

Title: The Sanctity of the Ordinances: The Lord's Supper

Theme: The Lord's Supper is a physical symbol of a spiritual reality: the believer's communion with Christ.

Main Points:

1. The Meaning of The Lord's Supper
2. The Mandate of The Lord's Supper
3. The Method of The Lord's Supper

Introduction:

The four-year-long U.S. Civil War began in April of 1861 and claimed at least 620,000 lives. In July of 1863 was the pivotal battle of Gettysburg, which saw the Union prevail and the Confederacy begin to decline. In that three-day battle, 51,000 people died. Each year on the same plot of land where the real battle played out, reenactors assemble to showcase what happened those fateful days. It occurred to me to ask the question: why do individuals perform live reenactments each year? In my brief research I found that most are simply students of history who have a love for and connection to this conflict. They all have a passion to display what they have found to others. In my reading I also found an opinion piece¹ written last year by a man who laments the "glorification" of war and the "billions of dollars in tourism" that it generates. I found a response to that opinion which declared that "For every reenactor, it is something far more important [than simply a display]. It is connecting one-on-one with the past and experiencing perhaps a part of what their ancestors went through."² So these modern day displays are symbols to memorialize the sacrifices that were made over 150 years ago in Gettysburg, PA.

This morning we will be considering the Lord's Supper and how Scripture presents it as a memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and our participation in the benefits of that payment. **The Lord's Supper is a physical symbol of a spiritual reality: the believer's communion with Christ.**

Last week we noted that: Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only two ordinances of the church. Unfortunately, every denomination seems to have a different understanding of the reason and significance for them. We must always go to Scripture for our faith and practices. We cannot lean on church tradition, the word of Popes or preachers, or even our prejudices.

Last week we mentioned that: Some churches use the word "sacrament" instead of "ordinance." The word "sacrament" comes from the Latin "sacramentum" meaning something sacred or consecrated. The Latin translation of the Bible completed in 405BC used the word "sacramentum" when translating the Greek word "mysterion," which means "mystery." Eventually a sacrament was associated with that which had a secret or mysterious significance.³

As early as the 1600's "Hocus Pocus" was used by and as a term for court jesters and magicians.⁴ The origin of the phrase has been traced to the Latin "Hoc est corpus meum" which in English means: "This is my body." Hundreds of years ago the uneducated peasants of England heard the phrase in church and were told that the bread and wine turned into the actual body and blood of Christ.⁵ They then assumed that the Latin phrase the priest had uttered was a magical incantation.

¹Roger Barbee, "The gross glorification of war — and big business — of reenactments in Virginia," article posted 23 June 2017 at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-gross-glorification-of-war--and-big-business--of-reenactments-in-virginia/2017/06/23/63dff2f8-4c64-11e7-bc1b-fddbd8359dee_story.html?utm_term=.d22a43979ab2; (Accessed 17 March 2018).

²Jay Henson, "Reenactors are doing more than 'playing at war'" article posted 30 June 2017 at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/reenactors-are-doing-more-than-playing-at-war/2017/06/30/e502673c-5c34-11e7-aa69-3964a7d55207_story.html?utm_term=.2befa3f63540; (Accessed 17 March 2018).

³Rolland D. McCune, "Systematic Theology III" (class notes, Detroit Baptist Theological Seminary, Fall 2008), p. 158.

⁴"hocus-pocus," Online Etymology Dictionary. Douglas Harper, Historian. 11 March 2018 article published at <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/hocus-pocus> (Accessed 10 March 2018).

⁵This was true as early as the fifth century according the Roman Catholic Church. See the Catechism http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p2s2c1a3.htm

Another important note about using the word “ordinance” instead of “sacrament” is that many understand a sacrament to be a means of grace, that is, the way or ways God transmits his grace to us. For instance the Catholic Church teaches seven sacraments or means of grace: Baptism, Eucharist, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Anointing of the sick, Marriage, and Holy orders. We know clearly from Ephesians 2 that we are saved by grace that only comes through faith not by anything that you can do. God does not communicate his saving grace through the ordinances.

