

Four Cups - One Christ

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[0 : 0 0] But if we could, this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling for a short while, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in the book of Psalms and Psalm 116.

Psalm 116. And if you read again at verse 13. Psalm 116 and verse 13.

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people.

I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord in the presence of all His people.

as you know for many christians psalm 116 is their favorite psalm and when you read it it's easy to understand why because psalm 116 it opens as we were singing it opens with this powerful and very personal confession of faith i love the lord because my voice and prayers heeded here i while i live will call on him who bowed to me his ear but you know the thing is this confession of faith it's the confession of every christian and i want to say from the outset that that's the qualification that's always the qualification for coming to the lord's table it's not if you're good enough or if you know enough or if you've done enough or followed the lord long enough but it's simply believing in your heart and being willing to confess with your mouth the opening words of this psalm i love the lord i love the lord that's your qualification for coming to the lord's table because even though psalm 116 is the personal testimony of every christian it's a personal testimony that as the psalmist says must be made public it's a personal testimony it's a personal relationship with the lord that must be made public and that's why the psalmist says in verse 13 i will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the lord i will pay my vows to the lord in the presence of all his people and so psalm 116 it calls us to profess our personal love for the lord by publicly sitting at his table and this evening i'd like us to think about this cup of salvation that's mentioned in verse 13 because the cup of salvation it was one of four cups one of four cups that were used during the passover meal and of course these four cups four cups they point to one christ so four cups one christ that's what we're thinking about this evening four cups one christ the first cup of these four cups was called the cup of sanctification the cup of sanctification now as you know psalm 116 it's it's actually a hymn it's part of a group of six hymns called the egyptian halel hymns and they're the psalms that are numbered from psalm 113 to psalm 118 and we know that these particular items of praise we know that they're hymns because when we read in matthew and mark's gospels we read that after the lord's supper had been instituted for the first time jesus and his disciples they sang a hymn and then they went out to the mount of olives and the hymn which they sang was the last halel hymn it was psalm 118 because that's the last halel hymn that was sung during the passover meal and it's a hymn of thanksgiving it's a hymn which thanks the lord for his steadfast love enduring forever and that's why we traditionally sing psalm 118 when we come to the lord's table it's a hymn of thanksgiving where we're thanking the lord for his steadfast love enduring forever but these six egyptian halel hymns so psalm 113 to psalm 118 they were originally sung during the passover meal and they're called halel hymns from the word hallelujah which as you know means praise the lord and they praise the lord for rescuing and redeeming the israelites from slavery and bondage in egypt their egyptian halel hymns and that's why we as christians that's why we are to sing these hymns

[5 : 0 1] because we are to also give our hallelujah to the lord we're to praise the lord for rescuing and redeeming us from slavery and bondage to sin we're to praise the lord we're to give our hallelujah for his salvation through jesus christ now as we said four cups were filled with wine during the passover meal and these four cups they point us to one christ four cups one christ and each cup is associated with the benefits and the blessings which the israelites received at the exodus from egypt in fact these four cups they were given their name because of the four promises that the lord gave to his covenant people in the chapter we read earlier in exodus chapter 6 whereas we read

there in exodus 6 the lord said to moses he said say to the people of israel i am the lord i will bring you out from under the burdens of the egyptians i will deliver you from slavery to them i will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment i will take you to be my people and i will be your god and you shall know that i am the lord your god who has brought you out from under the burdens of the egyptians and so based upon those verses verses 6 and 7 in exodus 6 there there are four promises from the lord i will bring you out i will deliver you i will redeem you and i will be your god four promises i will bring you out i will deliver you i will redeem you and i will be your god and based upon those four promises these four cups were given their name there was the cup of sanctification the cup of deliverance the cup of salvation and the cup of praise so the cup of sanctification the cup of deliverance the cup of salvation and the cup of praise and these four cups they were filled with wine and they were used throughout the passover meal but of course as we said and as we're going to keep saying these four cups point us to one christ four cups one christ and so when the passover meal when the passover meal was prepared there will be many elements to it many elements that i'm not going to talk about this evening but the key elements were these four cups then the passover lamb the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs the four cups the passover lamb the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs and as we saw last lord's day when we began looking in exodus chapter 12 we saw that the paschal lamb or the passover lamb it was to be roasted in fire which was a visual and a vivid pointer to the sacrifice and the substitute of jesus christ as our passover lamb he was the spotless lamb of god who encountered and endured our sin and shame on the cross at calvary then we saw the unleavened bread or the matzah it was made from flour and water without any yeast or leaven to make it rise it was like a tortilla or a flatbread and it was unleavened bread as a symbol of sanctification demonstrating that the israelites they were consecrated they were committed to the lord then there was the bitter herbs the maror which was a symbolic reminder of their bitter slavery their hard labor that the israelites experienced and endured under pharaoh in egypt and so when this passover meal was prepared with all these key elements at the table the four cups the passover lamb you had the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs the passover meal would then begin it would begin by singing the first egyptian hallel hymn which was psalm 113

