

The Lord's Supper

Franklin Church of Christ
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AM Worship

Introduction:

I imagine that most of us think eating is one of the most important things we do. Do you know what is the most important meal we eat? Some suggest breakfast because it helps us start the day off right. Others might say lunch, because it gets us through the main part of the day. Others might say supper because it is a time when families can most often be together. However, none of these is the right answer. The most important meal we eat, is not a literal meal at all. But rather it is a memorial meal. It is the Lord's Supper, which we eat, following the New Testament example, on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7**). However, the Lord's Supper is much more than just a memorial meal. During our worship today, we will focus our attention on the Lord's Supper and just exactly what it is.

Discussion:

- I. The Lord's Supper: A Memorial Meal
 - A. If there is anything we remember about Jesus' institution of His supper, it is His statement, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (**Luke 22:19**). Paul included the statement twice in his recap of the institution (**I Corinthians 11:24-25**). When we eat the Lord's Supper we are remembering the death of Jesus Christ.
 - B. The concept of memorial was well-defined throughout the Old Covenant.
 1. In **Exodus 12:14**, God spoke of the day of Passover as a memorial. Yearly, the Jews would be reminded of their deliverance from bondage and the freedom they had in God. In **Exodus 13:9**, this memorial was to serve as a sign on the hand and a reminder on the forehead. It was to be that obvious. The Lord's Supper is that kind of obvious reminder.
 2. **Joshua 4:1-7** adds the teaching element of the memorial. Memorials were a means to pass the teaching along to each generation. The Lord's Supper is the means by which we pass on to our children what Jesus did for us. Of course, we recognize it is not only to pass this on to our children, but also to any unbelievers that may enter our assemblies. No wonder Paul called it a proclamation of the Lord's Death (**I Corinthians 11:26**). Whether we realize it or not, the Lord's Supper is evangelism, that is, the proclamation of the good news.
 - C. Considering the Lord's Supper as a memorial meal, the Hebrew writer provides an awesome contrast for us. In **Hebrews 10:1-3**, we learn that the yearly atonement sacrifices of the Old Testament provided an annual reminder that the people were sinners. Further than that, despite the sacrifices offered, they were really still in their sins for the blood of bulls and goats could not pay the price for their sins. However, the sacrifice of Jesus did pay for our sins, redeeming us (**Hebrews 10:11-18**). Our memorial is not a memorial of sin, but of forgiveness. While we certainly remember our sins that sent our Savior to the cross, the Lord's Supper is a memorial meal that proclaims God's grace. What a joyous memorial this meal is for us.
- II. The Lord's Supper: A Sacrificial Meal
 - A. Jesus said of the unleavened bread, "This is my body, which is given for you" (**Luke 22:19**). He also said of the fruit of the vine, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." This supper is a meal of sacrifice. Not that we are sacrificing Jesus again. Rather, we share in the blessings of the sacrifice.
 - B. One of the often overlooked aspects of Old Testament sacrifices is that with various sacrifices, the priests and the people would eat part of it. The Passover sacrifice would probably be the one sacrifice in which we would most recognize this, especially since that is what Jesus and the apostles were doing the night Jesus established His Supper. According to **Exodus 12:6-10**, the people were to kill and eat this Passover sacrifice. In **Deuteronomy 12:6-7, 17-18**, we learn that the burnt offerings, tithes and other sacrifices were also eaten. **I Corinthians 10:18** explains the significance of this teaching that eating the sacrifice meant the person was sharing in the altar.
 - C. Perhaps the two sacrifices which most foreshadow the sacrifice in which we share through the Lord's Supper are the Passover sacrifice and the annual atonement sacrifice.
 1. **I Corinthians 5:7** says that Jesus is our Passover. He is the lamb that was sacrificed whose blood sets us apart, sanctifying us. When we eat the Supper, we proclaim our share in the sacrifice that saves us from death.

2. The passages we have already read in **Hebrews 10** connect Jesus' sacrifice with the annual atonement sacrifice. The sacrifice that was offered when the high priest would go into the most holy place and sprinkle the blood before the presence of God for the atonement of the priests and the nation. We must also note **Hebrews 10:19-25**. Because of Jesus' atoning sacrifice, we are also allowed to go through the veil into the most holy presence of God with full assurance. When we eat the Supper, we are reminded of the direct relationship we all have with God through the blood of Jesus as His royal priesthood.
- D. One interesting contrast between the Old Covenant sacrifice meals and the New Covenant meal is the distinction in what is done with the blood. Under the Old Covenant, the flesh of the sacrifice was to be eaten, but the blood was to be poured out and not eaten (**Deuteronomy 12:16, 25-27; Leviticus 17:10-11**). However, in our New Covenant meal, we eat the flesh and drink the blood. By this, we recognize that we share not only in the sacrifice but in the life that was given through that sacrifice, for the life is in the blood. We, by Christ's blood, now have life.

