



communion

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Communion. The Lord's Supper. The Lord's Table.

Part 1.

Introduction

Old Covenant

From Passover to the Cross

When did Communion begin?

Jesus established The Lord's Table in the upper room, on the night He was betrayed, before He was arrested in the garden. The last official Passover celebration became the first Communion.

“This cup is the New Covenant in My blood...do this... in remembrance of Me.”

What was the Old Covenant?

Obedience to the law and an animal sacrifice system to deal with sin. This was how God chose to set His people apart from the idolatrous surrounding nations. This is how a holy God and His chosen (but sinful) people could be in a relationship.

Israel was given laws like the ten commandments and over 600 ceremonial and civil laws, which they broke (Jeremiah 11:10).

The law can't save because we can't obey it (Galatians 2:16). It reveals that God is holy and we are not. Adam was given law which he broke (Romans 5:12). Jesus fulfilled the law (Matthew 5:17). The law reveals our need for a Savior (Romans 3:20, 5:19, 8:3).

The blood of an innocent, blemish-free animal, was substituted for the sinner, it covered or atoned for sin, temporarily restoring the relationship with God (Leviticus 17:11). A priest would perform the sacrifice in the temple according to sacrificial law (Leviticus 9:12-15). The next time that person transgressed the law, another animal would need to be sacrificed (Hebrews 10:3-4).

What was Passover?

Passover was a ceremonial celebration of God's miraculous deliverance of Israel from over 400 years of bondage in Egypt (Exodus 12:1-51, Leviticus 23:5-8, Deuteronomy 16:1-8).

What is symbolic about Passover and how is it important to us?

The Passover symbol for Israel's slavery in Egypt was bitter herbs. Today we remember our own bondage to sin and how we need deliverance.

The Hebrews were told to make unleavened bread and eat it in haste as they awaited their freedom. Leaven is a symbol of sin. 'Purge out the old leaven...for indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us' (1 Corinthians 5:7). The unleavened bread used in the Passover meal is symbolic of Jesus, the bread of life, which was broken for our redemption (John 6:35).

There were four symbolic cups of wine in the Passover Seder (sanctification, deliverance, redemption and praise) representing God's promises to His people. For millennia, Israel anticipated the coming Messiah. This is why Jesus chose the third 'cup of redemption', to institute Communion. Jesus was the fulfillment of God's promise of redemption all the way back in Genesis 3:15. The blood of the Lamb, poured out for our redemption, '**this is the New Covenant in My blood**'.

The lamb for the Passover ceremony was **chosen, without blemish, innocent and no bones were broken**. This is a picture of Jesus. During the Exodus, the Hebrews were instructed to spread the blood of the lamb on the doorposts and lintel using hyssop. The Angel of Death would pass over any house with the blood of the lamb. For the house without the lamb's blood, all firstborn sons and animals would die. The lamb's blood was required for deliverance from this judgment (Exodus 12). This points to Jesus, the Lamb of God, who would shed his life's blood on the cross to save the believer from judgment, death and hell.

Part 2.

The New Covenant

Jesus the Lamb of God

How are we saved?

Jesus the Bread of Life

Why is the New Covenant better?

'In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace' (Ephesians 1:7)

The blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. (Hebrews 10:4-10).

Today we celebrate a greater deliverance. Jesus is the blameless Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, once for all (John 1:29, 1 Peter 1:19).

The great substitution means Jesus took my sin, and His righteousness was imputed to me (2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 John 4:10, Romans 3:25). Jesus bore God's wrath for my sin, referred to as 'propitiation' (1 John 2:2). I am justified (just as if I'd never sinned) by His blood and reconciled (an accounting term meaning two things are brought together or made to agree) to God through the death of Jesus Christ (Romans 5:6-11).

I am forgiven, set free from the bondage of sin, rescued, redeemed, the old is made new, the dead is now alive, the lost is now found. This is grace, a gift of undeserved, unmerited favor through God's sovereignty (John 6:37, Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 5:17). These things could never be done by the law (Romans 8:3).

The curtain to Holy of Holies (the Old Covenant) was torn in two (Mark 15:38). We no longer need a priest. In Christ, we have been made priests to serve God (1 Peter 2:5, Revelation 1:6). Through the blood of Jesus, we have access to God through one Spirit (Ephesians 2:18). 'Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace...' (Romans 5:1-2).

Jesus fulfilled the righteous requirements of the law (Romans 10:4). We no longer rely on laws, ceremonies, priests, temple rituals or animal sacrifice to have a relationship with holy God, because the finished work of Jesus on the cross is complete. Jesus was the perfect and final sacrifice (Hebrews 10:12, 1 Peter 2:24). On the cross He declared, 'it is finished' (John 19:30).

The new covenant was prophesied in Jeremiah 31:31-34. In the new covenant of grace, the Holy Spirit writes God's law on our hearts. We receive a new nature, a heart of flesh, not a heart of stone (Ezekiel 36:26). With new hearts, walking in the Spirit and abiding in Christ, we serve and obey out of love, not fear of condemnation (John 14:15, 15:4-7, Galatians 5:16-18, Roman 8:1).

