

THE LORD'S SUPPER INSTITUTED

Matthew 26:26-30; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34

There are **two** and only two ordinances (an authoritative order or command) given to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ. These ordinances are baptism and the Lord's Supper.

The wisdom of God is seen in the simplicity of the two ordinances.
The rich can do no more; the poor can do no less.

Why should the Lord's Supper be called an "ordinance" as opposed to a "sacrament?"

A sacrament is an oath or consecration as a means of grace. Used correctly, this term implies that the sacrament itself is essential unto salvation. For example, the Roman Catholic Church has **seven** sacraments, all being essential to secure salvation; the Churches of Christ teach that baptism is necessary in order to be saved; and you must take the Lord's Supper every Sunday to keep your salvation {some exceptions permitted}.

What about "communion?"

Communion (Latin, Eucharist) means mutual participation and can refer to the Lord's Supper or to the church itself, e.g., the communion of saints.

What actually happens when the Lord's Supper is correctly observed?

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that the elements (bread and wine) are transformed into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ; called "transubstantiation." According to that teaching, the partaker receives "grace" through the elements. The support for this idea is taken from John 6:53-54. However, the context of that passage is not the Lord's Supper because the ordinance had not been instituted at that time.

Orthodox Christians believe that the Lord's Supper and Baptism are **symbolic** of what has been done **for us** by Jesus and not what is done **to us** as we observe those two ordinances.

How are the ordinances symbolic?

The Lord's Supper emphasizes the death and risen life of Jesus and implies His burial and resurrection.

Baptism emphasizes the burial and resurrection of Jesus and implies His death and risen life.

Matthew 26:26-30 is the institution of the Lord's Supper.

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The Lord's Supper was a transition from the Old Testament Passover to a new Christian ordinance. What follows is one view of how the transition occurred:

1. Eat bitter herbs (Exodus 12:8; Numbers 9:11).
2. First cup.
3. Washing of hands; at this point Jesus washed the feet of the disciples to demonstrate His humility and to answer their argument about which of them was the greatest.
4. Eat the lamb.
5. Second cup.
6. Eat unleavened bread.
7. Third cup, called the "cup of blessing" in the Passover; now called the "Blood of the new covenant."
8. At Passover the youngest male present would ask, "What mean you by this service?" (Exodus 12:26)
9. Fourth cup. Now that the Lord's Supper has replaced Passover this cup is not needed.

The Law (Passover) is honored by the Gospel. Deliverance is through the blood of the Sacrifice. "Even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us." (1 Corinthians 5:7)

How should we observe the ordinance of the Lord's Supper? (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

1. Baptized believers. Examine self. Obedient? (Acts 19:1-7)
2. Open or "close?" "Fencing the table." It is the Lord's Supper, not a particular congregation's supper.
3. Frequency? Day of the week? Time of day? (Acts 2:4-6; 11:26)
4. Host? You do not need a "priest" to bless the wafer. Why?
5. Cup or cups? Luke 22:17
6. Washing of feet? Not mentioned by Paul; no blood significance; not part of the ordinance. The practice would not be "wrong" and would teach humility.
7. Wine or fruit juice? Fruit juice is a symbol of a symbol. Why not use orange juice and vanilla wafers?
8. Preaching is central to worship. There should be an explanation of what is being done just as Paul did.
9. Examine self? What is it to "eat and drink" in an unworthy manner?

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There are four kinds of people considered for the Lord's Supper:

1. Those who **don't** come and **should not** come. Unregenerate, unbelievers are not invited to the Lord's Supper. Those who are spiritually dead are invited to come to Christ. You do not get to Christ through the ordinances but by grace through faith.
2. Those who **don't** come but **should** come. Repentant, but ignorant of the purpose of the Lord's Supper. You will never be "good enough" to come.
3. Those who **come** but **should not** come. Unregenerate, but believe they are saved. In rebellion to Christ but afraid of what men will think of them. Unsaved children just to pacify them. Those who think they are "good enough."
4. Those who **come** and **should come**. They are described in Romans 5:1-11. They were ungodly, lost sinners, enemies of God who find their righteousness only in the Lord Jesus Christ.

"THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME."

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The ritualistic practice, usually during a worship service, in which Christians partake of bread and wine (or grape juice) with the purpose of remembering Christ, receiving strength from Him, and rededicating themselves to His cause. It is one of two sacraments or ordinances instituted by Christ to be observed by His church until He returns.

