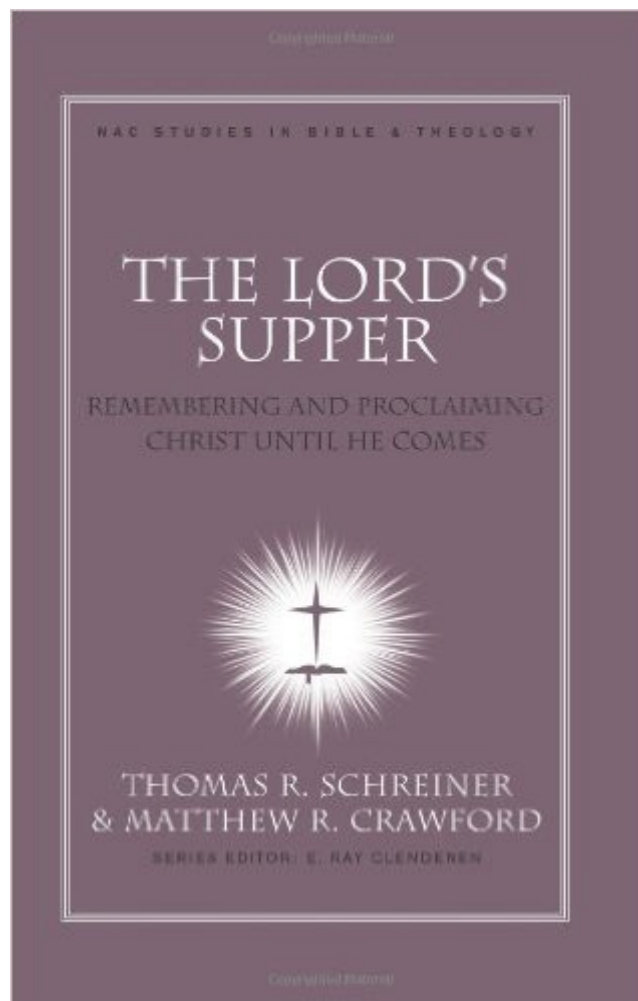


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# The Lord's Supper: Remembering And Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes (New American Commentary Studies In Bible & Theology)



## Synopsis

"As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, 'Take and eat it; this is My body.' " -Matthew 26:26 (HCSB) A follow-up to *Believer's Baptism* in the New American Commentary Studies in Bible & Theology series, *The Lord's Supper* explores the current Baptist view of the communion sacrament. Contributors include Andreas Köstenberger ("The Lord's Supper as a Passover Meal"), Jonathan Pennington ("The Last Supper in the Gospels"), Jim Hamilton ("The Lord's Supper in Paul"), and Michael Haykin ("Communion in the Early Church"). Adding a helpful perspective, chapters are also provided on the Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Zwinglian views of communion.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The Lord's Supper volume is part of the NAC Studies in Bible and Theology series, and a follow up *Believer's Baptism*, which is in the same series. According to editors Tom Schreiner and Matthew Crawford, "The goal of this book [Lord's Supper], then, is to study the Lord's Supper biblically, historically, theologically, and practically" (p. 3). This goal is then pursued through thirteen chapters, all written by Baptists.

Contents (A summary of the first 9 chapters)

- (1) Was the Last Supper A Passover Meal? by Andreas J. Kostenberger. After examining material from the Synoptics, John, Acts, and Paul, and the various objections that have been raised to the contrary, Prof. Kostenberger concludes yes.
- (2) The Lord's Last Supper in the Fourfold Witness of the Gospels by Jonathan T. Pennington. Prof. Pennington tackles "The Question of John and the Synoptics" "The Question of

the Discrepancies of Detail within the Synoptic Tradition," "Nodes of Meaning in the Fourfold Witness," etc. Prof. Pennington position however is this, that "Jesus intentionally celebrated the Passover meal a day earlier than the official Jerusalem one because He knew of His impending death" (p. 34).

