

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

DECEMBER 25TH - 26TH, 2021 // PRAYER & COMMUNION

THE LAST SUPPER (LUKE 22:14-20)

ONE MORE NIGHT IN FELLOWSHIP

Right before this scene, Jesus had sent John and Peter to secure a location for the 13 of them to celebrate Passover together. Jesus knew this would be the last meal they would all share together until the great banquet in heaven.

- The Last Supper was actually believed to take place a day earlier than the official Passover meal.

PASSOVER WAS A REMINDER OF DELIVERANCE

The Passover was a celebration of the liberation, or Exodus, of the Jews from Egypt. The meal began with a cup of wine which was blessed by giving thanks for the provision God had given the Jews.

- Often a host would give his cup to an honored guest, but **Jesus shared His cup with everyone at the table.**

SHARING THE CUP WAS SYMBOLIC

The disciples drinking from Christ's cup demonstrated the expectation of a unified body of believers looking forward to His return.

- **The Last Supper was a time of looking forward to two goals: the cross and the final feast the followers of Jesus will have with Him in heaven** (Luke 14:15-24).

LAMB AND UNLEAVENED BREAD

When a family would celebrate the Passover meal, they would recite the Exodus story through quizzing each other, singing Psalms 113-118, praying over the food, and eating.

- As Jesus took the role of the dad at the Last Supper, He made what would have been a startling change to the tradition.

THE UNLEAVENED BREAD CHANGES MEANING

The bread during Passover reminds the Jews that when they left Egypt there wasn't time for the bread to rise from yeast (Deut. 16:3), and God told them to make bread without yeast to remember the Exodus.

- In v19 Jesus, says, **"This is my body...do this in remembrance of Me."**

"IN THE SAME WAY HE TOOK THE CUP..."

During Passover, 4 cups of wine were drunk in intervals as they sang Psalms and remembered Ex. 6:6-8.

Wine symbolized freedom and God taking them out, rescuing, redeeming, and bringing them to the Promised Land.

- Like the bread, **Jesus is essentially saying in v20, "I am the One that gives you freedom. Remember Me."**

THE LAST SUPPER WAS A NEW BEGINNING

Jeremiah 31:31 foretold of a time when God would establish a new covenant (promise) with His people, not written on stone, but written on the hearts of believers.

- As sacrifice and blood sealed the old promise, sacrifice and blood would seal the new promise. **Jesus' blood would forever pay the debt humanity owed.**

LOOKING FORWARD

Passover was a time of looking back, but the Last Supper was a time of looking forward. The disciples were instructed to look to Jesus as their sole means for atonement (repairing wrongs).

- **Jesus' followers no longer needed to celebrate Passover. They would now celebrate the Lord's death until He returns.**

METHODS AND INTERPRETATIONS - How Different Groups Honor Communion

TRANSUBSTANTIATION: THE CATHOLIC VIEW

The idea that the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Jesus. This happens at the moment the priest says, "This is my body" and "This is my blood" during mass. At this time, the bread and wine are lifted up and adored.

- This can only be done by the priest, which raises many questions (1Peter 2:9).

CONSUBSTANTIATION: THE LUTHERAN VIEW

Luther rejected the Catholic view yet insisted the phrase "This is my body" was literal in some way. He presented the idea that Christ's body is present in the bread, but not the bread. Much like a sponge holds water, but is not the water.

- This view seems difficult because it takes a stance between literal and figurative that is hard to biblically support.

SYMBOLIC: THE PROTESTANT VIEW

Many of the leaders during the Reformation in the 16th and 17th centuries agreed that the bread and wine do not literally become Christ but are a symbolic reminder of what He has done.

- This is not to say Jesus is not present. This view believes the Spirit of God is with the believer in this process.

In essence, this view teaches that **the physical elements are a tangible reminder of the cross, the death of Christ, the resurrection, and even the pouring out of the Spirit of God** that we have the honor to feel and be in harmony with during our communion time.

