

This is My Blood of the Covenant

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[0 : 00] Well, I'd like us to turn back together to the chapter that we went to the first half of Matthew 26 Today we are continuing our study in the Gospel of Matthew and I want us to focus in particular on the words that we find in verses 27 and 28 Where we read that Jesus took a cup When he had given thanks he gave it to them saying drink it all of you For this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins Today we are able to share in the Lord supper again, which is brilliant It's and it's quite remarkable that and the very week that we had that we'd scheduled to to resume this is The same week that we come to the passage in Matthew where the Lord supper was instituted and of course the Lord supper is a very important part of our lives as disciples and as a church together. It's a very special thing for us to experience

So it's great to be able to see the bread and wine. There's there's very powerful Visual symbolism in front of us It's great to be able to touch the bread and wine. It's real. It's physical It's something that we take and handle and in which we participate It's great to taste the bread and the wine. We eat the supper together and in doing so we are nourished and fed It's even great to smell the bread and the wine Jesus and the disciples would have smelled the same smells Around the table here in Matthew 26 these senses seeing tasting touching smelling are all important But I don't think they're what's most important It might sound a wee bit strange But I think the most important thing about the Lord supper is not that we're seeing tasting touching or smelling the bread and wine I

Think the most important thing is that we're listening to the bread and the wine and That's because the bread and wine are telling us something and That means that even if you are at home today and I'm not able to to participate physically in the Lord supper And even though I'm sure you wish so much that you were able to be here just now You don't need to panic or worry about the fact that you're not able To do so because what matters most is that we are hearing and listening To what Jesus is telling us through all of this So what is Jesus saying?

Well, there's a lot we could say about the Lord supper today I want us to just focus on what we're being told here in Matthew 26 and in particular I want to focus on what Jesus says about the wine because in verse 28 Jesus says something massive He says this is my blood of the covenant Now that is a huge statement But what on earth does it mean?

Well, that's what I want us to think about together today and to do so we're going to ask three questions What is a covenant? What is the covenant and what does it mean for you?

[3 : 37] So our first question is what is a covenant? Well, when you see the word covenant in connection with the Bible There's five things that I want you to have in your minds. Well, actually there's six, but I'm only going to tell you five Just now Number one is a relationship between people. That's really what a covenant is. It's establishing a relationship between people There's a bond formed between parties Two is clear, firm, articulated truth So the relationship isn't vague or fluctuating. It's not a free-for-all. There's no spin or deception It's a relationship that's grounded on clearly set out terms and these These set out the expectations and the boundaries of the relationship Number three is life and death commitment

So the concept of covenant is not for anything minor You don't use a covenant to decide who's going to mow the lawn or who you're going to play Minecraft with later on this afternoon Covenant is to do with matters of life and death importance and Those involved in a covenant are expected to be committed to it as a matter of life and death Number four is real life action. So a covenant is never just a theoretical paperwork exercise It has a direct effect on real life so In the covenant relationship For those who are involved their actions and their lives are going to be shaped by that covenant. There's certain things you do There's certain things you don't do and the people in the relationship Are expected to be obedient to the terms that they are committing to now That's not obedient in the sense of slavery. You must do this or you must do that But obedient in the sense of being willing to fulfill the obligations that you now have towards one another

So relationship between people clear firm truth life and death commitment real life action number five lasting security the result Should be that the covenant relationship brings lasting security for all those who are part of it So the firm truth of the agreement the seriousness of the commitment the reality of real life obedience all comes together to establish a secure safe consistent relationship That you can rely on So that's five key elements of a covenant we can summarize them under the following headings Covenant relationship covenant truth covenant commitment covenant obedience covenant security and I would want you to try and keep these five things in mind as we think about Covenant and what I hope you can see by looking at these is that really This is simply summarizing what all good healthy relationships look like

So a good example of of a covenant is marriage. It brings two people together in a relationship It's grounded on firm clear truth. It's based on vows and it has a legal status attached to it It's a commitment that is for the whole of life. It involves real life action for a husband or wife There's there's things they do and things that don't do as a result of that covenant relationship and it brings lasting security So marriage is a very clear example of this but even in terms of relationships that aren't as formal as marriage The same emphases apply So for example these five headings I think really just portray what what any good friendship looks like People relate to one another as friends It's grounded on truth as you get to know one another and learn more about one another The best of all friendships are for life and greater love has no one than than than that of the person who will lay down their life for their friends

