



Lesson 1: Biblical Overview

Texts which describe the establishment of the Lord's Supper:

Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

Texts which refer to the Lord's Supper:

1 Corinthians 10:16-21; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Texts which may refer to the Lord's Supper:

Acts 20:7-11; 2:42-47; Jude 12

What catches your attention as you read through these texts?

What are some questions that you can think of about the Lord's Supper?



Lesson 2:

Old Testament Fellowship Meals

- I. **Covenants were confirmed with sacrifices, followed by meals**
Genesis 26:28-31; 31:22-55
Exodus 24:3-11
- II. **Worship under the Old Covenant was built around a series of feasts:**
Leviticus 23
- III. **“Peace offerings” or “fellowship offerings” involved community meals**
Leviticus 3:1-17 and 7:11-38
Deuteronomy 12:6-7; 27:7
 - A. **The psalms speak often of these events**
Psalm 50:14,23; 56:13; 107:22; 116:13-19
 - B. **These community sacrifices were held at important times in the nation’s history:**
 1. Covenant renewal at Mt. Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:1-8; Joshua 8:30-35)
 2. Coronation of Saul (1 Samuel 11:15)
 3. Movement of the Ark to David's tent (1 Chronicles 16:1-3),
 4. Dedication of the altar (2 Sam. 24:25; 1 Chronicles 21:27-22:1)
 5. Dedication of Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 7:1-10)
 6. Covenant renewal under Asa (2 Chronicles 15:8-15)
 7. Purification of Hezekiah's temple (2 Chronicles 29:27-36)
 8. Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chronicles 30:22-27)
 9. Dedication of Mannaseh's altar (2 Chronicles 33:16)
 10. Consecration of the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 12:35-43)
 - C. **Paul relates the Lord’s Supper to these sacrificial meals**
1 Corinthians 10:16-21



Lesson 3: The Passover

Review:

- (1) Worship in the Old Testament was built around a structure of “holy meals”
- (2) These meals were a time of community rejoicing in the presence of the Lord
- (3) The Lord’s Supper is related to the *table* of the sacrifice, not the altar

I. The Passover was the first and greatest of the annual feasts:

Exodus 12:2-14

Leviticus 23:4-8

Deuteronomy 16:1-8

II. The Last Supper reflects the Passover practices of the first century

1st Century Passover	Last Supper (Luke)
Retelling/application of Passover story	Luke 22:15-16
First/Second Cup of Wine	Luke 22:17
Breaking of the Bread	Luke 22:19
Passover Meal	Luke 22:20
Third/Fourth Cup of Wine	Luke 22:20
Singing	(Matthew 26:30)
Prayer	Luke 22:40

III. The focus of the Passover in the first century was on the following:

- A. Celebration
- B. Thanksgiving
- C. God’s deliverance of Israel from bondage
- D. Community with Israel and its history
- E. Expectation of the Messiah and God’s kingdom



Lesson 4:

Do This In Memory of Me

Review:

- (1) Worship in the Old Testament was built around a structure of community meals eaten in the presence of the Lord
- (2) The Lord's Supper is related to the *table* of the sacrifice, not the altar
- (3) The Lord's Supper was established in the context of the Passover, a meal celebrating God's redemption of His people

I. We have four accounts of the establishment of the Lord's Supper:

Matthew 26:20-29
Mark 14:17-25

Luke 22:14-23
1 Corinthians 11:23-26

II. The words of institution:

The bread: "This is my body which is given for you"

The cup: "This is my blood of the new covenant" or "This is the new covenant in my blood"

The command: "Do this in remembrance of me"

III. Four traditional views of Jesus' meaning:

- A. Transubstantiation (Catholic) in which the Bread becomes the body of Christ, and the wine the blood of Christ.
- B. Consubstantiation (Luther) in which the bread remains bread and the wine remains wine but the presence of Jesus and his power is with the bread and cup.
- C. Symbolic (Zwingli) in which the elements are merely symbols that help us remember Jesus' death on the cross.
- D. Spiritual reality (Calvin) in which the elements are unchanged, Jesus remains in heaven, but He is spiritually present.