Why couldn't the law save?

Because we could not keep it. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23, 7:13-24).

We are justified by faith in Jesus, who fulfilled the law by keeping it perfectly (Matthew 5:17, Romans 10:4, 8:3-4, Galatians 3:24).

Note: Though the law has been fulfilled in Christ, God's moral law remains, as this is unchanging. For example, the moral commandments in the law for murder, theft and adultery are absolute.

How are we saved?

Long before baby Jesus, born of a virgin in Bethlehem, arrived on the scene, Abraham was justified by faith. He believed the promises of God (Genesis 15:6). Those who lived before Jesus were looking forward to God's promise of redemption. Now that Jesus has come, we are looking back to the cross. **Like Abraham, we are also justified by faith.** We believe in God's promised Savior, Jesus Christ, and His finished work on the cross (Romans 3:28, 4:5, John 3:16).

We must believe. We are saved by grace through faith and not by works (John 3:16-17, Ephesians 2:8-9). Romans 10:9-10 says, 'That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and **believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead**, you will be saved.' The believer is set free from the law of sin and death by faith and has become a new creation in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17).

The bible speaks of turning to God in repentance, which means to change your mind, turn from sin and to God. Jesus warned that believing would be difficult and that the gate to eternal life is narrow (Matthew 7:13-14). We must count the cost, forsake everything but Him, deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Him (Luke 9:23, 14:28). Jesus is the way, the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through Him (Acts 20:21, Mark 1:15, John 14:6).

Jesus said we **must be 'born again...born of Spirit'** (John 3:3-8). The believer's old self is crucified with Christ, it no longer lives, and our new life in the Spirit is lived by faith in the Son of God, who loves us and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20). It is by the Spirit's power we put to death the deeds of the flesh and 'just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.' (Romans 6:4, 8:13)

The blood of Jesus atones for the believers' sins, past, present and future. This is our robe of righteousness, (Isaiah 61), and the only way to escape coming judgment, condemnation and hell (Romans 8:1). Death and hell were conquered at the cross. We have victory through our Lord Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:55-56) and salvation belongs to our God (Revelation 7:10).

Bread from heaven.

Israel was rescued from over 400 years of bondage in Egypt but wandered 40 years in the desert because of disobedience and stubbornness. They complained against God, "why didn't we die in Egypt? At least we had food. You have brought us out here to kill us with hunger." They contended with Moses, "give us water that we may drink...why have you brought us up out of Egypt to kill us with thirst?" So, God gave them bread from heaven each morning, called manna, and water from the rock (Exodus 16:4, 31, 17:6).

'He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your ancestors had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord' (Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus quoted this verse when He was tempted by Satan in the desert (Matthew 4:4).

God told Moses, 'I will rain down bread from heaven... and He gave them water from the rock...' (Exodus 17:6). These are both symbolic. Jesus said, 'I Am the bread of life' (John 6:22-69), and '... whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst...will become a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life' (John 4:6-26).

Near the Sea of Galilee, Jesus fed the five thousand by miraculously multiplying bread (John 6:1-14). Jesus used this miracle to teach that He was the 'bread of God who gives life to the world.' The people could not understand why Jesus asked them to 'feed on Him' and many of His disciples '...walked with Him no more' (John 6:22-69). In this story, Jesus was about to sacrifice His flesh and blood on the cross, so that the world could live (John 3:16). Peter understood that only Jesus has the words of eternal life (John 6:68). Jesus is eternal God, the Word made flesh (John 1:1-14).

What happens when we eat physical bread? We get hungry again, but more importantly, we all eventually die (John 6:49). Jesus is the bread of life. What happens when we eat this spiritual, living bread? If we don't, we remain spiritually dead, separated from God (John 14:6). Those who 'eat His flesh and drink His blood' will live forever. This is Spiritual life, the new birth, to be born again, to be set free from the law of sin and death, to eat the living bread (Romans 6:5-8, 8:2, 2 Timothy 2:11, 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Part 3.

What is Communion?

Institution of the Lord's Supper

Unity of the Body of Christ

A Warning

What is Communion?

While they were celebrating the last Passover meal in the upper room, Jesus took the bread. He gave thanks. **This is My body broken for you, take and eat, do this in remembrance of Me** (1 Corinthians 11:23-30).

This cup is the New Covenant in My blood...shed for many for the remission of sins...do this in remembrance of Me (Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-23).

What are we remembering?

We remember the communion of the blood and body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16), broken and poured out for our redemption (Matthew 26:28).