And finally from last week we answered the question: Why do we limit the ordinances to only two? Because we look to Scripture and see what was ordained by our Lord and commanded to his disciples but also what was confirmed in the founding of the church in the Book of Acts. Only two items meet these criteria: water baptism and the Lord’s Supper. These two symbolize saving truth.

I. The Meaning of The Lord’s Supper

The account of the Last Supper is recorded in each of the Synoptic Gospels. Read Luke 22:7–20. To understand what our Lord is instituting here we must understand what he is about to do the following day on the cross. The setting for the meal is the Jewish Passover. The sacrifice Jesus is about to make is as the ultimate Passover lamb.

A. Symbol of Christ’s Propitiation

Propitiation roughly means “payment of debt.” 1 John 4:10; Hebrews 2:17. In the OT, Jehovah gave the Law. Hebrews 9:22 affirms this, however, Hebrews 10:4, declares that the blood of animals is unable to pay for sin. Remember what John the Baptist said in John 1:29, “Behold, the Lamb of God...” Why did he say that? 1 Corinthians 5:7; 1 John 1:7; Jesus is the great and final Passover Lamb. At the Last Supper, Jesus used the bread and the fruit of the vine to illustrate that he was going to give his body and blood as a sacrifice. Christ made propitiation for sin perfectly fulfilling the OT Mosaic Law.

B. Reminder of The Believer’s Participation

1 Corinthians 10:16 (ESV) ¹⁶ *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?* (“participation” ESV, NIV; “sharing” NASB, HCSB; “communion” KJV) See also Acts 2:42; Galatians 2:9.

As believers we have a part in the crucifixion of Christ: we are pardoned. If I owe a debt of \$100,000,000 (something I could never pay), and Bill Gates comes along and says, “Ben, I know you can’t pay this debt, so I’m going to pay it for you.” What part did I play in this? The part of needy debtor. The same with the Lord’s payment on the cross. When we partake of the Lord’s Supper. We are remembering what our Lord did on our behalf. This is why it is such an important event for a local church. We are celebrating the pardon of a debt only Jesus could pay!

In passing I will mention that there are some erroneous views : Transubstantiation is taught by Roman Catholics. They believe the elements literally become the body and blood of Christ. Consubstantiation is taught by Lutherans, Episcopalians, and others. They believe that while the bread is still bread Christ is physically present “in, with, and under” the elements. The Dynamic View is taught by Reformed groups and others. They believe Christ is spiritually present in the elements.

All of these views try to make the bread and fruit of the vine more than what they are. They are special only because of what they symbolize. There is not some kind of intrinsic spiritual or supernatural value to them.

C. Preaching & Prophecy

While primarily a remembrance, there is a proclamation and prediction involved. 1 Corinthians 11:26

1. Christ died for sinners (Proclaiming the Gospel)

1 Timothy 1:15. How did he save sinners? His death paid for sin. The Lord’s Supper proclaims this.

2. Christ will return (Predicting the Return)

Luke 22:16, 18; 1 Corinthians 11:26

There are many verses that say this. Here are a few: John 14:3; Hebrews 10:37; Revelation 22:20. Within the command to observe the Lord's Supper is a prophecy that our Lord is going to return.

II. The Mandate of The Lord's Supper

A. Authorization

The Lord said to do so. This is imperative. It's a command. Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24

B. Perpetuation

The early church was doing it. (In Jerusalem) Acts 2:42; (In Troas) Acts 20:7; (In Corinth) 1 Corinthians 10:16; The Mandate is clear that believers are to perpetuate this memorial until our Lord returns.

III. The Method of The Lord's Supper

A. Elements

1. Bread represents the body

No bones of Jesus were broken. John 19:33–37; Exodus 12:46; Numbers 9:12

2. Fruit of the Vine represents his blood

“Body and blood represent the Hebrew concept of man on his physical side (and of animals—Heb 13:11). This goes back to the union of the human and divine natures in the one person of the God-man. The Logos had to take to Himself human nature (flesh and blood) in order to die for the sins of the world, with the Logos needed to make this death infinitely efficacious. This is part of the theological explanation of the symbolism of the bread and the cup.”⁶

Matthew 16:17; John 6:53 (This is not the Lord's Supper. It is Jesus telling the unbelievers that they must accept all of him to have eternal life.)

