

Di223 We Believe

Lesson Di223-14 Communion

Every country celebrates when it becomes a nation and honors those who have been its leaders. In the United States the fourth of July is celebrated as Independence Day. Indonesia remembers independence on August 17 and Mexico keeps September 16. Many times freedom is gained through conflict and shedding of blood. The celebration is a memorial in which the sacrifices that were made to gain liberty are remembered.

Communion is a memorial established by Jesus himself. It calls to mind his shed blood and broken body, sacrificed on the Cross for our salvation. Communion is often referred to as ‘The Lord’s Supper.’ It was partaken of the first time at Christ’s Last Supper with the Twelve. That supper itself was remembering the Old Testament observance of Passover.

The Passover night had special meaning for all Israelites. Exodus tells the story of the first Passover. God promised to free the Israelites from slavery to Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt. Through the nine terrible plagues God sent on Egypt, Pharaoh stubbornly refused to let God’s people go free. Finally, God sent the tenth plague—all the Egyptians’ firstborn sons and animals would die. The Israelites were spared from this plague of death.

God instructed Moses to tell the Israelites to select a perfect lamb. They were to kill it and put its blood on the upper and side doorposts of their homes. God told Moses that at midnight, he would pass through the land of Egypt. Any house that did not have blood on the doorposts would come under God’s judgment. But God would “pass over” the houses having the blood applied to the doorposts. God visited Egypt just as he had said he would. The Egyptians’ firstborn sons and animals died. Immediately Pharaoh ordered Moses and the Israelites to leave Egypt. God’s people were free at last! Now they could make the journey to the land God had promised them.

God told Moses to never forget the great deliverance they had experienced. Every year, the Israelites were to remember how God had freed them from slavery. They observed a special celebration meal, called the Passover.

As a Jew, Jesus celebrated the Passover. Jesus met with his disciples on the night he was betrayed. They met in a place called the ‘Upper Room’ in Jerusalem. All twelve disciples were there, even Judas, who would later betray Jesus. This would not only be Jesus’ last Passover meal on earth, but it was also the final night before his crucifixion.

Jesus told his disciples, “I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer...I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:15-16).

As they were eating, Jesus took two very common items in every meal—bread and drink. Jesus took a piece of bread, blessed it, broke it into small pieces, and gave it to his disciples. He said, “Take and eat; this is my body” (Matt 26:26). The Gospel of Luke adds, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).

Jesus then gave the disciples a cup of wine to pass around. He said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20).

What did Jesus mean when he said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood”?

The old covenant was made with Moses when God gave the Law in the Old Testament. Under the Law, perfect animals were sacrificed on the altar for the people’s sins. The blood of these animals was sprinkled on the cover of the Ark of the Covenant, to atone for sin (Ex 25:10-22). The Old Testament Law looked ahead to the coming of the Messiah, who would give his own blood for the forgiveness of sin.

The bread and the wine represented Jesus’ body that would be broken and his blood that would be shed (Luke 22:7-13). In his death on the Cross, Jesus became the perfect, sinless Lamb of God. His death frees us from the bondage of sin. No other blood sacrifice ever had to be made for sin. Jesus was the perfect sacrifice, effective forever. This was the beginning of the new covenant. Jesus instituted the new covenant with his own blood instead of the blood of animals.

Jesus promised that he would not drink the Communion cup again until we drink it together with him in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Matt 26:29; Rev 19:9).

In our next lesson, we will discuss the apostle Paul’s teaching on Communion.

Our seventh **Statement of Faith** about Communion says: “We believe the Lord’s Supper is a remembrance of Christ’s suffering and death, and a prophecy of his Second Coming. Christ commanded all believers to take Communion ‘until he comes.’” Our memory verse is: “Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (First Corinthians 11:26).

This lesson is **important** because it helps to explain the connection between the old covenant and the new, the Old Testament and the New Testament, the Passover and the Last Supper. The sacrifice of animals to atone for sin pointed toward the sacrifice of Jesus. He died, once and for all, for the forgiveness of sin from then on.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that Communion reminds us of Christ’s suffering and death for our salvation. We take Communion in remembrance of Him.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. Why did God instruct Moses to observe the Passover festival every year? [Pause.]
 - A. If you answered that the Passover festival was to remember how God had freed the Israelites from slavery, you are right.
2. Who established Communion? [Pause.]
 - A. If you answered that Jesus established Communion, you answered correctly.
3. What do the bread and the wine in Communion represent? [Pause.]
 - A. If you answered, “The bread represents the broken body of Jesus and the wine represents the blood of Jesus shed for us on the Cross,” you are right.

Your **assignment** is to begin to memorize our seventh **Statement of Faith**: “We believe the Lord’s Supper is a remembrance of Christ’s suffering and death, and a prophecy of his Second

Coming. Christ commanded all believers to take Communion ‘until he comes.’” Also learn the memory verse “Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (First Corinthians 11:26). Tell the story of the beginning of Communion to two other persons. Explain some of the reasons for taking Communion.