

## The Lord's Supper

### I. Introduction

- A. This part of the service often has the least amount of preparation behind it
- B. This part of worship should be especially meaningful
- C. It should be conducted by those who both are prepared
- D. If a person is going to pray on the table, he should have a basic understanding of the meaning of the Lord's supper

### II. Biblical background for the Lord's Supper

#### A. The title:

- 1. Some call it the Lord's Supper
  - a. This description is used in 1 Cor 11:20
  - b. In this passage, it is used sarcastically, showing that the supper they were eating was not the Lord's but their own
- 2. Others call it communion
  - a. This description is used in 1 Cor 10:16
  - b. Translations render the word variously as communion, sharing, fellowship, or participation
- 3. Some call it the "Eucharist"
  - a. This is the word early Christians most often used
  - b. It is from the Greek word meaning, "gratefulness, or thankfulness"

#### B. Institution of the Lord's Supper: Matthew 26:17-20, 26-29; Mark 14:12-17, 22-25; Luke 22:7-20

- 1. Jesus said to do it in remembrance of him
  - a. Like the Passover, this was to be a memorial
  - b. To understand, it is helpful to look at the Old Testament
  - c. Old Testament was full of memorials for the Israelites.  
Sampling of these memorials are as follows:
    - 1) Genesis 9:13-16 - Rainbow;
    - 2) Exodus 20:8-11 - Sabbath;
    - 3) Exodus 16:32- Omer of Manna in the Ark of Testimony;
    - 4) Exodus 28:7-12 - Names of the Sons of Israel on High Priest's clothes;
    - 5) Joshua 4:5, 6 - Stones at the crossing of the Jordan;
    - 6) Joshua 24:21-28 - Stones as a witness to a vow
  - d. Purposes for memorials in the Old Testament
    - 1) Exodus 12:25-27 - To teach the children
    - 2) Joshua 4:6 - To pass on God's story

- e. It was during one of the memorials (the Passover, Exodus 12:1-14) that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper
- f. I Corinthians 5:7-8 - Christ is our Passover

2. Jesus said "this is my body given for you"

The following verses highlight the significance of the "body" of Christ, and the things worshippers could "remember" and reflect on

- a. John 1:14; 2 John 7 - Jesus became flesh
- b. Heb 2:16-18 - Since Jesus became human (sharing in flesh and blood), he also became a merciful and faithful High Priest
- c. Eph 2:13-16 - We all have been reconciled together into one body
- d. Passover bread is unleavened bread
  - 1) Exodus 12:18-20 - The original Passover bread was not to have any leaven, or yeast in it.
  - 2) 1 Cor 5:7-8 - Leaven came to symbolize impurity and sin
  - 3) Hebrews 4:15 - Jesus was without sin
  - 4) The unleavened bread reminds us Jesus was without sin

3. Jesus also said, "this is my blood of the new covenant."

The following verses highlight the significance of the blood of Christ, and the things worshippers could "remember" and reflect on

- a. Ephesians 2:11-13 - You have been brought near by the blood of Christ
- b. Hebrews 9:11-12 - Through his own blood, Jesus obtained eternal redemption
- c. Romans 3:24-25 - God displayed Jesus as a propitiation through his blood
- d. Romans 5:9 - We are justified by his blood
- e. I Peter 1:18-19 - You were redeemed with precious blood
- f. I John 1:7 - The blood of Jesus washes away our sins
- g. Acts 20:28 - The church is purchased with the blood of Christ
- h. Revelation 12:11 - The saints overcame the accuser by the blood of the lamb

C. Partaking the Lord's Supper properly I Cor 11:17-34

- 1. They had come together not for the better, but for the worse
  - a. When they met, it was not to eat the "Lord's" Supper
  - b. They had destroyed the meaning and intent through the actions and their attitudes
- 2. They were partaking in an "unworthy manner"
  - a. There were factions among them
    - 1) They were eating in cliques

- 2) They excluded some of the brethren
  - b. They shamed those who had nothing
    - 1) Apparently, the poor (often slaves) who could not bring food were excluded
    - 2) They went hungry
    - 3) By the time they arrived, the food was gone
  - c. They were not discerning the body of Christ rightly
    - 1) They had the wrong attitude about Christ's body
    - 2) All were equally precious to Christ
    - 3) All were to be one body without factions
  - d. They were eating and drinking in an unworthy manner
    - 1) They were to be united, regardless of their station in life
    - 2) They were to be one body (1 Cor 12:13, 23-26)
- 3. The Lord's Supper is to be properly focused
  - a. 1 Cor 11:24-25 - Looks to the past at Christ's death and resurrection
  - b. 1 Cor 11:26b - Looks to the future, anticipating Christ's return
  - c. 1 Cor 11:28 - Looks inward, inspecting the condition of our heart in the way we treat others, whether it is Christ like
  - d. 1 Cor 11:29 and 33-34 - Looks outward in consideration for one another
- 4. It is not a funeral nor a time for mourning, but a time of joy
  - a. We do not remember merely a death, but a resurrection
  - b. We anticipate the return of our Lord to take us home
  - c. Mt 9:14-15 - Since this is communion with the risen Christ who will return, mourning is not appropriate
    - 1) It is the Lord's Supper, not the Lord's Sacrifice
    - 2) Supper is eaten at a table, a place of fellowship and joy
- 5. The apostolic tradition is to partake of it weekly
  - a. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, he said nothing about its repetition and frequency
  - b. 1 Corinthians 11:17ff - Paul had passed on what he "received from the Lord"
    - 1) Indicates it is to be continued by all Christians
    - 2) However, there is no reference to frequency except "as often as you do it..."
    - 3) How often is often? Results widely differ today:
      - a) Some do it on Thursday night
      - b) Some do it Monthly
      - c) Some do it every Sunday
      - d) Some do it annually
  - c. Acts 20:7, 11 - Met together on the first day to break bread (This passage gives us an example of when the first Christians met to partake of communion)
    - 1) Greek indicates in verse 7 - "for the purpose of breaking bread"

