

Di122 Essentials of Christianity

Di122-7 Communion—The Lord's Supper

Some religions have many symbols. Most Christians, however, realize that the only symbols given by Christ for us to use in worship are the broken bread and the cup. The bread represents his human body, given and beaten for sinners. The cup serves as a symbol of the new covenant, sealed and paid for by the shedding of Jesus' blood on the cross.

This lesson concerns a third way a Christian follows the Lord in obedience. You have studied obeying Christ by being baptized in water and by memorizing God's Word as the sword of the Spirit. Now you will learn the importance of taking communion as part of the body of Christ. Jesus instructed his disciples at their last supper together, to partake of communion as a memorial. The church did it from then on, to recall and proclaim Christ's death for sinners. The apostle Paul reminded those who read his letters that they should obey Christ by continuing to observe communion in an orderly way.

Paul had come to Corinth on his second missionary journey. He saw that the town was a bustling commercial city and trade center. Busy! Busy! Busy! From the start of his visit, he talked with the Jews in the synagogue. He had in mind to persuade the Jews that their Messiah had come. His goal was to convince men and women to become followers of Christ. So for a year and a half he settled in Corinth. Paul went about making a living as a tentmaker, along with fellow believers Aquila and Priscilla. They reached out to the Jews first. He had a story to tell anyone who would listen. That story was about Jesus Christ, how he had died and had risen again. Paul told them how on a road to Damascus, his life was changed forever. On that road Paul had met the risen Lord. The story Paul told invited others to come to Jesus as their Savior. He would establish the church in Corinth around this fact.

About five years later, Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthian church from Ephesus. One reason for the letter was to help the Corinthians understand orderly worship. It seems they loved to worship God with their feasting before partaking of communion, but a problem had arisen. Some of the rich were eating and drinking to excess, while some of the poorer members went hungry. The church had divisions among the people. They were not treating each other with love. This lack of unity showed that believers had lost the real meaning of the Lord's Supper. Communion is a part of worship, but it is for the purpose of helping **everyone** remember that Jesus died for **all** as the Lamb of God. Both rich and poor had been sinners. The apostle Paul knew it was time for the people to be reminded how the church is to worship together.

As Paul ministered he taught about the last supper Jesus had with his disciples. Christ knew that it was time to go back to the Father. He called his disciples together for their last meal together before he would be crucified. He had something special to teach his followers. It would be a memorial—taking the bread and the cup to celebrate regularly. Jesus loves obedience in his people. He loves when his church, with open and humble hearts, remembers that he died for them. But there is a proper way to partake of communion.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread. When he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes” (1Cor 11:23-26).

Paul reminded them what the Lord himself had said regarding the observing of the Lord's Supper. It was to be both a point of remembering and a testimony. The kind of bread used may be different; the cup may be shared or individual. What the symbols represent is important, not the details of exactly how they may be shared in different settings. It was something they needed to do regularly and humbly as a part of their worship. Paul wrote in his letter that this very special time was to bring the church together, to unite Jesus' followers in remembering his death. The Lord's Supper, therefore, is very special to the body of Christ. Strength comes through the bread and cup that unite the church. Renewal comes to those who obediently take part and commune with each other and with God.

Jesus said, “This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me.” Paul reminded the Corinthians that when they eat of the bread, representing the body of Christ they are entering into fellowship with each other and with Christ. He also reminded them about the cup. Jesus said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Jesus' death on the cross ushered in a new agreement with God. Jesus died in the place of all sinners. His blood now removes the sin in believers' lives. It will never have to be shed again. Once was enough! Jesus paid the price God demanded. That is remembered as the Lord's Supper is eaten and believers worship together.

The apostle Paul asked the Corinthians to remember the reason for the celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is an acted sermon—to proclaim Jesus' death until he comes back. This observance looks both backward and forward! It is most often celebrated in a group of believers, but on occasion, a minister may bring the communion elements to someone in a hospital or prison or a home. The purposes of remembrance and testimony are still fulfilled, though a person is unable to join the Body when it gathers.

This lesson is **important** because it reminds us of the significance of being obedient by partaking of the Lord's Supper, in unity with our fellow believers, to remember Christ's sacrifice and show forth our testimony in worship.

The **main truth** is that we are obediently following Jesus when we celebrate communion. It is an act of worship with fellow believers, no matter their station in life. As we celebrate we show our love for Jesus Christ as we love and care for each other.

Your **review** questions are:

1. Why was the apostle Paul writing to the Corinthian church?
 - A. [Pause] If you answered that he wanted to remind them why and how they were to properly partake of communion, you are right.

2. What is the purpose of communion?
A. [Pause] If you answered, “The purpose of communion is for believers to remember Jesus’ death for us and to proclaim it until he returns,” you are correct.
3. What do the elements of the cup and the bread represent in the act of communion for the Christian?
A. [Pause] If you answered, “The bread represents the body of Christ given for us and the cup represents his blood shed for our sins,” you have answered correctly.

Your **assignment** is to listen to this lesson several times until you understand the main truths. Then find another person and explain the meaning of communion to them. Memorize these verses from First Corinthians: “The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.’ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes” (1Cor 11:23-26).