

The Lord's Supper At Imprint Church

*This document is to explain why and how we celebrate The Lord's Supper at Imprint Church. **To begin, please read Mark 14:22-26 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-29.** The Lord's Supper is also found in Matthew 26 and in Luke 22.*

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE LORD'S SUPPER?

It is worth noting that Jesus establishes the Lord's Supper during the Passover Feast while he was with the disciples during His earthly ministry. The background is Exodus 12. The Passover Feast was ordained by God for the Jews to remember and celebrate their deliverance from slavery in Egypt. In the story of the ten plagues that God struck against the people of Egypt, the final plague on the Egyptians was the loss of the firstborn of all the life in Egypt. Exodus 12:12 states that God is executing His judgment. To escape God's judgment, the Israelites were commanded to take the blood of the lamb and sprinkle it on the door posts. This shed blood was a sign to the angel of the Lord who would "pass over" the house with the blood spread on the door post and not bring God's judgment. Thus everyone in the home was spared. In this way, the background of The Lord's Supper is substitutionary in nature — the shed blood of an animal for the life of the people.

WHAT HAPPENED DURING THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Jesus broke bread and gave it to the disciples to eat. The broken bread foreshadowed the brokenness of His body due to the cruel nailing to the cross. King David, in Psalm 22, and the prophet Isaiah in chapter 53, had both prophesied of the great physical and mental suffering that Jesus would endure. Jesus told the disciples "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24 ESV).

Jesus then speaks of a New Covenant (Mark 14:24) as He introduces the cup to the disciples. He says, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:25 ESV). The poured-out wine, which Jesus and His friends drank that night, was a fitting symbol of the blood that would be shed the following day. As the Jews were to choose a perfect lamb for the Passover meal (and their means of redemption) so Jesus, the perfect Son of God — "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world," as John the Baptist called Him in John 1:29 — became ALL sinners' redemption.

Jesus and the disciples were in the midst of celebrating God's deliverance from slavery and He establishes a celebration/remembrance of God's deliverance from sin. When Jesus makes his statements, he is saying that his death is a new sacrifice offered to God. No more sacrificial victims need be killed, only bread broken and shared, wine poured out and shared. Jesus' sacrificial death is also a covenant-making event. It marks a new act of redemption and begins a new relationship between God and the people — one that supersedes the old. It creates a new community gathered around his table. It is probable that Isaiah 53:12 also forms the backdrop of Jesus' statement about his blood poured out for the "many" ("...He poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12 ESV).

The sacrifice of a lamb, required by the Old Covenant, was terminated, having fulfilled its purpose (Hebrews 8:8-13.) The one-time sacrifice of Christ, God's Passover Lamb, established a New Covenant for people forever. This new covenant, in which we receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Christ's shed blood and broken body, is celebrated as we remember Him in the Lord's Supper. By saying those words, Jesus had just broken over a thousand years of tradition, completely rewriting the meaning and order of the Passover meal. And in doing so, He was saying He was the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies.

This is what Paul means when he says "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 ESV).

Contrasts Between Passover And The Lord's Supper

Celebration of the Law	Celebration of the Kingdom
Festival celebrating God's people (Jews)	Meal celebrating God's new people (the Church)
Association: deliverance from slavery	Association: redemption from sin & the New Covenant
Looks at the Exodus	Looks at the cross

WHY DO WE TAKE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

The Apostle Paul explains why in 1 Corinthians 11.

1. It is a REMINDER (vs. 24)

"Do this in remembrance of me." We remember the shed body and blood of Jesus each time we partake.

2. It is a STATEMENT OF FAITH (vs. 26)

When we eat and drink, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Therefore, the Lord's Supper is designed for believers in Jesus — or for those seriously seeking Jesus.

WHAT ARE THE GUIDELINES OF THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Many churches have traditions that they observe, but there is only one biblical guideline for The Lord's Supper: we are to examine ourselves before going to the table. In 1 Corinthians 11:28-29 we are told that before we partake in the Lord's Supper, we are to evaluate our own lives and get right with God. We do this in two ways. One, we think about 1 John 1:9 and take inventory of areas of our lives where we need forgiveness, and confess those sins. Two, we evaluate our relationships with other believers so that we can approach the Lord's table with the righteousness that comes from the broken body and blood of Christ.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

- *Does the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of the Lord, as some churches teach?*
 - No. The Bible teaches that this is a symbol of our faith. In the original situation of Jesus with the Twelve disciples, Christ's reference to the bread and the cup as "my body... my blood" (in Mark 14:22-24) would have been recognized immediately as symbolic. The use of symbolism was already a feature of the Passover meal. Therefore there was no question of whether the bread and cup were actually the body and blood of Jesus. The living Jesus stood before them.
 - They are visible signs and seals of something internal and invisible, by means of which God works in us through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- *Is it restricted to a certain style, place, or ceremony?*
 - No. The only guideline is that we are told is "as often as you..." in 1 Corinthians 11:26. And in Acts 2, the did this "house to house..." (vs. 46).
 - It is important to note that ceremony is OK. If churches decide to have a ceremony as part of their celebration, that is perfectly acceptable. But it can also be informally given.
- *Do you have to be a Christian to partake in the Lord's Supper?*
 - This is not something we "guard." The Lord's Supper is a personal invitation to anyone who wants to symbolically receive the broken body and shed blood of forgiveness of the Savior, Jesus Christ. Why would someone partake in the Lord's Supper if they were not a Christian? It's a symbol and we do not receive forgiveness through it.
- *Do you have to be baptized?*
 - This questions stresses the important role baptism plays in one's public profession of faith. Salvation is by faith, but baptism is a public proclamation of salvation, and an act of obedience to Christ. Like the rules governing closing the Lord's Supper to believers only, the rule of being baptized first is not commanded in Scripture. However, it does reflect the pattern set by the early Christians, who were baptized immediately after believing. We would encourage people to be baptized as soon as they receive Christ as their Savior and then celebrate communion with great joy.

- *Does partaking in the Lord's Supper wash away my sins?*
 - No. It's an outward symbol of our faith.
- *Do you have to be a member of the church to partake in the Lord's Supper?*
 - No. Membership is debated anyway in Scripture. Each church must decide how they will administer the Lord's Supper. Once again, closing the Lord's Supper to members of a church is a way to make sure someone is a believer before they receive it. Since the Lord's Supper does not wash sins away or give any type of "spiritual benefit," there's no need to close it. At Imprint Church we open the Lord's Supper to anyone who is seeking Jesus and responding on their own. Anyone is welcome to take it.
 - Some may ask about 1 Corinthians 11:27 and receiving it in "an unworthy manner." However, this is referring to the manner in which a person partakes of the bread and cup, not to his or her personal worthiness of receiving the cup. No one is really "worthy" to commune with God; it is only by virtue of the shed blood of Christ that we have been made worthy. The manner of partaking becomes unworthy when certain believers are excluded (verse 21), when participants refuse to share (verse 21), when drunkenness is involved (verse 21), when the poor are humiliated (verse 22), when selfishness is promoted (verse 33), or when the gathering is viewed as merely a meal to satisfy hunger (verse 34).

We offer the Lord's Supper at most of our larger Gatherings at Imprint Church. We know that this is more than just a memorial to remember Jesus' death and resurrection. The Lord's Supper is also a declaration of one's continual dependence upon Christ's life and a regular reminder of His soon return. This the best apologetic for our church celebrating it as often as we gather together.