

# The Lord's Supper

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**Bible Text:** 1 Corinthians 11:23-26  
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Well, this morning let's talk about the Lord's Supper. I want to turn to a familiar text, 1 Corinthians 11, where we have the most, I guess, thorough or descriptive teaching on the Lord's Supper. We've looked at this numerous times over my almost 40 year tenure here, but let's look at it again this morning.

It's so helpful and it's so concise. The apostle is writing to this church at Corinth to try to get them straightened out. There's a lot they're doing wrong, a lot of pride, a lot of recklessness, a lot of immaturity, a lot of indulgence. The apostle even says they are abusing the fellowship meal around the Lord's Table, even becoming drunken at such an event and so one of the things the apostle said was that all things should be done decently and in order. So this is the Apostle Paul writing to the church at Corinth saying, "This is the way to view the Lord's Table. Let's get this right." And of course, it's left for all of us to use as a guidance for us. I'd like to say again that the Lord didn't give us any real strict, precise elements or aspects to this supper. We don't want to turn this into some sort of rigid law. That's not what it is but there is a proper way to approach the Lord's Table and though we'll not deal with it in any extent this morning, the great weight is on the condition of your heart and my heart as we come to the Lord's Table.

Here's what the apostle says in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26.

23 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; 24 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." 25 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." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

First of all, I., let's remind ourselves of the divine origin of the Lord's Supper, in other words, the church did not come up with this. The early apostles and here specifically the Apostle Paul did not think, "Hey, this is a good idea." The point is it came from God and verse 23, Paul simply and pointedly states, "For I received from the Lord what I delivered to you." Paul is saying, "I got this by revelation from the Lord Himself." And this is very

interesting, the scholars point out that this Gospel was written before, possibly before the Gospels were written so this may be the first full revelation and written revelation from God about the Lord's Table. So is this divine authoritative revelation of the importance and the significance of this ordinance, we don't call it a sacrament because it has no saving power within it, it is an ordinance thought that Christ has left the church.

Verse 23 the Bible says it was "the night in which He was betrayed." That's interesting. It didn't say it's the eve of the Passover, which it was. This was begun during the traditional Jewish Passover meal. It doesn't say that because saying that it was the night in which Christ was betrayed heightens the contrast, setting the beauty of the Lord's Table against the backdrop of his terrible betrayal, such a black backdrop makes all that he did for sinners that's much, that much more beautiful. It manifests his great sovereignty, his power and his wisdom, all the great power and wisdom of God in his plan to save sinners and build his church.

The two significant ordinances, of course, the Lord has given the church are baptism, we observed the ordinance of baptism just a few moments ago, and the Lord's Supper or the Lord's Table. These are both instituted by the Lord and commanded by the Lord. In effect, when your church, your local church announces, "We're gonna take the Lord's Supper together," you need to understand that God has invited you to his supper. This isn't optional. It's not salvific, it doesn't have saving power, but it is God inviting you to his supper. It has divine authority. It has a divine origin.

It is the night of Jesus' betrayal when he initiated this Supper. They're gathered together in the Upper Room to take the traditional Jewish Passover. Matter of fact, today when an Orthodox Jew observes the Jewish Passover, he still recalls the great historic deliverance from slavery that God gave the Jews from Egyptian bondage, but tragically the Orthodox Jew as he looks back at that great redemptive event when God brought them out of Egypt, he misses the greater deliverance that that event foreshadowed and that's our deliverance through the cross of Christ. So the Passover commensurates the deliverance out of bondage but we now know that that's been transformed into the Lord's Supper that commemorates our deliverance out of the bondage of sin and Satan and being brought into the kingdom of God.

