



**“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come,” I Corinthians 11:26.**

## **The Lord’s Supper**

**Lesson Aim:** To set forth the symbolism and significance of the Lord’s Supper.

**L309. Date:** October 1974. **Text:** I Corinthians 11:23-34.

**Topic:** Church: Ordinances of; Communion.

“There are two church ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both of them testify of Jesus. By the use of water, baptism speaks of His death, burial, and resurrection which provided salvation for us. By the use of bread and wine (“fruit of the vine”), the Lord's Supper speaks of His sacrifice as the basis for our continuing life and fellowship with Him. Both church ordinances are important!

Baptism and the Lord's Supper are “ordinances” in that they have been ordained (commanded) by Jesus Christ. They are “church ordinances” in that their observance and administration have been set in the church to be administered by the assembled church.

How many members of your church were admitted without baptism? None! How many members of your church have never received the Lord's Supper? If you observe it only on Sunday night, there are probably many! Why is there such an inequality between the ordinances? Church members need both baptism and the Lord's Supper in worship of and obedience to Christ.

There are two erroneous attitudes towards the Lord's Supper. Some have imagined it to have a mystical power by which saving grace is conferred. They make the ordinance a sacrament and hold it in great reverence. Others consider it to have little meaning and to be unimportant to a Christian. Both attitudes are wrong and harmful.

Today's study sets forth the symbolism and significance of the Lord's

Supper.

## I. ORIGIN OF THE SUPPER

The church ordinance which involves the breaking of bread and drinking of wine, to show the crucifixion of Jesus, was instituted by the Lord Himself. He had just observed the annual Passover, as was the custom of the Jews. With bread and wine left from that solemn memorial, He presented a symbolic picture of His death—a crucified body and shed blood, pictured in broken bread and poured drink.

Since the Supper is not of human institution, it is important in the rituals of the church. The same Lord who redeemed us has commanded our commemoration of that solemn sacrifice by the eating and drinking of the ordinance.

The circumstances surrounding the institution of the Lord's Supper are recorded in Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-20; I Corinthians 11:24-26. Jesus was already under the shadow of the cross—within twenty-four hours of His crucifixion—when He instituted the ordinance. That fact surrounds the occasion with a special solemnity.

The disciples were never free from the remembrance of that moment. They met regularly for “the breaking of bread” as a memorial supper (Acts 2:46; I Corinthians 10:16). As they broke bread in a common meal, they must have often remembered the Lord's sacrifice.

You and I are far removed from the historical occasion of the sacrifice of Jesus and the institution of the memorial meal, but we are near to Him of whom the memorial testifies. We should, therefore, be sure that we observe it regularly in memory of Him who is our Saviour.

## II. NAME OF THE SUPPER

What should the memorial meal be called? It has been called by many names. Christians of different church groups call it by different names.

Some call it “The Eucharist.” Their emphasis is upon giving thanks to God for the sacrifice of Jesus. Others call it “The Sacrament.” They understand the eating and drinking to be a means by which saving grace is received by them. Others call it “The Communion.” The thought is upon the joint sharing of a sacred and intimate fellowship with Jesus Christ and through Him with other Christians. Still others call it “The Lord's Supper.” The emphasis is upon the Lord who instituted the meal in His own memory. What is the proper name for the ordinance?

It appears from references in the Bible that the best title for the memorial is “The Lord's Supper.” Such a title is used in I Corinthians 11:20. It brings to mind the Lord who instituted it, the occasion in which it was instituted, and even the elements which are to be used in its observance. “Eucharist” (giving thanks) has to do with the spirit of the one who partakes. “Sacrament” (saving grace) is nowhere taught in the Bible. “Communion” (mutual fellowship) is present but not primary. Call it “The Lord's Supper.”

### III. NATURE OF THE SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is a solemn ceremony. It memorializes in a most heart touching fashion the Lord's sacrifice on our behalf. No believer can properly observe it without renewing his commitment to Jesus.

