

2. The Lord's Supper

By Dr. Charley Holmes

The Lord's Supper is the sacred sharing of the bread of communion and the cup of blessing by the assembled church (Acts 20:7) as a memorial to the crucified body and shed blood of Jesus Christ (Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26). Both ordinances (baptism and Lord's supper) must be administered by the authority of a New Testament church (Matt. 28:18-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26).

(BMA Doctrinal Statement: Article IX, Section D)

Jesus Christ, being Head of the church, has ordained two practices for His church. These practices are the “ordinances” of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper (or Communion). While Baptism is a visible testimony to the local church of one’s salvation through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the Lord’s Supper stands as a memorial to the atoning work of Jesus, also accomplished by His death, burial, and resurrection. As we consider the importance of this blessed ordinance, we must keep a few important details in mind.

First is the authority of the Lord's Supper.

The ultimate authority over the church, her ordinances, and worship is Christ Himself. Christ has entrusted the observance of the Lord’s Supper to local, visible churches. The Lord’s Supper is to be administered under their authority, which is ultimately under the authority of Jesus and His Word, the Bible.

Second is the proper participant in the Lord's Supper.

Christ did not give His ordinances to the world, an organization, or a para-church ministry. He gave His ordinances to His church. Therefore, the only proper participants are members of a local, scriptural church, who have been properly baptized (believer’s baptism by immersion), and are in good standing (not under church discipline).

There is great danger in taking the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner (1 Corinthians 11:27-32), which is why one must examine themselves prior to receiving the Lord’s Supper to ensure they are truly in the faith and that they are not living in unrepentant sin towards God or another believer.

Third is the proper observance of the Lord's Supper.

The proper observance of the Lord's Supper involves two elements—unleavened bread and the cup. The bread symbolizes the broken body of Jesus and the cup symbolizes the shed blood of Jesus (Luke 22:14-20). The outcomes of this ordinance are threefold: 1. Remembrance of Jesus' sacrifice, 2. Worship of the Savior, and 3. Proclamation of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 11:23-26). Only that which is taken directly from Scripture is to be permitted in the observance of this ordinance. The church does not have the authority to add to or take away from the biblical mandate of remembering Christ's death.

Helps for preparing the congregation to observe the Lord's Supper:

Preaching: It is helpful to the congregation for the pastor to preach about the significance of the Lord's Supper. Too often, this ordinance is merely "tacked onto" the end of a worship service. It would, therefore, be beneficial to the members of the church to learn about the ordinance, the proper observance of it, and the theological and practical implications of it from the pulpit. Some pastors may take a few weeks to cover these truths leading up to the observance, while others may preach about this on the day it is observed. That is the pastor's decision to make. However, it should be noted that the people in each church will be blessed to have heard solid, biblical preaching about the Lord's Supper as they prepare to partake of it.

Prayer: The Bible makes it clear that the Lord's Supper is not to be taken in an unworthy manner (1 Cor. 11:27). Therefore, it is very important that a time of prayer be set aside prior to observing this ordinance. Many churches observe this time in the moments leading up to the eating of the bread and drinking of the cup. This is a good practice to follow. In this time of prayer, confession of sin can be made, thanksgiving for Christ's broken body and shed blood can be given, praise to God can be offered, and intercession for the lost souls and/or wayward church members who are not present can be made. All these things weigh heavy on the heart during this time of observing Christ's sacrifice. There is, perhaps, no better time to pray about these matters.

Participation: It is the sacred duty of every member of the local church to participate in the observance of the Lord's Supper—as long as one is physically able to do so. It is wise for the pastor to emphasize the importance of participation in the Lord's Supper by each church member.

Order of Service for Lord's Supper Worship Service

1. Welcome
2. Prayer
3. Congregational Singing
4. Scripture Reading
5. Congregational Singing
6. Responsive Reading (Question 80, Doctrine Review Questions)

-Q. What is the Lord's Supper?

-A. The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the New Testament, instituted by Jesus Christ; in which, by giving and receiving bread and the cup, according to His appointment, His death is shown forth, and the worthy receivers are...made partakers of His body and blood with all His benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

7. Prayer to confess sin to God
-At this time, it would be helpful to read the Ten Commandments and ask the congregation if they are fulfilling the two greatest commandments—loving the Lord and loving their neighbors.
8. Partaking of The Lord's Supper
9. Prayer of Thanksgiving
10. Congregational Benediction

Suggested Scripture Passages and Hymns

Suggested Scripture Passages:

- Exodus 12:1-30
& John 1:29
- Isaiah 53
- Psalm 22
- Matthew 26
- Mark 14
- Luke 22
- John 6
- 1 Corinthians 11
- Hebrews 9
- Revelation 5

Suggested Hymns:

- Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed
- Amazing Grace
- At The Cross
- Come Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy
- Hark! The Herald Angels Sing
- Holy, Holy, Holy
- Power in the Blood
- There is a Fountain
- Victory in Jesus
- When I Survey the Wondrous Cross

How to Administer the Lord's Supper

The simplest pattern to follow is found in **Mark 14:22-26**.

1. Distribute the bread (Some churches have deacons do this, while others have the pastor serve).
2. Read: *"And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body" (v.22).*
3. Pastor says a prayer thanking Jesus for His broken body.
4. Congregation then eats together.
5. Distribute the cup(s) as with the bread.
6. Read: *"And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (v.23-25).*
7. Pastor says a prayer thanking Jesus for His shed blood.
8. Congregation then drinks together.
9. Congregation sings benediction together (v.26).