(3) *The Lord's Supper in Paul: An Identity-Forming Proclamation of the Gospel* by James M. Hamilton Jr. This is developed against the background of the Corinthian culture and the issue of the "haves" and the "have nots."

(4) *"A Glorious Inebriation": Eucharistic Thought and Piety in the Patristic Era* by Michael A.G. Haykin. It's both interesting and freshening to know that the Fathers were not monolithic in their theology of the Eucharist.

(5) *Carolingian Conflict: Two Monks on the Mass* by David S. Hogg. Two monks at the same monastery went at it on the Lord's Supper, Radbertus, who argued for what later became Transubstantiation, and Ratramnus, who argued for "Spiritual Presence," with both drawing on John 6.

(6) *The Theology of the Eucharist According to the Catholic Church* by Gregg R. Allison. Prof. Allison clears up many of the misconceptions that many have about the Catholic Mass (for example, "Catholic theology does not teach that the sacrifice on the cross of Calvary is repeated over and over again, each time the Eucharist is celebrated," p. 158). Though the term transubstantiation was coined in 1140, it was not until the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 that it was made an official pronouncement of the church's position (p. 169). Note: "Presenting and understanding Catholic eucharistic theology cannot be severed from a presentation and understanding of Catholic theology in general, as the entire theological system hangs together" (p. 177).

(7) *On Faith, Signs, and Fruits: Martin Luther's Theology of the Lord's Supper* by Matthew R. Crawford. Luther understood the Lord's Supper through the lens of the Gospel, hence his sola scriptura. "Luther defined the Lord's Supper as consisting of three parts: faith in the promise of God, the presence of the physical sign accompanying the promise, and the fruits resulting from the sacrament" (p. 194). Though Luther wrote quite a bit on the Lord's Supper, *The Babylonian Captivity of the Church* is considered his watershed work, containing key hermeneutical principles that he would use later against Zwingli and other Reformers.

(8) *The Meaning of the Lord's Supper in the Theology of Ulrich Zwingli* by Bruce A. Ware. After exploring Zwingli's view of the Lord's Supper, Prof. Ware quotes Timothy George, regarding Zwingli's view: "Such a lofty view of the Eucharist cannot fairly be characterised as `mere memorialism'" (p. 244).

(9) *The Reformed View of The Lord's Supper* by Shawn D. Wright. This is principally a discussion of Calvin's work in the Institutes and the Westminster Confession of Faith.

**Conclusion** Though written by "Baptists for Baptists" (p. 391)--which really comes out from chapters 10-13, dealing with matters of "Open" vs Close Communion" and "Communion in the Local Church"--this latest volume on the Lord's Supper in the NAC in Bible & Theology should serve as a good resource for others of

different Christian and denominational traditions. Why do I say this? First, all the contributors interact and draw on primary sources. Second, the contributors also interact with others of different denominations who have written on the Lord's Supper. And third, the contributors often disagreed with one another. I highly recommend it.

Schreiner, Thomas R. and Matthew R. Crawford, editors. *The Lord's Supper: Remembering and Proclaiming Christ Until He Comes*. Volume 10 of NAC Studies in Bible & Theology. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2010. 413 pp. \$24.99. At only a few pages shy of four-hundred pages of written text, the book covers a significant amount of territory related to the Lord's Supper. Because of the vast amount of essays, the review below, in order to meaningfully cover the book's more notable aspects, will be somewhat selective in its evaluation of essays. The entire book will be noted and reviewed, but specific chapters and topics will be more carefully noted. Further, since the book is an anthology, it is spatially difficult to remark upon the achievements of each contributing author and their academic expertise warranting their input on the subject. The reader of the book is encouraged to note each author's credentials which are noted at the beginning of each essay. The volume is noteworthy overall, like so many in the NAC Studies in Bible & Theology series, and merits the attention of any reader interested in generalized expertise in both biblical and theological discussions of the Lord's Supper.

