

Church 101

Lesson 4

Lord's Supper

PART I EXPLANATION

Introduction: The second ordinance of the local church is commonly called the Lord's Supper. This name reveals that it is His supper and not ours. Therefore, we are to observe it in the manner and spirit in which He instituted it. While baptism pictures our identifying with the death and resurrection of Christ, the Lord's Supper pictures our continuing dependence upon Christ for life. It is given as a remembrance or memorial of His death that we might live. We are told to observe it until He comes, reminding us of His Second Coming. This has been a doctrine which has revealed the division among Catholics, Protestants, and Baptists throughout the ages. They are divided upon such questions as: what elements are to be used? What do the elements represent? Who is to participate in the Supper?

According to Scripture, the two elements used in the Supper are unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. However, there are various beliefs concerning the use and significance of the elements, especially the fruit of the vine. Should wine or grape juice be used? (We will not attempt to defend a position in these lessons due to the number of arguments raised by both sides.) The Scriptures that deal with this subject are: Mt. 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26, Luke 22:7-20 and I Corinthians 5:7-8 10:14-22 and 11:17-34. Study these passages carefully and determine which elements you believe were used.

A greater division is revealed by what the different sects believe about what the elements themselves represent. The Catholic teaching is called Transubstantiation. The Protestant teaching is called Consubstantiation. The Baptist position is called the Symbolic or Memorial position where the elements are merely symbols of the body and blood of Christ. (Terms defined below.)

While most Baptists would basically agree on these first two questions, the final one has become a particularly divisive issue among them in recent decades. Should the communion be 'open' or 'closed'? There is also the practice which is referred to as a 'close communion' which is a modified version of 'open communion'. 'Open communion' would be allowing anyone to partake of the Lord's Supper whether baptized or not, which no church has historically held. 'Close communion' would claim that any professing Christian that has been baptized is welcome to participate in the Lord's Supper. Those holding to a 'closed or strict communion' would restrict participation in the Supper to members of the local church.

The answer to this question depends upon who the authority to administer the ordinances was given. If the authority were given to the invisible church, it would make sense that all Christians could partake in the observance of the Supper. If however, the ordinance was given to the local church, it would make sense that only the members of that church should partake of the Supper. That is the primary reason that we hold to a 'closed communion', because we believe that the ordinance was given to the local church not to the invisible church.

Very few people would consider observing the Lord's Supper with their own family apart from the church. In the same way, we would not practice baptism or the Lord's Supper outside of a local church context. We believe the ordinances were given to the local, visible institution to administer and protect the purity of them to all generations.

Definitions: *For English use the Webster's 1828 Dictionary and copy all appropriate definitions for each word. For the Greek and Hebrew use a Strong's Concordance and copy the definition. The Strong's number is in parenthesis.*

English: **Communion** -

Eucharist -

Transubstantiation -

Consubstantiation -

Greek: (2842) **koinonia** *koy-nohn-ee'-ah* -

Quotation:

“The communion is the highest act of worship by the church. By it are declared all the distinctive truths of Christianity; that Christ became man; that He died for us; that He now lives at the right hand of God; that He is coming again; that the redeemed and forgiven constitute the body of Christ, one with Him and with the Father, living in Him, on Him, and for Him. By it are expressed all the distinctive Christian emotions: penitence, faith, peace, love, gratitude, joy. Each participation in it is a worldless confession of faith’s basal principles.” Henry Weston

“The Christian consciousness in all ages has recognized church membership as prerequisite to the Lord’s Supper, including, of course, in this membership regeneration, baptism, and a consistent life in the church...Now, this fact, that the Christian consciousness through all the centuries has recognized the restriction of the Lord’s Supper to members of the church, creates a presumption in its favor as a divine law. It at least places the burden of proof on him who would depart from a principle thus enshrined in the deepest and holiest convictions of the Christian ages...The Christian communities, as already seen, have in all ages been nearly unanimous in regarding this as an ordinance within the church, and in restricting its observance to those belonging to the church...The Baptist churches, if they invited all immersed members of other churches to the table, would be involved in the inconsistency of inviting persons to that highest symbol of church fellowship whom, if applicants for actual membership, they would be compelled to refuse... Besides, such an invitation would involve the inconsistency of inviting to the table those whom, if actual members, it would be the duty of the church to exclude...Thus the direct tendency of the practice is to lower the standard of Christian life, since no church adopting it can consistently require in its own members a style of Christian life higher than the very lowest type prevailing in any one of the churches which it invites to the Lord’s Table.” Hezekiah Harvey (1879)

“The difference between our Baptist brethren and ourselves is an important difference. We agree with them, however, in saying that unbaptized persons should not partake of the Lord’s Supper. Their views compel them to believe that we are not baptized and shut them up to closed communion. Closed communion, in our judgment, is a more defensible position than open communion, which is justified on the ground that baptism is not prerequisite to the partaking of the Lord’s Supper. To chide Baptists with bigotry because they abide by the logical consequences of their system is absurd.” Presbyterian paper

