

## Institution of the Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus on the eve of His betrayal, during the Jewish Passover occurring just before his death. Jesus met with his disciples to eat the Passover and after the Passover meal He instituted the Lord's Supper.

The accounts: **Matt 26:26-29**; **Mark 14:22-25**; **Luke 22:8-20**; Paul in **1 Cor 11:23-26**

### 1. The Jewish Passover.

- A. The Passover commemorates the deliverance of the firstborn children of Israel from the final plague God brought upon Egypt (**Ex 11:1-7**) to secure the release of His people. It was first observed by the Israelites in Egypt during the very event. (**Ex 12:1** thru **13:10**) They were commanded to observe it every year (**13:10**).
- B. God commanded the annual Passover so that His people would forever remember that He had delivered them from Egypt (**Deut 16:1-3**). The Passover was observed in the Jewish month of Abib, or about the first of April. The Passover was also called the feast of Unleavened Bread (**Lev 23:6**) and it lasted 7 days.
- C. The Passover, in which the blood of a lamb was offered to acknowledge the sins of the people (**Heb 9:7**), is a "Type" (a prophetic parallel example) of our salvation by the blood of Christ. The Passover feast was a Type of the Lord's Supper; the sacrificial lamb was a Type of Christ. (**1 Cor 5:7**); that no bones of the lamb were to be broken (**Ex 12:46**) is a Type of the fact that none of Christ's were broken (**John 19:32-36**); the Passover commemorated the Israelite's deliverance from Egyptian bondage while the Lord's Supper commemorates our deliverance from the bondage of sin (**Matt 26:28**).

### 2. The bread

- A. Jesus used the unleavened bread of the Passover. During the seven days of unleavened bread, all leaven was to be put out of the house. Anyone who ate leavened bread would have sinned and been "*cut off from Israel*" (**Ex 12:15 & 19**). Had Jesus used leavened bread, He would have sinned, and since we know Christ did not sin (**1 Pet 2:22**) we know by necessary inference that unleavened bread was used. And since we are to follow His example (**1 Pet 2:21**), we should use it today.
- B. When Jesus took the bread, He said: "*This is My body*" (**Matt 26:26**) this phrase should be understood figuratively, similar to many other metaphors he used: "*I am the door*." (**John 10:9**) and "*I am the true vine*." (**John 15:1**). For the purposes of this memorial supper, He chose the simple symbol of the unleavened bread by which we are to remember his sacrificed body. In **Luke 22:19** it records He said: "*This is My body which is given for you...*" and in **1 Cor 11:24**, Paul records: "*Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you...*" Not broken in the sense of his bones, because we know they were not broken, but in the sense of His body being completely and totally spent in sacrifice to where it no longer functioned. Note that in all three gospel accounts of the institution of the Lord's Supper, it records that before Jesus passed the bread around, He broke it.
- C. A year before He instituted the Lord's Supper, Jesus told the Jews in Capernaum that He was the Bread of Life. (**John 6:48-51**) and that "*the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.*" He indeed gave this bread to provide the world the opportunity for everlasting life, so it is fitting that bread memorializes this supreme gift.
- D. Paul said the bread is a communion of sharing in the body of Christ. (**1 Cor 10:16b-17**) We who are many are one body because we all partake of the one bread.

### 3. The cup

- A. Jesus took a cup of “the fruit of the vine” and gave thanks and told the apostles to “*Drink from it, all of you.*” (**Matt 26:27**) The phrase “fruit of the vine” is used in the New Testament only in connection with the Lord’s Supper. (**Matt 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18**) In OT times, vines produced grapes throughout the Holy Land, and juice from grapes was what was used for the Lord’s Supper.
- B. In two Old Testament passages, the word “blood” is used specifically to signify the juice of grapes (**Gen 49:11** and **Deut 32:14**). It seems most fitting that Jesus should use this substance to represent His blood.
- C. The word “cup” (Greek: *poterion*) is used to refer to a cup or drinking vessel, but it was also used to indicate the contents of the vessel, offered for drink. (**Luke 22:20b**)
- D. Jesus explained that the cup of the fruit of the vine “...is My blood of the new covenant.” (**Matt 26:27-29**) Blood had represented the old covenant. At the direction of God, the blood of the sacrifice was applied by Moses. (**Ex 24:6-8** and **Heb 9:18-20**) Likewise, Jesus was the sacrifice from which blood was taken to ratify the new covenant. His was a more perfect sacrifice yielding a more perfect covenant. (**Heb 9:11-14**)
- E. Note the purpose of the shedding of His blood: for forgiveness or remission of sin. (**Matt 26:28**) Heb 10:4 says: “*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.*”
- F. Paul said the cup is a communion of sharing in the blood of Christ. (**1 Cor 10:16**) Thus we share both in the body and the blood of Christ, which is a horizontal sharing among the members of the Body (church). Also, Jesus promised to drink the fruit of the vine “*anew with you in My Father’s Kingdom.*” (**Matt 26:29**) Therefore, we who are in the Kingdom (church) also participate in a vertical sharing with Christ.

