

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

WORSHIP “The Lord’s Supper”

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

In Acts 20:7 the Bible says, “On the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread.” In the first century, a part of Christian worship was a weekly memorial intended to help people remember the Lord through the supper He had instituted in Matthew 26:28-30. Thank you for joining us today in our study of the Lord’s Supper. This is a subject where there is mass confusion in the religious world. Many people have questions about the Lord’s Supper. How often should we take it? What happens when we do take it? What does the Bible actually say about the supper that Jesus institutes in the New Testament?

During this study of the Lord’s Supper, we will be looking at a text found in 1 Corinthians 11:20-29. Here, Paul reiterated some of the things that the Lord said. But he also, by inspiration, provided further details regarding the Lord’s Supper. As we think about the Lord’s Supper, one of the first things we see in 1 Corinthians 11 is its reverent nature. The Lord’s Supper is a very reverent act of Christian worship. In 1 Corinthians 11:20-22 Paul wrote,

“Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What?! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.”

The Christians in Corinth had turned the memorial of the Lord’s Supper into a common meal. Paul told them that when they came together it was **not** to partake of the Lord’s Supper. His point was, of course, that they **ought** to be coming together for that purpose. Their assembling ought to be for the purpose of remembering the Lord. Paul said that they were arriving at different times (some of them were coming early, and some were coming late). He therefore asked, “Shall I praise you for this?” He answered his own question by saying, “I do **not** praise you!” From this we learn that the Lord’s Supper is intended to be a reverent memorial to Christ. Proverbs 28:14 says, “Happy is the man who is always reverent.” Our lives ought to be reverent—in the sense that everything we do has God in mind so that we can give Him honor and glory. Hebrews 12:28 says that we are to “serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” The purpose of the Lord’s Supper is intended to be reverent, in and of itself. The purpose of this action is to worship God, which is something that must be reverent. According to John 4:24, “God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.” In Revelation 19:10 we are told to worship God only and to serve Him. Psalm 29:2 tells us, “Give unto the Lord the glory due to His name; Worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” Psalm 95:6-7 says, “Come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker. He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.” The very purpose of the Lord’s Supper is intended to be reverent because it gives honor to God, and because by its very nature it exalts the Savior Who died for each one of us. In 1 Corinthians 15:57 we are told, “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus died so

that we could have victory over sin. In 1 Peter 2:24 we read, “He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes we were healed.” Think about what Jesus did for us as He endured the pain, suffering, and agony of the cross, and as He eventually even died for us. When we consider all of that in light of the Lord’s Supper, it becomes clear why this part of our worship is intended, by its very nature, to be reverent. In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we are told that God “made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

However, we should partake of the Lord’s Supper in a reverent manner not only because of its nature, but also because of others around us. We should think about others as we remember the Lord’s death, and consider how **our** actions might affect **them**. Will what we do help them worship God correctly, too? Or, will our actions hinder them? In 1 Corinthians 11:21 Paul said, “In eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.” The Corinthian Christians’ irreverence in partaking of the Lord’s Supper caused others not to be able to worship God acceptably. What chaos that must have caused in the first century when you walked in on an act of worship and it appeared to be more like a common meal or a party! That is **not** the way God intended for the Lord’s Supper to be observed! In worship we need to do things that will help others remember the Lord’s death. For example, there ought never to be a place in worship for talking, laughing, or joking. That is not what worship is meant to be. It is not a time to write notes, play, day dream, or tinker with your cell phone. Instead, it should be a time when, through our reverence, we give God the glory and help others to do likewise.

However, not only should we recognize the reverent nature associated with the Lord’s Supper, but we also should remember that there are certain requirements that accompany the Lord’s Supper. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 we find those requirements, as given by the apostle Paul.

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 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.’”

This text shows us that, by the very nature of the Lord’s Supper itself, there are certain requirements associated with that part of our worship. In this passage, certain specifics are given. And when we look at what the rest of the Bible says regarding authority and doing what God has commanded, we see the principle that we are to do only what God has said for us to do during the Lord’s Supper. The Bible teaches that we are to always do only what God has told us to do. Consider the following passages in this regard. In 1 Corinthians 4:6 Paul said, “Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written.” The principle from this passage is: “Do not think beyond what is written.” If God has not commanded or allowed something (that is, if we cannot find it in the Scriptures), then we must not even **think** about doing it! From 2 John 9 we learn that certain people had not followed the commandments of God, and as a result had gone beyond the doctrine of Christ. We must stay with what God has said! In Revelation 22:18-19 we learn that we are not to add to or delete from God’s Word, lest the divine condemnations found within Scripture fall upon us. We are to do only what God has commanded. Another passage which teaches that we must do only what the Scriptures say is Proverbs 30:6, “Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.” This passage is very clear. We are not to add to God’s Word, lest He have to rebuke us! From this passage, we learn two things that will