III. The Lord's Supper: A Covenant Meal

- A. When Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, as He offered the fruit of the vine, He said, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (**Luke 22:20**). The Lord's Supper is also a covenant meal. This concept also has its roots in the Old Testament covenants.
- B. According to ISBE, a covenant between two parties had four essential elements.
1. *A statement of the covenant's terms:* For example the covenant between Laban and Jacob in **Genesis 31:44-54**. Jacob would not mistreat Laban's daughters or marry anyone else and neither Jacob nor Laban would pass by the heap of stones in order to harm the other.
 2. *An oath or commitment to the covenant:* Notice Jacob's oath in **Genesis 31:53**.
 3. *A curse upon the parties if they violate the covenant:* In **Genesis 31:53**, this is implied by Laban's statements that God would judge them. That is, God would bring judgment on either one if they violated the covenant. But we can also look to God's covenant with Israel in which He invoked curses on the people if they did not keep their end of the agreement (**Deuteronomy 27:15-26; 28:15-68**).
 4. *An external act of ratification:* In the Old Testament, this usually took the form of a sacrifice and sharing in that sacrifice in some way. There were different acts accomplished with various covenants. In some cases, they would cut the animal in two and the covenanters would walk between them (**Jeremiah 34:18**). In others, they would sprinkle the blood of the sacrifice on the covenanters (**Exodus 24:6-8**). In many cases, they would eat the sacrifice together (**Genesis 31:54**).
- C. The Lord's Supper is this covenant meal for us. The cup which we drink is the New Covenant in Jesus' blood. As we partake in the Supper, we are repeatedly expressing our participation in and commitment to the covenant with Jesus Christ.
1. No doubt the agreed upon terms are that God grants us forgiveness and that we will live as new men, dead to sin and alive to God (**Romans 6:1-23**).
 2. Our commitment to the covenant took place in baptism, when our consciences were sprinkled clean by the blood of Christ (**Hebrews 10:19, 22**). When we eat the Lord's Supper covenant meal, partaking in the body and blood of our covenant sacrifice, we are remember the commitment we have made. Further, we are continually reminded of the promises that God made regarding His New Covenant in **Jeremiah 31:31-34**—we can know God through His word in our hearts and He will forgive our sins and remember them no more.
 3. At the same time, we are reminded of the curse upon us if with trample under foot this blood of the covenant. According to **Hebrews 10:29-31**, if we drink this cup on Sunday but on Monday we are willfully sinning in rebellion to God, we will fall into His hands and that is truly a terrifying thing.
 4. This meal, the Lord's Supper, is our ratification and agreement to this covenant. It is a weekly reminder of the covenant to which we have submitted. It is a the reminder that our lives now belong to God and that we have separated ourselves to His service. It is also our reminder that God has submitted to a covenant of forgiveness with us. Of course, we can trust God for His end of this covenant, because God cannot lie (**Hebrews 6:17-20**).

IV. The Lord's Supper: A Communion Meal

- A. Finally, the Lord's Supper is a meal of communion, that is, of sharing and fellowship. Let us not make the mistake of so many today and equate this fellowship merely with eating. That is not the case at all. But this meal is a meal of communion, sharing and fellowship.
- B. Again, we step into the Old Testament. When the Israelites ate their sacrificial meals they were not simply doing so by themselves. They were commanded to do so in the place where God desired to be in His presence (**Deuteronomy 12:7, 18; 14:23**). In a sense, they were eating with God, as they consumed their portion of the sacrifice and as God consumed His portion in the fires on the altar. As Paul stated in **I Corinthians 10:18**, those who ate the sacrifices were sharing or having fellowship with the altar. They were sharing in the blessings of the altar of sacrifice and they were doing so in fellowship with God as He also shared in the altar.
- C. As we partake in the Lord's Supper as a memorial meal, a sacrificial meal and a covenant meal, we are also participating in a communion meal with God. **I Corinthians 10:16** demonstrates that we are in fellowship with the body and blood of the Lord as we partake the Supper. Just as the Jews shared in their altar by their meal, we share in the cross of Christ through this meal.
- D. As we partake in the Lord's Supper, we are participating in communion with Christ. He promised He would partake of this memorial with us in the kingdom (**Matthew 26:29; Luke 22:16**). As the Israelites ate their sacrificial meals in the presence of Jehovah, so do we eat in the presence of Jesus Christ. He is our host in this meal.
- E. Finally, according to **I John 1:7**, every person who walks in the light is in fellowship with every other Christian in the world. As we commune with one another in the Supper, we are reminded of our constant communion through Jesus' blood. As Paul said in **I Corinthians 10:17**, because every Christian participates in this same bread, that is, the same communion meal that represents a sharing in the body of Christ, we who are many are one body. We are all in fellowship with one another through the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and the meal represents that communion, not because we are eating together, but because we are all sharing in the same Savior. The fact that we and Christians of all races, countries, cultures, backgrounds and classes participate in the same Supper, in fellowship with the same Sacrifice and Savior, demonstrates our sharing with one another, not only in the body of Christ that hung on the cross, but also in the body of Christ that is present in the world today, His church (**Ephesians 1:22-23**). In Christ, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, but all are one (**Galatians 3:28**). In Christ, there is neither black nor white, rich nor poor, American nor Russian—we are all one.
- F. As such, the Supper teaches us that we are not to be in communion with the devil and his works. Paul drove this home in **I Corinthians 10:21-22**. In this passage, his concern was idolatry rampant among the Corinthians. But for us, he might express the same concern. The blessed communion we are proclaiming during our Lord's Day observance of the Supper does not allow for communion with other masters throughout the rest of the week. Through the Supper, we are devoting ourselves to the one Lord and His one body. We must not try to be in communion with more than one master.

Conclusion:

The Lord's Supper...memorial, sacrifice, covenant and communion. This Supper is, no doubt, deeper than we can possibly describe in one lesson. Most certainly, we can see that this Supper is one of the most awesome events in which we participate. As we do so, we must not trivialize it in our minds. Rather, we must follow Paul's command in **I Corinthians 11:27-29**. We must examine ourselves and make sure we are discerning the body properly. This does not, as some suggest refer to giving thought to the church. Rather, we must see Christ's body in this meal. We are not participating in a meal to assuage our hunger. Nor are we participating in a meal to provide some kind of entertainment as we gather. We are participating in a memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, submitting to the covenant He established with that sacrifice and communing with Him and each other in His blood. What joy this Supper brings to our hearts. As Jesus looked forward to partaking with us in His kingdom, let us also rejoice to eat this Supper with Him.