

WHAT EVERY CHRISTIAN NEEDS TO KNOW

Lesson 28

The Lord's Supper

Main Texts – Matt 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26 Luke 22:7-20; I Corinthians 11:17-34

The statement from *The Baptist Faith and Message*: “The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.”(page 14)

- I. The 3 gospel accounts provide the establishment of the Lord’s Supper and I Cor 11 provides some guidelines to how we observe the Lord’s Supper.
 - a. Basic overview and background information
 - i. Ordinance – stresses the fact that the practice was “ordained” by God. We observe 2 ordinances that are mandated in the New Testament:
 1. Baptism
 2. Lord’s Supper
 - ii. Sacrament – comes from the word sacred- something (an act or practice) that is dedicated to God for sacred use. Groups that follow sacraments usually connect them with special grace or mysterious power being bestowed through the sacrament.
 - b. Historical context of the Lord’s Supper
 - i. Jesus establishes this ordinance during the Passover Feast (background reading – Exodus 12). The account of the Lord observing the Passover Feast and establishing the Lord’s Supper is found in Matt 26, Mark 14 and Luke 22.
 1. The Passover Feast was ordained by God for the Jews to remember (and celebrate) the deliverance from slavery in Egypt. The final plague on the Egyptians was the loss of the firstborn. Exodus 12:12 states that God is executing His judgment. To escape God’s judgment, the Israelites were commanded to take the blood of the lamb and sprinkle it on the door posts. This blood would reconcile everyone in the home.

2. Jesus was in the midst of celebrating God's deliverance from slavery and establishes a celebration/remembrance of God's deliverance from sin. What is needed? – being covered by the blood of the unblemished Lamb.

II. What is the Lord's Supper? – Main Text is I Cor 11:17-34

- a. It is a REMINDER. (v. 24)
- b. It is a SYMBOL. (v. 25)
 - i. Many religious groups think that Jesus was being literal and that the wine is actually the blood of Jesus and the bread is the flesh of Christ. This view is called transubstantiation (the elements “transform” into the blood and flesh). People will use John 6:53-54 (Eat my flesh and drink my blood) to support this school of thought. We need to look at the multiple times that Jesus speaks figuratively when describing himself – He is the light, road, way, tree, bread, etc. Just as the Passover Feast was established to remember and celebrate deliverance, the Lord's Supper was created to help believers focus on the broken body and shed blood that brings us life and the elements are used symbolically to help us achieve that.
 - ii. There is also a belief that extra grace is received with the taking of the Lord's Supper. This is called Consubstantiation (con is a prefix that means “with”). Again this elevates the simple act of remembering the crucifixion above a symbolic ordinance to something magical that provides extra grace.
- c. It is a STATEMENT OF FAITH (v. 26)

When you partake in the Lord's Supper, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

III. Biblical Guidelines for the Lord's Supper

- a. Don't overindulge

The church in Corinth used the Lord's Supper to overeat and get drunk. Often the Lord's Supper included a meal. That is hard for us to imagine with our current tiny wafers and 1/4 oz grape juice, but Paul challenges the Corinthians that the LS was to remember and not to get your fill.

- b. It is an ordinance meant for a body of believers.

- i. V. 18 sets the context by say, “as you come together as a church.”
 - ii. v. 20 continues that “when you meet together...”
 - iii. v 33 adds, “when you come together to eat...”
- c. It is meant for believers
 - i. The body was (and is) a group of believing Christians.
 - ii. In v 33, Paul addresses the audience as “brothers” or “brethren” which designates a believing audience.
- d. Examine yourself before going to the table
 - i. v. 28-29 – before observing the LS, take time to evaluate your own spiritual life and get right with God. I John 1:9. Take inventory of areas of your life that need forgiveness, confess those sins and approach the Lord’s table with the righteousness that comes from the broken body and blood of Christ.
- e. When do you observe the Lord’s Supper? How frequently?
 - i. Some Christian groups believe that you have to observe the LS every worship service.
 - ii. v. 26 says that “as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup.” The discrepancy is in the translation. Some churches translate Paul’s instructions as “as often as you meet, do this...”. Paul was not mandating that you observe the Lord’s Supper every time the church doors are open. He is simply giving the purpose of going to the Lord’s table – to remember.
 - iii. Jesus did not specify the frequency.

Many people will argue that they do not have to attend church to be a practicing Christian. While we do have the ability to read God’s word and grow in our walk each day, the Lord’s Supper is something that you cannot receive at home watching services on TV. Corporate worship provides many benefits to a Christian’s development in Christ. One of those benefits is following the command of Christ to observe the Lord’s Supper as an act of worship by remembrance.