**Summary with Evaluative Remarks**

Andreas J. Kästner writes the first essay "Was the Last Supper a Passover Meal?" (6-30). There is a significant amount of ground covered in his essay since a few critics (including Scot McKnight, 9 n.7) have written against the meal's paschal nature, but Kästner does a fine job managing the data. One needless complication in his chapter is an issue Kästner feels is "at stake" in the debate (8), and that is the doctrine of inerrancy, since the Synoptic Gospels and John have a somewhat discordant chronology. When it is understood that John favors paschal theology over chronology (John 1:29; Rev 5:12), the issue does not nearly press itself as some might feel, and this is the opinion of several conservative New Testament scholars, including Craig S. Keener and Darrell L. Bock. In pages 9-17 Kästner provides the common arguments given against a paschal understanding of the Supper but provides firm rebuttals. Here the influential work of Joachim Jeremias' work is extensively noted, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*. What is particularly noteworthy about Kästner's essay, however, is what comes next in his final section discussing evidence favoring a paschal reading. Extensive use of Rabbinic material is marshalled, and here Kästner's impressive research and careful writing and logic really shine.

Jonathan T. Pennington's essay

• The Lord's Last Supper in the Fourfold Witness of the Gospels • (31-67) also covers a lot of ground. Pennington treats the Last Supper account holistically based on each Gospel's presentation, including the far too often neglected Johannine Gospel. After briefly surveying all four Gospels, including recent scholarship (31-41), Pennington provides a positively remarkable account of common themes (or "nodes of meaning," 43) among them, including: (a) the Passover as an enacted parable of Jesus' coming sacrificial death; (b) the fulfillment of the Passover festival and the new exodus; (c) the inauguration of the new covenant; (d) the Supper as a community forming event; and lastly (e) the Supper as a marker of the coming eschatological banquet (42-58). Pages 58-65 further elaborate on each Gospel's distinctive voice. The third essay (of thirteen), "The Lord's Supper in Paul: An Identity-Forming Proclamation of the Gospel," is by James M. Hamilton Jr. (68-102). He begins by noting the contextualizing 1 Corinthians 10 and 11 in light of the entire epistle (69-76), and from here he moves to his central thesis that the Lord's Supper has an identity-shaping nature (77-100). In a church torn by factionalism Paul presents the Lord's Supper as a fellowship in the body of the Savior, which is a sharing in the redemptive work of Christ. Hamilton's essay rightly emphasizes the corporate nature of engaging in the Lord's Supper and critically draws out the pastoral theology of Paul in his historical dealings with the ethically and theologically misguided Corinthians. Essays six, seven, eight, and nine are taken together since they treat, respectively, the theology of the Last Supper in Roman Catholicism (Gregg R. Allison, 151-92), Martin Luther (Matthew R. Crawford, 193-228), Ulrich Zwingli (Bruce A. Ware, 229-247), and traditional Reformed theology, namely John Calvin and the Westminster Confession of Faith (Shawn D. Wright, 248-84). The repristination of church history and theology throughout this period is wonderfully accomplished. Though working independently, each author manages to create a unified discussion covering the full spectrum of the Lord's Supper theology in both medieval Catholicism and the Reformation periods. Despite the volume's Baptist perspective (as Thomas Schreiner notes in the Epilogue, 391), the care to present each tradition's theology in non-polemical ways allows the reader to understand more readily the importance of the discussion as it unfolded historically, and also invites the trust of careful readers evaluating not just what is discussed but how it is discussed. The controversy essentially centers on whether the elements are understood to be the real body and blood of Christ, or rather seen as a sign which only signify the body and blood of Christ. The Roman Catholic church espouses a realistic understanding (180-1). The church also administers grace through the sacraments, and this can be observed from the manner in which the sacrament itself is conducted, with the priest first receiving the sacrament before offering it to the