If someone's your friend then there's things that you definitely do so you talk you spend time together You help each other and there's things you definitely don't do so you don't gossip about them You don't pick on them You don't you don't take them up and put them down at a whim and you don't take advantage of them and a good friendship brings lasting security, it's a wonderful thing so even friendships an example of this I think that even a good employee employer relationship Looks the same There's clear terms and expectations in that relationship There's commitment. There's real-life obligations for both the boss and the staff and if things are the way they're meant to be then everyone benefits from lasting security and Equally on the other side of the coin Problems arise in marriage and friendship or in the workplace when individuals fail in one or more of these five areas

[8 : 57] Now all of that means that when we when you see the word covenant It's not talking about some weird archaic concept from ancient history It's actually talking about everything that we crave in our relationships with others And you can see that if you think of the opposite of all of these things So covenant relationship is the opposite of selfish individualism Covenant truth is the opposite of deception and manipulation Covenant commitment is the opposite of being superficial or changeable Covenant obedience in real life is the opposite of empty airy-fairy waffle and Covenant security is the opposite of temporary or casual relationships and in today's world Whether it's with friends with colleagues with lovers so many relationships today are selfish manipulative shallow half-hearted and insecure

And If you've been on the receiving end of that You will know how horrible all that can be And that's why so often in life the very things that should give us the greatest joy can be the things that can cause us The most pain broken friendships nightmare colleagues or failed relationships these are all incredibly hard In that world The word covenant is thrilling it is everything we long for and The amazing thing about Christianity is that covenant is what lies at the very heart of the whole thing Which of course brings us to question two What is the covenant as Jesus establishes the Lord's supper in Matthew 26 after taking the bread and giving it to the disciples

He then takes a cup of wine and he says drink it all of you for this is my blood of the Covenant That means that one of the things the Lord's supper is telling us is that at the heart of What Jesus's death is all about is the covenant?

It's central to all that he's doing But what is the covenant? Well, we can pretty very simply and say that The covenant is the big thread that ties the whole of the Bible and the whole of Christian theology together So for example if you were to drive north today, you would probably go over the Queen's Ferry crossing How is that Queen's Ferry crossing held together and held up over the Firth of fourth?

Well, it's held up by massive cables that span across the whole thing if you turn on a light switch in your house How does it work? It's connected to a vast network of wires and cables that make up the national grid and even if you go to school tomorrow or to uni or Tune in to listen to a lecture what you're gonna learn tomorrow is Part of a wider curriculum that spans across each stage of your education so much of what we do every day Is part of a framework which is bigger and which holds everything together and it's exactly the same with the Bible The Bible is an incredible book full of different people different periods different places different cultures But the whole thing is held together by one key concept Covenant It's the framework that spans the whole of the Bible. It's the thread that runs right through it And that's reflected very clearly in the titles that are given to the two big sections of the Bible as I'm sure you know

[13:10] The Bible is divided into two big chunks Old Testament and New Testament and that word Testament simply means covenant We could just as easily say Old Covenant and New Covenant the whole Bible is framed around this concept So we'll see that if we look back at these five key areas Christianity is all about the relationship between God and Humanity the Bible presents that relationship as a covenant relationship Christianity is grounded on clear solid Stated truth that's precisely what the Bible is it is setting out the terms the implications and the expectations of a relationship with God Christianity is a matter of life and death commitment now. That's not even the slightest Exaggeration the whole thing is about living or dying. It's about heaven or hell. It's about being saved or being lost

Nothing is more important Christianity is not just a nice thing to think about on a Sunday morning It's a relationship that's grounded on full commitment Christianity is all about real life action and Here in Matthew everything is pointing towards the one great act that Jesus has come to do and the Bible is constantly presenting us with a record of real life stuff That's happened and that's building up towards the cross the whole Bible is centered on the real life obedience of Jesus that takes him all the way to the cross and of course as Christians the reality of what Jesus has done it now transforms how we live each day of our lives as well and the goal of it all The goal of Christianity is lasting security. In fact, it's eternal eternal security for all who trust in Jesus

Covenant is at the heart of what Christianity is all about So the covenant what is it? Well, it's referring to God's great plan to bring us back into a relationship with him But as we said a week ago the Bible divides that into two big chunks And you've got the old and the new and we kind of need to ask well, how does that all work?

