

Study Six



The Lord's Supper

Read the lesson carefully, and fill in the Bible references before coming to the study.

The Lord's Supper is one of the most important parts of our worship, but what is it all about? What does it mean? What should be going through our minds while we eat the bread and drink the wine?

The Lord's Supper is a service of thanksgiving. On the last occasion Jesus ate with His disciples He gave thanks for the bread and wine they were eating. He said that bread and wine were to be the symbols of His body and blood, and so the Lord's Supper was instituted (Luke 22:14-20). When we take part in the Lord's Supper *we also* give thanks, and for a very special reason – Christ gave His body and shed His blood for us!

Let us begin by turning to 1 Corinthians 11:23-31, where the events of that last meal are again recorded for us. Fill in the relevant verses below.

1. Looking Back to Christ

At the Lord's Supper we especially remember the death of Jesus for our sins. He tells us to take the bread and wine in remembrance of the time when He gave His life for us.

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1 Corinthians 11:23-25

The bread and wine represent Christ. He cannot be physically present in the bread and wine, for He is risen and His body is in Heaven. As we receive the bread and wine we remember that Jesus is the Bread of Life (Eternal Life) and we feed on Him by faith.

2. Looking Outward and Forward

Whenever we eat bread and drink wine at the Lord’s Supper we
(a) “proclaim” the Lord’s death (b) “until He comes”.

1 Corinthians 11:26

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The Lord’s Supper is an announcement of the Gospel in actions and words. This is primarily for our own encouragement as Christians, but it should remind us to look outward and “proclaim” Christ to others.

The Lord’s Supper also points us to the return of Jesus. We receive the symbols of bread and wine “until He comes.” When He comes, we shall no longer need a reminder of His dying love. We shall be present with Him, and will eternally sing, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain”.

Revelation 5:12

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3. Looking Inwards

No-one should participate in the Lord’s Supper carelessly or lightly. The symbols should be taken thoughtfully, remembering the sacred Person they represent (1 Corinthians 11:27-31). We should come to the Supper in true repentance – searching our hearts and examining ourselves before we eat the bread and drink the wine.

1 Corinthians 11:28

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4. Looking Around Us

The Lord’s Supper is a family meal, so it is not to be eaten in isolation. Our family in Christ is around us. Jesus died for us personally, but He also died for our Christian brothers and sisters.

In the early church, the Lord’s Supper was set in the context of a church meal. Today churches emphasise the “fellowship” aspect of the Lord’s Supper by:

- a) Joining together with each other in this act of remembrance.
- b) Praying for one another, especially those in need.
- c) Often acknowledging new members at the Lord’s Supper.

The oneness of the church family is emphasised at the Lord’s Supper.

1 Corinthians 10:17

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5. Looking Onwards

If the Lord's Supper is to be meaningful, it must result in a renewed commitment to Christ. It speaks to us of the cost of our salvation, and challenges us again to take up the cross and to follow Jesus.

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Matthew 16:24

6. Finally

There are many wrong views about the Lord's Supper. Some say the bread and wine become Christ's body and blood, and Christ is said to be sacrificed again. They call this "The Mass". But there is no need for further sacrifices because our Saviour died for all our sins – past, present, and future. When we fail in our daily endeavour to please Him, His blood goes on cleansing us from all sin.

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1 John 1:7

Jesus did all that was necessary to save us, and there is nothing left for us to do. God's justice was fully satisfied by the punishment He bore on the cross. After three hours of intense suffering, and having completed His saving work, He cried "It is finished".

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John 19:30

We have seen in this study that the Lord's Supper keeps us anchored to the central truths of the Gospel, and strengthens us for Christian living. It helps us rejoice in what God has done for us, and is a reminder of how we should live for God. The Lord's Supper rightly holds a central place in our worship and life together as Christians.