and psalm 113 as you'll see if you flick to it it begins and ends with the word hallelujah praise the lord and it opens with these wonderful words of praise to the lord praise the lord praise oh servants of the lord praise the name of the lord blessed be the name of the lord from this time forth and forevermore from the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the lord is to be praised you know it's a hymn which praises the lord for his covenant faithfulness and so then after singing this first hallel hymn the first cup would be passed around the passover table everyone would partake of the first cup the cup of sanctification the cup of sanctification and as we said the cup of sanctification it was based upon the promise in exodus chapter 6 the promise i will bring you out or i will call you out he's calling them out of egypt and that's because as you know the first step of salvation has been called to sanctification the first step of salvation is being called to sanctification the first step of salvation is when you are effectually called out of darkness and you're called and sanctified by the lord you're set apart you're called to be saints you know that's how paul described the corinthians he said that as christians they've been called to be saints they've been sanctified in christ they've been sanctified and set apart from the darkness of sin to the light of salvation from death in sin to life in salvation from the dungeon of sin to liberty in salvation so they've been sanctified in christ they've been called to be saints and then they would pass around so that's the first cup this cup of sanctification the cup of sanctification then the second cup is the cup of deliverance the cup of deliverance so after partaking of the first cup the cup of sanctification the next hallel hymn would be sung which is psalm 114 and psalm 114 it's a hymn which opens with the words when israel went forth from egypt when israel went forth from egypt so it's a hymn all about god's wonders and works at the exodus and then after singing this hallel hymn psalm 114 the second cup would be passed around the passover table and as they were sharing this cup as people were participating and partaking of this cup at the passover it was called this cup was you know it was called the cup of deliverance and again it's based upon that promise in exodus 6 i will deliver you but what's interesting is that as this cup was being passed around the table this cup of deliverance someone at the table would start telling the history the history of the exodus the history of the exodus would be recounted and then retold to all who were present at the table and the history would begin with the narrative of abraham father abraham and then isaac and jacob and how jacob's favored son joseph

was sold into slavery in egypt by his brothers but the lord in his providence he he exalted joseph from being a prisoner to being prime minister and how all the israelites then ended up in egypt they were there for for 400 years until there arose a king who did not know joseph and as we know from our study in the book of exodus pharaoh was someone he feared the israelites because there were many