The term the Lord's Supper is used only in <1 Corinthians 11:20>. The practice is also known as Communion (from <1 Cor. 10:16>), the Lord's Table (from <1 Cor. 10:21>), and the Eucharist (from the Greek word for "giving thanks"; <Luke 22:17,19; 1 Cor. 11:24>). The expression breaking of bread <Acts 2:42,46; 20:7,11> probably refers to receiving the Lord's Supper with a common meal known as the LOVE FEAST <2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 12>.

The institution of the Lord's Supper <Matt. 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:1-23; 1 Cor. 11:23-25> took place on the night before Jesus died, at a meal commonly known as the Last Supper. Although there is considerable debate over the issue, the Last Supper probably was the Jewish PASSOVER meal, first instituted by God in the days of Moses <Ex. 12:1-14; Num. 9:1-5>.

Many of Jesus' actions and words at the Last Supper, such as the breaking and distributing of the bread, were part of the prescribed Passover ritual. But when Jesus said, "This is My body" and "This is My blood" while distributing the bread and the cup, He did something totally new. These words, which were intended for our blessing, have been the focus of sharp disagreement among Christians for centuries. In what sense are the bread and wine Christ's body and blood? What should the Lord's Supper mean to us? The answers to these questions are often grouped into four categories, although there are variations within these four broad views.

The Transubstantiation View. The first view is that of the Roman Catholic Church (especially before the Second Vatican Council of 1962-1965). This view holds that the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Christ when the words of institution are spoken by the priest. This doctrine, known as transubstantiation, holds that while the physical properties (taste, appearance, etc.) of the bread and wine do not change, the inner reality of these elements undergoes a spiritual change.

While this view may help to foster a serious attitude toward the Eucharist, it fails to grasp the figurative nature of Jesus' language. Jesus could not have been holding His actual body and blood in His hands. He probably meant, "This bread represents My body" and "This wine represents My blood." Jesus often used figurative language <Luke 8:11,21>, just as a person does today when showing someone a photograph and saying, "This is my father."

The Consubstantiation View. The second viewpoint, developed by Martin Luther, is that Christ's body and blood are truly present "in, with, and under" the bread and wine. The elements do not actually change into Christ's body and blood. But in the same way that heat is present in a piece of hot iron, so Christ is present in the elements. The Lutheran position is often called consubstantiation.

This position can encourage the recipient of the Eucharist with the realization that Christ is actually present at the Supper. But it also misses the figurative use of Jesus' words. It also may tend to draw more attention to the bread and wine than to Christ Himself.

The Symbolic View. The third position, known as the symbolic or memorial view, is derived from the teachings of the Swiss reformer, Ulrich Zwingli. Although his teaching is not completely clear, he basically held that the bread and wine were only symbols of the sacrificed body and blood of Christ. He taught that the Lord's Supper is primarily a memorial ceremony of

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Christ's finished work, but that it is also to be an occasion when God's people pledge their unity with one another and their loyalty to Christ. This is the viewpoint held by most Baptist and independent churches. While Zwingli's ideas are basically sound, this position tends to place more emphasis on what the Christian does and promises in the Supper than on what God does.

The Dynamic View. Finally, there is the view of John Calvin and the Reformed and Presbyterian churches which follow his teachings. Known as the dynamic or spiritual presence view, it stands somewhere between the positions of Luther and Zwingli.

Calvin agreed with Zwingli that the bread and wine are to be understood symbolically. Christ is not physically present in the elements, because His risen, glorified body is in heaven <Heb. 10:12-13>. Still, He is dynamically and spiritually present in the Lord's Supper through the Holy Spirit.

In the worship service (but not at any one precise moment), when the Word of God is proclaimed and the Lord's Supper is received, the glorified Christ actually gives spiritual nourishment from His own glorified body to those who receive it. As bread nourishes the physical body, so Christ's glorified body enlivens the soul. Because of the organic union between Christ, the risen Head and the members of His body, the church <Eph. 1:18-23; 4:15-16; 5:23>, this nourishment is conveyed to Christians by the Spirit who dwells in them <Rom. 8:9-11>. Calvin admits that the way the Spirit does this is a genuine mystery. Yet, it is not contrary to reason-- just above reason.

Calvin at times places more emphasis on Jesus' glorified flesh and blood than the Scriptures teach. But his position helps to explain why the Eucharist is so important for the Christian to observe, and why it is such a serious offense to misuse it. His view also corresponds well with those Scriptures that speak of God's nourishing and empowering work in His people <Eph. 3:14-21; Col. 2:6-10,19>.