IV. A broader view:

- A. We need a sense of "mysticism" here, yet we should not only focus on the elements.
- B. Jesus is present not only in the elements; He is present as host and fellow-participant.
- C. The Lord's Supper is not the altar; it is not just a remembering of the cross. It is the table, where we eat and drink in the presence of the risen Lord. We proclaim His sacrifice **and** the redemption that it brings.
- D. Body refers not only to Jesus hanging on the cross, but to His living body; the blood is remembered because of the covenant it ratified, not only as a sign of death.



Lesson 5: Communion (1 Corinthians 10)

Review:

- (1) Worship in the Old Testament was built around a structure of community meals eaten in the presence of the Lord
- (2) The Lord's Supper is related to the table of the sacrifice, not the altar
- (3) The Lord's Supper was established in the context of the Passover, a meal celebrating God's redemption of His people
- (4) At the Lord's Table, Jesus is present as host and participant with us
- (5) The Bible never tells us to take the Lord's Supper with sadness, but with thanksgiving

I. Paul connects the experience of the Israelites in the wilderness with that of the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 10:1-13):

II. Paul connects the Lord's Table with sacrifice meals (1 Corinthians 10:14-22):

- A. Those who participate in the Lord's Table participate in Him (just as those who ate of sacrificed meat participated in the altar)
- B. Those who eat and drink together are united
- C. By eating of the Lord's Supper, we pledge ourselves to Him

III. The emphasis here is on communion:

- A. There is a real connection between Christ and those who participate
 1. We share in His body and in His blood
 2. We become one with Him (which requires fidelity)
- B. There is a real connection between all participants
 1. We "partake"
 2. Because we share in the same meal, we truly become one body
 3. Paul will have much more to say about this in 1 Corinthians 11
- D. Body refers not only to Jesus hanging on the cross, but to His living body; the blood is remembered because of the covenant it ratified, not only as a sign of death.

V. Conclusions:

- A. Taking the Lord's Supper is **not** an individual act
- B. Participating in the Lord's Table is a time of connecting with our Lord and with one another

It is important that we not let our practices shape our interpretation of the Bible; we must let our interpretation of the Bible shape our practices



Lesson 6:

“When You Come Together To Eat” (1 Corinthians 11)

Review:

- (1) Worship in the Old Testament was built around a structure of community meals eaten in the presence of the Lord
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- (3) The Lord's Supper was established in the context of the Passover, a meal celebrating God's redemption of His people
- (4) At the Lord's Table, Jesus is present as host and participant with us
- (5) The Bible never tells us to take the Lord's Supper with sadness, but with thanksgiving
- (6) The Lord's Supper is a communion with Christ and with one another; we cannot “partake” alone

I. In Corinth, the church had come to reflect society by allowing socioeconomic divisions at the Lord's Table

II. Paul's words:

- A. “In the following, I have no praise...”
- B. “When you come together, there are divisions among you”
- C. “It is not the Lord's Supper you eat for each of you goes ahead without waiting”
- D. “I received from the Lord what I passed on to you”
- E. “As often as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes”
- F. “Whoever eats or drinks in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord”
- G. “If anyone eats and drinks without discerning the body, he eats and drinks judgment”
- H. “If we discerned ourselves, we would not be judged”
- I. “So then, wait for each other. If any is hungry, let him eat at home”

III. The emphasis here is again on communion:

- A. The body takes the Lord's Supper as a body.
- B. We must recognize that body to take the Lord's Supper correctly.
- C. **It is not an individual act! It is the most corporate thing that we do.**
- D. Paul did not eliminate the meal; he eliminated the division during the meal.

