

7 ASPECTS OF THE LORD'S TABLE ON WHICH TO MEDITATE



Introduction

1. During His ministry, Jesus promised to build His church (**Matthew 16:18**) and that promise was fulfilled in A.D. 33. Luke records in the book of Acts a most extraordinary day – it was the day the apostles were immersed in the Holy Spirit, it was the day when the first gospel sermon was preached, it was the day that three thousand Jews heard and obeyed the gospel, it was the day that Jesus began to build His church (**Acts 2:1-47**).
2. Those first three-thousand Christians recognized Jesus' twelve disciples as being His apostles, and so they continued steadfastly in their "doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (**Acts 2:42**). The "breaking of bread" is a reference to what is commonly called "communion" or "The Lord's Supper". This is the memorial feast that Jesus established shortly before His death (**Matthew 26:19-30**).
3. Today I want us to consider the seven aspects of the Lord's Table. For some of us these things will be a reminder, but for others it may be the first time you have heard these things. The aim of this lesson, then, is to remind and edify in order that partaking of the Lord's Supper each week will be a blessing to us.

7 ASPECTS OF THE LORD'S TABLE ON WHICH TO MEDITATE

1. Retrospection (**1 Corinthians 11:24-25**).
2. Communion (**1 Corinthians 10:16**).
3. Oneness (**1 Corinthians 10:17**).
4. Sanctification (**1 Corinthians 10:20-21**).
5. Introspection (**1 Corinthians 11:28**).
6. Proclamation (**1 Corinthians 11:26a**).
7. Anticipation (**1 Corinthians 11:26b**).

7 ASPECTS OF THE LORD'S TABLE ON WHICH TO MEDITATE

1. RETROSPECTION (**1 Corinthians 11:24-25**)

We look back and remember the Messiah's saving work on the cross.

"And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me. In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (**1 Corinthians 11:24-25**).

a. Partaking of the bread.

- 1) After His arrest, Jesus was put on trial before the Sanhedrin and they charged Him with blasphemy because He confessed that He was the Son of Man. So they judged Him to be worthy of death, spat in His face and beat Him, and others struck Him and mocked Him (**Matthew 26:57-68**). The next day He stood before Pilate and was condemned to death. After being scourged, the soldiers spat on Him, mocked and beat Him. And then they led Him away and crucified Him (**Matthew 27:1-37**). Jesus hung on the cross for six hours suffering excruciating pain (**Mark 15:25** ⇨ **Matthew 27:45**). Finally, Jesus cried out, "It is finished!" And then He bowed His head and gave up His spirit (**John 19:28-30**).

- 2) As we partake of the bread, we remember His body “which is broken for you” and we remember that Jesus “bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness - by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).
- b. Partaking of the fruit of the vine.
- 1) The fruit of the vine is a memorial of the blood that He shed. It was necessary for Jesus to shed His blood in order for the New Covenant to become effective (Hebrews 9:15-17).
 - 2) When Jesus said, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood”, He was likely alluding to the time when Moses instituted the covenant with Israel: “Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read in the hearing of the people. And they said, All that Jehovah has said we will do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, sprinkled it on the people, and said, This is the blood of the covenant which Jehovah has made with you according to all these words” (Exodus 24:7-8). The Hebrew writer also alluded to these verses in conjunction with the institution of the New Covenant (Hebrews 9:15).
 - 3) The great truth we must try to comprehend is: “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). Peter reminds us: “Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19).

2. COMMUNION (1 Corinthians 10:16)

When we partake of the cup and the bread, we are sharing with all other Christians in the benefits of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

- a. Paul asks two rhetorical questions regarding the fruit of the vine and the bread. The Corinthians knew that the fruit of the vine which we bless is a *sharing* of **the blood of Christ**, and that the bread which we break is a *sharing* of **the body of Christ**. The word “sharing” or “communion” means to share with someone in something. When we partake of the fruit of the vine and the bread, we are sharing with all other Christians in the benefits of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.
- b. So think of all the benefits in which we all share as children of God – here are just a few:
 - 1) He reconciled us to God: “For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life” (Romans 5:10; Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20).
 - 2) He justified us: “So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men” (Romans 5:18).
 - 3) He redeemed us: “knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18-19).
 - 4) He died to sin, i.e., He paid the sinner's debt: “For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God” (Romans 6:10; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24; 1 Peter 3:18; 1 John 2:2).
 - 5) He rendered the Devil powerless: “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Hebrews 2:14).
 - 6) He brought in the New Covenant (a better covenant): “And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it” (Hebrews 9:15-16).
 - 7) He brought us the benefit of all spiritual blessings: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

3. ONENESS (1 Corinthians 10:17)

All Christians are untied together in one body.