B. Administration

Who may administer the Lord's supper?

1. The Evidence

Acts 2:41–42; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:18; 1 Corinthians 11:33

2. The Considerations

Are there other things that would lead us to believe that only a local church may rightly administer the Lord's Supper?

- a. **The command to observe the ordinance was given, not to individuals, but to a company.**
- b. **Obedience to this command is not an individual act, but is the joint act of many.**
- c. **The regular observance of the Lord's Supper cannot be secured, nor the qualifications of persons desiring to participate in it be scrutinized, unless some distinct organized body is charged with this responsibility.**
- d. **The only organized body known to the New Testament is the local church, and this is the only body, of any sort, competent to have charge of the ordinances. The invisible church has no officers.**
- e. **The New Testament accounts indicate that the Lord's Supper was observed only at regular appointed meetings of local churches, and was observed by these churches as regularly organized bodies.**
- f. **Since the duty of examining the qualifications of candidates for baptism and for membership is vested in the local church and is essential to its distinct existence, the analogy of the ordinances would lead us to believe that the scrutiny of qualifications for participation in the Lord's Supper rests with the same body.**
- g. **This care that only proper persons are admitted to the ordinances should be shown, not by**

⁶McCune, p.167.

open or forcible debarring of the unworthy at the time of the celebration, but by previous public instruction of the congregation, and, if needful in the case of persistent offenders, by subsequent private and friendly admonition.⁷

C. Participants

Who gets to participate when a local church administers the Lord's Supper? Two views:

1. The Two Views

a. Open Communion

This view believes the Lord's Supper is unrestricted. Any and all believers present may participate. However:

1. It assumes an unscriptural inequality between the two ordinances. The Lord's Supper holds no higher rank in Scripture than does Baptism.
2. It tends to do away with baptism altogether. If the highest privilege of church membership may be enjoyed without baptism, baptism loses its place and importance as the initiatory ordinance of the church.
3. It tends to do away with all discipline. When Christians offend, the church must withdraw its fellowship from them. But upon the principle of open communion, such withdrawal is impossible.
4. It tends to do away with the visible church altogether...Open communion logically leads to open church membership.⁸

b. Closed Communion

This view believes the Lord's Supper should be restricted to those that meet some Scriptural qualifications. (There are at least two subcategories here: "closed communion" strictly allows only members of the local church; "close communion" allows those that are members of other churches of like faith)

2. The Evidence

a. Paul broke bread with believers at Troas (Acts 20:7, 11).

b. Paul introduced the Lord's Supper to the church at Corinth (1 Cor 10-11)

3. The Qualifications

a. Regeneration.

Acts 2:41–42; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 11:28.

The very meaning of The Lord's Supper demands the person be saved.

4. An Orderly Walk. (i.e. obedience to Scripture)

Romans 16:17–18; 1 Corinthians 5:1–13; 1 Corinthians 10:14–23; 2 Thessalonians 3:13–15

In addition to these... "Baptism and church membership are inseparable in the NT. Therefore church membership is the NT way of formally or officially guaranteeing one's Christian life and character. Baptism/church membership is the only way a local church can formally and officially have evidence of one's profession of regeneration. It is the only way a local church can officially approve of someone's life and conduct."⁹

D. Frequency

Acts 2:46; Acts 20:7

Conclusion:

Do you have any pictures of loved ones who have passed away? Do these pictures talk to you or communicate with you? Do they somehow bring the person back? No. But they help you to remember them, what they were like and things that they did. They are memorials of the person.

The Lord's Supper is a physical symbol of a spiritual reality: the believer's communion with Christ.

⁷Augustus Hopkins Strong, *The Project Gutenberg EBook of Systematic Theology*, vol 3; pp. 468-469; <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/45283/45283-pdf.pdf> (Accessed March 17, 2018).

⁸Augustus Hopkins Strong, pp. 474-476.

⁹McCune, p. 169.