

Lesson Four: The Lord's Supper

THEME: One of the two ordinances given to the church is the Lord's Supper. It is an ordinance for those who have accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior. It is a representation of belonging to the family of God, and an emblem of the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection.

KEY VERSES: *1 Corinthians 11:24-26* – “²⁴ And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. ²⁵ After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. ²⁶ For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.”

From the outset it is important to note why we call these ordinances and not sacraments. The word sacrament comes from the Latin word, "sacramentum," which described the oath of loyalty a Roman legionnaire would swear to his commanding officer, and in the sense that we observe baptism and the Lord's Supper in allegiance to our Master, Jesus, we could call these events sacraments. But over the years the word has taken on a different meaning. According to the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church, a sacrament is something which, by its very nature, is a means whereby the grace of God is conveyed. In other words, they teach that when one is baptized or takes communion, by that act itself their sins are forgiven.

As Baptists, we believe that grace comes by faith alone and is given as a free gift by God. God's grace is not ours to control, to give out or to deny to someone else. Thus, we refer to Baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances. An ordinance is a command which our Lord has directed us to obey. It is symbolic in its nature and carries with it all of the blessings which normally accompany obedience.

I. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper - In many Christian circles these days, the Lord's Supper has lost some of its significance. There are churches where it is their tradition to take the Lord's Supper each and every week. There are no hard and fast rules as to how often the Lord's Supper can be taken, but when it becomes rote and humdrum it loses its importance.

From a biblical point of view, the Lord's Supper has deep theological and spiritual meaning. In Luke 22:19 Jesus tells His disciples that they are to observe this ordinance in remembrance of Him. Thus, the overarching truth is that it is a time to remember what Jesus did for us, as 1 Corinthians 11 tells us that whenever we take it we proclaim

the death and return of our Lord. By reading our Lord's word we are told of at least three things the Lord's Supper memorializes or calls to our remembrance.

A. The bread is symbolic of the broken body of our Lord - Like the Passover lamb, Jesus, the Lamb of God, laid down His life as a sacrifice for sin. His body was broken, His hands and His feet, His side and His brow were pierced for us. Each time we take the bread in the Lord's Supper we are reminded of the theological truth of substitutionary atonement; Jesus gave His life for us. He laid His life down on the cross to pay the price for our sins. He died in our place. His body was broken so our broken souls could be healed.

As Isaiah 53:5 says, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

B. The cup is symbolic of the blood of the covenant – As recorded Exodus 24 when Moses ratified the covenant God made with Israel, he took the blood of the sacrifice and sprinkled half of it on the alter and the other half he sprinkled on the people. It was with the blood of the sacrifice that the covenant was ratified or sealed between God and His people.

A covenant is the same thing as a Testament. The Old Testament, or old covenant, was one which was based on the blood of sheep and oxen whereby the High Priest would have to go to the temple once each year and make atonement for the sins of the people. But when Jesus died, He fulfilled the law and instituted a New Covenant, or New Testament, one which was ratified or established on the strength of His shed blood. This is why the Bible says in Hebrews 10 that it was impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin, but Jesus, it says, took away the first covenant and established the second, so that " By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*."

His blood, shed on the cross, was poured out for the forgiveness of sins. With His blood He became the sacrifice for our sins, a sacrifice which was acceptable to God. When we take the cup we are remembering His shed blood, we are reflecting on the sacrifice He made for us and are being reminded of the covenant between us and God, a covenant sealed with the blood of His only begotten Son. And being reminded of that covenant should have a sobering effect on our lives.

But there is a third thing which this calls us to remember, and that is that He is coming again to take us home. In 1 Corinthians 11:26 the scripture says, " For as often as ye

eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." The Lord's Supper reminds us not only that Jesus died for us, but that He will come again for us some day. It calls us to live each day in light of that final day.

III. Called to a different way of life - the Lord's Supper calls us to be in right fellowship as members of the body of Christ.

First, we are to remember; remember what it is Jesus did for us and why it was necessary for Him to die for us.

First Peter 1:18-19 says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:"

Each time we take the cup and the bread we are to remember whose we are and the price He paid to redeem or buy us back from the penalty of our sin. It should call us back to the cross. The bread and the cup call us to remember. But not only are we to remember, we are to repent.

Second, we are to repent. When we take the cup and bread and we remember all that Jesus has done for us and allow His Spirit to show us the things in our life which are inconsistent with our profession, we should repent. That is, we should stop doing what is displeasing to God and begin to do what is pleasing in His sight.

This was why God had judged some of the believers at Corinth. They were taking the cup and eating the bread in an unworthy manner. They were not judging themselves, therefore God was judging them.

First Corinthians 11:27-31 says, "Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."

The Lord's Supper calls us to repent of the attitudes of our hearts and the actions of our hands which are displeasing to God.

Third, we are to be reconciled. This was the big problem at the church at Corinth. They had all the outward ceremonies, but their fellowship was lacking love. Instead

of coming to take the bread and the cup and allowing God to use that time to remind them of the high price that had been paid for their souls, because of the envy, strife and division which existed amongst the members of that church, not only were they going through the motions without giving place to the true significance of the ordinance, but they were also using it as another chance to goad one another. And for this reason, according to 1 Corinthians 11:30 God had pronounced judgment on them and some of them had died.

It's passages like this which shed light on how seriously we are to take God's word and how serious God is about our hearts being right with Him above all else.

One of the great problems in the lives of many Christians today is that they have somehow become so desensitized to the Holy Spirit of God that they can go through the motions of church, week after week, they can take the Lord's Supper time after time, and never come to terms with the truth that their relationship with God is always and ever connected to their relationship with one another. That's why we call it communion, it is a time when we examine and rectify our communion with God and with one another. That's why we must use the Lord's Supper as a time to reconcile with one another. That's why we are to take it regularly because it seems we are always in need of getting right with one another.

And last, we are to recommit. After reflecting on the authenticity of our walk with God, and after remembering what it is Jesus has done for us, remembering whose we are and who we are in Jesus, and after having the opportunity to repent of our sins and reconcile with one another, each time we take the cup and eat of the bread we are called to recommit ourselves once again to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and to allow His Spirit to have absolute, unreserved control of our lives.

Questions:

1. The Lord's Supper has deep theological and spiritual meaning. In _____ 22:19, Jesus told His disciples that they were to observe this ordinance in remembrance of Him.

2. The _____ is symbolic of the broken body of the Lord. Each time we take the _____ in the Lord's Supper we are reminded of the theological truth of substitutionary atonement, Jesus gave His life for us.

3. The cup is symbolic of the _____ of the covenant. His _____, shed on the cross, was poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

4. The Lord's Supper reminds us not only that Jesus _____ for us, but that He will come again for us some day.

5. The Lord's Supper calls us to be in right _____ as members of the body of Christ.

6. Each time we take the cup and the bread we are to _____ whose we are and the price He paid to _____, or buy us back from the penalty of our sin. The Lord's Supper should call us back to the cross.

7. 1 Corinthians 11 sheds light on how seriously we are to take God's _____ and how serious God is about our _____ being right with Him above all else.

8. Another name for the Lord's Supper is _____. It is a time when we examine and rectify our communion with God and with one another