Biblical Teachings. In <1 Corinthians 10:16>, the apostle Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their involvement with idolatry. He referred to the cup as "the communion of the blood of Christ" and the bread as "the communion of the body of Christ." The Greek word for communion has the meaning of "fellowship, participating, and sharing." From the context it appears that Paul is saying that when Christians partake of the cup and the bread, they are participating in the benefits of Christ's death (referred to as His blood) and resurrection life (His glorified body). The most important of these benefits are the assurance of sins forgiven (through Christ's blood) and the assurance of Christ's presence and power (through His body).

The "one body" (the universal church) in <1 Corinthians 10:17> connects with the "body of Christ" in <verse 16> in the sense that the entire church of Christ is organically related to the living, glorified human body of Christ now in heaven. The "one [loaf of] bread" <v. 17>, representing Jesus the "bread of life" <John 6:35>, is eaten by all believers at the Supper, symbolizing their unity and common participation in the one body of Christ. The great discourse of Jesus on the bread of life <John 6:25-68>, while not intended to be a direct theological explanation of the Lord's Supper, helps to explain how receiving the Eucharist can be one way in which Christians "feed" on the Lord <John 6:55-57>. Other important ways are by prayer and the hearing of God's Word through the Scriptures.

In <1 Corinthians 11:17-34> Paul rebuked the Corinthians for their pride and greed during the meal that accompanied the Eucharist <vv. 17-22>. Then <vv. 23-25> he described the institution of the Lord's Supper and emphasized the need for Christians to partake in a worthy manner. Many of them who had not been doing so were weak and sick, and many had even died as a result of God's judgment <vv. 27-34>.

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Why does Paul use such strong language when speaking of the abuse of the Lord's Supper? The Corinthians were not properly discerning or recognizing the Lord's body. The wealthy Corinthians who shamed their poorer Christian brothers and sisters by their selfish eating practices <vv. 21-22> were not discerning the true nature of the church as Christ's body in which all distinctions of social class, race, etc. were blotted out <Gal. 3:28>.

On the other hand, Christians who received the bread and the cup after behaving disgracefully were failing to discern that Christ would not automatically bless and empower those who received the sacrament in this manner. Such persons were guilty of sin against the body and blood of Jesus <v. 27>.

Meaning for Today. When we ask how the Lord's Supper should be meaningful to the Christian today, three concepts-- relating to the past, present, and future-- can be helpful.

First, the Lord's Supper is a time of remembrance and Eucharist. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me" <Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24-25>. This is not to be so much our dwelling on the agonies of the crucifixion as it is to be our remembering the marvelous life and ministry of our Savior. The Eucharist is to be an occasion for expressing our deepest praise and appreciation for all Jesus Christ has done for us.

Just as one step in the Jewish Passover meal was to proclaim the Hebrews' deliverance from Egyptian bondage <Ex. 12:26-27>, so in the Supper Christians proclaim their deliverance from sin and misery through the death of "Christ, our Passover" <1 Cor. 5:7; 11:26>.

Second, the Supper is a time of refreshing and communion. As we participate in the benefits of Jesus' death and resurrection life <Rom. 5:10; 1 Cor. 10:16>, we are actually being nourished and empowered from the risen Christ through the Spirit.

John Wesley knew of this strengthening. On the average, he received communion every four or five days throughout his long and fruitful ministerial career. It is not that God cannot empower us without the Lord's Supper, but that He has instituted the Supper for us, even as He has designated prayer and the hearing of Scripture as means of communicating His grace. While the Bible does not tell us how often to observe the Eucharist, Wesley's guideline-- "as often as you can"-- deserves our serious consideration.

Third, the Supper is a time of recommitment and anticipation. We are to examine (literally "prove" or "test") ourselves and partake in a worthy manner <1 Cor. 11:28-29>. In so doing we renew our dedication to Christ and His people, in hopeful anticipation "till He comes" <1 Cor. 11:26>. After Christ's return we shall partake with Him-- in His physical presence-- in the kingdom <Matt. 26:29>.

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LORD'S SUPPER (Gk. kuriakon deipnon, a "meal belonging to the Lord").

Name. The meal established by our Lord <1 Cor. 11:20> and called "Supper" because it was instituted at supertime. Synonymous with this is the phrase "the table of the Lord" <10:21>, where we also find the term "the cup of the Lord." Other terms were introduced in the church, such as Communion (Gk. koinonia, "participation," i.e., a festival in "common," <1 Cor. 10:16>) and Eucharist ("a giving of thanks") because of the hymns and psalms that accompanied it.

