

Celebrating God with the Lord's Supper

I. The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper

- Just like baptism, communion is commanded by God and has an accompanying sign associated with it. Baptism demands water, and the Lord's Supper demands bread and the fruit of the vine.
- But — unlike believer's baptism which is has a one-time fulfillment — Jesus commanded that we observe the Lord's Supper with increased frequency.
- The ordinance of baptism is a public testimony whereby we proclaim to the world and the church that we are leaving behind our old lives and following Christ.
- The ordinance of communion is a more private, family experience whereby we collectively rededicate ourselves to following Christ and long for His return.

II. The Purpose of the Lord's Supper

- Luke 22:19; I Corinthians 11; Matthew 5:23-24
- The ordinances are not sacraments because they do not provide us access to special grace or merit to which we would otherwise not have access or is required for a fully Christian life.
- Jesus Himself made it very clear that He wanted us to repeat the Lord's Supper until He returns. What's interesting is that this piece of information is only included in Luke's Gospel.
- Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul further clarifies what Christ meant by explaining, "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.*"
- The Lord's Supper is simply an exercise in remembrance. We remember what Christ did for us, and we remember what He promised to do for us. His body was broken and His blood was spilled for us in order to purchase our redemption, and He also promised to come again and receive us to Himself. That is the primary purpose of the Lord's Supper.
- But there is a secondary purpose on which Paul elaborates in I Corinthians 11. Paul explains that as God's people assemble to remember the Lord's sacrifice and second coming we are also to search our hearts. Salvation made us followers of Christ, baptism testified to our commitment to follow Him, and Communion provides us some regular accountability that we actually are following Christ. To partake in an unworthy manner is to participate in communion with unrepentant sin. The Lord's Supper allows us to judge ourselves rightly, confess our sins, apologize, and repent — thereby returning to undefiled worship of God.

III. The Elements of the Lord's Supper

- After participating in the Passover with His disciples, Jesus broke bread and shared the fruit of the vine. He first broke the bread — which would have been unleavened — and passed it out to the disciples proclaiming that this was His body. And then the Scriptures say He took the cup, proclaimed it the new covenant in His blood which was poured out for them.
- No doubt this terminology was unexpected, and yet very normal for Jesus. During His ministry He had already referred to Himself as a shepherd, a door, bread, water, the cornerstone, He compared Himself to the brazen serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness, and His teaching was always filled with parables, word pictures, and significant imagery.
- This is another reason Protestants do not refer to the Lord's Supper as the Eucharist. Catholics believe that the bread is transubstantiated into the actual body of Christ and the that the cup is transubstantiated into the actual blood of Christ.
- This belief grew out of inappropriate literalism coupled with a dash of delusions of grandeur.

- The Lord's Supper is a symbolic tradition whereby we remember the sacrifice of Christ. It does not impart grace, and God's people are not cannibalizing the Messiah. It's not necessary, because faith in Jesus imparts saving grace to our lives.
- What we know is that the bread was unleavened, and the fruit of the vine was fermented to one degree or another. We're not going to state whether modern observances of the Lord's Supper should include grape juice or wine. Suffice it to say, there can be good reasons to do either.
- The blessing doesn't come from the elements, it comes from doing the right thing in the right way for the right reasons. The fact that their fruit of the vine had to have alcohol in it in order for it to be drinkable doesn't necessitate that we must do the same thing.
- Either way, whether or not your bread is gluten free, whether or not your church uses Welch's grape juice, whether or not everyone drinks from the same cup or has their own disposable shot glass, whether it's accompanied by a full meal or the minimalistic elements in many baptist churches, none of that was clearly commanded or illustrated for us.
- Therefore, do your best to celebrate God the best you can while you submit to what you know and seek to please Him with what you don't.

I. The Participants of the Lord's Supper

- It is impossible for us to know the spiritual condition of every man who participated in the first Lord's Supper. Some tend to think that Judas may have been present for it, and others believe the Gospels make it clear he wasn't there. But even if Judas wasn't present, we know Peter was, and it's safe to say that Peter was not truly converted when he participated in the first Communion.
- The Lord's Supper should be taken by professing believers.
 - The Lord's Supper has a purpose. It's for God's people to remember what Christ suffered in order to purchase their salvation. And it's for God's people to excitedly anticipate His return . . . because we're going to keep observing it until He returns. The purpose of the ordinance makes it clear that only believers should participate.
 - There are consequences when people participated in the Lord Supper in an unworthy fashion. And what was an unworthy fashion? If people sinned as they participated or had not yet confessed known sin before participating, they were not judging themselves rightly. This too teaches that observing the Lord's Supper would not be wise for someone who Romans 8 describes as an enemy of God for whom it is impossible for them to glorify God.

II. The Frequency of the Lord's Supper

- The Scriptures neither command nor give any hard and fast examples of how often God's people are supposed to observe the Lord's Supper. Some believe that the early church observed it on a weekly basis, but it's hard to say.
- Again, we're left to fulfill the Spirit of the Law. Jesus intended for this ordinance to draw our minds back to the one thing we are so prone to forget. In II Peter 1, Peter talks about the salvation of Jesus Christ and the effect it is to have in our lives as we grow in Christlikeness. And in verse 12, Peter says, "*Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.*"
- The Lord's Supper should be done with a frequency that makes it hard to forget what God has done, what He wants to do in us, and what He will do in the future.