

*Our Promised Place of Intimacy  
and Transformation with Jesus*

The  
LORD'S  
SUPPER



Jonathan Black

*Foreword by* Michael L. Brown

"In this highly readable primer, Jonathan Black carefully explains the nature of the Lord's Supper and shows its special significance in Christian life and worship by drawing on Scripture and a wide range of primary sources."

Dr. Simon Chan, Association of Theological Education  
of Southeast Asia

"From the opening lines to the closing statements of *The Lord's Supper*, Jonathan had my undivided attention. As a Pentecostal, I was deeply stirred by the way he unfolded the significant passages in Scripture from Sinai to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb regarding the profound mystery of the sacramental grace that is ours in the Lord's Supper. Jonathan adeptly grasps the mysteries that enable us to "taste and see," through Eucharistic bread and wine, that the Lord is good. There is much here to feast upon for leadership and laity, scholar and student, disciple and devotee. As we move forward in this day of unprecedented change and unparalleled opportunity for Gospel mission, may we realize that the sustaining food for this pilgrim journey is ever found in the sacred Bread and Beverage that is Christ's Body and Blood."

Bishop Mark J. Chironna, Church On The Living Edge

"In this wonderful, deeply devotional book, pastor and theology lecturer Jonathan Black brings a timely, tender and passionate call for us to encounter Jesus afresh in the Lord's Supper. As we share in the Lord's Supper we are drawn to fresh wonder and worship and awakened to greater expectancy and faith."

Chris Cartwright, general superintendent  
of Elim Pentecostal Churches

"The risen Jesus, wonderfully, is present to us exactly as we need Him to be (if not always the way we want). And what we need more than anything is for Jesus to be present to us *sacramentally*—as and in the mystical communion of the visible and the invisible, the earthly and the heavenly, the human and the divine in the feast of His body and blood. Tragically, many of our churches have lost touch with this mystery and its life-giving power. But, as Jonathan Black shows so convincingly in this timely, wise and badly needed book, the teaching of the Scriptures and the wisdom of the broader Christian tradition is clear: There, at Christ's table, thanks to the Spirit, we receive all the good the Father wants for us and intends for us to share with the world."

Chris Green, professor of Public Theology at Southeastern University

“Reading, I imagined myself in a living room with other Christians listening to Jonathan speak. His style is enthusiastic: part testimony, part biblical study and part historical survey, building a case for Christians to come to the Lord’s Supper expecting nothing less than to meet the Lord.”

The Right Reverend Gregory O. Brewer, Episcopal  
Diocese of Central Florida

“I’ve had the great privilege of knowing Jonathan Black for many years as a friend, a gifted teacher of God’s Word and a powerful authentic prophetic voice.

There are very precious moments in Church history when the light of revelation brings illumination that shifts the posture of the Church, which has the effect of realigning the Body of Christ with Christ, the Head of the Church, and advancing it on its mission on earth. We see these throughout history, some even in our lifetime. I sense that Jonathan’s book and its brilliant and inspiring content will play a vital part in bringing about another needed shift. *The Lord’s Supper* is carefully crafted in such a way that it inspires the reader to desire the privilege of Communion, and to seek deeper encounters and transformation in a fresh, meaningful and irresistible way. This personal inspiration is further intensified by the renewed understanding that Jonathan shares, and it refreshes the heart to know that as we engage afresh in Communion expectantly, we do so with all the saints, past and present, with all of heaven and most wonderfully with Christ Himself. Who wouldn’t want to experience that again and again?

I thoroughly recommend you read it.”

Ivan Parker, national leader, The Apostolic Church UK

“This book by Jonathan Black on the Lord’s Supper is both thoroughly biblical, pastoral and devotional. I found it a very encouraging book to read, with helpful and deep insights that people from a variety of denominational backgrounds will find strengthening and encouraging.”

The Right Reverend David A. McClay,  
Bishop of Down and Dromore

The  
LORD'S  
SUPPER

# The LORD'S SUPPER

*Our Promised Place of Intimacy and  
Transformation with Jesus*



Jonathan Black



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To Jenny, Aaron, Barney & Josh,  
who joined me nearly every day  
in the Lord's presence at His table  
in the good old days of the  
daily breaking of bread.

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# FOREWORD

WHEN YOU THINK of Pentecostal-charismatic meetings, you generally don't think of liturgy and sacraments. Instead, you think of free-form, contemporary worship, the gifts of the Spirit in operation, something spontaneous and, on a certain level, unrehearsed. As for liturgy and holy sacraments, that's for the more traditional churches, the older, denominational churches.

