

This is my
“Blood
of the
Covenant”

A DEEPER STUDY OF THE LORD’S SUPPER

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Preface

The Lord's Supper seems to be the quiet subject in the brotherhood. We all know of its importance, yet we speak of it so seldom and study it almost never. I am ashamed to say that I was 75 years old before I really did a study of this most important subject. And then only at my wife's behest, for which I now publicly thank her.

You see, I had been a Bible school teacher for 50 years, a minister/missionary for thirty years and had a conviction on what the Bible taught on many doctrinal subjects. This in itself is acceptable, but the dangerous part is that it can also lead to a *comfort zone*, sometimes called *being in a rut*. We must all be willing to get out of our comfort zone if we expect to grow. As we all know, we can not grow if we do not change!

If we want to grow spiritually, we must change spiritually! Not change for its own sake, but only when the evidence warrants it!

In this book I will be saying, as Christ did, that the bread is His body and the cup is His blood. When Christ said these words He was speaking figuratively. I also will be speaking figuratively, but this is the only time I will specify that distinction. Please remember this as you read.

In preparation to read this material I ask you in a very serious way to please interrupt your reading for the short time it will take you to read Hebrews chapters 9 and 10. These two chapters are so pertinent to our discussion it will be very helpful if you read those two chapters first. (please take this request seriously)

I sincerely hope this information will help you to leave your comfort zone and investigate this subject with me. I know from experience that growing in this area of knowledge has the potential to assist you in great spiritual growth, which we all need!!
..... Cliff Baird

The Blood of Christ

One of the main themes of the New Testament is the blood of Christ and what that blood does for us. Its power to cleanse us of our sins is paramount. Although you may know most of the following verses by memory I sincerely request that you carefully read them again as preparation for this study.

***John 19:34* Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water.**

Without this act of a suffering sacrifice the following scriptures would have no meaning.

***Ephesians 2:12* remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.**

Paul was here speaking to those who were gentiles, see v. 11. We were foreigners and outsiders, we are now brought near to God, put into a saved condition, added to the family of God, all by the blood of Christ.

***Hebrews 9:13* The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify them so that they are outwardly clean. 14 How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!**

The blood of the old covenant, i.e. the blood of animals, cleansed them outwardly. Now the blood of the new covenant, the blood of Christ, cleanses us from all sins so that we can stand before God clean and prepared to serve Him. The contrast between the blood of animals and the blood of Christ is clear. It is the difference between being outwardly clean and being totally spiritually clean, it is the difference between the *old* blood-of-the-covenant and the *new* blood-of-the-covenant! All due to the blood of Jesus.

***Hebrews 10:19* Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water.**

Because the blood of Christ has taken away our sins we are able to enter the presence of God (*the Most Holy Place*) because the veil separating them/us from the most holy place was torn in two at the time of His death, Matthew 27:51. This physically allowed the Jews into the most holy place and more importantly, spiritually allowed direct access to the presence of God. We are able now to stand in the presence of God, having direct access to Him through prayer, because of the blood of Christ.

***Hebrews 13:11* The high priest carries the blood of animals into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering, but the bodies are burned outside the camp. 12 And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through his own blood.**

***1 Peter 1: 18* For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.**

***1 John 1:7* But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.**

***Revelation 1:5* and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,**

These are only a few of the scriptures that tell us about the impact that the blood of Jesus has on our spiritual lives. His blood is directly and indirectly associated with the forgiveness of our sins. Our thinking, our actions, our daily living, virtually every aspect of our existence is touched by the blood of Christ, or can be, if we allow it.

As we partake of His blood each week in the Lord's Supper, it has the physical potential, chemically, to penetrate every cell of our body. I pray you will allow the spiritual benefits of Communion to penetrate every fiber of your spiritual being as well, because we all need all the help we can get to live this earthly life so as to bring glory to God. As you read this effort to discuss some of the special aspects of the blood of Jesus please allow the information to seep deep into your psyche and become a part of you, you will be spiritually better off for the effort.

The Blood of the Covenant

Matthew 26:27-28

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

The words *blood* and *covenant* are associated in all three accounts of Jesus establishing the Lord's Supper and in Paul's recounting of it to the Corinthians in his first letter, chapter 11, starting with verse 23. Why this connection? If the words *of the covenant* had been left out it would have had little effect on our current practice; unfortunately. In most churches today we see no special meaning attached to these words. It's as if the words *of the covenant* were not there! We talk about the cup representing the blood of Christ, but no practical meaning is given to the words *of the covenant*. May we remind ourselves that there is no *filler* in God's Holy Word. Every word is there for a purpose and we must study and meditate on all the words presented if we are to gain the information and the benefit intended by the writer, the Holy Spirit.

