

The Lord's Supper is a topic that is misunderstood in the religious world today. The reason I believe it's misunderstood is because of a lack of study and meditation of God's Word. We will see that the Word of God teaches us everything we need to know about the Lord's Supper.

What is the Lord's Supper?

Christ instituted the Lord's Supper on Thursday night at the Passover meal. Matthew, Mark and Luke record this event. Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover meal for Him and the disciples. Let's pick up on this story in Luke's account.

Luke 22:14 When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. ¹⁵ **Then He said to them, "With *fervent* desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;** ¹⁶ **"for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."** ¹⁷ **Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide *it* among yourselves;** ¹⁸ **"for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."** ¹⁹ **And He took bread, gave thanks and broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."** ²⁰ **Likewise He also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup *is* the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.**

Jesus taught His disciples many times that He would have to die and suffer. From our text, Jesus knew His time was running out and this would be His last time to eat the Passover meal with His disciples. Jesus uses this event to institute the Lord's Supper. Jesus tells them the bread represents His body that would be slain, and the fruit of the vine represents His blood that would be shed. This gave the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine a new meaning. Until now, the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine were viewed as a memorial of how the Jews were delivered out of Egypt. Now, they were being told to partake of them in remembrance of Jesus. So, the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the great sacrifice that Jesus made for everyone.

Jesus death on the cross is important to all of us because it delivered us from the Law of Moses and from the power of sin. Paul tells us that Jesus nailed the requirements of the Law of Moses to the cross at His death (Col. 2:14). By this great sacrifice, He established a new covenant which makes it possible for us to receive

the forgiveness of our sins. Hebrews 9 tells us that Jesus is the author of a better covenant and how He died for our transgressions. This is why Jesus is our Passover.

1 Corinthians 5:7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

We can only imagine the emotions His disciples experienced after Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. We need to remember that these men had been through a lot together. They truly loved Jesus and it must have hit them hard in their hearts knowing this would be their last Passover meal with Jesus. This had to be hard on Jesus as well, but He knew what had to be done. As heart wrenching as this news was, Jesus had more bad news to give them.

Matthew 26:21 Now as they were eating, He said, "Assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me." ²² **And they were exceedingly sorrowful, and each of them began to say to Him, "Lord, is it I?"** ²³ **He answered and said, "He who dipped *his* hand with Me in the dish will betray Me.** ²⁴ **"The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born."** ²⁵ **Then Judas, who was betraying Him, answered and said, "Rabbi, is it I?" He said to him, "You have said it."**

Judas, Judas, Judas! I can imagine just how hard his heart was pounding, and how guilty He must have felt when Jesus revealed to him that he was the betrayer. However, this didn't stop Judas from betraying Jesus, which would lead to His death.

How should it be partaken?

First, let's look at how the Lord's Supper shouldn't be partaken.

1 Corinthians 11:17 Now in giving these instructions I do not praise *you*, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. ¹⁸ **For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.** ¹⁹ **For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.** ²⁰ **Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.** ²¹ **For in eating, each**

one takes his own supper ahead of *others*; and one is hungry and another is drunk. ²² **What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise *you*.**

We must understand that the Corinth church had many problems and these verses show us how they were abusing the Lord's Supper. Corinth was the center of the immoral worship of Aphrodite, goddess of love, whose followers practiced ritual prostitution. The immoral behavior in this city had influenced the church there. We find these Christians coming together eating a huge meal and getting drunk. They were turning the assembly of the saints into a wild party which may have led them to commit fornication. Paul lets them know that they are making a mockery of the Lord's Supper and he does not approve of their malicious behavior. The Lord's Supper isn't some feast where you make a pig of yourself. No, it's a time of remembrance where the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine are divided between the Christians and all partake of it.

1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴ **and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."** ²⁵ **In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."** ²⁶ **For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.** ²⁷ **Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.** ²⁸ **But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.** ²⁹ **For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.**

Now, Paul is teaching us how to partake of the Lord's Supper. First, we are supposed to partake of it in remembrance of Jesus. Just as the Passover was a reminder to the Jew of how death passed over them, which led to their freedom of slavery. The Lord's Supper reminds us of how Jesus made eternal salvation possible for us by becoming the perfect sacrifice and

dying on the cross so we could have freedom from the bondage of sin.

Second, when we partake of the Lord's Supper we proclaim His death until He comes again (vs. 26).

Third, we learn that partaking of the Lord's Supper is a time of reflection (vs. 28). We need to examine how we are living our lives in accordance to God's will. When we stop and think about the significance of the Lord's Supper, it becomes a reminder for us each week to live pure and holy lives before God. It's important that we know what we are doing as we partake of the Lord's Supper so we don't partake of it in an unworthy manner like the Corinthians did. Paul makes it clear that we will be judged guilty of Jesus' blood and His body by God if we partake of it in an unworthy manner. Hebrews 6:6 describes the sin of those who fall away, like the Corinthians did, as crucifying Christ all over again. So, we need to be careful of how we partake of the Lord's Supper.