And how does that fit together? Well, when we're looking at the difference between the old and the new covenant older New Testament It's important that we make sure we understand it correctly So When we say old and new We mustn't think of old and new in terms of completely Chucking out the old and bringing in a completely different replacement instead We need to think of it in terms of the old being a shadow and the new being a fulfillment So maybe it's helpful to think of it like this that when you say the difference between the old and the new It's not like old and new stuff where you your shoes are old You throw them in the bin you go and buy a new pair of shoes and there's a complete total Replacement one's pink the others are red or whatever and it's not such a radical change as that It's more in terms of a progression sometimes It's maybe helpful to think in terms of an old way of doing things and a new way of doing things So for example when I was a young child I wobbled when I walked and I I couldn't really speak

Very clearly I'd get words wrong when I said anything as an adult. I don't do that anymore and I can I can walk fully and I can talk coherently and the old way of childhood has passed and The fullness of adulthood has come. It's not that that the old me was thrown away and completely abandoned I'm still the same person. It's still me walking. It's still me talking Probably talk too much now But the key thing is that the old has been fulfilled and been completed in the new That's exactly how it works in the Bible The covenant stretches right across the whole thing But in the Old Testament the Old Covenant there are shadows pointing towards the ultimate fulfillment in Jesus Now there's there's four big Covenant shadows in the Old Testament

[17 : 53] That I want to highlight and they're all connected with key individuals. So first of all you've got Noah and God comes to Noah and he makes a covenant with him and Central to that covenant is the creation It's a shadow of God restoring the universe that has been broken and cursed because of sin and The sign of that covenant is to do with the creation particularly to do with with rainfall and clouds It's the sign of the rainbow That is is the sign of that covenant Next God makes a covenant with Abraham Central to that covenant is the family God promises Abraham a son and that that And his descendants would become a great nation and that's a shadow of God restoring a divided and hostile Humanity and bringing them back into one family and the sign

For that is circumcision which of course is connected with the male reproductive organ again pointing to the idea of family and descendancy God makes a covenant with Moses Central to that covenant is the law and the tabernacle or the temple That's a shadow of restoring humanity to be the image of God So obeying the laws to become again what God wanted us to be the tabernacle is where God Dwelled with his people and through the Old Testament. That's a really Important theme and the great emphasis of that is that you had this building the tabernacle or the temple and in the middle of that building God dwelt with his people and the sign of that covenant was observing the Sabbath day Which of course is pointing back to Eden where where humanity did fully bear the image of God and where God did indeed Dwell with humanity and then fourth we have a covenant with David Central to that covenant is the kingdom. It's a shadow of God's kingdom

Being established and all the damage of sin being put right Everything being restored to what God intended it to be and the sign of that is that David's descendants would sit upon The throne now that diagram there is a bit of a simplification And there's a lot more to it and there's a lot more overlap between these than maybe that cover that diagram Perhaps is able to portray but I hope that that's helpful to see that you've got these shadows Running through the Old Testament that are just building things up bit by bit by bit But they are all shadows And that's why when you go back to the Old Testament and you read about them You see that they're all a combination of success and failure So you look at Noah There was the promise that the world would never again be destroyed by a flood and it hasn't been but the world is still cursed And it's still broken and even Noah himself failed rather sadly After Abraham a great family nation was established the nation of Israel

But it was pretty tiny compared with the rest of humanity and even the nation itself just kept on dividing After Moses there was clear instruction with the Ten Commandments They had the amazing privilege of God being present there in the tabernacle and then the temple But they kept on disobeying these commandments and eventually God departed from the temple And after David there was a line of kings sitting upon the throne But half of them were terrible and eventually the kingdom was conquered by foreigners All of these were a combination of success and failure mostly failure because they were all shadows None of them restored things properly and they were never intended to they were only ever meant to be shadows And that's why I've drawn them as arrows because they're pointing towards something and What they're pointing to is the new covenant the new testament and

This is what Jesus is talking about The whole reason he has come is to fulfill Everything that these shadows pointed towards so for the creation Jesus has come to defeat Satan to destroy the kingdom of evil to break the curse of sin and to Restore the whole universe into a new creation and new heavens and a new earth For the family Jesus has not just come to unite Abraham's biological descendants He's come to unite the whole of humanity in fact He's come to make a new humanity Jews Gentiles every family every nation every race every class all United as brothers and sisters for the law He's come to fulfill everything that the law required and he's come to teach us what God's law instructs And he's doing that so that we can learn and understand and grow and fulfill our potential to be everything that God created us to be For the temple Jesus has not come to to build us a temple. He's come to make us the temple

