

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

### CHAPTER 9

The second ordinance that the Lord gave to the local church is the Lord's Supper. Many false teachings have arisen through the years about this important doctrine. There are those who take it very lightly without giving much thought to its significance. Others take it very seriously, yet they are seriously wrong in what they teach and believe about the Lord's Supper. Some call it communion, but in reality, Christians should have communion with the Lord every day of their life as they pray, study their Bible, and live the Christian life. The Lord's Supper is a memorial service, a time when we remember the suffering death of our Lord.

Some teach that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. They teach that you cannot be saved if you do not take their Holy Communion. Some believe that it is to be taken every Sunday or every time the church assembles together. We will endeavor, with the help of the Lord, to establish truth and expose error as we look at this important doctrine. Please study with your Bible open and your heart open to God's Word.

#### THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

In Matthew 26:20-25 we have the account of our Lord eating the Passover Supper just before he was arrested and taken away to be crucified. Then in verses 26-30 we read, "***And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.***" Here we have our Lord instituting the Lord's Supper with His disciples in the upper room on the night before His crucifixion. In Luke 22:19-20, the phrase, "***This do in remembrance of me***" is added.

#### THE INSTRUCTIONS ABOUT THE LORD'S SUPPER

In I Corinthians 11:23-32, the Apostle Paul gives us instructions as to how the church is to carry out this Memorial Service. Please read this text carefully. We will look at several things in this study.

##### 1. THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

In I Corinthians 11:24-25, we read, "***This do in remembrance of me.***" This gives the purpose for our observing the Lord's Supper. It is not just some religious ritual. It is not a part of the salvation of our souls. It is a time when we remember and reflect upon the suffering death of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## **2. THE PRODUCTS USED IN THE LORD'S SUPPER**

We are told very plainly in the Scriptures what products were used in observing the Lord's Supper. Jesus used the *unfermented fruit of the vine* to symbolize his shed blood, and *unleavened bread* to symbolize His sinless body. This is what we should use today if we are going to be Scriptural in our observance of the Lord's Supper. There are some churches that actually use and believe that the Lord used fermented wine. One thought from the Scriptures should erase any doubt about this. In Proverbs 20:1, the Bible says, "**Wine is a mocker, and strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise.**" Do you think the Lord would use wine, and then instruct us to do so when He has already condemned it in His Word? Of course, the answer is, No, He would not. Suppose someone has just been saved from an awful life of drinking, maybe he was a winebibber, who already is having a battle with the old desire to drink. Do you think the Lord would make his temptation greater by requiring him to use wine in the Lord's Supper? Again the answer is, No, He would not.

The unfermented fruit of the vine speaks of the pure, sinless blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Juice only ferments when there are some additives put into it. Christ's blood does not have, nor does it need, anything added to it. His pure blood alone is sufficient to redeem all sinners. Likewise leaven is a type of sin every time it is mentioned in the Scriptures. The unleavened bread speaks of the fact that Christ Jesus lived a life without sin all the years He lived here on the earth. I have always used unfermented grape juice and unleavened bread when I observed this Memorial Service and I sure do not have any plans of changing my position on this now.

## **3. THE PREPARATION FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER**

Approaching the table of the Lord's Supper is not something that is to be done without preparation. Actually, before we are fully prepared to partake of the Lord's Supper there are three looks that we are instructed to take. The first one is the *backward look*. Here we examine the sufferings of our Lord. This will get us into the right spirit to proceed in a manner that will glorify God. The second look we are instructed to take is the *forward look*. Here we are to be reminded of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the Memorial Service, there is not only a proclamation of his suffering, but also a promise of his Second Coming. At the table Jesus told the disciples in Matthew 26:29, "**I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, UNTIL that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.**" So we're not only to take a backward look at His sufferings but also we are to take a forward look at His Second Coming.

The third look which we are instructed to take is an *inward look*. We are instructed to examine ourselves before we participate in the Memorial Service of the Lord's Supper. In I Corinthians 11:28-29, the Bible says, "**But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.**" Here we discover that it is a very serious time when we come to the Lord's Supper. A time of self-examination and confession of sins should always precede our coming to the Lord's Supper. It should be a time of getting right with God and with our fellowman.

It is very important to notice that he uses the word *unworthily* and not *unworthy* in verse 29. Unworthily means to take the Lord's Supper with known sins in our lives. If it were the word *unworthy*, we all would be left out, because none of us are worthy in our own self to sit down at His table. Verse 30 says, "***For this cause many are weak, and sickly among you, and many sleep.***" This speaks of the sleep of death. Many of the saints have died premature deaths because they did not properly prepare themselves for the Lord's Supper. This is the consequence of partaking of the Lord's Supper without taking an inward look at ourselves and making the necessary preparations by confession of our sins before we participate.

#### ***4. THE PROCLAMATION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER***

We have already studied this, but a little review will not hurt anything. As we partake of the Memorial Service, we are proclaiming our faith in the Scriptural account of the suffering death of our Lord Jesus Christ. We proclaim our faith in His promise to come again, and we also proclaim to our church that we have examined ourselves and there is nothing between the Lord and us.

#### ***5. THE PERIOD OF THE LORD'S SUPPER***

Nowhere does the Bible give us a definite period of time when we are to observe the Memorial Service of the Lord's Supper. Neither are we told in the Bible how often that it is to be observed. We are simply told in I Corinthians 11:25, "***as oft as ye drink it...***" Some discernment should be used. We should not observe the Lord's Supper so often that it loses its real meaning. At the same time we should be careful that we do not become negligent, and not observe it often enough for people to stay familiar with what it represents.

#### ***6. THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER***

Here again, there is not much clear teaching in the Scriptures on who is to take part in the Memorial Service of the Lord's Supper. We are sure that it is an ordinance that is given only to the church for saved people and should not be observed anywhere, anytime, unless it is under the authority of a local New Testament Church. No person or group of people has the right to hold the Memorial Service observing the Lord's Supper apart from the local church. Those who refuse to become a member of a local church by following the Lord in believer's baptism, and those who have unconfessed sin in their life should not participate.

Some churches practice what is known as closed communion. This means that they will not allow anyone to participate in the Lord's Supper unless they are a member of that local church. I give every church the liberty to set its own policy about this matter. When I pastored, I personally never made it a practice to invite visitors to the service when we were going to observe the Lord's Supper. Yet, I did not refuse to let those present in the service who were members of another church of like faith and order take part if they chose to do so, providing that they knew they were saved and there was nothing between them and the Lord. Again, I am aware that some will disagree with this, but I trust that you will not become disagreeable.

## REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Did you read each passage of Scripture that is mentioned in this chapter? If you did not, do so right now.
2. When did the Lord institute the Lord's Supper?
3. What is the purpose of our observing the Lord's Supper today?
4. What products are to be used in observing the Lord's Supper?
5. What do the two products used in the Lord's Supper symbolize?
  - a.
  - b.
6. Why do we not use fermented wine?
7. Why do we not use leavened bread?
8. What are the three looks that we should take in preparation for the Lord's Supper?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
9. What should you do personally before taking the Lord's Supper?
10. What are the consequences that follow if we fail to judge ourselves?

*Be sure to study these questions until you know them well before you go to the next chapter.*