

The Lord's Supper

INTRODUCTION

1. I have sought to emphasize why we need **the Lord's Supper**, also known as...
 - a. The Communion - **1 Co 10:16**
 - b. The Breaking Of Bread - **Ac 2:42; 20:7**
 - c. The Eucharist, from the Greek eucharisteo, "giving of thanks", which Christ did at the time of its institution - **Mt 26:26-27**

2. The Lord's Supper is a simple act, in which Christians...
 - a. Partake of unleavened bread, and drink of the fruit of the vine
 - b. Do so together, as they assemble for that very purpose

3. Why do we need the Lord's Supper? I suppose one could simply say...
 - a. It was instituted by the Lord Himself - cf. **Mt 26:26-28**
 - b. It's observance was commanded by the Lord - cf. **1 Co 11:24-25**

[But to encourage stronger appreciation for the Supper, and a greater commitment to keeping its observance, let's first review...]

I. THE OBSERVANCE OF THE SUPPER

A. THE BIBLICAL EVIDENCE...

1. The Biblical evidence is that it was done on the first day of the week
 - a. Christians came together on the first day of the week to "break bread" - **Ac 20:7**
 - b. "Breaking bread" is likely a reference to the Lord's Supper - cf. **1 Co 10:16-17**
 2. Other indications of a weekly observance:
 - a. The church at Corinth was coming together to eat the Lord's Supper, though they were abusing it - cf. **1 Co 11:17-22**
 - b. Instructions concerning the collection suggest their coming together was on the first day of the week - cf. **1 Co 16:1-2**
- Following the divinely approved example of Christians in the Bible, we know God approves of a weekly observance on the first day of the week**

B. THE HISTORICAL EVIDENCE...

1. The earliest historical evidence outside the Bible confirms the first day and frequency
 - a. The Didache (ca. 95 A.D.) indicates Christians were to come together on the first day of the week to break bread - **Didache 14:1**

- b. Justin Martyr (ca. 150 A.D.) records how Christians assembled on Sunday and partook of the Supper - **Apology I, 67** c. "...the early church writers from Barnabas, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, to Clement of Alexandria, Origen and Cyprian, all with one consent, declare that the church observed the first day of the week. They are equally agreed that the Lord's Supper was observed weekly, on the first day of the week." - **B. W. Johnson, People's New Testament**
2. Religious scholars confirm this was the practice
- a. "As we have already remarked, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was still held to constitute an essential part of divine worship every Sunday, as appears from Justin Martyr (A.D. 150)..." - **Augustus Neander (Lutheran), History Of Christian Religion And Church, Vol. I, p. 332**
- b. "This ordinance (the Lord's Supper) seems to have been administered every Lord's day; and probably no professed Christian absented themselves..." - **Thomas Scott (Presbyterian), Commentary On Acts 20:7**
- c. "This also is an important example of weekly communion as the practice of the first Christians." - **A. C. Hervey (Episcopalian), Commentary On Acts 20:7**
- d. "It is well known that the primitive Christians administered the Eucharist (the Lord's Supper) every Lord's day." - **P. Doddridge (Congregationalist), Notes On Acts 20:7**
- **The overwhelming consensus of extra biblical sources supports our conclusion that the Biblical practice was to observe the Lord's Supper each first day of the week**

[Even so, some who would agree that when done it should be on the first day of the week are not always diligent to observe the Supper each week. Perhaps they need to be reminded of...]

II. THE VALUE OF THE SUPPER

A. AS A MEMORIAL...

1. Note Paul's account as given by the Lord Himself - **1 Co 11: 23-25,29**
 - a. We eat the bread in memory of His body
 - b. We drink the cup (fruit of the vine) in memory of His blood
 2. We therefore commemorate the death of Jesus on the cross - **Mt 26:28**
 - a. Whose death make the new covenant possible - **He 9:16**
 - b. Whose blood was shed for the remission of sins - **Ep 1:7**
- **Is not the memorial of the Lord's suffering, death, and shed blood worthy of faithful observance?**

B. AS A PROCLAMATION...

1. We proclaim our faith in the efficacy of the Lord's death
- **1 Co 11:26a**
 - a. That His death was indeed for our sins
 - b. If we don't believe He died for our sins, why keep the Supper?
 2. We also proclaim our faith in the Lord's return - **1 Co 11:26b**
 - a. For it is to be done "till He comes"
 - b. If we don't believe He is coming, then why keep the Supper?
- Is not the proclamation of the Lord's redemption and return worthy of faithful observance?**

C. AS A TIME FOR REFLECTION...

1. Reflecting upon one's spiritual condition - **1 Co 11:28-32**
 - a. Examining one's self
 - b. Discerning the Lord's body
 - c. Judging ourselves so as not to be judged
 2. Are we living in a manner that shows appreciation for His sacrifice?
 - a. By accepting the grace of God in our lives? - cf. **2 Co 5:18-6:1**
 - b. By living for Jesus who died for us? - cf. **2 Co 5:14-15; Ga 2:20**
 3. Or are we living in a manner that shows disregard for His sacrifice?
 - a. By willful sinning - cf. **He 10:26-29**
 - b. By refusing to repent - cf. **He 6:4-6**
- Is not the time for such reflection worthy of faithful observance?**

D. AS A COMMUNION...

1. It is a fellowship or sharing in the blood of Christ - **1 Co 10:16a**
 - a. As we partake, we commune with the blood of Christ
 - b. Perhaps in the sense of reinforcing blessings we enjoy through the blood of Christ
 2. It is a fellowship or sharing in the body of Christ - **1 Co 10:16b**
 - a. As we partake, we commune with the body of Christ
 - b. Perhaps in the sense of reinforcing fellowship together in the body of Christ (i.e., the church), as we break bread together
- Is the communion that we have with the Lord's blood and body worthy of our faithful observance?**

E. AS A MEANS OF BUILDING FELLOWSHIP...

1. The disciples "came together" to break bread - **Ac 20:7**
2. Eating of the same bread reflects our oneness in Christ - **1 Co 10:17**
3. Thus Christians were to wait for one another - **1 Co 11:33**
-- Is the not the fellowship we have with one another in Christ reflected in the Supper worthy of faithful observance?

CONCLUSION

1. The first Christians "continued steadfastly" in its observance...
 - a. Just as they did in the apostles' doctrine, fellowship and prayer
- **Ac 2:42**
 - b. Coming together on the first day of the week for that very purpose
- **Ac 20:7**
 - c. Coming together every first day of the week, as supported by historical sources

2. Christians today should never lose sight of the significance of the Lord's Supper...
 - a. As a **memorial** of the great sacrifice Jesus paid for our sins
 - b. As a **proclamation** of our faith in the Lord's death and His return
 - c. As a **time for reflection and rededication** of our service to the Lord
 - d. As a **communion** or sharing in the body and blood of the Lord
 - e. As a **means for building fellowship** with one another in the body of Christ

Do we appreciate our need for the Lord's Supper today? The **frequency** and **manner** of our observance reveals the extent of our understanding of the need for this wonderful ordinance...