and they were multiplying there were so many of them that pharaoh had to try and control them he started putting the children to death he started inflicting them with hard labor trying to kill the adults he was trying to control the number of these israelites and the israelites were told they cried to the lord for mercy the lord heard them the lord called and commissioned moises and aaron to preach and proclaim the message let my people go and we know the story we're learning all about the story of the exodus on sunday morning we're learning about how pharaoh stubbornly hardened his heart he refused and resisted and rejected the lord he came to blows with the lord through all these plagues these ten plagues that that were placed in front of them and how the lord demonstrated his presence and his power over the impotence and the ineffectiveness of all these egyptian gods and we know all these plagues how the water was turned into blood and there was frogs and fleas and flies and pestilence and a pandemic of boils there was large hailstones and locusts and complete darkness and then the final plague the knockout punch which we'll consider tomorrow morning is the death of the firstborn in egypt with our sons and fathers and grandfathers and even great grandfathers every firstborn son in egypt dies but as you know the only reason the israelites are preserved the only reason they don't die is because of the sign of the passover the israelites are sheltering under the blood of the passover lamb the blood that has been shed and smeared on the doorposts and on the lintel of their doors and the blood of the lamb was a sign a sign to the lord where the lord said when i see the blood i will pass over you when i see the blood i will pass over you and as we mentioned last lord's day the sign of the passover it was a public declaration on their private dwelling it was a public declaration on their private dwelling and in many ways as we said before that's what we are doing god willing tomorrow morning as we sit at the lord's table as we sit together at the lord's table we're making a public declaration of our private dwelling that we have been redeemed that we have been renewed and restored by the lord we've been redeemed not with corruptible things such as silver and gold but by the precious blood of christ blood as of a lamb without blemish and without spot our public declaration is that we are sheltering under the shed blood of christ because christ our passover lamb he has smeared his blood upon the doorposts and lintels of our heart my friend if that describes you then we must come we must come and proclaim and profess the lord's death we must come and make that public declaration about our private dwelling that there is as the hymn writer says there is power power wonder working power in the precious blood of the lamb but then as we consider continue to look at this passover meal we see that after participating and and partaking of the cup of deliverance and after telling the history of the exodus after after recounting and retelling the history of what happened in egypt the jews would then eat the passover they would enjoy the passover meal together they would enjoy the roasted lamb and and and the unleavened bread and the bitter

herbs which brings us to consider the third cup the cup of salvation so there's the cup of sanctification the cup of deliverance and then thirdly the cup of salvation which is mentioned here in psalm 116 he says in verse 13 i will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the lord i will pay my vows to the lord in the presence of all his people now the cup of salvation was given its name again because of the lord's promise in exodus chapter 6 where the lord said i will redeem you i will redeem you with an outstretched arm and so the cup of salvation is is mentioned here at the close of psalm 116 because it was after singing the next two halal hymns that they took the cup of salvation so they're singing about the cup of salvation and then after singing after concluding psalm 116 they would then take the cup of salvation so following the conclusion of their passover meal so after eating the lamb and the unleavened bread and the bitter herbs they would sing they would sing again they'd sing psalm 115 and then they'd sing psalm 116 and they would sing these psalms or hymns because they are hymns of commitment and hymns of confession they're hymns of commitment and confession and what they commit and what they confess is the goodness the grace and the glory of the lord in comparison to the deaf and dumb idols of egypt psalm 115 as you know it opens with that statement that statement of commitment and confession where it says not unto us lord not to us but do thou glory take unto thy naming for thy truth and for thy mercy's sake so the hymn writer he praises the lord for his goodness his grace and his glory in comparison to the deaf and dumb idols of egypt and as the hymn writer goes on to say in psalm 115 he says that the

idols of egypt they are the work of human hands because they have mouths that can't speak they have eyes that can't see they have ears that can't hear they have noses that can't smell they have hands that can't feel and they have feet that cannot walk and with that the hymn writer he exhorts and he encourages all of the lord's people to come and make their commitment and come and make their confession to the lord because he says in psalm 115 he says in verse 9 o israel trust in the lord he is their help and their shield o house of aaron trust in the lord he is their help and their shield you who fear the lord he says trust in the lord he is their help and their shield and you might well ask why why are they to trust in the lord as their help and their shield and the hymn writer says he explains why he says that in their exodus from egypt in their salvation from slavery in their deliverance from death the wonderful thing is in verse 12 the lord of us have mindful been and he will bless us still why are we to trust in the lord as our help and shield because the lord of us have mindful been and he will bless us still we're to trust in the lord because it's the lord who has blessed us he has graciously given and granted to us what we do not deserve he has called us he has delivered us he has redeemed us he has saved us he has sanctified us he has set us free from slavery to sin and the destruction of death and we are to give our amen to him we're to ascribe praise and glory to his name

