THE LORD'S SUPPER



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NOTES

For as often as you eat this bread, and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till he come. I Cor 11:26



The two ordinances of the Church are: the Lord's Supper and baptism. This study of the Lord's Supper will be covered in nine sections: the meaning of the Lord's Supper, the Scriptures used, names for the ordinance, its qualifications as an ordinance, purposes of the Lord's Supper, the frequency of its practice, the mode of practice, the prerequisites, and the dangers of partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily.

I. THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

What is the true meaning of the Lord's Supper? In the realm of Christendom, there have been four major views as to the meaning of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

A. Transubstantiation

The first view is known as transubstantiation. This is the view of Roman Catholicism. Transubstantiation teaches that the elements, the bread or the host and the wine, are actually changed into the body and the blood of the Messiah by priestly consecration. Therefore, by means of transubstantiation, whenever the Lord's Supper is served, it is a new offering of the Messiah's sacrifice.

Because they believe that the bread becomes the real body and the wine becomes the real blood, the bread was made available to all, but until recently, the wine was limited for the priesthood only. Wine was not for the laity because of the danger of spilling the real blood of the Messiah.

And because they believe this, it was often used as a basis for anti Semitic campaigns throughout Jewish history. Jews were often accused of sneaking into a church and stealing the host after it had been

consecrated, and nailing it to a tree, and by so doing were re crucifying the Messiah. Priests used this to enrage the mobs to attack the Jewish parts of the town. Many Jews throughout history were killed because of the Doctrine of Transubstantiation.

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1. The Basis for the Belief

The basis for their belief in transubstantiation is the statement of Yeshua (Jesus): "This is my body; this is my blood." Therefore, they claim that the bread and the wine become the real body and the real blood of Yeshua. They also use John 6:53-56, where Jesus spoke of eating His body and drinking His blood.

2. Refutation of Transubstantiation

That this interpretation is not the biblical teaching or the meaning of the Lord's Supper is clear for the following reasons. First, Yeshua had not even died when He said these words. When He made the statements in Luke 22:19-20: "This is my body, this is my blood," He used the present tense, because He hadn't died yet. Therefore, He could not have meant that these elements became His real body and His real blood.

Secondly, He did say in verse 19: This is my body, but in verse 20, He did not say, "This is my blood." Rather, He said: This cup is the new covenant in my blood. If transubstantiation were true, then this statement becomes totally senseless.

Thirdly, the John 6 passage, where Jesus spoke of eating His body and drinking His blood, is not in the context of the communion service. In fact, Yeshua never spoke of the Lord's Supper and did not even mention it until the last Passover of His earthly life.

The fourth reason this interpretation is not the biblical teaching is that transubstantiation denies the completeness of the Messiah's sacrifice. That is the point of the Book of Hebrews: the Messiah died once and for all, and no sacrifice needs to be repeated. Therefore, there is no need to re sacrifice the Messiah in the mass. So transubstantiation cannot be the biblical meaning concerning the Lord's Supper.

B. Consubstantiation

The second view in Christendom concerning the meaning of the Lord's Supper is known as consubstantiation; this is the Lutheran view. The Lutheran position of consubstantiation admits that the elements, the bread and the wine themselves, do not change as taught by transubstantiation. However, the body and the blood are physically present in the elements. That is why it is not "trans substance" in that the substances change, rather, it is "con substance," meaning the body and the blood are really "within the substances," though the substances themselves do not change. Again, the teaching of consubstantiation is that the body and blood are physically present in the elements.

The basis for this teaching is the same as that of Roman Catholicism. The arguments used by Catholics are the same arguments used by Lutherans to teach consubstantiation; therefore, the response and refutation would also be the same, so it will not be repeated here.

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C. The Spiritual Presence

A third common view in Christendom concerning the eating of the Lord's Supper is known as the spiritual presence. This was the view of John Calvin, and it is the view of the Reformed Churches. This view teaches that the body and blood are spiritually present, but not physically present in the elements.

1. The Basis for the Belief

The basis for this teaching is the concept of the ordinance's being a sacrament. A sacrament always conveys a means of grace. So, while those who teach spiritual presence say that the substances do not change, nor is the real body and real blood present with the substances, they do teach that the body and blood are spiritually present in the elements. Again, the basis is the concept of a sacrament as a means of grace; because it is a sacrament, it therefore must have the spiritual presence.

2. The Refutation of the Spiritual Presence

The refutation is that the Lord's words do not imply a spiritual presence any more than they imply a physical presence, whether it be by transubstantiation or consubstantiation. While the first two views teach a physical presence, this third view teaches a spiritual presence, but the words of Yeshua no more convey a spiritual presence than they do a physical presence.

D. A Memorial

There is a fourth view in Christendom concerning the meaning of the Lord's Supper, and it is the most obvious and biblical view: the meaning is to be a memorial. Among the Reformers, this view was held by Zwingli. It is the correct view: the Lord's Supper is a memorial.

