

The Lord's Supper

Introduction

- I. Paul told the Corinthians about the solemn history of the Lord's Supper, an account he had received directly by inspiration from the Lord (1 Cor. 11:23–29).
 - A. The memorial design of the Supper is explained in these verses.
 - B. The phrase, "In remembrance of Me" is mentioned twice in this text.
 - C. The word "remembrance" means "a recollection, a calling to mind."
 - D. It is in memory of Christ, not only of His death, resurrection, ascension into heaven, and future return that we eat and drink.
- II. We have many memorials in this life:
 - A. A family photo album is a memorial of sorts.
 - B. Simple grave markers are the most common.
 - C. On Memorial Day citizens gather around that monuments to remember and honor the memory of fallen servicemen.
- III. All most monuments eventually fail: pictures fade, flowers crumble into dust, marble monuments are effaced and leveled with time.
 - A. The Lord's Supper is one memorial that will never fade away or be forgotten as long as earth time continues.
 - B. In order to appreciate this memorial, let us look the institution of it and some practical observations for us today.

Discussion

I. The Passover Meal

- A. After the first nine plagues, God promised one more (Exo. 11:4–6).
- B. In mercy, God provided a way of escape (Exo. 12:3–14).
 1. The lamb was secured on the tenth day of the month, and killed near the end of the fourteenth day.
 2. At the end of the fourteenth day they removed all leaven from their house till the evening of the twenty-first day.
 3. Not a bone of the lamb was to be broken (Exo. 12:46); it was to be roasted whole and eaten with bitter herbs.
 4. "And thus you shall eat it: with a belt on your waist, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand. So you shall eat it in haste. It is the Lord's Passover" (Exo. 12:11).
 5. If a family was too small to eat a lamb, they could share it with another.
 6. If any remained, it was to be burned.
 7. This meal is often referred to as the Seder, which literally means "order," referring to the ordered ceremony that would be observed.
- C. This meal was to be "a sign" (Exo. 12:13), which means "a sign, mark, or token, which brings to mind, shews, or confirms anything either past, present, or to come; which excites attention or consideration" (*Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*, p. 394).
 1. It was to be a perpetual reminder (Exo. 12:25–28).
 2. After entering the promised land we find them celebrating the Passover under the leadership of Joshua in plains of Jericho (Josh. 5:10).

- D. Devout Jews today still celebrate the Seder meal.
1. The head of the family, usually in a white ritual gown, begins the ceremony by giving a benediction over a cup of wine.
 2. There is then a ceremonial washing of hands by all participants.
 3. The table is prepared with matzo (unleavened) bread and with a Seder tray, which contains:
 - a) Bitter herbs and horse radish to remind them of the bitterness of their oppression and the bitter lot of enslaved Israelites.
 - b) A shank bone, symbolic of the “mighty arm” of God.
 - c) A vegetable, such as parsley, which they will dip in salt water.
 - d) There is a hard-boiled egg, symbolic of God’s loving kindness.
 4. They will read the Haggadah, the special book containing the story of the biblical Exodus as it must be retold at the beginning of the Seder dinner on Passover.
 - a) The book’s commentaries on the Exodus provide a religious philosophy of Jewish history, and the book supplies answers to the traditional questions asked by children at the beginning of the Seder.
 - b) After the reading of the story, there is a period of singing—often including Psalms 115 thru 117, plus the Psalms of Ascents.

II. The Lord’s Supper

- A. 1500 years later, Jesus and His disciples come to Jerusalem about a week before the Passover—during this week He taught in Jerusalem during the day and spent the night at Bethany.
- B. In Jerusalem, on the Thursday evening before His betrayal, we find Christ ready to observe His last Passover meal (Matt. 26:17–20).
 1. Lamb taken to the priest and slain after 3:00 P.M.
 2. It was during this meal that we read of the institution of the Lord’s Supper (Matt. 26:26–30).
 3. The elements of the Lord’s Supper are the same as for the Jewish Passover feast: unleavened bread and unfermented wine.