and you know that's why psalm 115 is followed by psalm 116 because having made a commitment and confession of the goodness and the grace and the glory of the lord would to then echo the hymn writer and exalt the lord with those precious words of of commitment and confession i love the lord because my voice and prayers he did hear i while i live will call on him who bowed to me his ear and as you read and sung in this psalm my friend we love him because he first loved us that's the bottom line we love him because he first loved us we love him because he listened to our longings we love him because he delivered us from death we love him because he saved our soul and we love him in response to his redemption and out of love for him we obediently make that confession and commitment to the lord as it is in psalm 116 and verse 13 i will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the lord i will pay my vows to the lord in the presence of all his people now when it comes to jesus instituting the lord's supper he instituted the lord's supper during or at the end of the passover meal and some suggest that it was this cup the cup of salvation that jesus took in order to institute the lord's supper because as we said the passover meal the meal part had come to an end so some suggest that jesus took the cup of salvation and then instituted the lord's supper but you know over the past week or so i've been reading a number of different and diverging views about the passover and what adds to the confusion is that they all use different names for these four cups if you start looking into it you'll have all these different names one person i was reading was arie finlison arie finlison was a professor of systematic theology in the free church college from the 1940s to the 1960s and he's written well i think it's been written about him but there's one book in particular the cross in the experience of our lord if you've never read it we did if you don't have it get it the cross in the experience of our lord it's a brilliant book and he talks in one of the chapters he talks about the lord's supper and he talks about the passover and he says that jesus used the fourth cup not the third cup not the cup of salvation but he used the fourth cup to institute the lord's supper the cup of praise and so let's look at the cup of praise i want us to consider this cup next the cup of praise so there's four cups one christ four cups one christ the cup of sanctification the cup of deliverance the cup of salvation and the cup of praise sanctification deliverance salvation and praise hopefully you'll have it all by the end of tonight the cup of sanctification deliverance salvation and praise so the cup of praise. So like the other three cups, the fourth cup was given its name because of the covenant promise in Exodus chapter 6. I will be your God and you will be my people. But the cup of praise, it wasn't shared until after another Hallel hymn was sung. This time they would sing the shortest

[25 : 09] Psalm in the Psalter, Psalm 117, which is a Hallel hymn that exhorts and encourages the nations of the world to give their hallelujah to the Lord. We're to praise the Lord for his covenant love and covenant faithfulness that endures forever. We can read the Psalm, it's very short. Praise the Lord all nations, extol him all peoples, for great is his steadfast love towards us and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever. Praise the Lord. It's a Hallel hymn which praises and pronounces and proclaims the covenant promise, the promise that was given to faithful Abraham. The promise you'll remember that Abraham was given was through your seed. All the nations, all the families of the they are with no blessing. They would be blessed. And that's what we're singing, that's what's been sung about in Psalm 117. They're praising the Lord for his covenant promise. They're praising him for his promise. I will be your God and you shall be my people. I will be your

God and you shall be my people. And with that, they would have the fourth cup. The cup, the fourth cup, the cup of praise would then be shared following this hymn being sung. But however, Ari Finlayson in his book, he regarded the fourth cup. He didn't call it the cup of praise. He called it the cup of the Messiah.

And he said that when the cup of praise or the cup of Messiah, when that was shared, he said nobody was to drink it. Nobody was to drink this fourth cup until the Messiah appeared. And Ari Finlayson says that it was at this point, at this point in the Passover meal, that Jesus put the Passover lamb to one side and then instituted the Lord's Supper. So some say it was the cup of salvation. Some say it was the cup of praise. However, and I want you to think about this. It's fascinating, fascinating to study this. As I said, there are different diverging and disagreeing views in this. And rabbis have debated this for generations. And the question they've been debating is, should there be four cups or five? Should there be four cups or five? And the reason they debate and they disagree about the answer to this question is because during the Passover meal, when you look it up, when you look up what the Jews do nowadays, during their Passover meal, where they're partaking in it, they drink all four cups. So they drink from the cup of praise. They drink from the cup of sanctification, the cup of deliverance, the cup of salvation, and the cup of praise. And because they drink from all four cups, some suggest that there's a fifth cup. Some actually use a fifth cup.

A fifth cup that remains untouched. So it remains untouched. It's filled, it's passed around, but it's not drunk from. And this cup is called the cup of Elijah. The cup of Elijah. Now it seems that the cup of Elijah was added to the Passover meal towards the end of the Old Testament, maybe even between the period of the Old Testament. And the New Testament. Because as, you know, as the Old Testament canon, as it comes to a conclusion, in the closing words of the book of Malachi, the Lord says through his prophet, he says, behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And then after Malachi's prophecy is given, each year when the Passover is celebrated. So Jews today, as they celebrate the Passover, they fill this fifth cup, the cup of Elijah.

