

Take-Home 9: The Cups of the Passover

What We Found

The Synoptic Gospels present the Last Supper as a Passover meal, and the New Testament itself shows real structure in it: Luke records two distinct cups at distinct moments, with the words of the new covenant spoken over the cup after supper (Luke 22:17, 20); St. Paul, writing in the fifties, already calls the Eucharistic cup the cup of blessing which we bless (1 Corinthians 10:16), and his own institution account places the covenant cup after supper (11:25); and the company sings a hymn before going out (Mark 14:26). Jewish tradition's four-cup seder, written down later in the Mishnah, we held lightly as background only, never as evidence for the Supper's exact order; every weight-bearing stone was canonical.

Then the two facts we are carrying, unresolved, into next week. After the cup, Jesus vowed: I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. And they sang the hymn and went out, into the night, where later that night he prayed, three times (Matthew 26:44), about the cup: the cup which the Father has given me (John 18:11). We did not resolve this. Do not resolve it this week. Next session, we open what you sealed at the very beginning.

Voices of the Church

St. Gaudentius of Brescia (d. c. 410)

In summary of his Paschal preaching: the Passover of Israel was the shadow and the Church's Eucharist the truth; what Israel ate in figure at its ordered meal, the Church receives in reality.

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)

In the Summa Theologiae (III, q. 74, a. 5): the Lord himself called the cup's contents the fruit of the vine, and the Church follows him; true wine of the grape is the matter of the sacrament of his blood.

St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380)

In summary of themes constant in her letters: a Doctor of the Church whose writing returns again and again to the Blood, Catherine urged her correspondents to drink from the side of Christ crucified, finding in the Blood the price of their souls. What fills the cup, what it costs, and who will drink it: her question is now ours.

Live It This Week

- Read Psalms 113 through 118 across the week, one or two a day, as the Passover Hallel, the psalms tradition assigns to that night, and mark every verse that sounds different in the mouth of Jesus.
- Do not try to solve the unfinished meal. When your mind reaches for the answer, turn it into a prayer: Lord, finish what you began.
- Come next week no matter what. We open what you sealed at the beginning, and the circle should be whole.

SCRIPTURE MEMORY VERSE

Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God. Mark 14:25

Before Next Session

Read John 13:1-15, the beginning of John's Last Supper account: having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

Catechism references for this session: CCC 1130, 1339-1340, 1403.