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Lesson 7: The First Christians Break Bread

- I. **On three occasions in Luke's gospel, Jesus is the host of a meal**
 - A. Luke 9:12-17 *Feeding the 5000*
 - B. Luke 22:14-23 *The Last Supper*
 - C. Luke 24:28-35 *In Emmaus with two disciples*
 - D. In each case we have this description: Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to them
 - E. For the disciples, the phrase "the breaking of bread" took on a new meaning
- II. **The disciples in Troas (Acts 20:7-12)**
 - A. Luke includes this story to tell of the raising of Eutychus
 - B. This verse shows the current practice of the church in Troas: they met on Sunday and broke bread together
 1. All four gospels emphasize that Jesus rose on Sunday
 2. Pentecost was on Sunday
 3. The earliest evidence outside of the Bible indicates that the church met on Sunday
 4. This also fits with I Corinthians 16
 - C. Acts 20:7 is a cornerstone verse for many people
 1. It is used to prove that we must meet every Sunday
 2. It is used to prove that we must take the Lord's Supper every Sunday
 3. It is used to prove that we must take the Lord's Supper only on Sunday
 - D. "Broke bread and ate" in verse 11 probably refers both to the Lord's Supper and to the meal that accompanied it
- III. **The disciples in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42-47)**
 - A. The first Christians focused on the teachings of the apostles, fellowship, breaking bread and prayers
 - B. They met together daily in the temple
 - C. They ate together daily in homes
 1. They could not eat together in the temple
 2. The focus of these meals was joy (the root of the Greek word means "jump for joy")
- IV. **"Breaking bread"**
 - A. I have previously taught that Acts 2:42 and 20:7 refer to the Lord's Supper and that 2:46 and 20:11 refer to community meals. Why? *Because it fit what I already believed.*
 - B. I see no reason to think that the same phrase does not mean the same thing in each case. Each verse seems to refer to the Lord's Supper.

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Lesson 8:

Come to the Table of the Lord

Review:

- (1) Worship in the Old Testament was built around a structure of community meals eaten in the presence of the Lord
- (2) The Lord's Supper is related to the table of the sacrifice, not the altar
- (3) The Lord's Supper was established in the context of the Passover, a meal celebrating God's redemption of His people
- (4) At the Lord's Table, Jesus is present as host and participant with us
- (5) The Bible never tells us to take the Lord's Supper with sadness, but with thanksgiving
- (6) The Lord's Supper is a communion with Christ and with one another; we cannot "partake" alone
- (7) The practice of the New Testament church is not set out in a legalistic framework

I. Some non-biblical influences

- A. The Catholic church teaches that the Mass is a repetition of the sacrifice of Christ and forgiveness is found there
 1. This has contributed to the "funeral atmosphere" in the Lord's Supper
 2. This has led many people to treat the Lord's Supper as a "sacrament," as a rite that is performed to obtain forgiveness
 - Some leave the assembly after taking the supper
- B. Our culture does not value "table fellowship" as the culture of the Bible did
 1. We seek to streamline the Supper, using as little time as possible
 2. There is little awareness of those around us with whom we share the Supper
- C. Our society distrusts spiritual things, preferring rationality
 1. The bread and the cup are reduced to mere symbols
 2. We rarely speak of any real presence of Jesus in the Supper

II. Returning to the Table of the Lord

- A. We need to leave the altar and go to the table
 - 1. We need to get away from the idea of the Supper as a time for individualistic reflection
 - The self-examination that Paul called for in 1 Corinthians 11 had to do with how one took the Supper as related to others
 - The emphasis of the Supper is on a community experience
 - 2. We need to recapture our table manners
 - It would be entirely out of place at a table to eat without interacting with those around us
 - We need to work on ways to recapture the “table feel” in a pew setting
 - This is our true fellowship meal!
 - 3. While the altar is the place of death which brings forgiveness, the table is the celebration of the forgiveness which that death made possible
 - The Bible does not focus on Jesus’ physical suffering on the cross
 - When the early Christians declared Jesus’ death in Acts, it was in the context of proclaiming the Good News of salvation
 - We can celebrate the Lord’s Supper with joy and gladness without frivolity
- B. We need to return the Lord’s Supper to the central place in our worship
 - 1. Slow down! Let’s not be conformed to Western society, which sets a time limit on our time together
 - 2. Talk about the meaning and reflect on what we are doing
 - 3. Connect the Lord’s Supper to the sermon and vice versa.
- C. We need to focus our attention on the real presence of the risen Christ
 - 1. Our participation in the Supper puts us in real fellowship with Him
 - 2. We need to remember the present reality of Jesus, not just the past sacrifice

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