The problem for Pentecostals and charismatics is that the Bible is filled with liturgy, right into the New Testament, meaning that liturgy itself is not necessarily bad or anti-Spirit. As for sacraments, at a minimum, we Pentecostals and charismatics believe in the sacraments of baptism, communion, and the anointing of oil when praying for the sick. But have we thought about their meaning and significance? Do we truly understand their importance? And how can these practices be more deeply incorporated into our meetings, joining together sacrament and Spirit and Word?

We now have a book written by a young Pentecostal theologian whom I only know through the pages that follow and through the glowing recommendation of the publisher. Now you can get to know Jonathan Black for yourself as you read

his new book. Better still, you can gain a better understanding of the sacrament of communion for yourself.

What really happens when we partake in communion together? What were the communion practices of the early church and how do those relate to us today? Where does communion fit in our public gatherings, home meetings, or personal time with the Lord? And what can we expect from Jesus when we share His bread and cup?

Within the Christian tradition, communion has different expressions and meanings. Some believe the bread and wine turn into the actual body and blood of Christ. Some deny the literal presence of Christ in the elements but say He is spiritually present, and others receive communion only as a symbolic act of remembrance. Regardless of your present stance, you will learn much as you read these pages, your thinking will be challenged on several points and, above all, you will receive a fresh invitation to partake of the Lord's transformational grace that is so freely poured out in and through His supper.

I, for one, want everything the Lord has given His Church. If it is from above. If it is good. If it is scriptural. If it glorifies Jesus. If it edifies—then I want it. And I don't want my own spiritual past to rob me in any way of God's best. Instead, I do my best to respond to Scripture, throwing out the bad and holding on to the good.

As you read Jonathan's book, especially when he contends that there is a strong connection between the Lord's Supper, the supernatural, transformation and revival, drink in his good insights, observations, and teachings. They might just impact your life in a lasting (even eternal) way.

Dr. Michael L. Brown, author, apologist,  
and host of the *Line of Fire* radio broadcast

# I

## The Upper Rooms

**D**O YOU EVER FEEL like your eyes aren't fully open? I don't mean like me when I get out of bed in the morning, before I've made it as far as the kettle to make a cup of tea to properly wake up. I mean when you're fully awake but know there's much more to be seen than what your eyes can take in. And maybe, sometimes, we're even so used to our eyes not being fully open that we don't notice it. Everything looks normal, but we don't realize there is something far beyond what we are seeing.

### **A ROOM ON THE ROAD**

On the very first Easter Day, two disciples had that experience. Their eyes weren't fully open, but they didn't realize it. The Lord Jesus was standing right beside them, walking with them

and talking with them, but they didn't even recognize Him. All they saw was a fellow traveler on the road to Emmaus, when it was actually the Lord of glory who had just risen from the dead.

Now, to be fair, we can't blame the two disciples for not recognizing Jesus. It wasn't like we would have recognized Him any quicker. For Luke tells us, "Their eyes were restrained, so that they did not know Him" (Luke 24:16). Their eyes were restrained. Something was keeping them from seeing the reality. Jesus was really there. They could walk with Him and talk with Him. They could even have reached out and touched Him. He wasn't invisible or silent. He wasn't just there because He's God and so He's everywhere. He was there tangibly. They encountered Him, not just in a vision or a dream, but they saw Him and heard Him, and He made their hearts burn within them (see verse 32). They encountered Him in a glorious, powerful and tangible way—even if their eyes didn't yet recognize Him.

There came a point that evening when "Their eyes were opened and they knew Him" (verse 31), but it wasn't because they'd suddenly put the pieces together and figured out who He was. They didn't open their own eyes. They needed the Lord to open their eyes for them, and He did it in a rather unexpected way.

Jesus could have told them who He was as they walked along the road. After all, He did tell them a lot about Himself, for "Beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (verse 27). Jesus could have told them who He was when they invited Him in for supper. At that point, He could have told them He needed to get back to Jerusalem to appear to the

disciples because *He* was the One who had just risen from the tomb. But He didn't.

Instead, "He went in to stay with them" (verse 29). They still didn't know who He was, but they were enjoying His company and displaying hospitality to a lone traveler. So they all sat down together at the table to eat. And when they did, "He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them" (verse 30). That's when their eyes were opened.