- a. Several versions translate this verse in such a way as to suggest that we are “one bread”. For example, the NKJV says, “For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17). In what sense are we “one bread”? Some of the best versions translate this verse with a better construction. For example, the ISV says, “Because there is one loaf, we who are many are one body, because all of us eat from the same loaf.” Even better is the AMP which reads, “Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.” The point is that all Christians partake of the same bread, which participation demonstrates that we belong to the “one body”.
- b. Indeed, we are all one body; we are all one in Christ (Galatians 3:27-28).
 - 1) However much we may or may not have grown spiritually, we are members of that one body. One cannot grow spiritually and graduate to a place of superiority that puts him outside the body. We were all at one time sinners, but now we have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, and, no matter how spiritually advanced we think we are, we all continue to rely on the blood of Jesus to cleanse us (1 John 1:7-10). Let us meditate on that for a moment – we were all sinners that have been saved by the grace of God. Yes, we are all, as it were, “in the same boat.”
 - 2) This ought to influence the way we think of and regard one another: “In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Philippians 2:3). Since we are one body, we regard each member of the body as useful and necessary (Romans 12:3-5; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27). We are reminded of this oneness when we partake of the one bread and the one cup.

4. SANCTIFICATION (1 Corinthians 10:20-21)

We are a peculiar people - set apart and sanctified unto the service of God.

- a. Imagine for a moment that the elements of drunkenness, corrupt speech, and ungodly behavior become virtually compulsory at every social event (whether with family, friends, or work colleagues) – You would stop attending these “social” events, wouldn't you? People would think you are strange and treat you like a leper, and you would lose any status or influence you may have had in the community, and perhaps even lose your job! This was the challenge the Christians in Corinth faced - Idolatry was a way of life and much socializing took place in the temple of one of the many gods; such also took place in people's homes. One that rejected idolatry was considered an atheist, and was basically cutting off all his social ties.
- b. Having, in the eyes of the society, declared themselves atheists and ostracized themselves from society, the regular assembling of the saints would be all the more meaningful and precious, wouldn't they? And it would highlight and accentuate the **sanctification** of (i) Christians as the people of God, (ii) the assembly, and, (iii) the Lord's Supper. God had called them out of paganism, false religion, and the worship of demons to be a peculiar people - set apart and sanctified unto the service of God.
- c. I think we can meditate on this from time-to-time before we come to the Lord's Table – we have each been called out of the world and have cast aside all the evil customs and practices in which we once walked – God has washed us, justified us, and sanctified us (1 Corinthians 6:11) – we are indeed a holy people (1 Peter 2:9).

5. INTROSPECTION (1 Corinthians 11:28)

It is essential to examine ourselves before partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine.

- a. As we partake of the Lord's Supper, we look back to Christ's saving work on the cross (see point “1. Retrospection”), but it is also essential to look inward (introspection). Paul says that each one must “examine himself” and then – assuming he passes the examination – he may “eat of the bread and drink of the cup”.
- b. I have heard of some brethren that think the examination is to decide whether they are good enough to partake of the elements, and we once had a brother visiting with us for several months and he never partook of the bread and wine. The reason he gave was, “I am not worthy enough”. If this is the type of examination Paul has in mind, would anyone think themselves worthy enough to partake (cp. Luke 17:10)? But actually, Paul tells us what kind of examination he has in mind in the next verse:

