

The Lord's Supper

Introduction

Much has been written concerning the Lord's Supper and its observation. It is suggested that you carefully examine all that is contained in this writing and then study the Bible to get a complete study of what inspired writers had to say about the Lord's Supper. This writing will address such matters as the **institution** of the supper by our Lord, the **practice** of early Christians, some of the written **teachings** to local congregations by the writers of the New Testament, and **what is expected** of those of us participating in the partaking of the Supper. We should remember that the teachings of the Bible must always take place over what man may write or say. God's Word is **truth** and we must follow it to be pleasing to Him. Quotations contained in this booklet are taken from the New American Standard version of the Holy Bible.

Institution of the Lord's Supper

Jesus, nearing his death upon the cross for the sins of all men, saw the necessity to provide a way whereby individual Christians could look back to the cross and remember Him. This was not the first time that some type of remembrance was used to help man recall a past event. After God had destroyed the world by water, He told Noah that He would make a **covenant** with man to never again destroy the world by water. To keep this firmly in the mind of man, God placed a rainbow in the sky and each time that man looked and saw the rainbow he would be reminded that God had made a promise to man. Today, many of us vividly call to our mind the occasion of the flood when we see a rainbow in the sky. You can read fully about this event in Genesis chapter 9 beginning with verse 8.

Just prior to the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, God had sent a plague to take the life of every first born unless a lamb had been killed and eaten, then a portion of the blood placed upon the two side posts and the upper post of the door in which the lamb had been eaten (Exodus 12:3-14). The lives of the children of those who fully obeyed the Lord's command were spared, as were the first born of the animals. Moses had been very careful in his instructions to the children of Israel. As a result, all those that faithfully followed his instructions did not see death come to their households. Many did lose their children and animals since they **refused** to obey God. As the people of that day looked upon the blood that had been placed on the post, they recalled that the Lord had passed over the house since they had obeyed Him. This became a **remembrance** to them as to how God had been with them.

Very specific instructions were given to the priests under the law of Moses in the offering of sacrifices as to **how** each sacrifice was to be offered and the **purpose** for which it was being offered. God was not pleased unless the priest **fully** obeyed His instructions. Read about Nadab and Abihu and what happened to them for offering strange fire upon the alter (Lev 10:1,2).

A reading of the entire book of Leviticus gives a good background on the expectations of the priest under the law of Moses. As the lamb without spot or blemish was the sacrifice under the Old Law, Jesus Christ becomes **our sacrifice** under the New Covenant which is the law under which we live today. Jesus was totally aware of all that had happened in times past since He was

"from the beginning" (John 1: 1) and had known that He would eventually give His life for the sins of man. With His understanding, He instituted the Lord's Supper as something that would be helpful to man **in remembrance** of His cross, suffering and death, as well as His resurrection. See Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14- 23 and I Corinthians 11:23-29.

In the three gospel accounts, we find that Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it and gave it to the disciples and told them to "take and eat; this is My body." Jesus blessed or prayed over the bread before it was broken. This was **symbolic** of His body as being whole and unblemished as it was offered as a sacrifice upon the cross. It was a **perfect** sacrifice and would provide many benefits for His disciples of that day and future generations as well as beneficial to all of those that had been followers in times past.

Today we are to express to our Father, through His Son, our thanks for the giving of His Son upon the

cross for the forgiveness of our sins, prior to breaking the bread. This should help us to remember the perfect sacrifice of Christ's body as it was offered upon the cross. As He underwent great suffering even so we today must be willing to suffer as His disciples. The breaking of the bread will strengthen us to be willing and prepared to undergo the suffering that may come into our lives as we live for Him. Jesus also took the cup and after having given thanks, gave it to His disciples and told them to drink of it, stating that it was to be done in remembrance of Him.

Some today misunderstand the matter of "the cup." In eating the bread, we do not eat the dish on which it is served and in drinking the cup we do not drink the container. We drink the **contents** of the cup. It is the contents that Christ is setting forth as the memorial of His blood and **not** the container. Jesus tells the disciples on this occasion that His blood is given for the forgiveness of sins. He tells them that He will not participate with them in this Supper until He "drinks it new with you in My Father's Kingdom."

This signifies that today as we partake of the bread and drink of the fruit of the vine, we are communing with the Lord. In order for us to receive the benefits, we must be in His Kingdom.

Early Christians Partake of the Supper

"And on the first day of the week, when we were gathered together **to break bread**, Paul began talking to them, intending to depart the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight" (Acts 20:7). From this reading, we find that Paul, along with other followers of Jesus, met together upon the **first** day (Sunday) of the week. Some would try and confuse us as to the day we are to meet, but Paul had no doubt about the meeting day and since he was inspired of God and full of the Spirit let's look to him as to when we are to come together.

It would appear that since the text does not deal with Paul having to teach them about the Lord's Supper, that they were already aware of **when** to observe it from previous teaching since they had come together for this purpose. Each week has a first day, and this being the case, we are to partake of this memorial upon the first day of **every** week. There are no other teachings in the Scriptures that set out any other day or regularity other than upon the first day.