This is seen in Luke 22:19. When the Apostle Paul discusses the theological significance of the Lord's Supper, that is the phrase he emphasizes in I Corinthians 11:24-25. Therefore, the key thing about the meaning of the Lord's Supper is that it is a memorial, a remembrance of Jesus. This is further emphasized in I Corinthians 11:26, where he wrote that, by means of the Lord's Supper, we are showing forth the *Lord's death till he come*. And by showing forth the Lord's death, we are fulfilling the commandment to do this in remembrance of Him; it is simply a memorial.

II. THE SCRIPTURES USED

The second section concerning the Lord's Supper is the Scriptures

that are used. There are five main passages from which we derive the theology of the Lord's Supper: Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20; I Corinthians 10:16-17; and 11:23-26.

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III. NAMES FOR THE ORDINANCE

The third section of the study of the Lord's Supper is to point out that various names for the ordinance. All together, there are seven different names for this ordinance, but only the first six are biblical.

A. The Lord's Supper

The first name is *the Lord's Supper*, which is the name used in I Corinthians 11:20. Literally, the Greek reads, "of the Lord a supper." The Greek word for "Lord," here is an adjective, not a noun, and as an adjective, there is no exact English equivalent. The only other place this word is found is Revelation 1:10, and the closest way of reflecting in English the Greek adjective is the word "lordy." It means that it is a "lordy supper."

This particular name, the Lord's Supper, is probably a reference to the *agape* feast that used to precede the communion service. In the early Church period, they first had a supper, and the supper would end with a communion service which was therefore known as the Lord's Supper. Obviously, in most churches today, when only a small piece of bread and a thimbleful of juice are served, it could hardly be classed as a supper.

B. The Table of the Lord

A second name is *the table of the Lord*, used in I Corinthians 10:21. Literally, the Greek reads, "of a table of the Lord," and as such, this may not be a definite reference to communion.

C. The Breaking of Bread

A third name for this ordinance is *the breaking of bread*. This is found in Acts 2:42, where it reads: *the breaking of the bread*, and also in Acts 20:7 where it reads: *to break bread*.

D. The Eucharist

The fourth name is the term "Eucharist." This term comes from the Greek word that means "thanksgiving." This is based upon what Yeshua did at the last Passover. Matthew 26:27; Mark 14:23; and Luke 22:17 and 19 state that Jesus *gave thanks*, or more literally, He was "giving thanks." I Corinthians 11:24 states that after having *given thanks*. And so it was given the name "Eucharist," which means "to give thanks," based upon what Yeshua did at that time.

E. The Eulogia

The fifth name for the ordinance is the *eulogia*; this is found in I Corinthians 10:16 and means "blessing." The verse states: *The cup of blessing which we bless*, because they did have a cup of wine during the Passover, known as "the cup of blessing."

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F. Communion

The sixth name for this ordinance is the term "communion," found in I Corinthians 10:16. It is the Greek word *koinonia*, and it is used of both the body and blood, the bread and the cup. This is perhaps my own favorite name for this service.

G. The Mass

The seventh name for this ordinance is the only one which has no biblical support, and it is the Catholic name, "the mass." As mentioned earlier, the mass itself implies a re-sacrifice, and there is no biblical support for it whatsoever.

IV. THE DEFINITION AND QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ORDINANCE

The fourth section of the study of the Lord's Supper will be covered in two parts: first, the definition and secondly, qualifications of an ordinance.

A. Definition

An ordinance can be defined as a rite or ritual or practice prescribed by the Messiah to be performed by the Church, as an outward sign of the saving truth of the Christian faith. Rather than seeing the ordinances as conveying grace, it is better to see them as visible signs of saving truth, and that is why the term "ordinance" is better than the term "sacrament."

B. Qualifications

Normally, three qualifications must be met for something to qualify as an ordinance. First, it had to be commanded by Jesus. Secondly, it was observed in the Book of Acts. And thirdly, it was expounded upon in the Epistles as to its theological significance.

We find that all three of these qualifications were met in the Lord's Supper. First, it was commanded by Yeshua in Luke 22:19-20. Secondly, it was practiced in the Book of Acts; three examples are: Acts 2:42, 46; and 20:7. Thirdly, the theological significance of it is expounded upon in the Epistles; two examples are I Corinthians 10:16 17 and 11:23-31. Therefore, it has all of the necessary qualifications for an ordinance.

V. PURPOSES OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

The fifth section of the study of the Lord's Supper is its purposes. It is possible to deduce four purposes from the passages that deal with this ordinance. First, in Luke 22:19, it is a memorial and a remembrance of the life and death of Jesus. The second purpose, in I Corinthians 11:26, is that it announces the basic facts of the gospel in that it proclaims the Lord's death. The third purpose, also in I Corinthians

11:26, is that it quickens an anticipation of the Messiah's return, because we are to perform this service until He returns. And fourthly, in I Corinthians 10:17, it has the purpose of reminding us of our oneness with all other believers.