- 1) Paul says, "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:29). In the previous verses (23-26) Paul spoke of the proper manner in which one is to partake (as a memorial to the body and blood of the Lord). So each one must examine himself and make sure he is discerning the body, which means to eat the bread while remembering that "this is My body which is broken for you" and to drink the cup while remembering that "this cup is the new covenant in My blood". This is reinforced at the end of verse 25: "This do... in remembrance of me".
- 2) Partaking of the bread and wine is not a vain, empty weekly tradition; it requires a focused mind on the part of the individual partaking of the elements. In fact, the Lord regards it so seriously that He issues these warnings: (i) "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner **will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord**" (1 Corinthians 11:27). If you show disrespect for a nation's flag, you show disrespect for the nation. Likewise, when a person partakes of the bread and cup in an unworthy manner, he shows disrespect for what they stand – the body and blood of Christ. (ii) "For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner **eats and drinks judgment to himself**, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:29). To eat the bread and drink of the cup without meditating upon their meaning will bring the judgement of the Lord down upon that one.
- 3) Those that partake of the elements in an unworthy manner are spiritually sick or even dead! This is the judgment of the Lord. The spiritual sickness and death is God's way of chastening such individuals (1 Corinthians 11:32). The purpose of the chastening is to bring about repentance and restoration.

6. PROCLAMATION (1 Corinthians 11:26a)

In partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine we proclaim His death till He comes.

- a. Paul says, "For *as often* as you eat this bread and drink this cup...". The words "as often" have sparked much controversy regarding the frequency of the Lord's Supper. So why did Paul say "as often" and not tell the Corinthians that it was to be taken every first day of the week? The reason is simple! It wasn't necessary! The Corinthians didn't need to be told *how often* to partake of it – they already knew! There were several problems these brethren had in relation to the Lord's Supper, but frequency wasn't one of them. Regarding the frequency, consider: The apostles taught the disciples about the observance of the Lord's Supper from the very beginning (Acts 2:42), and so one naturally assumes they taught the frequency of the observance at this time. We know the apostles taught the same thing in every church (1 Corinthians 4:17), and since the brethren at Troas came together on the first day of the week, we believe they did so at the apostles' direction (Acts 20:7).
- b. As we partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7), Paul says, "You proclaim the Lord's death till He comes". The verb *kataggello* (proclaim) is present tense, which means that the proclaiming is continual or habitual. To those who witness Christians partaking of the Lord's Supper (whether beings in the physical or spiritual realm) it is a proclamation of Christ's death.
- c. This weekly proclamation of His death is to continue "till He comes". Two things to consider: (i) we proclaim His death, and yet He is alive! (ii) Jesus will return! As to why He is returning is the subject of the next point.

7. ANTICIPATION (1 Corinthians 11:26b)

Christians eagerly anticipate the return of the Lord.

- a. We come to the Lord's Table and proclaim His death each week "til He comes". We anticipate Jesus' return and it excites us! It will be a day unlike any other. (i) Paul says that He will be "revealed from heaven with His mighty angels" (2 Thessalonians 1:7) and, on that day, He will be "glorified in His saints" and "be admired among all those who believe" (2 Thessalonians 1:10). (ii) Those that are in Hades when Christ returns will be reunited with their bodies, which will then be raised up and transformed into spiritual bodies that are suited for that spiritual realm (1 Corinthians 15:41-45). Those that remain alive at His coming will also have their bodies changed (1 Corinthians 15:51-53). (iii) We sing a song titled "O To Be Like Thee". John says, "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2). Thus we shall spend eternity in the presence of our Savior and brother. But heed what John says about this hope we have: "And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure" (1 John 3:3; cp. 2 Corinthians 7:1).

- b. But not everyone is eagerly anticipating Christ's return and, in fact, not everyone believe He will return! But He will return and it will not be a happy day for unbelievers: "... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 **Thessalonians 1:7-9**). If we truly have the heart of God and eagerly anticipate His return, then, like God, we will desire "all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 **Timothy 2:4**). Let us, then, make every effort to share the good news with all whom we come into contact that they also may share in our joyful anticipation of His return.

Conclusion

1. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night He was betrayed (1 **Corinthians 11:23-25**) – it is a memorial in which we remember His body and blood [retrospection]. It is essential for our spiritual health that we partake of those elements in a worthy manner, which means "discerning the Lord's body" (1 **Corinthians 11:27-29**) [introspection]. Primarily, then, we must focus our thoughts on His body and His blood. As we continue in this memorial we proclaim His death till He comes (1 **Corinthians 11:26**) [proclamation]. There are some other aspects of the Lord's Table on which we can meditate at other times.
2. It may be that all these things have simply been a reminder for you, and it may be that we have shared some thoughts that you haven't before considered. I believe that if we regularly meditate on these aspects of the Lord's Table, our hearts and minds will be enriched and it will make partaking of the bread and the cup all the more meaningful.

Copyright©DavidCambridge2016