Paul's Teaching to the Corinthians

In I Corinthians 11, we find that even during the first century the Christians were misusing the Lord's

Supper; confusing it with a common meal. Paul rather severely admonishes them in this regard. In fact, in verse 20, he tells them that "when you meet together, it is not to eat of the Lord's Supper." Some were eating and leaving others hungry and others were becoming drunk. This was clearly a misuse of the Lord's Supper according to the inspired Apostle Paul. Therefore, he issues a strong statement condemning this practice, "What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? 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 will not praise you" (I Corinthians 11:22).

After Paul has pointed out their unacceptable practice of using the Lord's Supper, he then proceeded in the next verses of this chapter to teach them the **proper** way to observe this memorial supper. First of all, he tells them that he **received** of the **Lord** what he has delivered to them. This is so they might not have any question as to where this practice had its origin. This was from the Lord. Here again, Paul relates the institution of the Supper by the Lord. He tells them that after having given thanks, He broke the bread and told them to partake of the bread and eat it in remembrance of Him. Likewise, He took the cup in the same manner, and then told them that as often as they drank of it they were to do this in **remembrance of Him**. Then in verse 26, He tells them that "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." To proclaim is to make known publicly. Therefore, we **show forth** the Lord's death as we partake of the Lord's Supper upon the first day of the week. This is not for **physical** fulfillment but is for **spiritual** nourishment. How long are we to proclaim the Lord's death? Paul tells us that it is "until He comes." Since He has already come one time, this refers to His second coming.

Paul goes on to tell them that it is possible to partake in an **unworthy** manner and therefore, be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. How would one be found guilty of the body and blood of the Lord? By eating and drinking in an unworthy manner. Examination is to be made by each of us each time we partake of this memorial. We are to guard our thoughts so as to partake of these representative emblems remembering Jesus and His death upon the cross for our sin. Paul in his writing states that many are weak and sickly in this matter, therefore, we today need to give heed so that we will not become such when we partake of the Lord's Supper.

Christ vs. Satan

After having spent some time in looking at the suffering of Christ and all that He has done for us, we should now ask ourselves what has Satan done for us? First of all, he lied to the first humans, Adam and Eve, in the garden and caused them to be driven from a perfect place to live. He has caused misery, suffering, pain, anguish, heartbreak, and all such bad things to happen to men throughout history. He continues today to try and place stumbling blocks in our pathway to cause us to leave the Way of the Lord. His appeal is based upon lies about happiness, joy, peace and all good things that man is seeking. God, Christ and the Holy Spirit base their appeal to us upon a great love that has been and continues to be manifested toward us daily. In view of the contrast should we not choose to remember Jesus and follow Him?

Some Practical Suggestions

We should **guard** our minds and the thoughts that enter them in such a way as to allow us to remember Jesus as we partake of the Lord's Supper. We may have difficulty in controlling what thoughts enter our minds but we can readily control what remains in our meditations.

Either memorize the scriptures pertaining to the observation of the Lord's Supper and use this as a time to reflect upon them or open your Bible and read from these sections of scripture. Many people have found this to be very beneficial in helping to remember Jesus.

Many very good songs have been written that can be used to help us properly reflect as we observe this feast by thinking about the words and their meanings.

In I Corinthians 10:16, we find that the cup is a **sharing** in the blood of Christ. From this we find that we do share with Christ as we partake of His Supper. This gives us sufficient motive to be willing to suffer physically or mentally and we signify this each time that we engage in the observation of this supper. How more readily could you and I draw nearer to Jesus than to be given a memorial in which we can remember His suffering and death upon the cross for us. It was out of **love** for each of us that Jesus was willing to be used as the perfect sacrifice upon the cross, therefore, we today need to **remember** Him and in so doing we will be drawn to Him. **Love** is the strongest motive that is possessed by man and to be Christ-like, we are to love. No motive will move us to obedience, service, or worship of God like love. Love is a lasting motivation and will bind us together with those of like faith.

Conclusion

It is our hope and prayer that this short booklet will be of help to some in their weekly observance of partaking of the Lord's Supper. If this is accomplished then this has been time well spent. Since this study is not presented in great detail, it will be necessary for you to go to the Word of God and meditate upon it to become fully aware of His teachings.

God's Word will stand the test of time as it will be used to judge man in the last day. The Bible is true and following it will prepare us to meet our Saviour.

Paul felt strongly enough to correct those at Corinth when they had begun to observe the Lord's Supper in an improper manner. We must be careful today that we properly participate in this communion service. The partaking is for each individual Christian. Spiritual strength will be gained by proper observation of the Lord's Supper. This strength can be used to help us live daily for Jesus. Therefore, we should look forward to communing with the Lord in His Supper on each first day of the week.

Summary

WHEN: Upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

WHERE: Where gathered together (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20).

HOW: Worthy manner (I Corinthians 11:27).

WHY: To remember Jesus (I Corinthians 11:23ff).

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Also see the following:

1. [Do This in Remembrance of Me](#)
2. [This Do In Remembrance of Me](#)
3. [The Lords Supper- The One Cup Issue](#)