

Is The Partaking Of The Lord's Supper Important?

Bible Answers About Worship

The great importance of the Lord's Supper can be seen by the fact that Christ Himself instituted the Supper. On the night of His betrayal and after celebrating the Passover we read:

"And while they were eating, Jesus took {some} bread, and after a blessing, He broke {it} and gave {it} to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave {it} to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:26-28 NAS Cf. Mk. 14:22-24; Lk. 22:19, 20).

The bread, representing the Lord's body, and the cup, representing His precious blood, are perpetual witnesses to our Lord's sacrifice on Calvary, as the foundation of human hope. The purchase price of our redemption was the great sacrifice of the body of the Son of God and the pouring out of His blood for our atonement (1 Pet. 1:18-20).

The Lord's Supper is commemorative, being a memorial of Jesus' suffering and death. It is a communion, being communion with Christ. And it is a declaration in that it portrays the body which Christ gave up on the cross and the blood He shed on our behalf.

Perhaps the most meaningful of all of the passages in the New Testament concerning the Lord's Supper is found in Paul's statement to the Corinthians. After having established the church at Corinth and having given the Christians oral instructions concerning this memorial meal, the apostle Paul wrote back to them these words:

"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; 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." 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." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep (1 Cor 11:23-30 NAS).

First, notice there is a retrospective look involved in partaking of the Supper: "This do in remembrance of Me." The Lord's Supper is a period of time each Lord's Day in which Christians look

back to the life of our Lord and contemplate His love and sacrifice for us. We are contemplating the very center of our religion. In the Lord's Supper the heart of Christian doctrine is enacted in visible form and we are lifted up to a higher plane of life.

Second, notice there is a prospective look: "Ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come." The Lord's Supper is to be eaten by Christians who also look forward to His eventual coming again. It is a declaration of faith in the future. If this memorial meal only looked back to the cross and the tomb, it would be sad and sorrowful. However, the fact that it is an announcement of Christian faith for all to see, and a constant declaration of faith that the Lord is living and will come again makes it a joyous meal (Cf. Jno. 14:1-3).

Third, notice there is also an inward look: "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly." There is no worship in the mere sounding of brass and tinkling of cymbals. The fact that men and women merely go through the act of partaking of the Lord's Supper is no assurance of their communion with Christ. This observance calls for self-examination. Our hearts must be right. Some have thought that the passage refers to a person who has lived an unworthy or sinful life during the recent past, and that he/she should not partake of the Lord's Supper. This does not have reference to the life of the one partaking, but to the manner of the actual eating of the supper itself. Not to discern or think of Christ and His death for us while eating His supper is the sin being warned against. It is necessary for the Christian who has fallen into sin to genuinely repent and pray for God's forgiveness before coming to the Lord's Table. However, once one has repented and prayed for forgiveness, he/she needs to come to the Lord's Table and to eat. Everyone needs the spiritual strength the Supper provides. Jesus said, "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matt 26:29 NAS). The Lord's Supper is to be served in the Lord's kingdom. The kingdom of Christ is the church of Christ (Matt. 16:18, 19; Rom. 16:16). The church is composed of those who are saved by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:28; I Pet. 1:18-20; Rev. 1:5-6). One must be born again, "born of water and the Spirit," to be in the kingdom (Jno. 3:3-5). Only God's children, citizens of Christ's kingdom, can commune with the body and blood of the Lord through the Lord's Supper.

There is no hour as sacred as the hour Christians spend at the table face to face with the supreme sacrifice on the cross. The cross of Christ, of which the Lord's Supper is a memorial, stands in the midst of the ages as the supreme pledge of God's love and sacrifice. At Monte Vista church of Christ we partake of this Supper each Lord's Day.

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