The Lord Jesus "was known to them in the breaking of bread" (verse 35). In fact, it was only once their eyes were opened to see Jesus in the breaking of bread that they realized the glorious reality of the encounter they'd been having the whole time. It was only when Jesus made Himself known to them in the breaking of bread that they said, "Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us on the road, and while He opened the Scriptures to us?" (verse 32).

Jesus had been at work all along; He'd been doing something glorious. And the place where it all came together—the glory of the cross and the resurrection, the glory of the living Jesus and the glory of what He'd been doing in their lives as He opened His Word and made their hearts burn—was in the breaking of bread.

## **THE FIRST UPPER ROOM**

In the room on the road, Jesus "took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them" (verse 30). He'd done exactly the same thing only a few days before in a room down the road in Jerusalem.

On the night He was betrayed, "Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them" (Mark 14:22). The supper

## The Lord's Supper

Jesus shared with the two disciples in Emmaus is pointing us back to the supper He had shared with His disciples in the Upper Room. He opened their eyes with a repeat of taking, blessing, breaking and giving.

In the Upper Room during the Last Supper, Jesus had promised to meet with His disciples in bread and wine by saying, “This is My body,” and “This is My blood” (Matthew 26:26–27; Mark 14:22, 24).

Then Jesus was arrested, put to death on the cross and buried in the tomb. When we meet the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, they’ve already heard about an empty tomb and angels and the message that Jesus was alive, but they hadn’t seen Him, and they don’t know of anyone else who had either. But then Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to them. This wasn’t just any old gesture. These actions restated the promise He had made only a few days earlier. To show them He was fulfilling that promise, He opened their eyes and revealed Himself to them in the breaking of bread.

Now, maybe you’re thinking, *Sure, that all sounds very nice, but where’s the promise? At the Last Supper, Jesus just told us to remember Him.* The thing is, Matthew and Mark say nothing at all about remembrance. Yes, Jesus tells us to “Do this in remembrance of Me” in Luke (22:19) and 1 Corinthians (11:24–25), but Matthew and Mark do not include that bit. So that must mean that there’s something else going on in the supper beyond this remembrance!

What we do read in the Bible *every* time Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper are His words “This is My body” (Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24). And each time He also says “this is My blood of the new covenant” (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24) or “the new covenant in My

blood” (Luke 22:20; 1 Corinthians 11:25). (For now, let’s not get too caught up in how precisely that could be His body and blood—we’ll think some more about what that does or doesn’t mean later on.) Jesus is about to go to the cross and lay down His life for the sins of the world, then rise again in glorious victory over death, hell, sin and the devil, before ascending to the Father’s right hand. Yet, somehow, He still promises that He’ll be with His disciples as they eat and drink at His table.

In presenting the disciples with His body and blood, Jesus is making them a tangible promise. He’s not just leaving them with an idea to remember, but with the promise of His powerful presence. You can’t get more present than body and blood.

Think about what we’ve learned from our Zoom fatigue during the lockdown of the pandemic. Video calls helped us stay in touch with the people we love. We could see them and hear them and feel some sort of connection with them. But it didn’t take us long to discover that it wasn’t the same as them being present with us in flesh and blood. I can still remember how amazing it felt the first time I was able to sit down for a meal with friends at their kitchen table after months of not being able to see real, live people! I’d seen them every week on Zoom, but seeing them in real life, in flesh and blood, was something far, far better.

That’s the promise Jesus gives us. A promise of the real-life, flesh-and-blood kind of presence. The best kind. Now, maybe you’re still a bit skeptical that this is what is going on here. So let me show you how we see the promise of His presence in another way in that Upper Room. But to do that we need to go to some mountains.

## UP THE MOUNTAIN

The Lord's presence often comes with meals in the Bible. It is often with food that Jesus reveals His glory in the gospels. In fact, it's often with bread (John 6:1–14) and with wine (John 2:1–11). But the Lord makes His presence known at meals in the Old Testament too. When the Lord and two angels came to speak with Abraham at Mamre, they ate, and it was as they were eating that the Lord revealed Himself (Genesis 18:5–8).

A few hundred years later, when the Lord delivered the children of Israel from Egypt and brought them to Mount Sinai, we read about a very interesting meal (that we could very easily miss because it is surrounded by so many wonderful works of God). After the Lord had spoken His Ten Commandments to the people (Exodus 20:1–17), and after Moses “drew near the thick darkness where God was” to receive God's Law (Exodus 20:21), the Lord sent Moses back down to get “Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel” to bring them partway up the mountain to “worship from afar” (Exodus 24:1).

