

The Lord's Supper

INTRODUCTION:

1. Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, 33-34.
 - a. The local church at Corinth had a big problem. Instead of coming together to eat the Lord's Supper they were eating their own supper.
 - b. Paul's instructions? Stop doing that. Eat your own supper at home, and when you come together as a church, eat the Lord's Supper.
2. That's what we do here at Prattmont. We come together as a church to eat the Lord's Supper.
3. Do we know why we do it the way we do it, other than what's taught in this passage?
 - a. Do we know who started this practice?
 - b. Do we know which elements to use and why?
 - c. Do we know when and how often we should do it?
 - d. Do we know its purpose?
 - e. Do we know how to properly observe it?
4. Our intent is to answer at least most of these questions (the one on proper observance will be answered in a future lesson).

BODY:

- I. Who started or instituted this practice?
 - A. The answer is found in Matthew 26:26-29 (parallel accounts in Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20).
 1. On the night Jesus was betrayed He gathered with His apostles to eat the Passover feast.
 2. It was on this occasion that Jesus chose to start something **new** (read the passage).
 - a. Obviously, then, it's not a human ordinance. It was divinely established by Jesus.
 - b. To appreciate this, let's contrast it with a purely human ordinance: the observance of Christmas as a religious holiday, as a celebration of Christ's birth.
 3. Hold your place here, but let's turn now to 1 Corinthians 11:23ff, where Paul refers back to this very occasion.

- a. Notice what else Jesus said, (also recorded in Luke’s account)—“do this in remembrance of Me” (11:24-25).
 - b. Putting this together with v. 26, it’s a proclamation of His death, a memorial—it’s designed to help us remember His death.
 - c. Verse 26 also indicates that we observe it in anticipation of His return.
- B. Notice something else Jesus said, in Matthew 26:29: “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.”
- 1. The kingdom was not established until after the death and resurrection of Jesus.
 - 2. Turn with me to Acts 2, because this is when Jesus is first proclaimed as King, and this is when the first people submit to His rule as King (a group described as the church). This chapter records the establishment of the church.
 - 3. Based on what Jesus said back in Matthew 26, it’s not surprising at all that these new Christians, these new citizens of God’s kingdom, immediately begin to gather together to eat the Lord’s Supper.
 - 4. Read Acts 2:42. How do we know this doesn’t refer to an ordinary meal?
 - a. Look at the activities mentioned in connection with it.
 - b. That breaking bread can refer to the Lord’s Supper is evident from 1 Corinthians 10:16-17: “The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”
 - c. Breaking bread is a figure of speech called synecdoche, where one part stands for the whole.
 - d. Remember, too, Paul told the brethren in Corinth to eat their common meals at home (1 Corinthians 11:22, 34).

II. When and how often should we eat the Lord’s Supper?

- A. This question is answered in a variety of ways by different religious groups.
 - 1. Some groups may observe it every Sunday, but also on special holy days, days which the N.T. is completely silent about.
 - 2. Other groups observe the Lord’s Supper one Sunday a month, some two Sundays a month, some maybe just one Sunday a year.
- B. Only question that matters—what does Jesus say in the New Testament?
 - 1. Acts 20:6-7—notice what these Christians did on the first day of the week.

- a. Ordinary meal? Paul was hurrying to be in Jerusalem (20:16), so would he wait seven days for a regular meal? (20:6).
 - b. Again, remember that regular meals were to be eaten at home.
 2. No other day is ever mentioned in the N.T. on which Christians gathered to eat the Lord's Supper.
- C. But did they do it every first day of the week?
 1. "Now on the first day of the week"—it doesn't say the first day of the **year** or the first day of the **month**.
 2. When the church at Corinth gathered together they were supposed to eat the Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:20), and they gathered every first day of the week (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).
 - a. NAS, NIV translate, "on the first day of every week."
 - b. Most have no trouble applying this frequency to giving.
 3. "Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy" (4th commandment)—the Jews had no trouble understanding this meant every Sabbath day.
 4. No, we don't have a direct command, but the evidence clearly points to a weekly observance. There is absolutely no evidence to suggest anything else.
 5. Remember the warning Jesus gave: "Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!" (Matthew 7:23).
 - a. We are certainly operating within the law when we do it every first day of the week. Anything else we would be outside the law.

III. Which elements do we use? We've already answered that to some degree, from our earlier readings. Let's go back to Matthew 26:26-30.

A. Bread, but what kind of bread?

1. Remember, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper when He and His apostles were celebrating the Passover. Read Matthew 26:17-20.
 - a. Only unleavened bread could be used during that feast.
 - b. No, we're not explicitly told to use unleavened bread, but we do know that's what Jesus used.
 - c. We're not told which grain of flour to use, whether we should use oil or not, or whether the recipe should include salt or not, etc. (the O.T. records a variety of ways in which unleavened bread was prepared).

- B. Fruit of the vine, but which fruit of which vine?
1. If we used watermelon juice, or kiwi juice, would that be okay?
 - a. Throughout the Bible, “the vine” is always used in reference to the grape vine.
 2. What’s at least interesting is that the word wine is never used in connection with the Lord’s Supper.
 - a. Yes, that word is sometimes used describe unfermented grape juice, but it’s also used to describe the fermented variety, too.
 3. What we’re saying here is that we can be absolutely certain we’re doing right when we use unfermented grape juice.
 4. One other observation. Some of our own brethren have added what amounts to a third element—the cup, or the container itself.
 - a. Notice, though, what Jesus says about the cup in Luke 22:20: “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.”
 - b. It’s an example of metonymy, where one thing stands for another, e.g., “The pen is mightier than the sword.”
 - c. Another example from Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:21 refers to the Lord’s Supper as the “Lord’s table.”

CONCLUSION:

1. So what we have learned from the New Testament about the Lord’s Supper?
 - a. It was instituted or established by Jesus.
 - b. It is called the Lord’s Supper, the Lord’s table, communion, breaking bread.
 - c. Once Christ’s kingdom was established, Christians in local churches ate this supper every Sunday.
 - d. They observed it as a proclamation of Christ’s death, in remembrance of His sacrifice.
 - e. In observing this supper, they ate unleavened bread and drank fruit of the grape vine.
2. We’ll focus in a future lesson on the manner in which this supper should be observed.