“As to that which the generality of our people have taken most offense at, viz. Our strictness about the sacrament, have we done more than our commission warrants us? Have we not often told you the danger, that to eat and drink unworthily is to eat and drink your own damnation? Can you blame us if we have at once consulted you and our own safety? Will you quarrel or censure us, because we would not give you that which, in the state you were, would have been to you a cup of poison, and would certainly have aggravated your damnation? Forgive us this wrong. But who hindered or deprived you of that ordinance? Was it not your own fault?” John Oldfield

“Individuals have been found in our country, who express doubt as to the propriety of strict communion. A few isolated instances exist of communities who practice upon the opposite principles. But no association, nor even a single church, respectable for either numbers or intelligence, has, within the compass of my information, seceded from the great body of the denomination upon this ground.” Howell in 1846

“Open communion has but one argument to sustain it, viz., sympathy; that, which some kindly minds, outweigh all others. It has neither Scripture, logic, expediency, nor the concurrent practice of Christendom, either past or present, in its favor. But to some it seems kind and brotherly to invite all who say they love our Lord Jesus Christ, to unite in commemorating His death at the Supper. And to exclude any, or fail to invite all, seems to those sentimental natures harsh, cold, and unchristian... But sympathy should not control in matters of faith, and in acts of conscience.” Hiscox

“The Savior used wine made of “the grape” it was the fruit of the vine” He commanded; and, if it was not lawful for leaven to be used in this feast, He certainly did not use an element that was little less than leaven itself. It could not have been unfermented wine He used and commanded, as some, more zealous than wise, are now teaching; for unfermented wine, in the first place, is a misnomer. There never was, there can not be, a drop of wine without fermentation. It is must, and not wine, until fermentation ensues, and unfermented juice of the grape is but a mass of leaven. It is this element in the juice that causes it to ferment, and fermentation is the process by which it throws off, and clears itself, of this impurity. Thoroughly fermented wine contains no leaven, and, therefore, it is only after this natural clarification of itself that the Savior used, and commanded His churches to use it; and, limiting this element to wine, He forbade the use of any other liquid than the pure juice of the grape, when fermented and clarified.” JR Graves

Confessions (Look up and read these articles)

New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith of 1833

Article XIV Baptism and the Lord's Supper

London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689

Chapter 28 Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper - paragraphs 1-2

Chapter 30 Of the Lord's Supper - paragraphs 1-8

Spurgeon's Catechism

Questions: 80-82

PART II EXPLORATION

Key Questions (*Answer in writing*)

1. Who did Christ institute the supper with and why?
2. What is transubstantiation?
3. What is consubstantiation?

4. What is open communion?

5. What is close communion?

6. What is closed communion?

7. What is the difference between open and close communion?

8. What is the difference between close and closed communion?

9. What is the primary argument for closed communion?

10. According to the quote by Hezekiah Harvey, what inconsistency would there be in open/close communion?

Key Scriptures:

Matthew 26:26-30 When Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, he took _____ and broke it to symbolize His _____ which would be broken for them. He took a _____ and told them it symbolized His _____ and that it was a token of the new _____ (Covenant). He promised not to drink of this _____ of the _____ until the millennial kingdom.

Mark 14:17 Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with the _____ and not with the multitudes.

Luke 22:19-20 When Christ instituted the Lord's Supper, He gave His disciples the bread and He told them to eat it in _____ of Him.

I Corinthians 5:1-13 The church was negligent to discipline a known fornicator. Paul reasons that they were to do so for his sake, that the spirit be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. He warned them that a little _____ would leaven or spread through the _____ church. They were expected to _____ out the leaven to remain _____

_____. They were to keep the feast not with the leaven of wickedness in their members but in _____ and _____. They were told not to fellowship with any person that is a fornicator even if they were called a _____ and that they were not to _____ with them. They were expected to judge those who were _____ the church and not to keep the feast with them. They were to _____ from themselves the wicked person.

I Corinthians 10:16-22 The cup is called the _____ of the _____ and of the _____ of Christ. We are to be separate from ungodly practices and worship. We cannot drink the cup of the _____ and the cup of _____. To practice both would serve to provoke the Lord to _____.

I Corinthians 11:17-20 Every time the church comes together in one place they are not expected to eat the _____.

I Corinthians 11:26-34 As often as the Supper is observed it pictures His death _____ He _____. We are warned not to observe the Supper _____ lest we be found _____ of the body and blood of the Lord. Instead we are expected to

_____ ourselves before partaking of it. Those that observe the supper unworthily bring _____ to themselves for not _____ the Lord's body. The sickness and death in the church was attributed to their failure to _____ themselves and caused them to be _____ by the Lord.

Key Chapter(s) (*Read daily and summarize in your own words the meaning of the chapter*):

I Corinthians 5

I Corinthians 11

PART III EXPECTATION

Memory verse: I Corinthians 11:26

Personal definition: (*Write a definition in your own words*)

Communion -

Personal confession: (*Study the confessions and write your confession in your own words*)

Lord's supper -

Meditation question: (*be prepared for discussion*)

Is it acceptable to use either wine or grape juice for the Lord's Supper?

Extra Credit

Research the wine vs. grape juice debate and read an article defending each side.