Now historically speaking, um, chronologically, the next day the Passover lambs were sacrificed and Christ himself was sacrificed on the cross. So what we have, in effect, as Jesus is taking the Passover meal in that Upper Room, he transforms the ancient feast of the Passover into the Lord's Table. He gives the Passover a new meaning but that's too weak. He does more than just give it a new meaning, he now gives it its true meaning. The Passover was always meant to point forward to the Lamb of God, the Paschal Lamb, Jesus Christ. So now the Passover, if you will, has been fulfilled, the Passover has been completed because Christ has come and he will be sacrificed for the sins of his people. Calvary has now superseded deliverance from Egypt as the greatest redemptive event in history. We don't look back today and look at blood applied to the doorposts of Jewish households in Egypt, we look back today and remember the blood on the beam of a cross where our Savior was crucified.

Now a little historical context of the earliest Lord's Suppers as we see in the New Testament. First of all, I want to say this is a local church ordinance. I've heard of people who would maybe have a fellowship at their house and even one youth group that had Pepsi and potato chips and they called it the Lord's Supper. Well, I'm not gonna question the sincerity and the motives of folks doing things like that but I would say that that's not what God's ordained. This is a fellowship for those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ, have been baptized and have come together, covenanted together as a local church body together and we are to commune together with our Lord in the Lord's Table. Uh, matter of fact, Acts 2:41 and 42 speaks of how they were first baptized, and then verse 42, "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching," preaching the word, "to fellowship the breaking of bread and prayer." That includes the Lord's Table in that phrase.

Now fellowship and the breaking of bread and prayer was an interesting phrase because it included a feast meal and there's several reasons why the early church had a great big dinner, if you will, a great big feast and then out of, or maybe at the end of the dinner, they would have the Lord's Table. Several thoughts on that. First of all, the Bible tells us it's partly because of the poor. Uh, the poor in this day were the legitimately poor. They didn't have enough to eat so when you put a big feast on, the poor would come and need to eat, literally just to eat to get their minds settled and their stomachs full. It was a, it was a, a needful thing. So they would throw a big banquet to take care of those who had little to eat.

Secondly, the Gentile converts of the day were very used to feasting when they had their religious observances. Uh, the, the love feast of the New Testament mostly grew out of that kind of, uh, cultural, um, custom they had of having these great feasts together when they would meet together for their religious observances. So they just brought that over in the church. There is a place to bring decent things and give them a proper meaning. You have to be careful with that, but some of that can be good.

Then, of course, Jewish tradition, uh, I think it is that the Jews had, uh, five annual feasts that they celebrated. When God gave the Jews a memorial, a day or a week it might be of remembrance, he always included in that feasting together. So, um, God likes his people to get together and eat a lot of good stuff. It's just biblical. It's celebratory and I think it's, it's symbolic of God caring in giving plenty to his people and caring in, in great ways, if you will, for his people. So it was just in the custom of the day, the poor needed to eat anyway so they would have this big meal and then they would have the Passover.

Now let's go further. II. Not only is, was all this of divine origin and God put it together and it's ordered of him but, secondly, he gave it to us to remember him by. He says very simply in verse 24, "and when He had given thanks, He broke it," that's the bread, "and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.'" He broke it to distribute it. I always have thought that that is a beautiful and vivid picture, our Lord taking a piece of unleavened bread and tearing it apart as soon as his body would be, at least figuratively speaking, torn apart in the agony of the cross as he took his place for his

children under the wrath of God. So he tears it apart, breaks it, and begins to pass it out. "This is My body," as he breaks it. A lot of symbolism there but surely as the bread gives physical sustenance to the body, so his bread, his body gives spiritual life to the man. He says, "This is for you." This statement of unparalleled love and unparalleled sacrifice for his children.

Then he turns to the cup in verse 25, "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.'" It's a, there's a new promise. That's the idea of a covenant. Jesus said, "There's a new promise God's given to you and it's gonna be ratified, it's gonna be, uh, firmed up, made sure by My blood." The old covenant was ratified by the blood of animals, whether it was a pigeon, turtledoves or a bullock or a goat or a lamb, but not the new covenant. The new covenant is based on much better blood than the blood of an animal. Jesus said, "It's My blood by which this new promise comes to you." A new agreement, a new promise has come from God. It's something like the way a signature can ratify a contract in our day. Of course, it's of much greater magnitude than that but Jesus says, "My blood is ratification of this new con, contract."