Another thing we learn about the Lord's Supper is that it consists of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. This is all we should use because God has not given us the freedom to substitute them with something else like Wonder Bread and Kool-Aid.

When should we partake of the Lord's Supper?

Acts 2:42 And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

In context, Luke has just finished talking about the birth of the church and the 3000 that became Christians that day. Then he talks about how they steadfastly or continuously devoted themselves to several things with breaking bread being one of them. In this verse, breaking bread is referring to the Lord's Supper. So, we can see that they were partaking of it often. However, we learn when they partook of it in the following verse:

Acts 20:7 Now 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.

Some background information is needed here. Paul stayed at Troas for seven days so he could worship with these Christians even though he was in hurry to make it to Jerusalem by Pentecost. We learn a couple of things

from this verse. First, we learn that the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread. Notice, no other day is given. So, by example we can know the first day of the week and only the first day of the week is when we should partake of the Lord's Supper. If it had been acceptable to partake of it on another day, Paul could have saved some time without having to wait around for seven days to partake of it. Another important point is that the Lord's Supper is supposed to be taken on the first day of every week. Many denominations will only partake of it monthly, quarterly or sometimes yearly. However, common sense tells us that every week has a first day so we should partake of it every single week.

1 Corinthians 16:2 On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.

Every denomination that I know of will teach that you must give of your means every first day of the week. In fact the NAS and ESV both render this text as "first day of every week." Did you know the same Greek word in this passage is used in Acts 20:7 describing when the Lord Supper is to be taken? So, if you are going to teach that giving must be done every first day of the week then you must teach the same about the Lord's Supper.

Notice the significance of the first day of the week.

1. Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of week.
2. The church began on the first day of the week.
3. We are commanded to give on the first day of week
4. By example, we are to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week.

This makes it easy to see that the Lord's Supper should be taken on the first day of the week. Before we leave this section of scripture, I want to point out the term "break bread" doesn't always mean the Lord's Supper because sometimes it can refer to a common meal. You have to look at the context to decide which is being spoken of. This confuses some people especially since Paul uses this term both ways in the following verses:

Acts 20:7 Now 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. ⁸ There were many lamps in the upper room where they were gathered together. ⁹ 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. ¹⁰ But Paul went down, fell on him, and embracing *him* said, "Do not trouble yourselves, for his life is in him." ¹¹ Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten, and talked a long while, even till daybreak, he departed.

In verse 7 we learn the purpose of this gathering was to break bread on the first day of the week. However, watch what happens after Paul goes down and brings Eutychus back to life. In verse 11 we find that only Paul breaks bread after midnight. So, we have the term "break bread" used twice in these passages. But, how do we decide if these are talking about a common meal or the Lord's Supper? Well, in verse 7 we can see this was a special gathering of Christians on the first day of the week where all of them would break bread. Since this was a worship service, it should be easy to see this is talking about the Lord's Supper. However, in verse 11 Paul broke bread by himself. This is talking about a common meal because only Paul ate it. The word "eaten" is also significant as it means to taste. This word is never used to describe partaking of the Lord's Supper, but it is used to describe someone eating a common meal (Acts 10:10; Lk. 14:24)

Who should partake of the Lord's Supper?

Only Christians should partake of the Lord's Supper. I think it's interesting to see what they did under the Old Testament in regards to the Passover.

Exodus 12:48 For no uncircumcised person shall eat it.

According to Gen.17:10ff, circumcision was necessary to enter into God's covenant. Only those who had been circumcised could partake of the Passover. In a similar manner, only Christians are to partake of the Lord's Supper. The Bible describes our conversion to Christianity as a spiritual circumcision made without hands.

Colossians 2:11 In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, ¹² buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

Another reason only Christians should partake of the Lord's Supper is found in the following verses:

1 Corinthians 10:15 I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

Matthew 26:29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

When we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are in fellowship with Jesus in the kingdom or we could say the church. So, this tells us that only Christians should partake of the Lord's Supper because non-Christians have not been added to the kingdom/church by God, which means they cannot be in fellowship with Jesus (2 Cor. 6:14; 2 John 1:9).

We also need to consider that when we partake of the Lord's Supper, we are supposed to examine ourselves as to how we have been living our lives for God. How can a non-Christian do this when they haven't become a Christian yet? Since we are supposed to know what we are doing when we partake of the Lord's Supper, this rules out young children because they don't understand what the Lord's Supper is all about. Also, you cannot find one example of a child or a non-Christian partaking of the Lord's Supper in the Bible. So, only Christians should partake of the Lord's Supper.

In conclusion, our Savior instituted the Lord's Supper and we should honor our Lord by partaking of the Lord's Supper every first day of the week. By example, the Bible teaches us to partake of it only on the first day of the week. In the Old Testament, the Jews observed the Passover in remembrance of their deliverance from Egypt. In the New Testament, we partake of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine in remembrance of our Lord Jesus Christ who has delivered both Jew and Gentile from spiritual death. So, don't ever forget the true significance of the Lord's Supper.

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The Lord's Supper



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