

Christians stop at the Lord's table to remember, not millions, but "The One" who suffered and died for each of us.

But, just as the Ark of the Covenant in the Old Testament had no inherent power, there is no inherent power or supernatural effect in the elements of communion.

The bread and wine are not holy in and of themselves. The act of eating and drinking the bread and wine is not holy in and of itself. In other words, special grace is not conferred upon us by our observance of the Lord's Supper. It is not a means by which God conveys His grace to sinners. God's grace is conveyed to us by Christ alone, through faith alone. That is not the purpose of a memorial. Its purpose is to *remember* Christ's death and the commitment that comes from our belief in Christ.

2. A memorial reminds us of something or somebody. Remember in the Old Testament when the children of Israel crossed over the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land. The first thing Joshua did was to set up a pillar of stones *as a memorial* (Joshua 4:7). Its purpose was to remind the future generations of Israel about the faithfulness of God in keeping His covenant promises by bringing the people out of bondage in Egypt, caring for them in the wilderness, and bringing them into the promised Land.

Communion is a memorial that reminds us of God's faithfulness when He fulfilled His covenant to us by providing Jesus as a substitute sacrifice for the payment of our sin debt.

1 Corinthians 11:24-26 explains it like this, *and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way {He*

took} the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink {it,} in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

An instructive comparison exists between the sign of the old covenant and the sign of the new covenant. The Lord's Supper is a sign of the new covenant (Luke 22:20), just as the Passover represented the old covenant (Deuteronomy 16:1, Hebrews 11:28).

The purpose of the Jewish Passover was to remember God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 20:8 Deuteronomy 5:15); the purpose of the Lord's Supper is to remember Christ's deliverance of us from sin. This, in part, explains why the Passover is unique to the Old Testament and the Lord's Supper is unique to the New Testament.

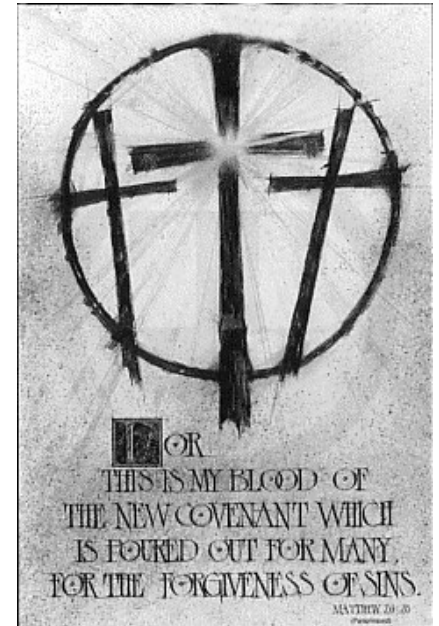
Also, as the Passover was a memorial to celebrate God's work through death (Exodus 12:14), we proclaim God's work through the death of His Son until He returns (1 Corinthians 11:26).

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The Lord's Supper



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THE LORD'S SUPPER

Christians have been celebrating the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20), known also as communion, together for about two thousand years, ever since Christ instructed His disciples to continue to do so until He returns. This is done by partaking in bread and juice, or wine, together in a local church setting.

However, different churches understand and practice communion differently. The New Testament teaches the meaning and motivation for observing communion, with the key text being 1 Corinthians 11:23-34.

I. The Principle: The Reality of the Lord's Supper

1. The Lord's Supper was established by Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 quotes the Lord Jesus as calling His Church to follow His example of taking bread and the cup with the phrase *"do this in remembrance of Me."* Christ instituted this practice in Matthew 26:26-29 and because of the command *"do this,"* it is not optional for the Christian. It is also a practice established by the authority of Christ, not the church.

2. The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of the church. Ordinance is an important word and helps to clarify the meaning of the communion. *An ordinance is an outward rite prescribed by Christ to be performed by His church.* As an ordinance, it does not bring special grace in and of itself. Some churches call the Lord's Supper a "sacrament," or something that is set apart as sacred and consider the ceremony and elements to be holy in and of themselves. The number of sacraments varied until 1562 when the Council of Trent limited the number to seven for the Catholic Church. However, only two observances, baptism and communion, are taught explicitly in the New Testament as commands

of Jesus, and because they are symbolic and testimonial in nature, it is better to use the term ordinance rather than sacrament. It was ordained by Christ and is to be done in obedience to Christ, not to receive a supposed mystical blessing.

3. The Lord's Supper is symbolic in nature.

Communion is an "outward expression" of an "inward reality." In this way it is similar to baptism, which is an outward expression of the inner reality of our death, burial and rising to newness of life with Christ as His substitute sacrifice for our sin takes effect on our behalf.

The elements of bread and wine are clearly symbolic. Our Savior simply took the unleavened bread and wine of the Passover dinner and incorporated them as the elements to be used in communion, to symbolize His body and blood.

This contradicts flawed views that have been traditionally held in the church. Transubstantiation, as found in the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, teaches that as part of the ceremony, the bread and wine literally change into the body and blood of Jesus. Consubstantiation, as found in the teaching of the Lutheran Church, teaches that Christ's literal presence does not replace but is added to the bread and wine and likewise imparts grace. The teaching of reformed churches retains the real presence of Christ in the elements, but claim that special presence is spiritual, not physical.

When Jesus said, *"this is my body,"* and *"this is my blood"* (1 Corinthians 11:24-25) we must consider the meaning of these words to the hearers. The disciples would have most clearly understood them as nothing more than a picture of a spiritual truth, as Jesus often used illustrations from daily life for the

purpose of teaching. They would not have sat at the Last Supper and believed that Jesus' words *"this is My body,"* (Matthew 26:26) meant the bread was literally His body.

As He was still in His earthly body when He spoke, His disciples would have no more considered the bread physical extension of His flesh anymore than when Jesus said *"I am the door"* (John 10:9) they considered Him to be hardware or when He said, *"I am the true vine"* (John 15:1) they considered Him to be a plant.

The meaning of our Lord's words is this: *"This bread represents my body. This wine represents my blood."* There is absolutely no indication that He meant or His disciples understood Him to mean any more than that.

The Lord's Supper is symbolic and represents Christ's death for our remembrance, much as the memorials in the Old Testament caused Israel to remember God's work on their behalf (Joshua 22:9-16).

Indeed, Jesus' words were given in the context of Passover, which also was given as a memorial to remember God's work (Exodus 12:14). Christ is our Passover and has been sacrificed for our sin (1 Corinthians 5:7).

There is but one sacrifice of sins for all time (Hebrews 10:12) we must recognize the finality of this sacrifice in the breaking of the bread. His body is not continually being broken for sin.

II The Purpose: The Remembrance of Christ

1. The Lord's Supper is a memorial to remember Christ's death. Many people erect memorials to remember their dead.