We remember that Jesus is the bread of life, the bread of heaven (John 6:35)

We remember that in Him we have redemption through the blood of the Lamb, the forgiveness of our sins, in line with God's rich grace (Ephesians 1:7)

We are sharing in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus (Galatians 2:20, Philippians 2:8). We are participating in God's plan of salvation (Romans 5:8, 6:6). We remember that Christ suffered for us. We share in His suffering that we might also be glorified together (Romans 8:17, Philippians 3:10, 1 Peter 4:13, Galatians 2:20).

We remember that we are part of one body and one Spirit in Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-27).

We remember God's great love for us. God sent His only Begotten Son to die for all who will believe (John 3:16).

We remember that our sin once separated us from God and condemned us to hell, but God demonstrates his own love toward us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

We remember that we are saved by grace through faith, not by works lest anyone should boast, and that salvation is a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9, Titus 3:5).

We remember that eternal God left the splendor of heaven, humbled Himself and became a servant, obedient even unto death on a cross (Philippians 2:5-11).

We remember that He chose us before the foundation of the world. He knew us before we were born and set us apart (Romans 6:23, John 15:16, Ephesians 1:4, Jeremiah 1:5, Psalm 139-15-16, Galatians 1:15).

We remember that we are adopted into God's family, children of the King, through Christ (Galatians 4:4-7).

We remember that grace is God's unearned, undeserved favor toward the sinner.

We remember that a believer's sins are removed as far as the east is from the west. God's wrath against my sin is satisfied thanks to Jesus (Psalm 103:12, Romans 5:9, 1 John 4:10).

We remember that we are bought with a price (1 Peter 1:18-19).

We remember that the believer will live eternally in heaven with Jesus (Ephesians 1:5, Galatians 4:4-7, John 14:2).

We remember that the veil of the Old Covenant has been removed and we have access to the throne of grace by the Spirit of God, that now lives within us and seals us for the day of redemption (Ephesians 4:30, Hebrews 10:19-20, 14:6).

Unity in the body of Christ

*Through communion we demonstrate our **unity in the body of Christ**, the church.*

For we, *though* many, are **one bread and one body**; for we all partake of that one bread (1 Corinthians 10:17).

For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that **one body**, being many, are **one body**, so also *is* Christ. For by **one Spirit** we were all baptized into **one body** (1 Corinthians 12:12-13).

For if we have been **united together** in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be *in the likeness* of *His* resurrection (Romans 6:5).

There is **one body and one Spirit**, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; **one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father** of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all (Ephesians 4:4-6).

And He is the **head of the body**, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence (Colossians 1:18).

Communion points forward.

When we take the Lord's Supper, we proclaim His death **until He comes** (1 Corinthians 11:26).

This small banquet reminds us of **the great feast to come** (Revelation 19:9).

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** (Matthew 26:29).

Warning!

Should anyone take Communion? How should we conduct ourselves at the Lord's Table?

In Corinth, at the Lord's Table, they had divisions, factions, selfishness, some took too much food while others went hungry, some were drunk (1 Corinthians 11:17-22).

Examine yourselves, reflect, be discerning. Do not take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, lest you be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord and bring judgement on yourself (1 Corinthians 11:27).

'You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?' (1 Corinthians 10:21-22) Flee from idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14).

'For the Lord your God *is* a consuming fire, a jealous God' (Deuteronomy 4:24). **'No one can serve two masters...'** (Matthew 6:24).

Be holy, be separate, totally devoted, be humble and contrite (2 Corinthians 6:17, 1 Peter 1:16, 5:6, Leviticus 19:2, 20:7, 20:26, 1 Thessalonians 4:7, Psalm 34:18). The Lord's supper is for those who belong wholeheartedly to Christ. If you're not a believer don't take communion. Instead, 'repent and believe in the gospel' (Mark 1:15).

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleans us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Confess your sins before you take communion.

Is it magic?

Communion is symbolic, not magic, not real blood or flesh. Communion is an act of obedience for the believer. Some religions claim their elements turn into the actual body and blood of Jesus. This is not biblical. In fact, Leviticus 17:10-12, Deuteronomy 12:23, Genesis 9:4 and Acts 15:29 prohibit God's people from drinking blood. This kind of pagan ritual is just spooky, effectually crucifying Christ again and again (Hebrews 6:6).

Eating and drinking the body and blood of Jesus?

This is a hard saying...many of his disciples walked with Him no more. Jesus said, "Do you also want to go away?" But Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

**My body broken for you.
My blood which is poured out for many for the
forgiveness of sins.
Do this in remembrance of Me.**

1 Corinthians 11:24, Matthew 26:28

Additional Scriptures:

John 1: 1 In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

John 1:14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us...

Matthew 4:1-4 Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.

Job 23:12 ...His Word is more treasured than food.

Psalms 19:10 The judgments of the LORD are true...sweeter than honey

Psalms 119:105 Your Word is a lamp unto my feet and light unto my path

Jeremiah 15:16 Your words were found, and I ate them... the joy and rejoicing of my heart, for I am called by Your name...

Revelation 5:9-13... For You were slain and have redeemed us to God by Your blood...Worthy is the Lamb...Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever and ever!