

Holy Communion is essential to the spiritual life of Christians. It is not optional, we are commanded by our Master to receive it. It is no more optional than water baptism (Romans 6). What is Holy Communion? Most of us have participated in it at some time. Holy Communion is a memorial to the New Covenant, or New Testament.

He has left us emblems representing His Body and His Blood. The bread speaks to us of the Body of our Lord, broken by the stripes that were inflicted on Him. The cup represents the Blood shed by our Lord. It speaks to us of eternal salvation, of redemption through His precious Blood. We frequently hear the ordinance referred to as the Lord's Supper, or the Lord's Table. These names stress that it is the Lord's – and not the exclusive property of any one group or individual. The Lord's Supper is more than mere form or ritual. It is a source of healing, for it memorializes the stripes by which we are healed. It is a source of fellowship, for in observing it we come into fellowship with others who know Christ as Lord. It is a reminder of the constant union we enjoy with the Saviour. **The Lord's Supper is a grand paradox.** It looks backward at death as a defeated foe, rather than forward to it as a dreaded villain. It points to a broken Body and shed Blood, yet views death as the beginning of life. The Lord's Supper speaks of death, yet its subject is life. Its bread is the bread of life, its cup, the cup of life.

In the Old Testament there was the Passover. In the New Testament there is Holy Communion. Both are celebrated to help us remember the **moment of deliverance**. Of what should we be reminded when we consider the Lord's Supper? First, we ought to remember that it is the Lord's Supper, not man's. Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, initiated it; it was not born in the hearts of men. It was not instituted by Church councils. It is not a ritual that has been added to the Church. The Lord's Supper is an original function of the Church, one that has been observed from the beginning of church life.

Nutritionists have long told us that we become what we eat, or more accurately, what we eat becomes us. Today's muscle and bone were last week's meat and milk. Today's bread and fish will become next week's blood and tissue. The one who eats and the thing that is eaten eventually become one. Our union with Jesus Christ is the same. As we take Him, we become one with Him and He one with us. It is communion, a common union or bond between the Lord and the individual believer.

The first Communion of our Lord was given exclusively to His disciples, the apostles. It was not given to His enemies, that they might mock Him and sneer at Him. There was no place at that table for anyone who was not a disciple. You will remember that Judas left before Jesus passed the bread and wine. This fact shows us that Holy Communion is not for unbelievers. The unregenerate man or woman has no place at the Lord's Table.

As we look back into the Old Testament, we cannot escape the striking parallel between the Lord's Supper and the Passover Feast. In fact, it was at the observance of Passover that the Lord's Supper was instituted. The one pointed forward to the other. The Passover was a time of witness. The father of each household explained to his children how the death angel had passed through Egypt.

The Passover: a shadow of Calvary

In every home where the blood of the sacrificial lamb had not been applied to the door post, the first-born died. That sacrificial lamb was a symbol of Jesus Christ. That blood was a symbol of His Blood. That deliverance from death was a picture of the deliverance that Jesus has given to all believers. Just before Jesus fulfilled the death that the Passover predicted, He instituted His new feast. That feast is also a witness. It is a witness to the broken Body and shed Blood of the Saviour. It is a witness to the fact that only in Jesus is there hope of deliverance.

As we observe the ordinance, as we drink of the cup, we can rejoice in the knowledge that God will not judge us on past sin. He loves us. We are His own.

The Blood of Christ is a seal for us –

against sickness, death and satan. It is a 'no trespassing' sign – when the devil brings things into our lives, it is because we have allowed him access. But satan is powerless to cross the threshold of any heart sealed by the Holy Spirit. The Lord's

supper reminds us of this truth and is reason for rejoicing at His table.

The Body of Christ broken for us

We have spoken a great deal of the cup and the Blood, but let's look at the bread, representing Christ's body broken for us. There was not a single bone broken in Jesus' body on the Cross, but yet His body was broken by scourging, beating and torture. *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him and by His stripes we are healed."* **Isa 53:5** Jesus' broken body brings us healing. His Word declares that by His Blood we are forgiven and by His broken body we are healed. When we come to the Lord's table we should come there expecting healing. Taking communion provides us with a tangible act, to enforce an intangible truth. (ie: physically as we eat the bread representing Christ's broken body, we are trusting by faith and receiving in faith, our healing from Him).

The two cups of Calvary

When we view the Lord's Supper and the events it represents, we are drawn to the fact that in those final hours before Calvary there are not one cup, but two. There is the cup of the Lord and the Lord's cup. There is the cup that Christ received from His Father, and there is the cup we receive from Christ. There is the cup that He drank on our behalf and there is the cup that we drink at His invitation. They are two, and yet the message of each is wondrously woven into the other. We read of the **first cup** in

John 18:11. The **second cup** which He gives to us is in **1 Corinthians 11:25-26.**

The cup of Christ and Christ's cup

The first cup (Christ's cup) was one of betrayal and sorrow. The Lord took that on, that we may drink of the second cup (the cup He gives us) and receive His joy, and unity in His family. The first cup is a picture of His sacrificial death. A cup of death, sickness and sin – that He took on Himself for our sakes. He exchanged this for our cup, a cup of salvation, healing, joy and love. The cup Christ received from the Lord that night was a cup on loneliness and pain. A cup of wrath and anger (the anger of a Holy Lord, the anger of satan and the world who crucified Him).

A reminder of the Lord's love

There are two cups involved in Holy Communion. Only one is visible to our physical eyes. It is the cup Christ gives us. It is a cup of fellowship and friendship, a cup of peace, healing, joy and life. Yet it was only made possible because Jesus was willing to drink of a cup of bitterness and loneliness, solitude, betrayal, wrath, bruising, sorrows and death. Holy Communion is so much more than many believe. It is not a Sunday celebration, it is more – it is life!