

# Communing With The Lord

By  
Matthew Allen

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## **From the Author**

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This project is a continuation and outgrowth of a paper I wrote and compiled several years ago concerning Sunday evening communion. That material has gone far and wide as brethren have studied out the issue. I felt it necessary to go back and restudy the issue, rework the text, and add a few pages of study to the text. While it will become obvious that I am in favor of Sunday evening communion, I do respect the conscience of my brethren who may be opposed to the practice. It is my sincere hope that we can work together in peace for the advancement of God's kingdom. May we all work together as we move closer our reward.

Matthew Allen  
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## Lesson 1

### The Purpose and Power of the Lord's Supper

Worship is an eternally important and challenging subject, and it is to be conducted in a manner so as to please God. It involves action on our part and is in no way associated with passiveness. When we gather together, we open our heart to God and recognize His glory as the Creator. It is a time to celebrate God's grace, mercy, and forgiveness, and it is a time when we solemnly remember the price Jesus paid on the cross in the partaking of the Lord's Supper. Throughout the centuries the importance of this part of worship has been stressed. Thomas Campbell said, "New Testament worship ceases when the Lord's Supper is not observed every Lord's Day." It is difficult to overestimate the importance and significance of the Lord's Supper.

#### Understanding the Purpose of the Supper

*The Lord's Supper is a memorial.* Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of Me," Luke 22:19. Paul wrote, "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when He was betrayed took bread, and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, 'This is My body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way also He took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me,'" 1 Corinthians 11:23-25. We eat the bread in memory of His body and drink the fruit of the vine in memory of the blood He shed. It is a solemn, serious occasion where we commemorate the death of Jesus on the cross. In the moments of partaking, we relive in our minds what Jesus experienced that awful day. We can recount the agony in the garden, the sham trials put on by the Jews and Romans, the brutal whipping/beatings that left Him near death, the crown of thorns driven on His head, and the intense agony He felt in every fiber of His human body while on the cross. It was the death of Jesus that made the new covenant possible. Our sins were remitted because of the blood He shed. It is important that we pause and reflect on the extreme price paid on our behalf. Sin has always required the ultimate price. In Old Testament times, those who offered sacrifices had a clear understanding that when they sinned, something had to die to make atonement for their wrong doing. Because of our sin, Jesus had to die. He was the *Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world*, John 1:29.

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***The Lord's Supper is a Communion.*** Paul said, "*The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread,*" 1 Corinthians 10:16-17. Communion can be defined as "sharing with someone in something." In partaking of the Lord's Supper each week, we have a fresh and loving encounter with Jesus. *All believers who come to the table are the Lord's guests and He is the host.*<sup>1</sup> We have communion with Jesus, who is present in spirit while we partake, and we have communion with brethren of like precious faith. Christians pause together to reflect on the blessings we enjoy through Him. Think of it: because of His blood, we walk in the light (1 John 1:7), and have forgiveness of sin, 1 John 1:9. Partaking of the Supper together should remind us that we all stand equal before the cross. It is a time when we lay aside our unique backgrounds and differences so that we may unite with each other and Jesus Christ. No one comes to the cross on a better footing than someone else – we're all equal in our need for the grace of God. While partaking, we unite as one, proclaiming our thankfulness for the sacrifice. It is also a time when we pause to recognize what we share together because of Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection.

### **Some Important Thoughts on our Observance of the Supper**

Does the pattern within the New Testament shed light on the proper observance of the Lord's Supper? 1 Corinthians 11 indicates that it should be done *in a worthy manner*. We read: "*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord,*" 1 Corinthians 11:27. In this verse, the focus is on HOW we partake. Whether or not we are worthy is not under discussion in this context. When we come together for the Lord's Supper, it is to be partaken with respect for the supreme price Jesus paid for our sins. We are to eat the Lord's Supper with the understanding that it imposes certain obligations on us – to live faithfully in service to Jesus Christ. It is not a part of worship to be treated casually. (The casual observance was what Paul condemned in 11:17-22.) Because of this, Paul wrote:

*Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself,*                      1 Corinthians 11:28-29.

The Lord's Supper is a time for self examination. In verse twenty-nine, we note the need of "discerning" the body. Discern means to "recognize or comprehend mentally." The Lord's Supper was given to us in order to bring into

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clear spiritual view our Savior and His sacrifice. It is human nature to forget. As time goes by our remembrance can wane. So each week, we come together to focus our minds on the sacrifice of Jesus. In so doing, we keep our memory clear, straight, and focused. It has been said that as we discern this action in worship, we are connected to the past, give meaning to the present, and are inspired with hope for the future. The context of 1 Corinthians 11 suggests that any thoughtless, careless participation at the Lord's Table is a failure to discern. The seriousness of the occasion cannot be overemphasized because failure to partake with reverence brings condemnation.