church (152-5). The priest functions as Christ, the great high priest (158). Concerning the elements, Catholic teaching explicitly states: "the whole Christ is truly, really, and substantially contained in them" (160). The elements are the "substance" of Christ ("substance" is taken in the technical, Aristotelian sense, 168), and this is so by means of transubstantiation (160). Augustine built upon Aristotelian philosophical notions and sacramental theology was forever wed to Roman Catholic dogma; specifically in understanding the sacraments as "communicating grace ex opera operato" "literally, by the work performed" (166). Further, the sacraments are necessary for salvation (160). In the closing evaluation, Allison objects that the sacraments are simply symbolic of the real person and work of Christ, not the body and blood in reality (182). Overall, the essay, while being confusingly arranged, mainly discusses earlier Catholic theology, making much of Augustine and the Council of Trent, though the author acknowledges this to a degree (176-7). Luther, while resolutely objecting to the whole sacramental system in Catholicism, since the sacraments were said to merit grace, nevertheless maintained a realistic view of Christ's presence in the elements. But he despised the idea that Christ was sacrificed anew in each eucharistic celebration (199). He also notably focuses on the importance of faith (195-9, 201-2). Luther adamantly stood by the reality of Christ in the elements, which subsequent theologians identified as "consubstantiation" (209). While Luther had done much to counter Roman Catholic errors, he would not concede to his Reformed interlocutors, specifically Zwingli, in his understanding of the elements (210-19). Crawford's evaluation helpfully points out Luther's error in exegeting Last Supper texts in Scripture, noting as unfounded his literal emphasis (219-228). Ware's essay on Zwingli is fluidly written and critically clear. Zwingli was a Genevan Reformer who understood the Lord's Supper primarily as a memorial meal (230-2). Zwingli also spoke of Christ's "spiritual presence" in the elements (240-3), something he shared with Calvin. Ware's closing evaluation is excellent in summarizing Zwingli, particularly his controversy with Luther at Marburg (244-7). The Reformed Tradition essay by Wright includes reflections on both Calvin and the Westminster Confession. The Reformed tradition understands, surprisingly, the Lord's Supper as a means of grace while at the same time denying Roman Catholic ex opera operato notions (255-6). Calvin equivocates some in his theology and Wright picks up on this when he quotes him as saying, "when we have received the symbol of the body, let us no less surely trust that the body itself is also given to us" (267). Is it a symbol or the real thing? Ultimately, Calvin understands the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the elements as a "mysterious work of the Holy Spirit" (268; 267-71). Wright's analysis of Calvin

in the closing evaluation helpfully appropriates Baptist theology and creeds, noting how Baptists have distanced themselves from Westminster on the point of sacraments (279). Surprisingly, this was the first essay in the book to address the Lord's Supper with respect to Baptist teaching. Gregory A. Wills' essay, "Sounds from Baptist Theology," focuses almost exclusively on closed and open communion (285-312). This is unfortunate since he pens the essay on Baptist theology. No confessions or significant Baptist theologians are regarded. Brian J. Vickers pens the essay "The Lord's Supper: Celebrating the Past and Future in the Present" (313-40). Vickers focuses on memory and memorialism in Old Testament festivals, chiefly the Passover. Gregory Alan Thornbury writes the essay "The Lord's Supper and Works of Love" (341-63), noting some very sober thoughts concerning the outlook for Baptist tradition (358f). The final essay of Ray Van Neste continues with the closing thoughts of Thornbury by discussing "how we practice this ordinance in the local church" and suggests "some ways to improve our practice" (364-90). Neste's essay is titled "The Lord's Supper in the Context of the Local Church." Many of his points are sobering and call attention to the high-church traditions' power to compel Baptists away from their sound theological roots, a point that Thornbury also raised. Conclusion As a Baptist book on the subject, the lack of a specific Baptist theological understanding of the Last Supper is a cause for some disappointment, particularly when there are so many excellent Baptist theologians to involve, such as Carl F. H. Henry, Donald A. Carson, Millard Erickson, etc. Overall, the work of the contributors is excellent and the writing is almost always very compelling.

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