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VI. FREQUENCY OF THE PRACTICE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

In the sixth section of the study of the Lord's Supper, it is obvious that the practice among members of the early church differed. For example, in Acts 2:46, they seemed to practice it on a daily basis, while in Acts 20:7 they observed it only weekly. There is no specific command which states how often it should be done. It does not say whether it should be done daily, weekly, or, as many churches practice, the first Sunday of the month. I Corinthians 11:26 simply states: *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.*
In Luke 22:19b, Jesus said: *this do in remembrance of me*. By combining these two passages, the point is: "As often as you do this, do it in remembrance of Yeshua." In other words, the frequency should be decided by each local congregation. If a local church chooses to practice it weekly, it has the freedom to do so; daily, the freedom to do so; monthly, the freedom to do so.

In the context of the Luke 22 passage, it should be remembered that Yeshua made this statement in conjunction with the Passover. The pronoun *this* referred to the Passover, which was on a yearly basis. The absolute minimum that a church should practice communion is once a year. However, the local church is free to practice it more often, though it should not be done so often that it becomes merely ritualistic, a ritual without meaning. Therefore, each church has the freedom to choose how frequently communion will be practiced, but the minimum is at least once a year.

VII. THE MODE OF PRACTICE

The seventh section concerning the Lord's Supper is the mode in which it should be practiced. Here four things should be noted: the setting, the elements, the order of the service, and the participants.

A. The Setting

First, it should be practiced when the local body of the church is assembled. This is seen in Acts 20:7 and I Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33 34, which speak of the body's coming together in the context of the practice of the Lord's Supper. It is not proper to practice communion one on one. It should be something in which a group participates. When Yeshua instituted the Lord's Supper, it was part of a group participation of the Jewish Passover. Consequently, it should be done with the assembled congregation, not privately between a few individuals.

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B. The Elements

The second thing about its mode of practice are the two elements used: the bread and the wine.

1. The Bread

The first element to be used is bread, and it should be unleavened bread. In Scripture, whenever leaven is used symbolically, it is always a symbol of sin. God would not permit even the symbol of sin to be in the Jewish home for the Passover. Therefore, when Jesus instituted a communion service in the context of the Jewish Passover, the bread that He used specifically was unleavened bread. Unleavened bread is a symbol of sinlessness, and the body of Yeshua was a sinless body.

2. The Wine

The second element should be a red liquid. Because it symbolizes blood, the color should be red. Most churches in America traditionally use grape juice, but it should be real wine, because that is also what Jesus used at the Passover. Grape juice should be provided for those who do not feel free to partake of the wine, but the weaker brethren must not be allowed to decide the rules for the body as a whole.

C. The Order of the Service

The third thing concerning the mode is that the distribution of the elements should be: first, the bread, followed by the wine. This is the order that Yeshua used: He first served the bread, and then served the wine. Therefore, that is the order of the service.

D. The Participants

And the fourth thing about the mode is that the believer should partake of both. Whereas for centuries in Catholicism, only the priest could partake of the wine and the laity could not, the biblical practice is that the believer should partake of both the bread and the wine.

VIII. THE PREREQUISITES

The eighth section of the study of the Lord's Supper deals with the prerequisites. All together there are three major prerequisites that must be fulfilled before one partakes of the Lord's Supper: salvation, water baptism, and self examination.

A. Salvation

The first prerequisite is salvation. The Lord's Supper should never knowingly be served to an unbeliever. This is something restricted to believers only.

B. Water Baptism

A second prerequisite, that one should be water baptized, is questionable. In the days of the early Church, a person was baptized on the day he believed. But in those days, people knew what baptism meant. Today, there is so much confusion concerning baptism, it

might be wise to refrain from the practice of baptism until the new believer has had a chance to be taught what baptism means and what it does not mean. But in the early Church, everyone who partook of communion had been baptized, and it might be that this was a prerequisite, although it is not a clear biblical teaching. Therefore, water baptism is only a possible prerequisite.

C. Self-Examination

The third prerequisite is self-examination. While the first restriction is to believers only, there is a second restriction: the Lord's supper may be served to believers who have self examined themselves. That is the point made by I Corinthians 11:27-28. Before a believer allows himself to partake of communion, he should undergo a self-examination, and he should confess all of his known sins. He should ask the question: "Am I walking an orderly spiritual life?" He should ask the question: "Do I discern and appreciate that the bread and the wine represent God's Atonement accomplished for me on the cross?" There should be a real sense of honor, a real sense of awe, when participating in communion. There should be a self-examination of where one stands before the Lord on this occasion.

There are some churches that have a further restriction known as "closed communion," in that they serve communion only to those who are members of that church. But there is no biblical evidence for the doctrine of closed communion. The communion should be open to all believers who have examined themselves.

IX. THE DANGERS IN PARTAKING UNWORTHILY

The ninth and last section about the Lord's Supper concerns the dangers of partaking in the Lord's Supper unworthily, which are found in I Corinthians 11:29-31: *For he that eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged.*

God will discipline those who treat the Lord's Supper lightly and do not examine themselves before partaking. These four dangers are: first, in verse 29, chastisement, which is a judgment of discipline; secondly, in verse 30a, physical weakness; thirdly, also in verse 30a, illness or sickness; and fourthly, in verse 30b, physical death.✡

NOTES

IF YOU ENJOYED THIS BIBLE STUDY, DR. FRUCHTENBAUM RECOMMENDS:
MBS097, 106, 109 and 112.