

Christian Discipleship Guide



“And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.’” (Matthew 28:18-20)

15. The Lord's Supper

One of the ordinances that God instructed us to keep is that of the Lord's Supper, so we need to understand the importance of the Lord's Supper in our lives. The Lord's Supper signifies many spiritual truths that apply to us as Christians today. Although it does not play a part in our salvation, its importance is to act as a memorial of Jesus Christ's death. We need to know what the Bible teaches about the Lord's Supper, its importance, and the attitude with which it should be celebrated and conducted.

The Lord's Supper is intended to bring to our remembrance the death of the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:26). It is intended to bring our attention back to what Christ has done for us. Not only are we to remember His death, but also His suffering. This is signified in the breaking of the bread (1 Corinthians 11:24; Matthew 26:26). The blood, which is able to cleanse us from our sin and save our souls, is pictured in the cup from which we drink during the Lord's Supper. This blood was shed for us according to Mark 14:24 when Jesus said, "... This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many." And, the importance of the shedding of blood is stated in Hebrews 9:22 when Paul writes that "... without shedding of blood is no remission."

There are some religions and denominations that teach that the body and blood of Christ are really consumed when they take communion, but this teaching is not scriptural for the following reasons:

- When Jesus spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood, He was very careful to explain that He was not speaking literally. The Bible tells us that the words Christ spoke unto them "are spirit." They were not to physically eat Him, but to spiritually "partake" of His life and death (John 6:53-63).
- The Jews were commanded not to eat blood, for the blood is the life of the flesh (Leviticus 17:11-12). That is why the Jews were confused with Christ's statements and they said, "This is an hard saying." They were trying to apply literally and physically what Jesus had said. They thought He was teaching them to go against the Old Testament Scripture (John 6:52, 60).
- Would Christ teach us to be cannibalistic? And, if He did teach us that, how would we eat of His body today? He is risen from the dead and ascended to the Father. There is no body available to eat.

But, not everyone should partake in the Lord's Supper. The passage of Scripture that is used to teach the Lord's Supper was written to one of the early churches, and it describes how the Lord's Supper should be conducted. The people that the Apostle Paul was writing to were believers. Lost (or unsaved) people are not included at the Lord's table because they are not saved, and the death and suffering of Christ would not have any significance to them (1 Corinthians 11:20-34).

Regarding the frequency of partaking in the Lord's Supper, the only instructions that God has given us is found in 1 Corinthians 11:25-26. In verse 25 it says, "... and as oft as ye drink it," and verse 26 states, "For as often as ye eat this bread and drink this cup ...," indicating that it is decided by the church leaders when the Lord's Supper should be held. No other passage tells us how often this ordinance is to be celebrated.

The Scriptures give no explicit instructions on how to perform the Lord's Supper. However, unleavened bread should be used as in accordance with the Passover Feast, which the Lord's

Supper typifies (Matthew 26:17; Luke 22:1). Throughout the Bible, leaven symbolizes spoilage, so unleavened bread is to be used. The drink is to be the “fruit of the vine” not “wine.” Throughout the Bible, the “fruit of the vine” means “juice from ripe fresh-squeezed grapes” (Matthew 26:29; Genesis 40:10; Isaiah 65:8). Those believers who wish to participate should be allowed to do so, and as God wants all things done, it should be done decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:40).

There are three ways in which the Lord’s Table should be approached:

1. With fear and trembling: Paul rebukes the Corinthians for taking this event lightly. They had turned it into some kind of feast for satisfying one’s hunger rather than making it a time of remembering the Lord’s death. The Lord’s Supper is a sacred time and it should be approached with a sacred attitude (1 Corinthians 11:17-34).
2. With desire: Jesus desired to eat the Passover with His disciples (Luke 22:15). Although the Lord’s table should be approached with reverence, believers should look forward to the Lord’s Supper as a way of bringing their attention back to what Christ has done for them.
3. With a clean heart: The Bible tells us to examine and judge ourselves when we partake of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:28, 31). This examination and self-judging is to make sure that our relationship with God is right and that we do not participate “unworthily” (1 Corinthians 11:27, 29). 1 Corinthians 11:30 states, “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep (died).” God chastises those who partake that are not clean before Him. The Lord’s Supper is a reminder that our sin was the reason for Christ giving His life for our salvation, and God wants us to be clean when we partake of the Lord’s Supper.

Questions:

1. When we partake of the Lord’s Supper, are we actually eating Jesus’ body and drinking His blood? Explain.

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2. List three ways by which we should approach the Lord’s Supper.

(1) _____

(2) _____

(3) _____

Additional Scripture Verses:

John 6:63; 1 Corinthians 11:26-28.