Origin. Of this we have the accounts recorded by <Matthew (26:26-29)>, <Mark (14:22:25)>, <Luke (22:19-20,30)>, and Paul <1 Cor. 11:24-26>, whose words differ little from those of Luke. The only difference between Matthew and Mark is that the latter omits the words "for forgiveness of sins." Paul declares <1 Cor. 11:23> that the account that he wrote to the Corinthians he "received from the Lord," which would seem to imply a communication made to himself personally by the Lord, contrasting it with the abuse among them.

Jesus instituted the supper while He was observing the Passover with His disciples, so some reference to that feast should be given. The following order of observing the Passover prevailed at the time of Christ: (1) Where the celebrants met, the head of the household, or celebrant, blessed a cup of wine, of which all partook. (2) The hands were then washed, this act being accompanied by a benediction. (3) The table was then set with the Paschal lamb, unleavened bread, bitter herbs, and sauce. (4) The celebrant first, and then others, dipped a portion of the bitter herbs into the sauce and ate them. (5) The dishes were removed and a cup of wine brought, followed by an interval for asking questions as to the meaning of this strange procedure, and then the wine was passed. (6) The table being again set, the celebrant then repeated the commemorative words that opened what was strictly the Paschal supper-- a solemn thanksgiving and reading of <Pss. 103-104>. (7) Then came a second washing of hands with a short blessing, the breaking of one of the two cakes of unleavened bread, with thanks. The bread was then dipped, with the bitter herbs, into the sauce, and eaten. (8) Meat was eaten with the bread, accompanied by another blessing, a third cup of wine known as the "cup of blessing," and then (9) a fourth cup, with the recital of <Pss. 115-18>, from which this cup was known as the cup of the Hallel (which see), of the Song of Sol. (10) There might be, in conclusion, a fifth cup, provided that the Great Hallel was sung over it (possibly <Pss. 120-38>).

"Comparing the ritual thus gathered from rabbinic writers with the New Testament, and assuming (1) that it represents substantially the common practice of our Lord's time; and (2) that the meal of which he and his disciples partook was either the Passover itself or an anticipation of it, conducted according to the same rules, we are able to point, though not with absolute certainty, to the points of departure which the old practice presented for the institution of the new. To 1 or 3, or even to 8, we may refer the first words and the first distribution of the cup <Luke 22:17-18>; to 2 or 7, the dipping of the sop <John 13:26>; to 7, or to an interval during or after 8, the distribution of the bread <Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-24>; to 9 or 10 ('after supper,' <Luke 22:20>), the thanksgiving and distribution of the cup, and the hymn with which the whole was ended." (Bennett, Christian Archaeology, p. 416).

Observance. The Passover was an annual festival, but no rule was given as to the time and frequency of the new feast, although the command "Do this, as often as you drink it" <1 Cor. 11:25> suggests a more frequent observance. It would appear that the celebration of the Lord's Supper by the first disciples occurred daily in private houses <Acts 2:46>, in connection with the agape, or love feast, to indicate that its purpose was the expression of brotherly love. The offering of thanks and praise <1 Cor. 10:16; 11:24> was probably followed with the holy kiss

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<Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20>. It was of a somewhat festive character, judging from the excesses that Paul reproved <1 Cor. 11:20>, and was associated with an ordinary meal, at the close of which the bread and wine were distributed as a memorial of Christ's similar distribution to the disciples. From the accounts in the <Acts (2:42,46)> and from Paul's letter to the Corinthians <11:20-21> it is safely inferred that the disciples each contributed a share of the food necessary for the meal, thus showing a community of love and fellowship. To this unifying power of the Eucharist Paul evidently refers <10:16-17>. From the account given in <11:17-34> it is evident that each person ate of that which he brought and held therein his own private meal in place of the Lord's Supper. There was not a proper waiting for the distribution of the elements by a church officer, and there seems to be no evidence that a priestly consecration and distribution of the bread and wine were regarded as necessary to the validity of the sacrament. It is true that a blessing was spoken over the cup <1 Cor. 10:16>, but every Christian would probably offer this blessing at that time, when the arrangements of church life as regards public worship were as yet so little reduced to fixed order.

Early Church. In the earliest notices of the Lord's Supper a simple and almost literal imitation of the meal as instituted by Christ is prevalent. In the "Teaching of the Twelve" the instructions for celebrating the Eucharist are as simple and archaic as those respecting baptism. In Justin Martyr's account of the Lord's Supper is noticed an almost like simplicity as in the "Teaching." A change is in the fact that special celebrants or officers are now recognized: "There is brought to the president of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water." The deacons distribute the consecrated elements and carry away a portion to those who are absent. In Tertullian's account there is scarcely more formality.