happen to us if we add to God's Word. First, if we do that, God **will** rebuke us. And second, we will have lied—because God did not authorize us to do what we did. It is always a tragedy when we do something that God did not authorize us to do. In Leviticus 10:1-2, Nadab and Abihu “offered profane fire before the Lord, which He had not commanded them.” The tragedy occurs in verse 2, where we are told, “So fire went out from the Lord and devoured them, and they died before the Lord.” It always is tragic when we do something that God has not authorized us to do. In 1 Samuel 15:22-25 we read of King Saul, whom God had told to destroy the Amalekites so that nothing of them remained. But the people of Israel kept back some of the best of the Amalekites' possessions, in addition to sparing the Amalekites' king. When Samuel asked Saul about this, he said that the people had done what they did so they could sacrifice to God. In verse 22, Samuel said, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams.” Saul lost his kingship as a result of his sinful actions. It was a terrible tragedy. The principle here is that there are requirements that we must follow when we worship God.

There also are requirements in regard to the practice of the Lord's Supper. In Matthew 26:26 Jesus said, “Take, eat, for this is My body.” In Matthew 26, Jesus authorized the eating of unleavened bread, which, to Christians, was to serve as a memorial of His body. By the fact that Jesus authorized the use of unleavened bread, He excluded everything else. We cannot use biscuits, pie, or cake on the Lord's Table because such things are not authorized. The unleavened bread represents the body of Jesus. Christ also authorized for use in the Lord's Supper the fruit of the vine (what we today refer to as grape juice) as a memorial of His shed blood. In Matthew 26:28 Jesus said, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Thus, today when we use unleavened bread as a memorial of the Lord's body, and when we use grape juice to represent His blood, we have observed the Lord's Supper the way that God wants us to.

In addition, there are other practical requirements that relate to partaking of the Lord's Supper. We must partake of the Lord's Supper in such a way that it causes us to remember the Lord's body and His blood. We must engage our minds so that we remember what the Lord did for us. Perhaps during the Lord's Supper we could read a passage from the Bible (like Isaiah 53, Psalm 22, or Matthew 27) about these things. Instead of letting our minds wander, we should instead think about the Lord's death. Perhaps we could read through the text of a song that concentrates on Christ's death. We need to do something to ensure that, practically speaking, we meet the requirement of remembering the Lord's death.

Another principle about the Lord's Supper that is found in 1 Corinthians 11:26 relates to its regularity. The Lord's Supper is a regular, **weekly** remembrance, as Scripture points out. Paul wrote, “As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.” Here we see an “oftenness” connected to the Lord's Supper. In other words, it was something to be done “often.” In this passage, we are not given an exact requirement regarding this “oftenness,” but other passages about the Lord's Supper teach us how often we are to partake of it. The Bible teaches that the Lord's Supper must be a part of our worship **every** first day of the week. How do we know that? There is a divine example found in Acts 20:7—“On the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread.” **How many weeks have a first day?** Every one of them does, of course. Thus, there is no specific week singled out in the Bible. Christians met on a regular, weekly basis—on the first day of each week—for the purpose of breaking bread. This same type of language was used in the Old Testament, and the Jews understood it perfectly. In Exodus 20:8 we read, “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.” The Bible does not say specifically, “Remember every Sabbath.” But how did the Jews interpret God's

command in Exodus 20:8? They remembered every Sabbath that came around. Compare these two biblical passages: “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy” and “On the first day of the week, the disciples came together to break bread.” The same type of language is used in both places. In the case of the Sabbath, we clearly understand that God wanted the Jews to observe **every** Sabbath. Yet when it comes to the Lord’s Supper, people seem to have a hard time understanding what God meant. Why? The Bible actually makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 16 that we are to partake of the Lord’s Supper **every** first day of the week. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 we read, “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” The Revised Standard Version (and other versions, too) say(s), “On the first day of **every** week...,” which more properly translates the Greek text of the passage. This, therefore, is something that is to be done on the first day of every week. If we put all of this together, here is what we find. From Acts 20:7 we see that Christians came together “to break bread”—that is, to partake of the bread and the fruit of the vine in order to remember the Lord’s death. From 1 Corinthians 11:20ff., we learn that the Lord’s Supper was taken “often.” And from 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 we note that the early Christians partook of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of every week. That is how we should partake of the Lord’s Supper today. When we understand its regularity, we will want to do it “until He comes.” We are told in 1 Corinthians 11:26 that we are to “proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.”

Another aspect of the Lord’s Supper is the fact that it is to serve as a remembrance of the Lord’s death. Notice again 1 Corinthians 11:24-26 where Paul wrote,

“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.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes.’”

