

8

RESTORING THE CHURCH - PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH LIFE

Communion

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this lesson is to help us to understand the importance of communion as one of the main ordinances of the church and to grow in our appreciation of what is available to every Christian at the "Table of the Lord".

KEY VERSE:

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

I. WHAT ARE SOME OF THE NAMES AND TITLES THAT ARE HISTORICALLY GIVEN TO THIS ORDINANCE?

There are many names and titles that are associated with this ordinance; some of them are Biblical, some historical, some traditional. All of them have an element of truth to them.

- A. The Lord's **Supper** (1 Corinthians 11:20). It is referred to in this way because it was at Christ's last supper with the disciples, prior to his crucifixion, that Jesus established

this ordinance (Matthew 26:26-29) and it points to a future supper that all believers of all ages will once again eat with Christ (Revelation 19:9, 17).

- B. The Lord's **Table** or the **Table** of the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:21). A table speaks to us of a place of feasting, love and fellowship. The Lord has provided a place for us to sup with Him in an intimate way.
- C. The **communion** (1 Corinthians 10:16). The word "communion" means an intimate sharing of one person to another. Communion is to be a time of intimacy with the Lord and His body.
- D. Breaking **bread** (Acts 20:7). The title refers back to when Jesus initiated communion and he took the bread, broke it and blessed it (Matthew 26:26).

"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."
Acts 20:7

E. Other non-biblical terms:

- 1. **Eucharist**. This word comes from the Greek word which means "giving thanks" (1 Corinthians 14:16). Certainly. As we remember the Lord, thanksgiving should fill our hearts.
- 2. **Sacrament**. This word comes from a Latin word meaning "holy" or "set apart". The Communion Table should certainly be hallowed and revered by all.

II. WHAT IS THE FOUNDATION FOR THIS ORDINANCE IN THE BIBLE?

- A. From the first chapter (Genesis 3:8) to the last chapters (Revelation 21:1-3) of the Bible, God has revealed Himself as one who delights in and desires to have intimate fellowship and relationship with His creation.
- B. Even though sin separated man from God, God has always provided a means whereby this intimate relationship could be experienced in His house.

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. **Exodus 25:8**

- C. In the Old Testament, at different times, God provided different avenues through which this desire could be manifest.
 - 1. The Altar of Sacrifice (Exodus 20:24).
 - 2. The Table of Shewbread (Leviticus 24:5-9).
- D. Under the New Covenant, the table of the Lord's presence is the Communion Table.

III. WHAT SYMBOLS DID JESUS USE IN ESTABLISHING THE COMMUNION?

- A. Bread (Luke 22:19)
 - 1. The Bread speaks of the body of Christ broken for sinful man.
 - 2. The Bread which Jesus provided is necessary for spiritual life (John 6:58).
- B. Fruit of the Vine (Matthew 26:29)
 - 1. The Fruit of the Vine speaks of the blood of Christ that was shed for sinful man for cleansing sin (Matthew 26:28)
 - 2. Only the Blood of Christ has the power to cleanse from sin (1 John 1:7).

IV. WHAT SPIRITUAL REALITIES ARE DEMONSTRATED AND EXPERIENCED AT THE LORD'S TABLE?

Everything that we experience in the Christian Life we experience as we exercise faith in the Word of God. Going through a certain formality effects nothing. However, as we exercise faith in the Word of God we should expect communion to be a very meaningful time.

- A. It should be a time of remembrance (1 Corinthians 11:24-25). As Christians, we should continually remember the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and what it provided for us.
- B. It should be a time of communion (1 Corinthians 10:16). All believers need to renew and maintain a communion relationship with the Lord.
- C. It should be a time of unity (1 Corinthians 10:17). At the Table believers should be united around the Lord and recognize their interdependence and need for the spiritual Body of Christ.
- D. It should be a time of love (Luke 22:15). Christ's death was the highest expression of His love for us. The Table of the Lord is a feast of His love.
- E. It should be a time of healing (1 Corinthians 11:29-30). The truths found at the Table of the Lord should have healing effects on relationships among believers and bring health to the physical body.
- F. It should be a time of examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). Every believer should examine his heart to make sure it is free from enmity toward God and enmity toward our fellowmen (Luke 22:21; 1 Corinthians 11:29).
- G. It should be a time of thanksgiving (Matthew 26:27). As we remember Christ's work, a new spirit of thanksgiving should be ours.
- H. It should be a time of blessing (1 Corinthians 10:16). God's desire is to bless His people through the blessed bread and the blessed cup.
- I. It should be a time of witness (1 Corinthians 11:26). Up to the Second Coming of Christ the practice of communion in the Church is visible sign and witness to the death of Christ.

V. HOW CAN A SINFUL MAN FIND A PLACE AT THE KING'S TABLE?

It is only on the basis of God's infinite love, mercy and grace that we can sit and feast at the Table of the Lord. Gratitude should fill our hearts every time we share this meal together. The magnitude of Christ's love is depicted in the Old Testament account of Mephibosheath finding a place at the Table of the King (2 Samuel 9:1-13).

CONCLUSION:

Paul the Apostle had a great love and appreciation for the Table of the Lord. His understanding did not come because he was familiar with the procedure. Because he read about it in a book or because he was told by a church leader. Paul's understanding came to him by a personal revelation by the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 11:23). As you read and meditate on the Scriptures in this lesson, ask God to give you a personal revelation of the love of God expressed to you in the Table of the Lord.