[23 : 08] So instead of God dwelling in the middle of a room in a building in Jerusalem. He's come to dwell in you and me in our hearts by his spirit and for the kingdom Jesus has come as king and as Matthew's been telling us all the way through this gospel the kingdom of God has come and Right now and forevermore Jesus reigns as king over the whole universe And he's calling all of us to become and to live out our lives as citizens of that kingdom Everything in the Bible is pointing towards this moment when the shadows of the old become a reality in the new and You can even see that right here in Matthew 26 You see the Passover mentioned in verse 2 that's immediately pointing you back to Moses and telling us that the salvation of Israel Through the death of a lamb is a shadow of the salvation that Jesus is going to bring through his own blood

You see Jesus being anointed in verse 7 the disciples thought it was a complete waste of money But Jesus is no this is a precious thing. It's pointing forward to something You see the plotting of the Pharisees you see Jesus Judas betraying Jesus The forces of evil are conspiring against him But all of this is known and understood by Jesus because it's all leading up to the key moment That's approaching everything in the Old Testament everything in Matthew's gospel is pointing towards this big key event the great moment of covenant fulfillment is coming and Jesus says If you want to understand this You need to listen to a cup of wine Now that probably sounds really weird, but it actually makes perfect sense Because that cup of wine is representing the blood of the covenant that means it's telling you something

Incredibly important. It's telling you about covenant relationship Jesus is round this table with his disciples and he gives the cup to them He's in a relationship with him and so he says to them drink it all of you It's not just for Jesus. It's for all of them because they all belong together in a relationship It's a meal that's being shared It's pointed to the fact that Jesus has come to restore us into a relationship with God and into a relationship with one another The wine is also telling you about covenant truth Jesus uses this wine as a picture of his blood Blood that's going to be shed as he goes to die in order to save us That's the key truth of Christianity that Jesus has come to die and rise again so that we can be saved and that salvation is for many That's one of the many incredible truths that it's not just for these disciples. It's not for the elite

It's not for the select few. It's a message of salvation proclaimed for the many This wine is telling you about life and death commitment because the blood that Jesus is talking about It's not the blood of a lamb or a bull or of anything else. He says this is my blood and The fulfillment of the covenant promises is literally a matter of life or death for Jesus Because our salvation can only happen through the death of our Savior and Jesus is saying that's exactly What I'm going to do The wine is telling you about real life action Jesus is saying that that this is my blood which is poured out poured out wine is speaking of poured out blood and it's telling us that Jesus actually did it He actually died His blood actually poured in real life real time. He did it. He had to go to the very limit in order to be obedient and he did it

He did everything that was needed and The wine is telling you about lasting security because the whole reason he did it was for the forgiveness of sins That means that for all who trust in Jesus the guilt and damage and brokenness and horribleness of your sin is Washed away And the result is that you are freed and You are safe Totally and utterly secure forever And that also means that there is so much to celebrate and that's what the wine is telling us to do It's Jesus is telling us to take the cup because it's the blood of the covenant and that covenant is giving eternal security To all who trust in him and in a world of disease and disaster and sorrow boy. Is that a reason to celebrate?

[28 : 25] But what's maybe even more amazing is that for Jesus he is not quite celebrating yet Because for him the time to celebrate is not now for him the time to celebrate is still to come That's why the new covenant is a big arrow because it too is still pointing forward It's pointing forward to the day when Jesus will come and take you home and bring you into his new creation That's why he says in the very next verse I won't think of this again until that day when I drink it new with you In my father's kingdom because for Jesus the moment to celebrate is when you are home with him forever That's his goal That's why he was sent. That's why he came. That's why he died so that he could save you and bring you home safe and secure forever So the covenant is

God's great amazing plan of salvation and when Jesus says this is the blood This is my blood of the covenant. He's telling us about everything. He has come to do He's come to fulfill the covenant. He's come to complete God's plan of salvation He's come to bring you back into covenant relationship with God and he did it all By pouring out his blood on the cross Last question is what does this mean for you?