Let us begin our study with a simple definition of the word *covenant* in Webster's New World Dictionary:

1 a binding and solemn agreement to do, or keep from doing, a specific thing;

None of the words in New Testament are chosen by accident. When the Holy Spirit chose *covenant* he meant to convey the meaning of a very important, binding and solemn agreement, not the casual agreement of ordinary daily conversation. The word *covenant* is used 271 times in the NIV Bible, 241 of these are in the Old Testament. This word, by definition and usage carried and carries a special obligation to all those who participate(d), i.e. all who agree(d) to be bound by it.

If there was a down payment of some kind, guaranteeing your commitment, then the covenant would be even *more* important. If that down payment was very substantial, then a greater significance was given to the influence of the covenant and your commitment to it. If that guaranty was blood then the covenant would demand your *utmost* attention, respect and devotion. In Hebrews 9:18-20 we have:

18 This is why even the first covenant was not put into effect without blood. 19 When Moses had proclaimed every commandment of the law to all the people, he took the blood of calves, together with water, scarlet wool and branches of hyssop, and sprinkled the scroll and all the people. 20 He said, "This is the blood of the covenant, which God has commanded you to keep."

Compare this to Exodus 24:3-8:

3 When Moses went and told the people all the LORD's words and laws, they responded with one voice, "Everything the LORD has said we will do." 4 Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said. He got up early the next morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain and set up twelve stone pillars representing the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 Then he sent young Israelite men, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as fellowship offerings to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey." 8 Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, "This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

The blood of the covenant was the symbol of the covenant which they were all bound to observe because all the people came into contact with the blood as Moses sprinkled it on them. This touching of the blood of the covenant (even symbolically) was so significant that the people spoke as one voice "*We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.*" And yet, this was only a outward touching of the blood of bull and goats.

How should *we* respond? We know that our new covenant is better in every way than was the Law of Moses, Hebrews 9 and 10. Rather than just being touched outwardly and symbolically with the blood of animals we are inwardly saturated with the sacred blood of Christ as it permeates, potentially, every cell of our bodies when we Partake of the Lord's Supper. Please dwell on this thought for a few moments. How should these facts affect our attitudes and actions as we gather at His table?

As we eat His flesh and drink His blood it, in reality, furnishes food for our souls, John 6:53-58

Because we, too, are priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9 Revelation 1:6), would it be a misapplication of scripture to consider ourselves consecrated by the blood of Christ as the priests, Aaron and his sons, were by the blood of bulls and goats, Exodus 29:15-21?

15 "Take one of the rams, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. 16 Slaughter it and take the blood and sprinkle it against the altar on all sides. 17 Cut the ram into pieces and wash the inner parts and the legs, putting

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them with the head and the other pieces. 18 Then burn the entire ram on the altar. It is a burnt offering to the LORD, a pleasing aroma, an offering made to the LORD by fire. 19 "Take the other ram, and Aaron and his sons shall lay their hands on its head. 20 Slaughter it, take some of its blood and put it on the lobes of the right ears of Aaron and his sons, on the thumbs of their right hands, and on the big toes of their right feet. Then sprinkle blood against the altar on all sides. 21 And take some of the blood on the altar and some of the anointing oil and sprinkle it on Aaron and his garments and on his sons and their garments. Then he and his sons and their garments will be consecrated.

Compare 1 Peter 2:5,9:

5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ... 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.

And Revelation 1:6:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father—to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

The importance of blood being attached to an agreement has even become part of our society. We have all heard the expression "OK, I'll sign it in blood!" as a means of emphasizing the importance of the signer's commitment to an agreement. Or the example of American Indians shaking blood-streaked hands to solidify their total commitment to each other. Or the expression "blood brothers" as proof of extreme obligation to each other. So, even in our society we have a recognition of the importance of blood as it relates to our understanding of how much thought and effort we should give to maintaining a specific alliance.

To add to this historical significance one more facet was added by Christ, i.e. the sacredness of the blood. The blood of animals was sacred because it came from a sacrifice made to God. How much more sacred is the blood of Christ as it too came from a bodily sacrifice to God for our sins? The answer is made plain by chapters 9 and 10 of Hebrews. Please read both of these chapters now as preparation for all the information which follows.

There is yet one more aspect of our covenant that adds another level of gravity to our action at the Lord's Supper, i.e. the covenantor!

Webster's gives us:

covenantor *n.* ***the party that has made the promises set down in the covenant***

Obviously the more awesome, the more powerful, the more loving the covenantor, the greater the devotion and attention that ***must*** be given to the covenant! Since our covenantor, God, is limitless in all these qualities, our response in sincerity, devotion, holiness and seriousness ***must also be as limitless as is humanly possible!***

Since His blood is a symbol of the new covenant, we are recommitting to His new covenant each Sunday as we partake of the blood!! As we drink the blood we are, in effect, saying "We will love it, learn it, live it and share it," or maybe we could say as the Jews did in Exodus 24:3 "***Everything the LORD has said we will do.***"

Summary. The blood of the covenant is a symbol of the ideas contained in the new covenant. Such a binding and solemn agreement is enhanced by the sacredness of the blood associated with it. Since the sacredness of the blood of Christ cannot be exceeded then it is impossible for us to give ***too much*** solemnity, holiness and seriousness to the new covenant. Therefore we must give ***our all*** to the covenant represented by the blood of Christ.