Scripture reminds us that we must be cognizant of what God has done for us. The importance of “reminders” is found throughout the Bible. Peter mentioned such things several times throughout 1 and 2 Peter. He said in 1 Peter 1:12, for example, that he was writing to put Christians “in remembrance” of certain things. He wanted people to remember items that were important. We must realize the importance of remembering what God has done for us. When it comes to partaking of the Lord’s Supper, we must remember the broken body of our Lord and Savior. This is something that no child of God should ever want to forget. Think about all that happened to Jesus. He was seized and bound by evil men, who took Him to the Praetorium, placed a crown of thorns on His head, spit in His face, slapped Him, and beat Him with a flagrum (similar to a cat-o-nine-tails) on His back. Can you imagine what Christ’s body looked like after that? His flesh was torn and mutilated. And it is likely that you could see His spine. We need to think about these things as a gruesome reminder of all that Jesus endured because they remind us of just how much He loved each one of us. After being beaten, He then was led up to the hill of Golgotha, where His hands and feet were nailed to a cross. In agony, He hung on His cross, suffered, and died. His body was broken for each and every one of us. As we break a piece of the unleavened bread and place it in our mouths, we should remember the horrible agony that Christ endured, and how much He loved us. This should not be a time when we think about other things. Instead, we should think about what the Son of God did for us—so that we will not have to bear the brunt of sin, and so that we could have the hope of Heaven. There is nothing at all wrong with getting emotional during the Lord’s Supper because it is at such a time that we realize what Christ did for us.

We also need to remember that it was on the cross that Christ shed His blood for us. Jesus said of the grape juice, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins" (Mt. 26:28). The grape juice serves as a reminder of all that God did for us through Christ. Zechariah 13:1-2 predicted that there would one day a "fountain opened up for cleansing." In John 19:34 when that Roman soldier pierced the side of Christ, blood and water came pouring out. The blood of Jesus is what cleanses us from our sins. In Revelation 1:4-5 we are told that we are "washed in the blood of the Lamb." Christ's blood is what cleanses us. In Acts 22:16, Saul was told, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." We are baptized into Christ's death, as Romans 6:1-4 explains. Thus, as we partake of the grape juice in the Lord's Supper, we need to remember all that the blood of Jesus represents, and how that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 19:22). We need to remember that Leviticus 17:11 says that "the life is in the blood," and that we can live through Jesus, Who gives us true life, because of the blood that He shed for each one of us. In the Lord's Supper, we find a reminder of all that God has done for us.

However, in the Lord's Supper we also have a time for reflection. In 1 Corinthians 11:27-28 Paul said, "

"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. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

We must reflect on why we are partaking of the Lord's Supper. We must reflect on the fact that we must partaking of the Supper in the correct manner. The Christians in Corinth were partaking of the Lord's Supper in an improper manner. They were not waiting on one another. Evidently they were not concentrating on what the Lord had done for them. And they had turned the Lord's Supper into a common meal. There were several things that were out of order. So, Paul reminded them that they had houses in which to eat common meals. We need to reflect on the manner in which we partake of the Lord's Supper. We need to ask ourselves if we are doing it for the right reason. We need to ask ourselves if we are doing things according to Scripture. And we need to ask ourselves if we are doing what we are doing in a reverent, organized fashion so that it causes people to think about the death of Jesus. Proverbs 23:7 says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." Are we truly thinking about the death of Jesus when we partake of the Lord's Supper? And, from the context of Paul's comments in 1 Corinthians 11:27-28, we know, too, that we must reflect on ourselves. Are we worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper? Are our lives what they ought to be? In 2 Corinthians 13:5 we are told, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith." Are we living the right kind of life? If we have sin in our lives, we should not want to take the Lord's Supper because that would be trampling on the Son of God and putting Him to open shame (Heb. 6:6). We need to ensure that we are thinking about our own lives to ensure that we are doing things the way we need to be doing them. Plus, we must be thinking about Christ's broken body, and all that He has done for us.

In regard to the Lord's Supper, we also need to examine today some of the innovations that people have introduced, as well as some of the changes that they have made in this solemn act of worship. Some religious groups, for example, have the Lord's Supper once a month, on Easter, or on Christmas. But the Bible teaches us that we are to do **only** what God has authorized. Where do we find the authorization in Scripture to partake of the Lord's Supper only once a month? Where do we find the authorization in Scripture to partake of the Lord's Supper only a manmade holiday like Christmas? Where do we find the author-

ization in Scripture to partake of the Lord's Supper only on Easter, which is another man-made holiday? Where do we find the authorization in God's Word to do such things? It simply is not there. But we **do** find authority in the Bible to meet together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). We are to do it "often" (1 Cor. 11:26), which is defined as the first day of **every** week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Can we understand this? Of course we can. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 we are commanded to give "on the first day of the week." Everyone understands that to mean that we are to take something out of our wallets to give to God. And everywhere you go, religious groups do exactly that "on the first day of the week." Why is it that religious groups understand the frequency of giving, yet fail to understand the frequency of the Lord's Supper? The same type of language is used, which means that we must be very careful to do these things the way God has commanded us to do them.