God promised Israel deliverance if they would sign on the dotted line there in Egypt, and in effect, put the seal of blood over the doorposts and over the lintel, and you know the story, that night God sent the judgment on Egypt and the death angel visited all the households that did not have the blood applied. All the Jews had the blood applied to their doors so the death angel passed over them, thus the Passover. That's why they remember it as the Passover. But the death angel visited the homes of the Egyptians and killed the firstborn and it was through that judgment that Egypt relented on holding Israel as slaves and captives and released them to go free to meet with their God and be one with him.

Well, they signed on the dotted line at Sinai. They signed on the dotted line in Egypt but Jesus, if you will, signed on the dotted line for us with his own blood. He said, "I'm making a contract between you sinners, you that are woefully offensive to a Triune holy God, I'm establishing a new covenant between you and this God and I'm establishing it in and through the effectual nature, the efficacy of My own blood." Jesus signed on the dotted line with his blood for us.

Now under the old covenant, day after day, month after month, year after year, they brought grain offerings and wave offerings and doves and goats and pigeons and lambs, and then they'd bring them again and they would bring them again and they would bring them again. Under the old covenant there was the continual reminder of sin. "That wasn't enough. You've gotta bring another one. That wasn't enough. You're a sinner, you have to bring another one. You have to bring another one. And you have to bring another one." It never ended. But the new covenant, the Bible says, is one sacrifice for all time. The blood of the old Jewish Passover is replaced by the blood of the cross and just as the juice we will drink in a moment is pressed out in a press, his blood was pressed out of his precious body in the winepress of the fierce wrath of God as he hung on the cross. The old covenant continually reminded us of sin, the new covenant continually reminds us of the

removal of sin. Did you get that? You don't take this Supper to somehow appease God to relent of wanting to judge you for sin, you take this Supper to remind you that he's already released you from sin. That's glorious. That's wondrous. The Supper is for remembering his suffering for us and the result of that suffering.

Now maybe a practical note here. There's some debate among professing Christians as to how often should a church take the Lord's Supper. Well, the text says, look at verse 25, "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.'" No specification of a certain number of times. Brothers and sisters, it's not a law. This is not a law. There are those who would like to insist on us that Christianity and the new covenant is setting aside of the old Jewish laws and statutes and establishing a new "Christian set of laws," and you've gotta keep these new laws now to make it into a right standing before God and somehow getting home to heaven one day, but that's not true. That's not what Christianity is at all. Christianity is that the law has been fulfilled in and through Christ, that our lacking and our failure and our wanting before God's law has been remedied in the person of Jesus Christ and now we live devoted to him, loving him and serving him not to gain God and to gain heaven but because he has gained it for us. That's what makes grace in a true church so special. I've actually had people ask me, "How do you get your people to serve and work like that when you just teach grace and they feel like, 'I'm saved and secure in Christ no matter what?'" I say, "Well, it takes God to change their hearts to do that." There, there's been false, uh, structure of Christendom all over the world where they put you under this coercive threat of judgment if you don't live right and give right and attend and pay penance and do whatever, and some very dear and good people may be in that system but that's not Christianity. You're not here out of threat of judgment. You're, you're here out of joy of redemption. That's what brings us together.

Well, back to the practical statement. How, how often do you take it? Well, it's not a law, it's an observance to do as often as you do it. We know in Acts 2, the very first church did it daily. I mean, they were practically living together then, they were practically always together during those several weeks around the, the Pentecost revival that God poured out, and remember Peter preached and thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands being saved. And so they just daily took it together. We know by Acts 20 things had settled down, the church had come into a more regular routine, and the Bible says they took it on the first day of the week, Sunday, once a week. But really if you want to be or want to follow the earliest biblical example, you would take the Lord's Supper daily, you would take it after a big meal, and you would take it in homes. But that's not where we are contextually today. These things in the narrative were not written as laws, they were written as guidance and the principle behind what they're involved in. I think God's much more pleased with the church that takes it every few months but it means something than just go through the rote and ritual of doing it a lot because you're checking a box and trying to please God with your good work that Sunday.