### 4. The Purpose: Paul taught there were several purposes. (**1 Cor 11:23-26**)

- A. It is to serve as a memorial. “*Do this in remembrance of Me.*” (vs 24) While men build showy memorials of stone and metal to honor their number (Egyptian pyramids, Washington Monument, Taj Mahal, etc) Christ selected simple symbols to be used when two or three are gathered in His name to remember Him. But then, His tomb is empty!
- B. It is to provide a proclamation of the Lord’s death (vs 26) Each time we partake we declare the death of Christ. This death provides the way for sinners to be reconciled to God. (**Rom 5:8-10**)
- C. It is to be observed until the Lord’s return, (vs 26) thus provides a prediction that He will return to claim His own. (**John 14:3, Acts 1:11, 1 Thes 4:16, Rev 1:7**)
- D. It is to be a communion (sharing, fellowship) simultaneously with other Christians (horizontal) and with Christ (vertical). (**1 Cor 10:16**) The Greek word *koinonia* is used of such joint participation in partnership. (**1 Cor 1:9, 1 John 1:3,7**)

### 5. Observance of the Lord’s Supper today

- A. It is to be observed by those in the kingdom of God. (**Luke 22:18**) The kingdom came into existence on the day of Pentecost, as recorded in Acts 2.
- B. It is an element of worship of God by the church. (**Acts 2:42, 20:7**)

- C. It is to be done when the saints are assembled. (**Acts 20:7, 1 Cor 11:20, 33**)
- D. It is to be done on the first day of the week. (**Acts 20:7**)
- E. The Lord's Supper (**1 Cor 11:20**) is observed on the Lord's Day (**Rev 1:10**) The Greek word *kuriakos*, used for "Lord's" here, is used only in these two places in the NT.
- F. It is a time of self examination. (**1 Cor 11:28**) We must partake "in a worthy manner" according to Paul. The Corinthians, in their abuse of the Lord's Supper, were not partaking worthily.

#### 6. Words used for the Lord's Supper

- A. Lord's supper (A scriptural use; see **1 Cor 11:20**)
- B. Lord's table (A scriptural use; see **1 Cor 10:21**)
- C. Communion (or sharing) (A scriptural use; see **1 Cor 10:16**)
- D. Breaking of Bread. (A scriptural use; see **Acts 20:7** and **1 Cor 10:16**)
- E. Eucharist. Used commonly beginning in the second century until today, this word is NOT found in the Bible as an alternate reference to the Lord's Supper. In Matt 26:27 the Greek word *eucharistia* is used, and translated "gave thanks" and is likely the source of today's incorrect usage. Here it simply means thankfulness to God during worship, not exclusively applicable to the Lord's Supper.
- F. Mass. According to Roman Catholic theology, Jesus is offered as a sacrifice in every service, called "The Sacrifice of the Mass." However, the Bible says that Christ was offered only once (**Heb 9:26-28**). The Lord's Supper is not a sacrifice, but a memorial of a sacrifice.
- G. Sacrament. In the centuries following the first, the term sacrament came to imply an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. The term was first applied by the Catholic Church to baptism and then to the Lord's Supper, and even later to other activities including confirmation, penance, ordination, extreme unction and matrimony. The sacraments came to be regarded as conveying grace within themselves. This concept is NOT found in the New Testament.

#### 7. Review Questions

- A. What, in the Old Testament, corresponds to the sacrifice of Christ?
- B. What was the penalty for bringing leaven to the Passover feast?
- C. Is the Lord's Supper commanded or optional?
- D. Could we use other fruits of the vine other than grapes? e.g. tomato? white grapes?
- E. Does it make any difference in which order the elements are taken?
- G. What are the purposes of our partaking of the Lord's Supper?