

# A Study of the Lord's Supper

(A Concordant Study of God's Word)

New International Version

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*God's Word instructs us to partake in the Lord's Supper. Further, it instruct frequency, respect and participation en group. These teaching will, therefore, not be explicated. Rather, what does participation mean? Are we able from Scripture to determine the true nature of the sacrifice? Who is empowered to participate and is there a hierarchical mandate as to whom may serve the eucharist?*

## **How important is the Lord's Supper?**

*The first Lord's Supper was celebrated on the occasion of the Passover. This was by no means coincidental. It was God's purpose in Christ to fulfill the Passover by offering up His Son on it. The first Lord's Supper was the last Passover Supper. What began in Moses' time continues yet altered by the fulfillment of the Passover. As the first Passover was important, so important that a curse was brought against those who despised it (**see Numbers 9:13**), so the Supper of Christ, the Messianic Banquet, as the fulfillment of the Passover is no less important.*

## **What is the Lord's Supper?**

### **Luke 22: 17-20—Matthew 26:26—Mark 14:22-25 (Christ's presence "is".)**

*"Jesus did not tell His disciples that the wine or the bread ought to be considered as a picture of or symbol of Himself. Jesus knew full well that what He was doing would someday become a controversy within the church. Knowing this He allowed His hearers and readers to "know" the words as He had so often done with His parables. Know the words. 'He who has ears let him hear.' That being the case, we must take those words and digest them as we do the bread and the wine. He chose not to take us into a private room as He did a few, select times with His disciples, and explain the meaning of His words. He did, however, by His Holy Spirit, amplify the meaning through the Apostle Paul in several of Paul's epistles. I believe that we need to let the words stand as meat for thought but fully complimented by the additional course of the epistles."*

### **1 Corinthians 11: 29 (Discerning Christ's body and blood.)**

"For anyone who eats and drinks without **recognizing** the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself."

ο γαρ εσθιων και πινων αναξιος κριμα εαυτω εσθει και πινει μη **διακριων** το σωμα του κυριου

**διακριων** verb - present active participle - nominative singular masculine

diakrino dee-ak-ree'-no: to contend, make (to) differ(-ence), discern, doubt, judge, be partial, stagger, waver.

*"The key to this passage is the word **διακριων**. Some translate this to mean (not) discerning the sacrifice of the body (Christ's death on the cross and His putting away of our sin by the shedding of blood, the sacrifice of His body as God required for our sins.)*

This is what “leads to damnation.” Others translate this to mean (not) discerning the nature of the bread as both ‘the’ body of the Sacrifice as well as the ‘result’ of the sacrifice. This will “lead to damnation” since unrecognized or tolerated sin on our part demeans the “body of Christ” and the “sacrifice.” From the context of the following passages in 1 Corinthians 30 – 32, it appears that abuse had been going on for some time in Corinth and that, in Paul’s estimation, sickness, disease, even death had resulted from a “disrespect” and “abuse” of the Lord’s Supper. Whether that abuse had been a disregarding of the “body and blood” or the “what the body and the blood meant” is, I believe, difficult to discern (διαζῆινον) from the context. I am no Greek scholar, but it appears that Paul was very much concerned with the abuse in general rather than specific. He cites unfairness, greed and gluttony among the bad behaviors evinced by the Corinthian congregation. The result of a poor practice of celebrating the Lord’s Supper was paramount in his concerns. Contextually it might be inferred that he would have had a different focus had he been specifically concerned with a διαζῆινον for the “physical body” of the sacrifice. Paul often goes into great detail on doctrinal specifics when the door of abuse is opened. I don’t see that here. However, my reading and understanding of this passage and those surrounding it are in no way “gospel.” This is for you to διαζῆινον based on your reading of the epistle; and your meditations and prayer over its meaning.

### **How did the early church celebrate the Lord’s Supper?**

Doubtless it was far different from the simple wafer and demitasse of wine we partake of today. In Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians he scolds them for the way they were eating the supper. Obviously they were partaking of more than bread and wine. They were eating, some to gluttony. In Jude 12 the term “agape” feast is used. These were love feasts or a sharing of food and fellowship. It seems that eating in the days of the early church was a big deal. In many respects we’ve lost the special place that God has given food in our lives. We snack and eat solo often. There is little feasting and no fellowship in that. I believe that God chose the meal to be the time to celebrate this special fellowship because of the esteem He wished us to have for food. How sad it is that we’ve lost that esteem. Modern “communion” seems rather empty in comparison to the sharing and eating that the early Christians partook in. And, perhaps, that’s why the focus of the church has been so narrow as to how we are to view the Lord’s Supper. Although we point to fellowship in our doctrine there is little to clue the average parishioner that any fellowship is really taking place. Sit a few people around a table and pass the food and you’ve got fellowship. Stand in a line at an altar and you’ve got accountability and little more. It’s seems pretty understandable that our focus over the centuries has come to bear on the nature of the wine and the bread. What else is there to focus on? Where there is no feast and little evidence of love or sharing, it is natural for the focus to be on the only thing our eyes can see, a small container of wine and a tasteless wafer. Give folks a couple of millennia and they’ll come up with a variety of doctrines to explain what they’re looking at. Pass the potatoes and they’ll identify with the feast and the sharing every time. Comfortable in our doctrine we despise the latter less people actually begin enjoying the experience and focusing on the non-doctrinal nature of the feast and the love.

### **1 Corinthians 11: 27-33 (Entering Into Communion.) Read these verses.**

Whenever we enter into a place that is reserved for something extraordinary we enter with caution, perhaps a bit of trepidation but certainly not without anticipation. When we

*commune with fellow believers it ought to be no different. Remember the last time that you visited someone you had not seen for a while. How inappropriate it would be to nonchalantly barge into their home, make no eye contact, mumble or track your muddy shoes over their carpet. In like manner it is inappropriate for a Christian to enter into a communion relationship with his Lord and the His Body in such a manner. Nonchalance has no place in such a communion. Rudeness, while never acceptable, is deplorable. As we would respect our host as a guest in their home, so too we should respect Christ and His Body. Obviously the Corinthians were guilty of disrespect. However, don't confuse disrespect with anticipation. As you would anticipate meeting your host with a smile and a kind word of thanksgiving, so too the Communion of Saints. A Communion meal is not an ordinary meal. It is a special commemorative meal wherein we dwell in the memory of our blessed Savior who shed His blood and offered His body up for us. While not somber, it is sober. Yet sober need not dwell uncomfortably with a smile. Breaking bread and sharing the cup with fellow believers is unique. There is no other experience quite like it. I am sure that Christ intended it to be so. It is, therefore, a place of extraordinary fellowship and you and I ought to treat it with a mixture of humble respect and glad expectation as we anticipate the grand reunion in Heaven when all the saints will continually sup at His table.*

These are my reflections on the Communion of Saints, the sharing of Christ's body and blood as we remember our Savior. The only advice that I can give you is this: don't dwell on how you might parse this information every time you break the bread and drink of the cup. Christ didn't offer up Himself that you might continually discern the meaning of the sacrifice. The meaning is apparent and ought to be present like a pleasant day in our lives. We don't look up into a blue sky to divine its blueness. We simply look up and soak it in. This is my advice to you on the presence of Christ's Body and Blood. The debate over the centuries has diminished the comfort and satisfaction of our communion with fellow believers to the point where we all too often focus on the "how" when Christ gave us this as a gift and not a puzzle.

In and with Christ,

Mark Brunner