Well, it's, it's of divine origin. God gave this Supper to his children. Secondly, it's that we might remember him. We take the juice and we think about the new covenant in his blood. We eat the wafer and we think about his body that became the vicarious atoning

sacrifice for us on the cross. Listen to me, Christ was a true, literal, actual, physical, human being. His literal body actually hung there, actually endured the physical agony and then, uh, uh, unimaginable agony of his Father pouring our wrath upon him. We take that juice and it's like eyeglasses, we don't look at the juice, we don't believe that juice is gonna turn into something, some superstitious thing will happen if we drink it, like it's a potion. No, we look at the juice and we look through it to his blood. We don't look at the wafer and think, "There's something magical that could happen if I get this in my mouth and swallow it." No, we look at it and we look through the bread to his sacrificial body on our behalf.

So we remember him. Divine origin, we remember him. And then thirdly, the Supper is to proclaim him. Now really remembering him and proclaiming him are two sides of the same coin. You, you remember him and you proclaim him and you proclaim him and it causes you to remember him. Look at verse 26, he says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." The word "proclaim" there is an interesting word. It can be translated "preach, or announce." It's to be done openly. It's to be done unashamedly. There's a statement that's being made.

Five things about this. 1. When we take this Supper, we show forth his death to ourselves. We're preaching to ourselves. We're reminding ourselves again, "Self, don't you remember you're a sinner? Self, don't you grasp and comprehend that the Triune holy God naturally and righteously only could judge you? Self, do you not understand that this Christ took your place on the cross and He is your Savior and He is your Lord?" You, you proclaim something to yourself when you take the Lord's Table.

Secondly, we not only proclaim to ourselves, we proclaim to God. We say afresh to our Lord as a brand new confession of faith, if you will. Now there's only one true confession of faith or I should say profession of faith in the Bible and that's baptism, but there's hundreds and thousands of ways that we confess Christ openly, and in this case we take this and we say to our Father in heaven, "We believe, we accept and we honor You and we are thankful to You for Your Son. Our hope is in Him. We believe Your way is wise and Your way is right and Your salvation is the only true salvation, Father."

We proclaim to ourselves, we proclaim to God, secondly or thirdly rather, we proclaim to our fellow church members. This Supper's meant to be taken together. When you take it, you're saying to that brother or sister around you, "Let's remember who we are. Brother and sister around me, remember whose we are. Brother and sister remind, around me, remember what the foundation of our lives is all about, we're centered in Christ, He's our hope, He's our all-in-all." In this time of the year in our country when this election thing is just boiling over, we remind ourselves the Democrats cannot save us and the Republicans cannot save us, only Christ can save us.

We proclaim to each other the centrality, the foundational element of our faith in Christ and our trust in Christ and what we have together. Listen to me, what we have together supersedes and is greater than any connection we have to anyone or anything else in the earth. Period. Period. You can't know Christ and love Christ and grasp the glories of your

salvation and yet take lightly your connection here but be heavy in your connection to all kind of stuff out there. Yes, we live in the world, there's things we do out there, there's people we connect with. I know that, I did that, you do that, but those are secondary to our church connection. We proclaim to ourselves, "Remember Him. Remember what He did. Remember how He's put us together as one."

We proclaim to ourselves, we proclaim to God, we proclaim to our fellow church members, and fourthly, we proclaim to the world. I've said it so many times but we take this Supper and we just say unashamedly to the world, "This is our hope. We're His. We love Him. He's our Lord. Ridicule, deny, scoff, whatever but we proclaim to the world Christ is our hope."

And lastly, we proclaim to sinners, "Would you not come to this Christ?" We proclaim to sinners, "Would you not receive Him?" The Bible says, "To as many as received Him, He gave the power, the right to become the children of God even to those who would believe on His name." We say to sinners, "Come to Christ. Turn to Him."