of the year, that the Last Supper occurred. It was a simple upper room, a group of ordinary men, in a small country, but it would change the world forever. The Messiah, the Christ, the Deliverer had finally come, but not just for the Jews. He had come for people of every nation. They would observe the Passover meal as had been done thousands of times before, but this time it would be different. It was no longer to celebrate the past and the future. It would now be a statement about the present. The Christ Himself would participate in the meal and fulfill the messianic prophecies this very night. Jesus was the Passover lamb, who had come to shed His blood so that others could be saved.

Lamb of God

In Hebrews 9:22 we are told that **“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin”**. That was the reason for the “innocent other” and the Passover lamb. All the sacrifices of the Old Testament and in the temple in Jerusalem were rituals that pointed to the true sacrifice that was still to come in Christ. They were temporary in effect and had to be repeated over and over again. The prophet Isaiah foretold the coming of the One who would be brought **“like a lamb to the slaughter”** (Isaiah 53:7). Christ shed His blood so that we could be forgiven and gain eternal life. Sin against an infinite and holy God demanded an infinite and holy sacrifice. When Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God, died, the full wrath of God was satisfied.

Jesus Christ was truly the eternal **“Lamb of God who came to take away the sins of the world”** (John 1:29). Similar to the lamb’s blood at Passover, it was the shed blood of Christ that covered the guilt of man and protects man from the judgment of God. No other sacrifice will ever be required.

May we share in the Lord’s Supper remembering our Savior who has drawn near and reconciled us to Himself. His blood has now become our “river of life”. His sacrifice has paid for our sin. His death has brought us life. May we drink deeply of His grace and do it in remembrance of Him.

Discussion Questions:

- 1) What of this lesson was most meaningful for you?**
- 2) What do people try to do to be right with God?**
- 3) In Hebrews 9:22, what is necessary for the forgiveness of sins?**
- 4) Why does scripture refer to Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”?**
- 5) What do you need to remember from this lesson?**
- 6) What do you need to do in response to this lesson?**