

Wil Owens

What is the Lord's Supper? Matt 26:26-29

GPBC

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Introduction – If you are not a believer, if you have not grown up in church, this ceremony will certainly appear very strange to you. If you have grown up in church, it still may be very strange. What is going on? Everyone eats a little bread and drinks a little juice and then they pray. It's not like any other meal. It's called a supper but these tiny portions are not like any other supper. It's called sharing the table or communion. It's practiced on a regular basis. So there's some kind of significance here for Christians. Christians, or at least professing Christians, are the only ones who participate in this service. And it's not a loud buffet; it's a sacred service. It's a form of Christian worship. What is the Lord's Supper?

Does participation in this meal make one a Christian? When you eat this meal are all your sins that you have committed since the last time you ate the meal forgiven? Is it purely ritual? Is it somehow salvific or is it simply symbolic? What is the Lord's Supper?

Throughout church history, unbelievers have grossly misunderstood the meaning and practice of this meal. In fact, early Christians were accused on being cannibals because their persecutors overheard them speaking of eating the body and drinking the blood. There has always been a lot of misunderstanding surrounding this meal.

As believers who share this meal together on a regular basis, we want to know what this meal is about. Why do we observe communion? What is the Lord's Supper? To answer that question we look at this text where Jesus institutes the practice.

- I. It's a Looking Back in Faith (vv26-28)
 - a. V26 – Jesus says of the bread, "Take, eat, this is my body."
 - b. First, we want to ask "What does Jesus mean when He says this bread is my body?"
 - i. We know Jesus is not speaking literally here but rather figuratively. The disciples understood Jesus to be speaking figuratively. They didn't think that biting down on a piece of

the bread was to chew an actual part of Jesus' body. They knew Jesus was saying this bread represents my body. In other words, there is something about this bread that tells you something about my body.

- c. So how does the bread represent the body of Jesus?
 - i. Right here in our text, Jesus blessed the bread, that is, He gave thanks to God for giving this bread.
 - 1. So the body of Jesus is something for which we should be thankful, something that God has given to us. That reminds us of John 3.16 – For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son
 - ii. He also broke it.
 - 1. Just as this bread was broken, so the body of Jesus would be broken. Cf Matt 27:26-31
 - iii. He also gave it to the disciples.
 - 1. Just as this broken bread was shared with the disciples, the message that Jesus' body has been given to us by God to be broken is a message that is to be shared.
 - 2. In fact, that's what it means when we share this meal together.
 - iv. Let's go over to John 6:30-35 to put this together.
 - 1. The body, represented by the bread, is for our hunger. The blood, represented by the wine, is for our thirst. Jesus satisfies our deepest need!
 - 2. So just as God sent manna from heaven to sustain the life of Israel during their 40 years in the wilderness, so God has sent Jesus from heaven to give spiritual life for eternity.
 - 3. How does that work? How does that happen? That leads us to the rest of what Jesus said about the bread.
- d. "Take, eat." Take it – my body and eat it, that is, receive it and internalize it. In other words, my broken body, sent by God from heaven, is for you. Take and eat means believe, believe in Me, believe in what I will accomplish on your behalf through the breaking of my body. In John He said it this way – I am the bread of life, whoever comes to me, that is, whoever believes in me, shall not hunger.

- e. Now we come to the cup in v27 and essentially the same actions transpire with the cup. He gives thanks – this is something God has given. He gives it to the disciples – this is something that is to be shared. And they are to drink it just like they ate the bread – they are to receive and believe.
- f. V28 Jesus explains that just as the bread represented His body being broken, the cup represents His blood being shed.
 - i. He calls His blood the blood of the new covenant. God relates to His people through covenants, promises. The one thing that separates God and man is man's sin. So a saving covenant must in some way deal with our sin, remove our sin, and therefore bring reconciliation. In the Old Covenant, God promises to give us life if we will keep His commandments. That's how sin is removed. We were to obey God and not sin. The Old Covenant of the Law could never save because we could never keep our end of the covenant. We won't quit sinning. The Old Covenant is a clear, unmistakable reminder that salvation is not achieved by man.
 - ii. God saves through the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, God promises to give us a new heart, one that believes, one that confesses, one that loves the Lord, one that follows the Lord, one that is set free from the bondage of sin. We can't obey God before salvation, but by grace through the Spirit, we can obey God after salvation.
 - iii. Something is still missing in the New Covenant. You still have to deal with the sin of those who are saved. And that's where the precious blood of Jesus enters our salvation.
- g. For this is my blood of the covenant which is poured out for many (all believers past, present, and future) for the forgiveness of sins (every sin committed by every believer).
- h. So when we eat the bread and drink the juice, we are declaring our faith in the death of Jesus on our behalf. He paid the punishment for my sins with His broken body and He cleansed me from my sins, He washed them away, through the shedding of His blood. I take Jesus!
 - i. Rom 3:21-26, Hebrews 9:15-22
- i. The Lord's Supper is a looking back on the death of Christ in faith.

- II. It's a Looking Forward in Hope (v29)
- a. I tell you – direct promise spoken from the Lord Jesus Christ directly to everyone who believes in Him.
 - b. Until that day – so there is a specific, designated day in the future. There is a special sacred day that this special sacred meal looks to. Jesus has promised this day is coming – the same Jesus who left heaven and gave His body to be broken and His blood to be poured out for you, that your sins might be forgiven, that you might have all the grace and life and promise of the New Covenant. There is a day coming that only the Father knows.
 - c. When I drink it with you – on that day a wondrous reunion will take place between every believer and our Savior. We will be reunited with Him. We will be with him and He with us. And we will dine together. We will fellowship together.
 - d. In my Father's kingdom – There is coming a day when we will be gathered together with the Lord in the beauty of celestial, eternal glory.
 - e. Every time we share this meal – Jesus is present in that the bread and the juice visualizes His death for us, but Jesus is also absent in that His literal, bodily presence is at the Father's right hand in glory. So every time we share this meal, we are not only declaring our faith in Him, we are also expressing our hope in His promise to return. One day when we share this meal, Jesus will share it with us.
 - f. And when He does the promise of salvation in Him and eternal life in Him will be fully realized. One day we will share this meal in sight rather than in faith, in heaven rather than in hope. Only then will we realize the fullness of the meaning of the broken bread and the wine.
 - g. For Jesus said in John 14:1-3 Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in Me. IN my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am, you may be also."

Conclusion – What is the Lord's Supper? It's when believers gather together and declare their faith in the death of Jesus on their behalf, that in believing Him their sins are forgiven, and express our hope in Jesus, that since we have received Him,

He will one glorious day receive us into His everlasting kingdom. That's a message worth sharing with the world!