- 2) Example of the Apostolic church is doing the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week, which is also the day that Christ rose from the grave.

D. "Our religious friends have sometimes maintained that observing the Lord's Supper every Sunday may produce such familiarity as to make it lose its meaning. We do many other things with frequency and regularity that do not produce complacency. I kiss my wife and tell her I love her every day. I enjoy it, and she tells me that she does not grow tired of it, even though it is frequent. Our keeping of the weekly memorial Supper of Christ need not become any more commonplace." - Don R. Carroll *Gospel Advocate*, June 1989 p. 22

### **III. Practical considerations in preparation to serve on the Lord's Table**

- A. Someone should be responsible to make sure communion is prepared
  1. If the person cannot be there, that person should delegate another
  2. If not, you may run into the problem of opening the communion tray, and finding that it is empty
- B. Allow time in the worship service for talks around the table
  1. This will help keep communion from being too ritualistic
  2. The person heading the table should be prepared to guide the congregation into meaningful devotion around the Lord's table
  3. The talk does not have to be lengthy, but does need to be meaningful and sincere
  4. Debating, small talk, joking, etc. are all out of place at the table. We are around the table for communion together with our Lord
- C. The person heading the table should make sure that everyone serving on the table is clear about the service and what their assignment is
  1. There should be an understood procedure for standing at the table
  2. There should be a procedure for handing out the trays, and walking back to the table

### **VI. Preparation for the contribution**

- A. Traditionally, in churches of Christ the contribution is done immediately after the Lord's Supper
- B. It may be done at any time during the service (whenever it is done, it need to be clear when it is to be done to those serving)
- C. If the offering is immediately following the communion, it is appropriate to

mention this transition.

If you can avoid the worn out phrase - "this concludes the Lord's Supper", then do so, it sounds so formal and ritualistic

- D. It may be appropriate to sing a song before the contribution and communion
- E. Remember that the contribution is also time of thanksgiving!

## **V. Serving at the Table**

- A. Make your way PROMPTLY to the table at the appropriate time
- B. You should have already decided who is going to do what
- C. The person giving the talk should make his comments, and then pray or call on those to pray, depending on how it is done
- D. Take your time. This is not a race, but a time for reflection
- E. Be dignified, but warm and thoughtful. This is a celebration, not a funeral
- F. Pray an appropriate prayer
  - 1. This is not the time to pray a general prayer
  - 2. The prayer should be specific to the occasion
  - 3. Don't be wordy just to fill time in your prayers
    - You will not be heard for your many words, but your sincerity
- G. Serve the bread first
- H. Try to avoid worn out phrases
- I. Handle the trays carefully (don't drop them)

## **VI. The Communion Talk**

- A. The topic for communion, and also for the offering should be appropriate
- B. Remember that this is a time of reflection and remembrance on Christ and his redemptive work, not on the institution of the Lord's Supper
  - 1. Many limit their remarks to reading passages that tell the story of when Christ instituted the first communion
  - 2. We do this in remembrance of Christ, not of communion

- C. There are resources available to help with communion devotions
  - 1. There are books with communion devotions and ideas
  - 2. There are websites
- D. Remember that this is a weekly reminder of the center of our Christian faith, it should be meaningful and done well

**VI. Some topics appropriate to Communion Talks:**

- A. Fellowship with his blood and each other
- B. Our present and future hope
- C. The tomb was empty
- D. Our spiritual feast, now and in the world to come
- E. This is the table of the Lord
- F. True life is in Jesus
- G. Jesus is our bread
- H. This is memorial day
- I. He rose, left, but is coming back
- J. Some appropriate Scriptures for Communion:
  - Isaiah 53
  - I Cor 10:16-18
  - I Cor 11:20-34
  - Matt 26:26-30
  - Heb 9:11-28
  - Heb 2:10-18
  - Phillipians 2:5-11
  - Colossians 2:9-15
  - Romans 5:6-11

**VII. Some topics appropriate for giving**

- A. Count your blessings
- B. God Gave his only son
- C. Thanksgiving
- D. We are just stewards
- E. God is number one
- F. Some appropriate scriptures
  - John 3:16
  - Malachi 3:10
  - I Cor 16:1-2
  - 2 Cor 8:8-15
  - 2 Cor 9:6-15
  - Luke 6:38

**Drill #6:**

Prepare a talk for the Lord's Table and be prepared to deliver it as if you were heading the Lord's table. You may use the topics and/or scriptures listed in this lesson.