III. A Memorial Supper

- A. The Lord’s Supper is a memorial which preaches and proclaims Christ’s death on the cross (1 Cor. 11:2).
 1. Christ is our Passover (1 Cor. 5:7).
 2. The word “remembrance” in 1 Corinthians 11:24 is the same word found in Hebrews 10:3, where Paul says, “But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year.”
 3. Levitical sacrifices reminded men of sins—the Lord’s Supper reminds us of the remission of sins (Matt. 26:28).
 - a) We break the unleavened bread to remind us of His body.
 - b) We drink of the fruit of the vine to remind us of His blood.

4. "At Passover Jews all over the world retell the story of the plagues and the Exodus and thus proclaim the central fact on which their peoplehood is founded. Likewise, members of the Messianic Community are to proclaim the death of the Lord as their exodus from sin and as the basis for their existence. Both proclamations look not only back toward a past redemption but also forward to a future one; hence the proclamation is until he comes the second time." (David H. Stern, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*).
 5. "The world builds monuments to her great men of the most durable material, and engraves on them records of their valorous deeds; but, even when not destroyed by man, the relentless mill of time grinds them to powder. But the Lord's Supper, builded of such perishable material, has endured through the centuries and is as fresh today as when builded. It is the Lord's monument. Let skeptics account for its existence. It is not enough that they tell us we keep it because of tradition. Let them tell us how it began; let them tell us why the first group ate their supper. If it celebrates a myth, let them tell us who fooled the first group into sitting down to the table to celebrate that which never existed. How was such a thing possible? Let them explain why a new word was coined to point out the peculiar relation of this supper to the Lord. It is called the *Kuriakos* supper. This word, not found in Greek literature previous to this, is defined: 'Of or belonging to the Lord; relating to the Lord.'" (C. R. Nichol, *Sound Doctrine*, Vol. 1, pp. 167, 168).
- B. A memorial which preaches His return (1 Cor. 11:26).
1. It points not only backward, but forward.
 2. "Proclaim" means "to announce, declare, promulgate, make known; to proclaim publicly, publish."
- C. A memorial to the new covenant.
1. Animal blood was the blood of the old covenant (Heb. 9:16–22).
 2. The blood of Christ is the blood of the new (Matt. 26:26–30).

IV. Manner Of Partaking

- A. If the New Testament gives us no regulations or directions for when to partake of the Supper, you could partake just once in your life!
1. Jerusalem church continued steadfastly (Acts 2:42).
 2. Church at Troas came together for this purpose (Acts 20:7).
- B. There are no directions given for when Christians partake of it during a particular worship service.
1. When we partake of it during an assembly is a matter of tradition—nothing is wrong with tradition unless we seek to bind it upon others.
 2. When it was instituted, the Lord preached to the apostles afterwards and then they sang a hymn and departed to Gethsemane to pray (Matt. 26:26–30; Luke 22:15–39).
 - a) This was not a worship service of the early church.
 - b) It was not the first day of the week, and their prayers were not offered in the name of Christ, for He was still on earth.

3. At Troas, “on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight” (Acts 20:7).
 - a) The Lord’s Supper was before the sermon in this passage.
 - b) If they had the Lord’s Supper after the sermon, they would have eaten it on Monday, not the first day of the week.
- C. Who should participate?
 1. Those in the Kingdom (Matt. 26:2).
 2. What about non-Christians?
 - a) Each one is to “examine himself” (1 Cor. 11:28).
 - b) The Lord has not conferred police powers on anyone to stand guard over His table and refuse those deemed “unworthy.”
- D. Do not partake of it in an worthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27).
 1. We will never be *worthy* of Christ’s death.
 2. If we have sin on our soul we can repent before we partake of the Supper—private sins require private repentance, public sins can be forgiven by God and public repentance made known (1 Cor. 11:27–29).

Conclusion

- I. Are you in the Kingdom of God’s dear Son?
- II. If not in the Kingdom, you have no fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 10:16).