The Supper memorializes the sacrifice of Jesus, but it does not repeat His sacrifice. Those who refer to the memorial as “the mass” declare that it is a repetition of His sacrifice. Not so! Such a sacrifice is neither possible nor necessary. Jesus “. . . offered one sacrifice for sins for ever . . .” Hebrews 10:12. His work is now completed. Nothing can be, nor need be, added to the finished work of Jesus Christ.

“Symbol” is the word to describe the Supper. Jesus was speaking figuratively when He declared, “This is my blood . . . this is my body,” Matthew 26:26-28. The bread is bread, not the actual flesh of Jesus. The juice is juice, not the actual blood of Jesus. To partake of the elements is to eat bread and drink juice,

The blessing of the ordinance is in the heart of him who observes it, not in any merit in the elements used. The elements are symbols—nothing more.

That does not make them insignificant or unimportant. Suppose you have in your hand a photograph of a loved one. The paper and ink used to form the picture are nothing of themselves. They are important to you because they carry the likeness of one you love. Just so, the elements of the Supper carry a picture of Jesus, and therein lies their value.

### IV. PURPOSE OF THE SUPPER

The late Dr. D. N. Jackson wrote an excellent booklet entitled “Doctrinal Statement of the Baptist Missionary Association of America Explained.” His discussion of the Lord's Supper suggested four angles of the ordinance. **Inward** — “Let a man examine himself.” **Outward** — “YE DO SHOW the Lord's death.” **Backward** — “Ye do show THE LORD'S DEATH.” **Forward** — Ye do show the Lord's death TILL HE COME,”

(See I Corinthians. 11:25-28.) Dr. Jackson set forth three great reasons for an observance of the Lord's Supper.

**The ordinance bears a testimony.** “Ye do SHOW the Lord's death. ” In beautiful and impressive emblem, the Christian shows his acceptance of and dependence upon the once dead, now living Jesus. It is a testimony to himself, to fellow believers, and to God that he shares the life of Jesus Christ.

**The ordinance declares a fact.** “Ye do show the Lord's DEATH . . .” As baptism speaks of resurrection to new life, the memorial meal speaks of the crucifixion by which redemption was made for sinners. The elements of broken bread and poured drink speak of the broken body and shed blood of Christ, thus beautifully portraying the scene at Calvary.

**The ordinance proclaims a prophecy.** “Ye do show the Lord's death TILL HE COME.” Christians do not live in the shadow of Calvary. They receive the benefits of the atonement effected there and look for the return of Him whose atoning deed made redemption possible. Even the Supper's reminder of Calvary speaks of the coming of the Christ.

## V. PREPARATION FOR THE SUPPER

For whom is the Supper prepared and offered? It is evident that four qualifications must mark the participant. (1) Regeneration—No unsaved person should partake of the symbols which speak of the crucifixion of Jesus. He has not shared in the atonement. The elements would have no meaning. (2) Baptism—Baptism is the rite by which one declares His faith in and allegiance to Jesus. There is no Bible record of any unbaptized persons receiving the Supper. (3) Church membership—Baptism in water prepares one for church fellowship. All who partook in New Testament times were members of a church. (4) Orderly walk—Believers are to withdraw themselves from every brother who walks disorderly; with such a one they are not to eat. (See II Thessalonians 3:6 and I Corinthians 5:11.) In those four areas, the church is to judge who does and who does not partake.

There is a personal preparation which should precede a person's partaking of the memorial. Examine the instructions given in I Corinthians 11:17-34. (1) Settle all differences of broken fellowship between you and another Christian (verse 18). (2) Make sure there is no heresy in you as regards doctrine or practice (verse 19). (3) Control fleshly appetite so the Supper is in memory of the Lord and not to satisfy physical hunger (verses 20-22). (4) Sanctify the motive in partaking so that it is not unworthy of such a solemn and significant participation (verse 27). (5) Put primary

concern and attention upon the person of Jesus and so discern the Lord's body (verses 28-29).

