

What is the Lord's Supper?

I Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:23-29

¹ One of the most popular Roman legends was the Battle between Hercules and Antaeus. Antaeus was the son of the sea god Neptune and the god of the land, Terra. He was, supposedly, immortal; as long as he remained in contact with his mother, the earth.

The battle occurred on Hercules' tenth "Labor" journey to steal the apples from the Garden of the Hesperides. The fight was evenly matched with no clear victor until Hercules picked Antaeus up off his feet in a bear hug and crushed him to death. The battle was lost when Antaeus lost contact with the earth. ²

Christians need to have contact with the Lord to have spiritual strength and life. One of the ways to remain in contact is the Lord's Supper. ³

So, what is the Lord's Supper? ⁴

I. It's a Participation – 10:16-17

First, it's a participation. Let's look at First Corinthians, chapter 10, verses 16 and 17. **Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.** ⁵

What is participation? **Participation**, ¹ translated in the King James Version, is “communion”. Many churches call the Lord's Supper that. It means “partnership, having something in common”. ⁶ We get our English word “coin” from this word. A coin is exchanged often for something of equal value. It changes hands routinely. It's a common method of exchange. ⁷

The idea is the Lord's Supper binds us together with a common heritage. ⁸ Philippians, chapter 2, verses 1 and 2 state, **If you have any encouragement from**

¹ κοινωνία.

being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. We have a common participation by showing encouragement, love, affection and sympathy to one another. ⁹

In First Corinthians, chapter 16, verses 1 and 2, it reads, **Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.** We have a common participation when we pass the offering plate in Sunday worship. There is this same common bond displayed when we share together in the Lord's Supper. ¹⁰

This ceremony also involves a participation with God and one another as the body of Christ. ¹¹

Here, in verse 16, it says, **Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?** The elements of the Supper represent the Lord's physical body and blood. ¹² The body represents the Incarnation: God became a man with a physical body and dwelt among us, teaching and living God's life, as an example to us. ¹³ The blood represents the Atonement: the crucifixion where Jesus paid the price for your sin. ¹⁴

Now, notice verse 17, **Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.** As you participate, you represent the spiritual body of Christ, His church, His family! ¹⁵

Then, First John, chapter 1, verse 7, concludes this thought, **But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.** By

having this fellowship with God (same word), He will continue cleansing you from your sin. ¹⁶

The Lord's Supper is not just a participation . . .

II. It's a Memorial – 11:24-25

It's a **Memorial**. Let's continue with chapter 11, verses 24 and 25, . . . **And when he had given thanks, he broke it (the unleavened bread) 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."** ¹⁷

What's a funeral supposed to accomplish? It's a memorial to the loved one who has passed away. ¹⁸ It's an opportunity to formally share together in the loved one's memory. ¹⁹ God's Word tells us over 200 times to remember! ²⁰

We are to remember the cross as God's love expressed to us. John said, **Look, the Lamb of God,**

who takes away the sin of the world.² ²¹ First Corinthians, chapter 5, verse 7, For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.²²

We are to remember the cross as the event that established the New Covenant. The New Covenant, or New Testament, is the new agreement, or Will, God has made with us, His people. The old relationship with God, the Old Testament, displayed in the first three quarters of our Bible, was one based on heritage and strict obedience to God's revealed Law.

The New Covenant was predicted by the Prophet Jeremiah, The time is coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.³ ²³

This New Covenant is connected to the cross. Luke, chapter 22, verse 20, In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you."²⁴

² John 1:29.

³ Jeremiah 31:31.

Again, Hebrews, chapter 9, verse 15, **For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance - now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant.** When Lord Jesus died on the cross, He paid the price for your sins. He established this New Covenant to free you from the “work your way to heaven by being good enough” Old Covenant which no one ever kept. ⁴ ₂₅

We are to remember to participate in the Lord's Supper as a command from the Lord. Luke, chapter 22, verse 19, **And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."** ²⁶ Since Christians participate in the Lord's Supper in

⁴ Romans 3:10-12 and 23 - “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.” . . . for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God . . .

obedience to a command, some churches call this ceremony an Ordinance. ²⁷

The Lord's Supper is not only a participation and a memorial . . .

III. It's a Proclamation – 11:26

It's a **Proclamation**. Continuing with chapter 11, verse 26, **For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.** ²⁸

The word here in the original language, for Proclaim, ⁵ means “to speak forcefully, to preach”. You are actually preaching a sermon as you participate in this ceremony. ²⁹

The Lord's Supper proclaims the gospel message. You are proclaiming your dependence on the blood of Jesus for your salvation. You are proclaiming the unity of the family of God. Families eat together! ³⁰

The Lord's Supper is proclaiming the biblical promises that were made. For instance, in First John,

⁵ καταγγέλλω.

chapter 4, verse 10, **This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.** ³¹ Again we have another promise in John, chapter 10, verse 10, **The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.** ³²

It's also a proclamation of the Lord's Second Coming. It proclaims, "until He comes again". As a marriage is temporary "until death", so the Lord's Supper is temporary "until He comes again". ³³

Finally, there's a fourth element to the Lord's Supper which I think is often overlooked.

IV. It's an Examination – 11:27-29

It's an Examination. ³⁴ This is a time to make a discernment. It is not a time to decide if you are worthy or not. "Have I lived a good enough life this week?" ³⁵ None of us are worthy! **For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** ⁶

The problem here was the members of the Corinthian church didn't seem to care much for one another. They weren't discerning the church, Christ's body. You need to understand that we are the Lord's body functioning together in love. Use the time before you partake to examine your attitudes. If you have sin in your life, confess it in prayer. If you have an unforgiving attitude toward another person, confess it in prayer. Then determine to reconnect with that other person. ³⁶

This is a time to make a commitment. This is why, in many churches, the Lord's Supper is called a sacrament. ³⁷ The Latin word refers to the oath a

⁶ Romans 3:23.

Roman soldier made when enlisting in the Army; it was his “sacrament”. So, the Lord’s Supper is a time of rededication to the Lord of your faith, your obedience to Him and your love. ³⁸

This is a time to express thanksgiving. ³⁹ In many churches the Lord’s Supper is called the Eucharist, ⁷ meaning “to give thanks”. You can use this time to thank the Lord for His redemption, continual presence and the help of His Holy Spirit. ⁴⁰

Every time you take that piece of bread and that little cup, ⁴¹ you participate together in a shared experience; ⁴² you remember the Lord Who loved you enough to die for you; ⁴³ you proclaim the gospel message faithfully until He comes again ⁴⁴ and you examine your relationship with the Lord and one another!

<http://www.biblelifemessages.org>

⁷ εὐχαριστέω.