PARAMETERS - The Normative Principle

WE TEND TO FOLLOW TRADITION MORE THAN BIBLE

Most methods of communion that many Christians are comfortable with are not biblical methods but traditional. There is nothing wrong with these formal traditions, but **we must know we are not bound to anything that is not biblical.**

- In other words, there are instances where God gives us wiggle room.

THE NORMATIVE PRINCIPLE

The *normative principle* is the idea that whatever isn't prohibited by the Bible may possibly be used in corporate worship. Music styles, PowerPoint, lighting, video, etc. are fine **as long as scripture isn't compromised.**

- We're to be unified by One Spirit and our core beliefs, but because different cultures have unique needs, **methods are flexible.**

REGULATED COMPONENTS OF CORPORATE WORSHIP

Weekly worship should involve **reading and teaching the Bible** (1 Timothy 4:13, 2 Timothy 4:2), **singing spiritual songs** (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16), **prayer** (Matthew 21:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:17), and observing the sacraments of **baptism and communion** (Matthew 28:19, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

- It's clear we are to do these things, but many debates on how we're to do them.

SO, HOW ARE WE TO OBSERVE COMMUNION?

There is very little said about taking communion in the Bible, but there is one important instruction on how to partake in it.

- 1 Corinthians 11:26-29 says **we're to "examine" ourselves because if we take the Lord's Supper in an "unworthy manner," we bring judgment on ourselves.** This means we must have **repentant hearts.**

SOME THINGS HAVE FLEXIBILITY TO CHANGE

Theology cannot change for the Christian, but methodology has and always will evolve. The theological and spiritual side of communion is immovable, but the formality of the ceremony has some room for adaptation.

- **We need to be careful not to make intimacy with God into a religious act as opposed to a relational experience.**

WHY IS COMMUNION IMPORTANT?

WE ARE AFFIRMING OUR FAITH IN JESUS

When we choose to take communion, we are professing our trust in that only Christ through, His body and blood, can save us.

WE ARE TAKING TIME TO REMEMBER THE CROSS

The broken bread symbolizes the agonizing torture and abuse Jesus suffered for us, and the cup pouring out the juice reminds us of **the blood poured out by Christ for our sins.**

WE REMEMBER THE BENEFITS OF HIS DEATH

We share in the redemption that the cross purchased. We're recipients of grace, freedom from sin and shame, hope, and the promise of salvation and eternity with our Creator.

- Like the elements entering our body, **we must allow the Spirit of God to reside in us.** We must rest in Him so we can recharge and be able to engage the world around us.

WE'RE REMINDER CHRISTIANS ARE TO BE UNIFIED

This experience is both personal and corporate. We take this together to remind us that we are on this journey as a unified front, a body that must be in sync with itself.

WE REMEMBER JESUS IS A PERSONAL SAVIOR

Communion reminds us that **Jesus is close and personal, and He chose us to fellowship and "recline" with Him as family.**

WE HAVE THE HOPE OF SALVATION

Communion now reminds us of the communion to come. One day we will sit at a glorious banquet in heaven and feast with our brothers and sisters in the faith and with the great Host, Jesus Christ.

- **It's a reminder that the pain of this life is not forever but will one day be exchanged for eternal joy!**

CONVERSING WITH GOD

AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO PRAY

We can have casual conversations with God, but we must also make intentional prayers of **praise, repentance, praying for others, and then addressing our personal needs.**

- **Though we should pray daily, communion is a special occasion for us to slow down, meditate, and talk to God in a meaningful and purposeful way.**

AN INVITATION TO THE TABLE

- Must be **repentant.**
- Must be approached with **reverence.**
- Must be hopeful and **expectant.**
- Must be **dependent** on the Holy Spirit.
- It's an opportunity to **rest**, recharge, and celebrate the **hope** we have in Christ.
- It's a time to **reflect** on what He has done and what we can do if His Spirit is in us.

WE HAVE TO CHANGE OUR MINDSET

We have to stop making Christianity mechanical or flippant and start realizing the opportunity we have with Jesus. We are invited by God to sit, commune, and have a conversation!