And before concluding the Passover meal with the hymn of Thanksgiving, Psalm 118, they would go to the door. That's what I find fascinating. They go to the door, their outside door, and they open their outside door before this cup is passed around. And they open the door to await Elijah, to see if Elijah will come.

[29 : 56] So they're waiting in anticipation of Elijah's appearance, where Elijah will come and herald the arrival of the Messiah. And of course, as we know, the Jews are still waiting. They're still waiting for Elijah to appear at their door. But you know, I believe that it was using this fifth cup, the cup of Elijah, that on the night when Jesus was betrayed, he took some of the leftover unleavened bread. And when he had given thanks, we're told, he broke it. And he said to the disciples, this is my body, which is broken for you.

Do this in remembrance of me. And then in the same way also we're told that he took the cup, the cup of Elijah. And he took the cup of Elijah because according to the words of Malachi, Elijah had come. We're told that when John the Baptist appeared, he preached a baptism of repentance. He came in the spirit and in the power of Elijah. John the Baptist was the forerunner who claimed and confessed about Jesus that he must increase. We all must decrease. John the Baptist, he preached and he pointed to Jesus and said, behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. And so when Jesus instituted the Lord's supper, he took this cup, the fifth cup, and he said, this cup, the cup of Elijah, which has pointed to me, this cup is now the new covenant. It's the new covenant in my blood. And Jesus says to his disciples and to you as his disciple, do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. Why? Well, Paul tells us, for as often as you eat this bread and you drink the cup, you proclaim, you profess the Lord's death until he comes. And so that's what we're doing tomorrow. We're proclaiming the promise, the promise of eternal life through the death of our Passover lamb, Jesus Christ. We're proclaiming the Lord's death till he comes. And so four cups and one Christ, no five cups, five cups. Remember them. So there is the cup of sanctification. There's the cup of deliverance. There's the cup of salvation, the cup of praise, and the cup of Elijah. And the Lord says to us, for as often as you eat this bread and you drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Five cups, but my friend, only one Christ. And that's the beauty of the gospel. There is only one Christ who loved us and gave himself for us.

[33 : 27] Well, may the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord, our gracious God, we give thanks to thee that thy word points us only in one direction and that points us ever to Jesus, the author and the finisher of our faith.

We thank thee and we praise thee that there is that wonderful thread that runs through scripture, a scarlet thread that leads us to the cross.

And we bless thee, Lord, for all these pointers in the Old Testament where the new is in the old concealed and how the old is in the new revealed. And we pray that in it and as we study it and as we learn about all these things, that we would see Jesus, see none other save Jesus only, that our focus would be upon him, that our eyes would be lifted heavenward, knowing that that's where he is this evening.

He is seated at thy right hand, having sat down after finishing his work. And tonight he is still making intercession for us, still praying for his people, praying for his church, praying that we would be built up and encouraged and strengthened in our faith.

Lord, bless us, we pray. Meet us, we ask, as we gather together tomorrow. Meet us, Lord, around thy table and we would know thy blessing.

[34 : 55] Hear us, we pray. Go before us. Take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously. For Jesus' sake. Amen. Well, we're going to bring our service to our conclusion this evening by singing in that psalm.

Again in Psalm 116. Psalm 116. We're singing in verse 13 down to the end of the psalm.

It's page 396 in the Scottish Psalter. I'll of salvation take the cup. On God's name will I call. I'll pay my vows now to the Lord before his people all.

Dear in God's sight is his saint's death. Thy servant, Lord, am I. Thy servant sure, thine handmaid son, my bands thou didst untie. We'll sing down to the end of the psalm of Psalm 116.

To God's praise. I'll of salvation take the cup.

[36 : 06] On God's name will I go. I'll be my vows now to the Lord before his people all.

Here in the sight is his saint's death. Thy servant, Lord, am I.

Thy servant sure, thine handmaid son, my bands thou didst untie.

Thy offerings I do, Thy will give, Thy offerings I do, Thy will give, And on God's name will call.

I'll be my vows now to the Lord before his people all.

[37 : 38] Within the course of God's own house, within the midst of thee.

O city of Jerusalem, praise to the ark of thee.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore. Amen.