So, Moses heads down the mountain to fetch Aaron and the others, but before he brought them back up, he had one more task.

Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the judgments. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the LORD has said we will do.” And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD. And he rose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel. Then he sent young men of the children of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen



to the LORD. And Moses took half the blood and put it in basins, and half the blood he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, "All that the LORD has said we will do, and be obedient." And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."

Exodus 24:3–8

What's going on? Why all this blood? Moses tells the people what the Lord has told him, and they promise that they will do what the Lord has spoken. Then sacrifices are offered to ratify this covenant. And as Moses sprinkles the blood over the people, he says, "This is the blood of the covenant"—the same words Jesus would say as He gave His disciples the cup of the new covenant in His blood in the Upper Room.

The proclamation that "This is the blood of the covenant" is immediately followed by Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the seventy elders going up the mountain. And then, very abruptly, Exodus simply tells us they saw God.

And they saw the God of Israel. And there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in its clarity. But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.

Exodus 24:10–11

They see the Lord. And even what they see merely under His feet is so glorious that it's like heaven itself. What they saw when they saw the Lord Himself is too glorious for even

the Bible to describe! And what do they do in the presence of the Lord? They eat and drink. They see the most glorious sight they've ever laid eyes on. They see the God of Israel—the Lord Himself in glorious splendor. They see the indescribable majesty. And what do they do? They get out their picnic.

Only it's not a picnic. They are overwhelmed with the glorious sight of the God whose mere footstool is more spectacular than the finest sapphires of this earth. The Lord Himself has invited them up this mountain. The Lord Himself has invited them into His very presence. And He doesn't bring them in just to gaze from a distance. This isn't something that could have taken place equally well on Zoom. They're not invited just to look at a glorious sight. They are invited in to eat and drink in the presence of the Lord. That's intimate fellowship. It's a bit like after the lockdown, when we could finally sit down and eat with the people we love and enjoy their presence—only a billion times more glorious.

The funny thing is, the Lord calls this worshiping “from afar.” The high and exalted One who reigns high over all, the One who is far beyond us, majestic in His holiness, draws near to those who have been sprinkled with the blood of the covenant. They “worship from afar” as they eat and drink in His presence. And He still does that today.

## NEAR WHILE AFAR

This meal at the sapphire pavement on the side of the mountain seems like one of the most intimate encounters with the Lord in all of Scripture. And yet it is what the Lord calls worshiping from afar. If that is what afar looks like, what happens when someone gets even closer?

Moses leaves Aaron, Nadab and Abihu and the elders to continue to worship from afar when the Lord calls him up into His presence at the top of the mountain.

Now the glory of the LORD rested on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it six days. And on the seventh day He called to Moses out of the midst of the cloud. The sight of the glory of the LORD was like a consuming fire on the top of the mountain in the eyes of the children of Israel. So Moses went into the midst of the cloud and went up into the mountain. And Moses was on the mountain forty days and forty nights.

Exodus 24:16–18

Eating and drinking in the presence of the Lord from “afar” looked glorious. But drawing nearer than that looks terrifying. Gone are the sapphire pavements and the brilliance of heaven. Now instead we see dark clouds, silence and finally a consuming fire. What we see when Moses gets closer is an overwhelming presence far beyond what we can grasp. But a bit farther down the mountain, we saw a gloriously beautiful presence as the elders ate and drank in the presence of the Lord.

Somehow what’s going on as they worship from afar by eating and drinking seems more inviting than what’s going on at the top of the mountain. It’s the same God and the same glory. But they see and experience it in completely different ways.

Notice one more thing: Moses doesn’t actually describe what he saw or experienced. He only tells us what it looked like “in the eyes of the children of Israel” (Exodus 24:17). We don’t know what the sight of the glory of the Lord looked like to Moses himself. We know that “Our God is a consuming

fire” (Hebrews 12:29; Deuteronomy 9:3). So the terrifying glory the children of Israel saw was truly the glory of our God. Yet, somehow, in His grace, the Lord drew Moses into that consuming fire, not as a terrifying flame, but as a flame of love, so that the overwhelming glory Moses encountered was a transforming radiance that caused even his face to shine with the glory of God (see Exodus 34:29–30). Moses was drawn up by the Lord in His grace, after being sprinkled by the blood of the covenant and having eaten and drunk in the presence of the Lord. The only way to the glory at the top of the mountain was by the blood and the meal of the presence.