God has chosen to add yet another level to the greatness and holiness already mentioned, that is the infinite knowledge, love and power of the covenantor, ... God himself!!

Each week as we ingest that magnificent blood of that magnificent covenant we cannot but be completely humbled and totally thankful to God for such Love, manifested in such a perfect law and reflected by such a perfect symbol.

Is there any way that God could have increased the overall solemnity of the Lord's Supper? Could He have added another ingredient to this most serious action to make it even more personal? If He could, would He have added yet another aspect to this already holy and humble supper that would make it even more spiritually significant? ... Yes, He did!

The Presence of Jesus in our worship services

Matthew 18:20 *For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.*

Matthew 28:20 *... and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

These two passages are well known to most Christians. They apply to our worship services as well as other times when we are meeting "in my [Jesus'] name." Do we have any special information about the presence of Jesus at our Communion service?

Please read and carefully consider these scriptures:

Matthew 26:29 *I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."*

Mark 14:25 *"I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."*

Luke 22:16 *"For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."...*

18 *For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."*

In all three accounts Jesus says He will not drink of the fruit of the vine again until some future time. In the Matthew record He adds "with you." These two facts give rise to two questions:

- 1) What act of drinking is He talking about? There are only two possible answers:
 - a) The passover, which he was currently observing when He made this promise.
 - b) The Lord' Supper, which would begin when the church began, Acts 2, Acts 20:7
- 2) When will this act be renewed? Not until:
 - a) *...I drink it anew with you in my father's kingdom,* Matthew 26:29
 - b) *...I drink it anew in the kingdom of God,* Mark 14:25
 - c) *...it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God,* Luke 22:16
 - d) *...the kingdom of God comes,* Luke 22:18

Let us consider answer *a* for question 1. Although it is obvious the "it" in Luke 22:16 refers to the Passover, notice when the action will be repeated. When "it," the Passover, finds its fulfillment in the kingdom of God, i.e. the Passover will be fulfilled or finished. As Christ came to fulfill the Law, (Matthew 5:17 *Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfill.*) thereby completing its purpose and terminating its force, the Passover was fulfilled in the kingdom of God and no longer was practiced after The Law was nailed to the cross, Colossians 2:14. Therefore answer *a* to question 1 cannot be true. Thus the Lord's Supper in the New Covenant is the fulfillment of the Passover Feast from the Old Covenant and is the promised time for renewing His partaking of *this cup*.

This conclusion agrees with the following quotations"

- a) *...I drink it anew with you in my father's kingdom,* Matthew 26:29
- b) *...I drink it anew in the kingdom of God,* Mark 14:25
- c) *...it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God,* Luke 22:16
- d) *...until the kingdom of God comes,* Luke 22:18,

Jesus will repeat his action of drinking the fruit of the vine *in my father's kingdom, in the kingdom of God, [when] the kingdom of God comes*. But what does the kingdom of God refer to, the church or heaven? Will Jesus drink the fruit of the vine again "with us" in the church as we partake of the Lord's Supper or do these verses mean that we will all be taking the Lord's Supper together in heaven?

It seems that 1 Corinthians 11:26 puts a time limit on our observing the Lord's Supper.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.

One purpose of the Communion is to proclaim the Lord's death *until he comes*. There will be no need to partake of the Lord's Supper after He comes and we are in heaven, as verified by:

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2 Corinthians 4:18 *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*

So the action that Jesus will perform again, the drinking of the fruit of the vine, will occur during the Lord's Supper in the kingdom. But please notice Jesus, will be or is, partaking "with us." He is not just present, watching. He is eating His flesh and drinking His blood as we do, i.e. WITH US!! As He ate the Passover "with" the apostles at the last supper, so He partakes of Communion "with" us every Sunday! Why would He do such a thing? Maybe He is reconfirming His commitment to the promises of the New Covenant as we are recommitting our obedience to it, setting us an example!

Can anything possibly be said to add yet another level of importance to the Lord's Supper? Yes!

Spiritual Significance - John 6:25-59

The discussion of the Lord's Supper begins in verse 51, but this whole context is so important to our understanding of the last nine verses that we must start at verse 25. Please read Appendix B for the complete text without comments. Only the pertinent verses are shown here, starting with verse 27.