In ante-Nicene times the following order was observed: the prayers, the kiss of peace between man and man, and woman and woman; the offerings for the feast, the poor, and the clergy; and the communion of the partaking of the consecrated elements. The wine was mingled with water, and the communicants, standing, received both elements in the hands of the officiating deacons. Portions of the sanctified bread were sometimes borne to their homes by the members, where the family Communion was repeated in kind. The custom of the apostolic church for all communicants to make offerings of bread and wine and other things, to supply the elements of the Eucharist and gifts to the poor, was continued through all the early history of Christianity and in a modified form until the twelfth century.

As church government and discipline developed, the ceremonies connected with the Eucharist became more formal and involved.

At the institution of the Lord's Supper Christ used unleavened bread. The early Christians carried with them the bread and wine for the Eucharist and took the bread in common use, which was leavened. When this custom ceased the Greeks retained leavened bread, while in the Latin church unleavened bread became common since the eighth century.

We have no evidence as to whether the wine used by Christ was pure, mixed with water, fermented, or unfermented; although general practice, as well as other facts, would lead to the conclusion that it was fermented.

Essential Nature. There is controversy concerning the essential nature of the Lord's Supper.

Transubstantiation. Transubstantiation is the view held by the Roman Catholic church. The Council of Trent teaches that after the consecration the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, are contained "truly, really, and substantially in the sacrament of the most holy eucharist," and it anathematizes those who say that Christ's body and

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blood are there in sign and figure only. Furthermore, the Roman Catholic church teaches "that the worship of sacrifice was not to cease in the Church, and the Council of Trent defines that in the eucharist or mass a true and proper sacrifice is offered to God" (Cath. Dict., s.v.).

Consubstantiation. The Lutheran church rejects transubstantiation, while insisting that the body and blood of Christ are mysteriously and supernaturally united with the bread and wine, so that they are received when the latter are. This is called consubstantiation.

Spiritual Presence View. According to this view, "this hallowed food (the bread and wine), through concurrence of divine power, is in verity and truth, unto faithful receivers, instrumentally a cause of that mystical participation whereby I make myself wholly theirs, so I give them in hand an actual possession of all such saving grace as my sacrificial body can yield, and as their souls do presently need, this is to them, and in them, my body" (Hooker, Eccles. Polity, book 5, p. 167). "The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the supper only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the means whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the supper is faith" (Discipline, Methodist Church, Art. 18).

Symbolic, or Zwinglian, View. According to this view, partaking of the supper merely commemorates the sacrificial work of Christ, and its value to the participant consists only in the bestowal of a blessing.

(from New Unger's Bible Dictionary)

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bibliography: A. J. B. Higgins, *The Lord's Supper in the New Testament* (1952); J. Jeremias, *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (1955); E. F. Kevan, *The Lord's Supper* (1966); W. Barclay, *The Lord's Supper* (1967); E. Schweizer, *The Lord's Supper According to the New Testament* (1967); M. Chemnitz, *The Lord's Supper* (1979); I. H. Marshall, *Last Supper and Lord's Supper* (1980).

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1 Cor 11:29; 1 Cor 11:30

Verse 29. - Unworthily. The word is not genuine here, being repeated from ver. 27; it is omitted by <START HEBREW>a<END HEBREW>, A, B, C. Eateth and drinketh damnation to himself; rather, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself There is reason to believe that the word "damnation" once had a much milder meaning in English than that which it now popularly bears. In King James's time it probably did not of necessity mean more than "an unfavourable verdict." Otherwise this would be the most unfortunate mistranslation in the whole Bible. It has probably kept thousands, as it kept Goethe, from Holy Communion. We see from ver. 32 that this "judgment" had a purely merciful and disciplinary character. Not discerning; rather, if he discern not, the Lord's body, Any one who approach? the Lord's Supper in a spirit of levity or defiance, not discriminating between it and common food, draws on himself, by so eating and drinking, a judgment which is defined in the next verse.

1 Corinthians 11:30

Verse 30. - Many are weak and sickly among you. St. Paul directly connects this general ill health with the abuse of the Lord's Supper. It is not impossible that the grave intemperance to which he alludes in ver. 21 may have had its share in this result; but apart from this, there is an undoubted connection between sin and sickness in some, though not, of course, in all cases (John 5:14). Many. The word is different from the previous word for "many," and means a larger number - "not a few," "a considerable number." Sleep; i.e. are dying.

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