Now, Moses didn’t go up to the top of the mountain alone. His “minister” goes up with him (Exodus 24:13 KJV). *Minister* is an odd word that is usually (but not always) used to describe the priests and Levites and those who minister to the Lord in the Tabernacle and the Temple. They were “ministers of the altar” (Joel 1:13 KJV). It can be just a word for a servant, but it is also linked specifically to service around God’s altar and before the Ark of His presence (see 1 Chronicles 16:4). That’s an interesting connection because we’ve just seen the young men offering sacrifices on the altar and Moses sprinkling the blood of the covenant on the altar before we came up the mountain.

But even more interesting is this minister who hovers in the background with barely a mention. He’s called Joshua, but at this point in Israel’s history there has been no mention of a Joshua. There is a young man called Hoshea, whose name Moses will eventually change to Joshua (see Numbers 13:16). But at this point there is no Joshua. So why does the Bible call Hoshea by the name Joshua in this mysterious mention on the side of the mountain? Well, the name *Joshua* means

“The Lord is salvation.” His original name, *Hoshea*, meant “O save!” But Moses isn’t climbing this mountain hoping that God will save him. He isn’t approaching the consuming fire in fear that it will burn him up. Moses is being drawn up this mountain by the gracious God who has already delivered His people from their bondage in Egypt. He has brought them into covenant with Him so that He is their God and they are His people. Moses has been invited up by the saving God who has sprinkled him with the blood and fed him in His presence, the gracious Lord who is salvation.

Like Moses, we can never climb up into God’s presence alone. We can only utterly depend on the Lord who is salvation. And Joshua reminds us of that. For his new name points us to something much greater than himself. He stays in the background here in Exodus 24 because ultimately Joshua is there not to draw attention to himself, but to lift our eyes to Someone Else whose name means “The Lord is salvation” (Matthew 1:21). Joshua is what we get when we translate his name from Old Testament Hebrew into English. But we’re much more used to seeing that name translated from New Testament Greek into English—from Greek, the same name translates as *Jesus*.

Only Jesus can bring us into the presence of the Lord (see John 14:6; Hebrews 10:19–20). And He does that by sprinkling us with His blood—the blood of the new covenant—and sitting us down to eat and drink in His presence. When Jesus spoke those words in the Upper Room that night, He wasn’t only pointing us *forward* to the cross, but He was also pointing us *back* to the promise of the glory and radiance of the presence of the Lord in Exodus 24. He was pointing us back to the sprinkled blood, the heavenly sapphire pavement

and the consuming fire who is the Lord, our salvation. Those words, “This is My blood of the new covenant” are an invitation up the mountain to eat and drink in the presence of our glorious God.

Now, we might not experience the top of the mountain every time we come to the table. That's okay. In fact, it's more than okay—it's how things should be. Sometimes God gives us glimpses of the mountaintop like the children of Israel had, which overwhelm us with the holiness and the majesty of the consuming fire. Occasionally, the Lord in His abundant grace gives mountaintop experiences of the grandeur of His glory. But always, when we gather with His people at His table, we “have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel” (Hebrews 12:22–24). The Lord Himself draws near from a distance through the meal as we “worship from afar,” drawing us by the blood of the covenant into His radiant love. And like the elders of Israel, we eat and drink in the heavenly glory of the presence of the Lord. Although sometimes, like the two on the road to Emmaus, our eyes are restrained, and we don't quite realize the true glory of what is happening.

## UP TO THE TEMPLE

When Moses went into the cloud at the top of the mountain, the Lord showed him the pattern of the Tabernacle. He

started with the three things inside: the Ark of God's presence, the golden lampstand and the table for the showbread.

What is showbread? That might be its traditional name in English, but it will help us to understand it better by translating it another way—its Hebrew name simply means “Bread of the Presence.” This bread was to be set on the golden table, next to “its flagons and bowls with which to pour drink offerings” (Exodus 25:29 ESV). So, bread and wine (for drink offerings) were to be set on this table before the Lord “always” (verse 30). That means that the Tabernacle and Temple not only had Bread of the Presence, but Bread and Wine of the Presence.

Just before receiving this revelation, Moses had eaten and drunk in the presence of the Lord on the sapphire pavement. Now the Lord tells him that His people need a constant memorial before Him of eating and drinking in His presence in the form of bread and wine. Then every Sabbath day, the priests were to eat this bread of God's presence (see Leviticus 24:8–9). This bread was only to be eaten in a holy place, because it was “most holy” (verse 9)—after all, it was the bread of the presence of the holy God.