Well, I hope that it helps you to see how the Bible fits together. I Also hope it helps you to see just how big and brilliant God's covenant plan of salvation is and I Really hope that it makes you love that word covenant because covenant theology is so cool But you might be looking at all of that and you might be thinking well that all sounds great Thomas but I can't live up to it and You can so easily think well covenant relationship sounds great, but my relationship with God is nowhere near what it should be It's so easy to look at that. I think well, I'm just a failure and I don't match up to all of this is saying Covenant truth maybe sounds great, but but you might be thinking well, I don't really understand it all and There's so much. I don't know so much. I need to learn and the truth about my life is that I've just made tons of mistakes And I keep on making mistakes Covenant commitment sounds great, but but sometimes I just want to give up and

Sometimes I feel tired or dissolutioned or discouraged sometimes I feel people have hurt me and I've let other people down and it's so easy to look at ourselves and think well I don't feel particularly strong or healthy in my faith Covenant obedience sounds wonderful, but but you might be sitting there thinking yeah But I'm constantly attacked to sin and if I look back over the past seven days. It's not a story of obedience It's a story of failing and There's no way that that that we can say to God look at what I've done and Covenant security maybe sounds great for those who are doing well in their Christian lives But for you, maybe you sit here and you're saying well, I just feel like a constant disappointment to God Maybe you feel like that today. Maybe you feel like that as a Christian Maybe you feel like that as somebody who wants to be a Christian You could say all that theology sounds great Thomas

But it sounds like it's for the proper Christians It doesn't really apply to me Well if you feel like that today, I can totally understand why you do But I'm also delighted to tell you that you're actually totally wrong Because who is all of this for Who is the blood of the covenant poured out for who are the kind of people who get to share in all of this Is it the elite the strong the wise the successful the ones who are spiritually on fire?

[32 : 58] Well Matthew 26 tells us who it's for All of this is for those who trust in Jesus and Here in Matthew 26 that means it's the people who are sitting around the table with him But what happens to them next After this moment do the disciples go out and Leave this room in triumph and overcome every obstacle that they face as as these models of of faith and wisdom and courage No, that's not what happens at all These disciples go out from this room and they totally stuff up Jesus tells them that they're gonna fall away and scatter and if you read a few verses further on you see that they fall asleep They run away and despite what Peter says he does in fact deny Jesus But Jesus says to them you might fall away, but I will go before you and

This is because all these promises and blessings of the covenant are never Ever dependent on us It is not about what you do. It's not about you matching up. It's not about us doing anything Because Jesus does it all and So the covenant is not about our truth or our commitment or our obedience or our efforts to restore a relationship With God it is all about him It's his truth It's his commitment. It's his obedience He is the one who makes us secure and far more than you will probably ever realize He is the one who wants to be in a relationship with you that lasts forever and It does not matter how useless or broken you think you are

Because all the incredible theology of the covenant is for weak broken people like Peter and the disciples and you and me And this brings us last of all to the sixth thing that I wanted to say about covenant if you look at that diagram again, you'll see that I've drawn covenant as arrows and That's partly because they keep pointing forward the arrows in the Old Testament are pointing forward to the new and Even the new covenant is pointing towards the new creation when Jesus returns But that's not the only reason why I've drawn them as arrows because the other reason why I've drawn them as arrows is because the covenant is Being driven along by something So as you go see this thread running through the Bible there is a tidal wave of strength Pushing these arrows forward. There's a relentless momentum that drives Jesus through Matthew 26

Into Matthew 27 and all the way to the cross these arrows are being driven along Right through the pages of scripture and across the generations of history But you need to ask what is it that's driving these arrows forward?

Well the driving force behind all of these is Covenant love Unstoppable unrelenting unending Unbreakable covenant love and if you look back over all these Examples in the Bible you'll see that every person in these arrows messed up Noah Abraham Moses David Peter James John All the disciples they all failed again and again and so do we we keep on failing but the arrows never stop And that is because God's covenant love never fails And when Jesus holds up that cup of wine he is saying I will never ever give up on you And that is why covenant theology is the coolest thing ever because it's telling you that threaded through the whole Bible and spanning across the whole of history is the covenant plan of God

[37 : 37] Which is driven forward by the fact that he loves you and he will never ever give up on you And all we have to do is trust him That's all we have to do Because that's the terms of his covenant He's the one who's put all these arrows in place. He's the one who is blasting it all up He's the one who is blasting it all along. He is the one who has done absolutely everything that's needed and all he's saying to you is to just trust me Follow me I Will hold you and I will never let you go I Really hope That every one of us here and Every one of us at home. I Hope that we can all hear

What this cup of wine is saying? Amen, let's pray