Another addition to the Lord's Supper that is not found in the Bible relates to the fact that, at times, during the Lord's Supper people will sing a song. While singing is an act of worship, we must inquire as to the authorization for singing during the Lord's Supper. In Scripture we do not find two separate acts of worship combined. For example, while I am praying, would it be acceptable for someone else to stand up and start preaching? Not at all. We must do **only** that which we are **authorized** to do. And in the New Testament we do not find singing being carried out during the Lord's Supper. That is something that is not authorized. Also, can we really say that we are being considerate of others as they are partaking of the Lord's Supper if we are singing while they are trying to concentrate on the broken body of Christ? What may **help** one person might **hinder** someone else. The first problem is that singing during the Lord's Supper is not authorized in Scripture. The second problem is that by singing, we may be (just as the Christians were in 1 Corinthians 11) hindering someone else as they are trying to partake of the Lord's Supper in a scriptural fashion.

The Lord's Supper is a special memorial that Jesus Himself established, and is something that we do in order to give glory and honor to God through our remembrance of Jesus' death. When we think about the Lord's Supper, it does indeed remind us of how much Jesus loves us. We want you to know today that God loves you immensely. The very existence of the Lord's Supper is a reminder of that fact. Jesus left Heaven to come to Earth to die for us. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 Paul wrote, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." When Jesus left the heavenly realm, He gave up that which we are trying to achieve! Why did He do that? He did it because He loves us. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (Jn. 3:16). You can know that God loves you because you can see it in Christ's life and actions.

Perhaps you have never obeyed the Gospel in order to become a Christian. We want you to know today that the love of God commands and encourages you to obey the Gospel. What does it mean to become a Christian so that you can partake of the Lord's Supper? The Bible teaches that in order to become a Christian, we first must hear the Word of God. Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Once we have heard the Word of God, we then must believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In John 8:24 Jesus said, "Unless you believe that I am He, you will surely die in your sins." Then we must repent. In Luke 13:3 Jesus said, "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish." We also must confess Christ as our Savior. In Acts 8:37 the Ethiopian nobleman made the good confession, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And we must be baptized in water for the forgiveness of our sins. In Acts 2:37, the Jews cried out, "Men and breth-

ren, what shall we do?" Peter's answer was, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Do you appreciate all that Jesus did for you? If so, and you are **not** a Christian, please obey the Gospel today. If you **are** a Christian, we want to encourage you to renew your desire to partake of the Lord's Supper in a manner that will glorify the Son of God. May God help each one of us to do exactly that.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “THE LORD’S SUPPER”

1. According to 1 Corinthians 11:26, what is one of the reasons that Christians partake of the Lord’s Supper?
2. In the Lord’s Supper, what emblem represents Christ’s body?
3. In the Lord’s Supper, what emblem represents Christ’s blood?
4. According to 1 Corinthians 11:20-29, what had happened in the church in Corinth in regard to the Lord’s Supper?
5. According to Acts 2:42, what did first-century Christians do?
6. One thing about which Christians should think when they partake of the Lord’s Supper is found in 1 Corinthians 15:57. What is it?
7. What is presented in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25?
8. What significant event (related to the Lord’s Supper) occurred in Matthew 26?
9. According to Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 4:6, what would be wrong with observing the Lord’s Supper on any day other than Sunday?
10. Isaiah 53:5 contains something about which the Lord’s Supper should remind us. What is it?
11. According to 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, how often are acts of worship such as giving and the Lord’s Supper supposed to be observed?
12. Why did God send fire from Heaven to slay Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1-2)?
13. What is the principle involved in the account of Nadab and Abihu’s deaths?
14. Why, according to Acts 20:7, did the disciples assemble on the first day of the week?
15. What important point about the Lord’s Supper is made in 1 Corinthians 11:27-29?
16. According to the principle contained in Hebrews 12:28, how is our worship to God supposed to be carried out?
17. According to 1 Corinthians 11:25, what is another reason that Christians partake of the Lord’s Supper?
18. In Matthew 26:28, what did Jesus say regarding the grape juice used in the Lord’s Supper?
19. What important point about the Lord’s Supper was Paul making in 1 Corinthians 11:27-28?