But not only do we have holy bread and wine here connected to the promise of the presence of the Lord, but this bread is also a sign of God's everlasting covenant (verse 8). The covenant that was sealed in the blood sprinkled on the children of Israel at the foot of Mount Sinai, the covenant celebrated by eating and drinking in the presence of the Lord on the sapphire pavement, now has a perpetual sign and memorial (a remembrance, in fact) before the Lord in bread and wine.

So the bread and wine of remembrance—the bread and wine of the new covenant in Jesus' blood, given by Jesus in the Upper Room—don't only point us up Mount Sinai, but

up to the Tabernacle and Temple on Mount Zion with their bread and wine of the presence as well—not just to the one-off events on the mountain, but to the perpetual sign that endured through the centuries—first in the Holy Place of the Tabernacle and then in the Temple. Right at the center of worship in the Temple every Sabbath day, fresh bread would be offered before the Lord by the priest. The bread and wine of the Lord's presence that had been on the table would be eaten and drunk. The table of the Bread of the Presence (with the bread and wine placed upon it) was one of the four most holy objects in the Temple (see Exodus 40:20–28). And this weekly offering and meal around the table was one of the most holy acts of worship.

Now, in the New Testament Church, Jesus has given us new bread and wine of His presence right at the heart of Christian worship, and we, as a royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:9), are all invited to eat and drink.

## **ANOTHER UPPER ROOM**

A few years after Jesus made those promises of His presence in that Upper Room in Jerusalem, and after He opened the disciples' eyes to His presence in the breaking of bread in Emmaus, we read about another Upper Room where His powerful presence was known at the breaking of bread.

As Paul traveled around the eastern Mediterranean on his third missionary journey, he stopped for seven days in Troas. That means the church in Troas could have the great apostle, one of the most famous preachers in the world, preach on the Lord's Day. Can you imagine if your church was suddenly going to have the apostle Paul preach on Sunday? We'd



probably be shouting about it from the rooftops (or, well, you know, whatever the social media equivalent might be). Everyone would want to make sure they were at church that day. But that's not quite what happens in Troas. The Bible tells us exactly why they came to church that Sunday, and it wasn't to hear Paul. Nope. The Christians in Troas had a much more important reason to crowd into their Upper Room, for "On the first day of the week . . . the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). They didn't come for the celebrity preacher. They didn't gather for a challenging message. They came together for the same reason they gathered each and every Lord's Day: to break bread.

But this didn't turn out to be a normal Sunday service—something went disastrously wrong. As Paul was preaching a very long sermon (it was midnight and he was still preaching!) the unthinkable happened.

There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. And in a window sat a certain young man named Eutychus, who was sinking into a deep sleep. He was overcome by sleep; and as Paul continued speaking, he fell down from the third story and was taken up dead.

Acts 20:8–9

But that wasn't the end. For "Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing him said, 'Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him'" (verse 10). Eutychus was dead. But the Lord used Paul to raise him from the dead. What a church service! What would we do next if it happened in our church? Perhaps we'd spend time spontaneously celebrating and giving thanks and praise to God. Or perhaps the service would just

end right then and we'd all rush out to tell everyone we could find about what had just happened. Either way, that would probably be the end of whatever had been planned for the rest of the service.

But what did the Christians of Troas do? In their joy and thankfulness, they went right back to the purpose of their gathering: the breaking of bread. Embracing Eutychus and being used by God to miraculously raise him from the dead wasn't the most important thing Paul did with his hands that night, for as soon as he told everyone that Eutychus was alive, Paul came back up to the Upper Room and broke bread (verse 11). The most spectacular miracle that probably nearly anyone in the Church had ever seen in their entire lives wasn't enough to overshadow partaking in the Lord's table, the true purpose of their coming together. No preaching (no matter how dynamic, or, in this case, no matter how long), no gifts of the Spirit (no matter how spectacular) could overshadow the Lord's promised presence in the breaking of bread. The Lord's table towers over testimony, praise and miracles in its centrality and importance. Yes, Eutychus had a powerful encounter with the Lord in being raised from the dead. But the whole assembly were promised a powerful encounter with the Lord in the breaking of bread.

So, in this book, I want to help us all be like the Christians in Troas—to come to the Lord's table with such expectancy and faith in Christ's promise of His presence, that nothing, not even the most glorious and spectacular miracles, could keep us away. And to know that, whether our eyes are restrained or opened, our hearts can burn within us as we encounter Jesus in His Supper.