

Two Ordinances - Part 2

The Lord's Supper

Introduction

Baptists often refer to this ordinance as the Lord's Supper. Communion is also a Biblical word (1 Corinthians 10:16), but has come to mean different things in other denominations. "The Lord's Supper" comes from 1 Corinthians 11:20. We do not use the terms "Eucharist," "Mass," or "Sacrament" to describe this ordinance, as they do not appear in Scripture, and are associated with unbiblical concepts about the Lord's Supper.

I. The Biblical Example of the Lord's Supper

- A. Mark 14:22-26
- B. Luke 22:13-20
- C. Matthew 26:19-30
- D. John 13:21-31
- E. I Corinthians 11:23-26

II. The True Purpose of the Lord's Supper

- A. It is a memorial or remembrance of what Christ did on Calvary.
(I Cor. 11:24-25)
- B. It is a picture recognizing His broken body and shed blood.
(I Cor. 11:26)
- C. It is a celebration and time of thanks for the love of God shown at the cross of Calvary. (Rom. 5:8, John 3:16, John 15:13)
- D. It is an anticipation, to remind us that Christ is coming again.
(I Cor. 11:26)
- E. It is not a means of being saved or receiving grace. That is why we do not call it a sacrament. Like baptism, it is a symbolic picture of what obtained our salvation: the death of Christ on the cross. (Eph. 2:8-9)

III. The Right Contents of the Lord's Supper

A. Unleavened Bread - to picture His broken body

1. We know the bread should be unleavened, because this meal was in conjunction with the Jewish Passover. (Exo. 12:17-20)
2. It was often called "the Feast of unleavened bread."
(Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:1, Luke 22:1)
3. Leaven is another word for yeast. This bread is flat and dense, with no yeast to "raise" it.
4. Though the Jews did not understand the picture, the passover feast was all about Christ. Leaven is a symbol of sin in the Bible, and Christ, being our passover, was without sin. (I Cor. 5:6-8)

B. Unfermented Wine - to picture His shed blood

1. Wine does not always refer to an alcoholic beverage in the Bible. It can mean either fermented or fresh grape juice, depending on the context.
2. As mentioned, leaven (yeast) is often a picture of sin in the Bible. (Matthew 16:6, Luke 12:1, I Cor. 5:6-8, Gal. 5:7-9)
3. To leaven the bread or ferment the grape juice using yeast would ruin the picture that was intended in the Lord's Supper.
4. It is also called the "fruit of the vine" indicating its freshness and purity. (Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18)

C. We believe that the bread and wine simply remain bread and wine, and do not change into anything else. (Luke 22:19, I Cor. 11:26)

1. They do not literally become the flesh and blood of Christ.
(Catholic - Transubstantiation)
 - a) This is a twisting of the metaphor used by Christ in Luke 22:19, and John 6:51-54. Christ explained that this was only a metaphor for believing in Him. (John 6:35 & 63)
 - b) These words were spoken long before Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. It had nothing to do with the ordinance, and certainly did not mean that we were to literally eat His flesh & drink His blood.

- c) How could the disciples accomplish this in the upper room when Christ's physical flesh and blood were still in tact and partaking with them?
2. Their substance is not united with the mystical presence of Christ. (Lutheran - Consubstantiation)
3. The elements remain bread and wine, and serve only as symbols.

IV. The Proper Participants of the Lord's Supper

A. The Lord's Supper is to be commemorated by those who are saved and baptized members of a given local church.

1. Must be saved.
 - a) The Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ after Judas left the table. (John 13:21-31, then compare Matthew 26:21-30)
 - b) Those who partake in communion are to be those who are "partakers of that one bread" which is Christ. (I Cor. 10:16-17)
2. Must be scripturally baptized. (Acts. 2:41-42) First they "received his word" and were saved. Then they were baptized, which added them as members of the church (Acts 2:47). Then they were qualified to continue in "breaking of bread."
3. Must be a member of that local church.
 - a) See above reference on baptism. The Lord's Supper was always observed in the context of a local church.
 - b) The instruction given concerning the Lord's Supper was given to individual, local churches. (I Cor. 11)
 - c) The ordinance was observed by the Lord only with the members of the church that He founded. He had other followers, but the apostles were the first members. (I Cor. 12:28)

B. Three terms that define where a church stands:

1. Open Communion - a church with this position will allow anyone who desires to join with them in observing the Lord's Supper.
2. Close Communion - this position would allow for anyone of "like faith and practice" to partake in the Lord's Supper.

Many churches - even Baptist churches - hold the position of “close communion.” But this is not supported by Scripture. As we will see in the next section, those causing division or heresy must not partake. If those partaking are not members, how can this be enforced by the church?

3. Closed Communion - this is the position that only the saved, baptized members of a given church can partake in the Lord’s Supper. (Scriptural reasons given under the previous point: IV-A-3)

This is the official position of our church. We do not believe in a universal invisible church (see Lesson 4 of this series). Therefore the ordinances are to be administered under the authority of local churches.

We would not allow Christians who were not members - even from other like-minded Baptist churches - to vote on important matters regarding our church. We therefore understand that some rights exclude those who are not members of this particular church body. The Lord’s Supper is one of those rights reserved for members only.

V. The Required Conditions of the Lord’s Supper

A. Church Unity (free of divisions) (I Cor. 11:16-17)

B. Doctrinal Purity (free of heresies) (I Cor. 11:18-20)

C. Personal Purity

1. Not under any church discipline - meaning that the member is in a state of unrepentant sin. (I Cor. 5:9-13) - v. 11, “with such an one no not to eat,” meaning to partake in the Lord’s Supper.

2. Having personally examined your own heart (I Cor. 11:27-28)

D. God looks very seriously on how we partake of the Lord’s Supper.

(I. Cor. 11:29-31) The Lord was judging many with physical sickness and even death for coming to His Supper in an improper manner.

VI. The Authorized Setting of the Lord's Supper

- A. The authority to administer the ordinances lies in the local church.
- B. It should only be observed when the church assembles together.
(I Cor. 11:33-34)
- C. It is not to be observed with only a few church members, at a home Bible study, or any time when the whole church does not meet.
- D. It is not to be observed in your home (unless the whole church is meeting there). This is not a family ordinance. It is a church ordinance.
- E. It is not to be observed with another church body - even if that church believes the same as you.

VII. The Proper Timing of the Lord's Supper

- A. It was instituted by the Lord at the time of the Passover, the Tuesday before Resurrection Sunday (Easter).
- B. The church has the authority to schedule other times to observe the Lord's Supper. Many Baptist churches will only observe the Lord's Supper once or twice a year. Others will hold it more often, such as once a month. (I Cor. 11:25-26, 33)
- C. The first time this supper was held by Jesus and the apostles was on a Tuesday. There is no command to do such, but we will usually follow this example. It is also practical to hold it on an "off night" to minimize the chance of embarrassing or offending visitors.

Note: This lesson is not to "put down" or offend anyone who may believe differently. It is simply intended to set forth what we believe the Bible teaches on this subject. It is taught to promote unity within the church upon the truth - not to create division. Please take what has been taught in Christian love and with an open, teachable heart.