The Lord's Supper is an extremely private matter between the Christian and his God. This should be a time where we remember the necessity of living in a way that shows appreciation for this sacrifice. We may take His death for granted more than we would like to admit. Gathering around the table at the beginning of a new week can be like hitting the spiritual reset button, where we bring what is really important back into clear focus. When we partake, it is an opportunity to reflect on whether or not we are truly living for Jesus. "*He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for Him who for their sake died and was raised,*" 2 Corinthians 5:15. We should use it as an opportunity to probe into our lives: *am I engaging in willful sin? Is there a sin that I am unwilling to get out in the open before God? Have I accepted His grace into my life?*

It should be noted that nowhere in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 does Paul teach that the Lord's Supper should be treated as a meal to satisfy one's physical hunger. Some brethren are now writing off the solemnity of the Supper, saying it is a tradition held over from Catholic influences. The problem at Corinth centered on their view of the Lord's Supper being no different from a common meal, and Paul's writing in 1 Corinthians 11 corrects this. The Lord's Supper is not the occasion for social or recreational fellowship dinners. "*If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home — so that when you come together it will not be for judgment,*" 1 Corinthians 11:34. Fellowship meals were not a part of the worship of the first century church.

### **The Power of the Lord's Supper**

When we partake, Christians preach a very powerful sermon: we proclaim the Lord's death. "*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes,*" 1 Corinthians 11:26. James Burton Coffman mentions that the Lord's Supper is a *living sermon*.<sup>2</sup> We announce our participation in the benefits of Jesus' death. In every generation, from the first century until the Lord returns, Christians declare their belief that Jesus died for

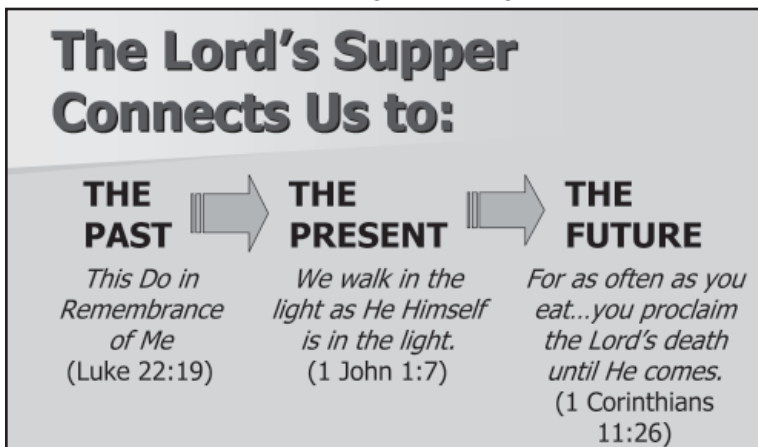
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the remission of their sins. Participation in the Lord's Supper is an affirmation of our belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul wrote: "...*that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,*" 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. We tell the world that our faith in the power of Jesus is alive and secure! And, we declare our faith in His return. Christians will partake of the Lord's Supper *until He returns*. When we eat the Supper we look back at the death of Christ on the cross and forward to the time of His return. By partaking and looking forward to His return, we acknowledge the reality of the coming judgment on mankind. Luke recorded, "*The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now He commands all people everywhere to repent, because He has fixed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom He has appointed; and of this He has given assurance to all by raising Him from the dead,*" Acts 17:30-31.

### Concluding Thoughts

The Lord's Supper is a very special memorial of the death of Jesus Christ for our sins. It was instituted by Jesus Himself, and He expects His disciples to observe it in His memory! The first Christians were devoted in keeping its observance. "*And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers,*" Acts 2:42 ESV. From reading Acts 20:7, "*On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread...*," we see that it was an established practice to partake on the first day of the week.

The Lord's Supper is a constant, regular reminder of Jesus' sacrifice. It is a time for self examination and rededication of our service to God. And it is an opportunity to build fellowship with each other inside the body of Christ. Today's Christian should never lose sight of its significance.





**Questions for Discussion**

1. Define memorial.
  2. What should we remember when partaking of the Lord's Supper?
  3. What has the commission of sin always required?
  4. Define communion.
  5. When partaking of the Lord's Supper, how do we have communion with Jesus?
  6. When partaking of the Lord's Supper, in what ways do we have communion with brothers and sisters in Christ?
  7. Describe how one can partake of the Lord's Supper *worthily*.
  8. What does it mean to *discern* the Lord's body?
  9. Discuss the importance of partaking of the Lord's Supper in a serious manner.
  10. What are some probing questions we can ask ourselves as we prepare to partake?
  11. Was the Lord's Supper intended to be a meal designed to satisfy physical hunger?
  12. What are some things we proclaim when we partake of the Lord's Supper?
  13. What do I hope to learn from this study?
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