Some hesitate to take the Supper because they do not consider themselves worthy. Indeed, who is worthy? No one. The Lord does not require you to be worthy. The warning is against taking it “unworthily.” The adverb refers to attitude, not to character. What is your attitude when you come to the Lord's table? Is it solemn or silly? Is it a remembrance of the Lord, or is it a mere ritual of the church? Do you truly trust and love Him, expressing that in your observance, or is it all empty and meaningless? You can control your attitude, and that is what God calls upon you to examine when you partake.

## VI. ADMINISTRATION OF THE SUPPER

The Lord's Supper is to be observed in the assembled congregation of believers. The Bible speaks of the disciples coming together to break bread (Acts 20:7). It refers to their being “come together in the church . . . come together in one place . . . Come together to eat . . .” I Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33. The Supper is a group experience. There is no record in the New Testament of its being taken to the sick room nor observed privately by a believer.

The church, as a body, is responsible for seeing that the ordinance is properly administered. It must be observed when the church is assembled. The Apostle Paul praised the church in Corinth that she had “kept the ordinances” as he had delivered them to her, saying, “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you . . .” I Corinthians 11:2, 23. It is logical that the church, as the body of Christ, should be authorized to superintend the ritual which speaks of the crucifixion of Christ. The ordinance can be observed, therefore, only by the authorization of a church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## VII. PARTICIPANTS IN THE SUPPER

Come to the Lord's table. Do not come with any sense of worthiness, for you have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God the same as others (Romans 3:19, 23).

Come to the Lord's table. Do not come expecting any magic in partaking of the symbols. The ritual is meaningless unless you are in Christ and Christ is in you.

Come to the Lord's table. Do not come from any sense of duty. Love

cannot be commanded; your coming should be a response of adoring love. To partake is the highest privilege.

Come to the Lord's table. Christ bids you to come. "This do in remembrance of me," He commanded. He desires to share your fellowship and a place in your thoughts—as you remember a beloved one by looking at a picture.

Come to the Lord's table. Thank God for the salvation obtained for you at the crucifixion. Say to yourself as you remember Calvary, "I am so glad that Jesus loves me."

Come to the Lord's table. Walk anew the way of repentance. Confess all sins (commission or omission) and ask for pardon. Open your heart to God that He may reveal and renew you in spirit.

Come to the Lord's table. Arise and walk away with new resolve, new strength, new courage, and new zeal to live for Him who died for you.

Come to the Lord's table. It is not at any particular time, as if by rigid schedule, but whenever your church gives you the opportunity to share with others in remembrance of Him.

The Lord's Supper is the divinely ordained memorial by which Christians are to remember the Lord Jesus' sacrifice upon the cross. It is simple (broken bread and poured drink) that we might fully understand its meaning. It is frequent (as oft as ye drink it) that we might not forget Him whom it memorializes. It is inclusive (drink ye all of it) that each believer, regardless of spiritual maturity, might partake. It is vivid (broken bread and poured drink) that we might have a clear reminder of the price paid for redemption from sin.

Do not neglect the memorial meal. "Remember" implies a personal knowledge of Him. "Remember" reveals His love; He wants to be remembered by His people. "Remember" implies a tendency to forget. Jesus wants you to observe the Supper. He wants to be in your mind and heart. His flesh is food indeed, and His blood is drink indeed. Observe the Supper!

## Questions

1. What is a church ordinance?
2. How do people err concerning the Lord's Supper?
3. How was the Supper instituted?
4. Why is it meaningful to you?
5. What is the "symbol" in the Supper? .

6. How does the Supper show the second coming of Jesus?
7. What four things are required of one who would take the Supper?
8. Why should a man examine himself before partaking?
9. Why does the church administer the Supper?