

# The Lord's Supper

*"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way, He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.'" 1 Corinthians 11:23-25*

The first century church experienced spiritual fellowship and close community life among its members (Acts 2:42; 4:32). On the Lord's Day (Sunday), the believers would meet together (normally in their homes) to share "the Lord's Supper" as a full fellowship meal (Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:20). The primary purpose of eating this covenant meal together was to remember the Lord's death through sharing "the bread and the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

What is the meaning of the Lord's Supper and sharing "the bread and the cup"? God ordained that we partake of the Lord's Supper to proclaim our union with Jesus Christ (made possible through His death) and to celebrate our union with one another as fellow members of Christ's body. With this in mind, the apostle Paul taught, "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing (the Greek is *koinonia*, which means *communion*) in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing (*communion*) in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)." For this reason, the Lord's Supper is now also called "Communion." Remember, though, "the bread and the cup" were normally taken as part of a community meal than as a separate ceremony.

At the last Passover (traditionally called the Last Supper), Jesus Himself instituted the believers' practice of sharing "the bread and the cup" as a means to remember His death. "When the hour had come, He reclined at the table and the

apostles with Him, and He said to them, 'I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, 'Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.' And when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given to you; do this in remembrance of Me.' And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood (Luke 22:14-20).'"

Just as God ordained the practice of water baptism to remind us of the spiritual benefits of our union with Christ's death and resurrection, God ordained the Lord's Supper to remind us of the divine provisions we have in Christ's death and resurrection. What are these provisions? Before we were saved, we were born into sin and were, therefore, in bondage to sin. We were also destined to receive the just penalty for our sin, which is spiritual death and eternal separation from God. However, by His death on the cross, Jesus Christ delivered us (*who believe*) from both the penalty of sin and the power of sin. In baptism, our "burial" under water demonstrated that our sinful nature died and was removed from us (*when we were born again*) so we might have Christ's resurrection life (Romans 6:3-11). In the Lord's Supper, the bread and the cup also demonstrate this full provision of Christ's death. The cup represents Christ's blood that was shed so that we might receive forgiveness for our sins. The bread represents Christ's body that died so that we might receive His resurrection life. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life... this is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die (John 6:48 & 50)."

How did Christ's sacrificial death provide us with His resurrection life? This is the mystery of the cross, which the Bible also calls the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:19). God used the death

of His Son to perform a divine exchange. When Jesus Christ died on the cross, He opened the spiritual door for God to exchange our sinful nature with His divine nature. We receive this divine exchange (made possible by Christ's death) when we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior and become born again of the Spirit. Therefore, whenever we partake of the Lord's Supper, we proclaim this glorious provision of Christ's death. We express our eternal gratitude that Christ's body is the door through which we have been reconciled to God (Colossians 1:20-22).

Sharing the Lord's Supper each week is not just a time when we remember Christ's death. It is also a time when we eagerly look forward to celebrating it in our Father's kingdom at the marriage supper with our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God. The Bible records of that day, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready... blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9)."

Although the Lord's Supper is a joyous time together, we must not partake of the bread and the cup in a thoughtless or unworthy manner. The Bible exhorts us to properly recognize the body of Christ whenever we share the Lord's Supper together. We are to treat our brothers and sisters in Christ with genuine love and respect as fellow members of God's family; otherwise we will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of Jesus and we will be severely disciplined by the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:17-34). On the road to Emmaus, the two disciples recognized Jesus Christ when He was "breaking bread" with them (Luke 24:35). Whenever two or more of Christ's disciples gather together in our day, may they also recognize that He is in their midst as they "break bread" together.

*"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."*  
1 Corinthians 11:26