27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

Jesus had just fed the five thousand, John 6:5-15. He uses this as an example to contrast the food that spoils with the food that endures to eternal life. Working for food that spoils is unimportant when compared to the food that endures. This food will be given by the Son of man.

28 ¶ Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

How do we do this work that produces the enduring food which the Son of man will give? The work that produces the food from God is to believe in the one whom God sent. Believing the teachings of Jesus is, not just *a* work, but *the* work of God.

30 So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

This seems to imply that they thought "If the work of God which produces enduring food is to believe in you, show us some miracle so that we can believe in you! Our forefathers saw and ate the manna, the bread from heaven. What will you do?" The word *bread* is now substituted for food.

32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

Once again correcting the perception of his audience Jesus says that it was not Moses who *has given* (perfect tense implies an action completed in the past) you the manna, but my father, AND it is my father who *gives* (present tense) you the true bread from heaven. The true bread from heaven, i.e. the bread of God *is* he (personal pronoun, a living person, i.e. Christ) who comes down from heaven.

So far we have seen that the food that endures, which God will give through Jesus, is the true bread from heaven which is *he*, i.e. Jesus. To receive this *enduring* bread they must believe *in the one he* [God] *has sent*.

34 "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." 35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. ... 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

His audience still did not understand, asking "give us this bread." He was standing right there in front of them but they were thinking of literal bread, something to eat, like Manna. He now clearly states, v. 35, that *the bread of life* is figurative. They will receive the enduring bread of life if they "*come to me*" and "*believe in me.*" Then they will never hunger or thirst. This obviously means to accept, practice and follow His teachings. Verse 40 reiterates for emphasis that to receive the benefits of the enduring bread which produces eternal life one must *look to the son*, i.e. accepting His authority and *believing* His teachings. Then and only then will they have eternal life and will be resurrected on the last day.

...47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life.

Repetition for emphasis and clarity, so that men are without excuse, Romans 1:20.

49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

Spiritual Significance - John 6:25-59

Jesus said "I am the bread of life" (v. 48), and if a man eats of it he will not die (v. 50). This is repeated in verse 51. How can anyone eat of this spiritual bread? They/We can eat this bread by:

- 1) believing in the one whom God sent, v. 29,
- 2) coming to Jesus and believing, v. 35,
- 3) looking to the Son and believing, v. 40,
- 4) believing, v. 47.

Jesus is again speaking in parables. Using the physical act of eating to represent the mental process of *looking/coming to Jesus* and *believing* the teachings of Him who was sent from heaven by the father.

Believing, accepting and obeying the one who is the bread of life is the way we can be assured of:

- 1) never going hungry or thirsty (spiritually), v. 35,
- 2) never being driven away from Christ, v. 35,
- 3) Christ never losing us, and we will be raised up in the last day, v.39
- 4) eternal life and being raised up in the last day, v. 40,
- 5) being drawn to Christ by God being raised up in the last day, v. 44,
- 6) having listened and learned from the father, v. 45,
- 7) having everlasting life, v. 47,
- 8) never dying, v. 50,
- 9) living forever, v. 51.

After establishing so thoroughly that the living bread, the bread of life or the bread that came down from heaven, was indeed the person and/or the teachings of Christ, He now adds:

v. 51 ... This bread is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world.

This Bread, the person and/or the teachings of Christ, is now represented by a new symbol, His *flesh*! It is interesting that the word *flesh* only appears one time in each of the synoptic Gospels and only 10 times in John, six of these are in the context we are studying. More surprising is that *blood* only appears five times in the book of John, the four verses in the context we are studying and in 19:34. All of these are listed in Appendix D for your convenience.

Why this change in the figure of speech used? He is changing the subject and, for clarity, He chooses another symbol, that is, *flesh*. He is changing from *bread* representing His person and/or teachings, to *my flesh* represented by the loaf at the Lord's Supper. The idea is changed from figuratively eating the *bread* by believing in Him, to the idea of literally eating the figurative body and blood of Christ at the Lord's Supper. Repeating part of verses 50b and 51 we have"

***... If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world 52
Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"***

At least the Jews heard the words correctly and those words said "If you eat this bread you will live forever. This bread is my flesh..." They did not understand that, though the eating was literal, the thing eaten was a symbol, a figure (*flesh*), representing the body of Christ in communion.

Look at the repetition in the next six verses:

- 53 ***Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.***
- 54 ***Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.***
- 55 ***For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.***
- 56 ***Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.***
- 57 ***Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.***
- 58 ***This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever."***

Spiritual Significance - John 6:25-59

Following the example of the text I, too, will repeat for emphasis. Remember, as we read, that the expression “feed on me” implies both eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Jesus said:

- 1) If you **don't** feed on me you have *no* life in you, v. 53
- 2) If you feed on me you have eternal life, v. 54
- 3) If you feed on me you will remain in me, v. 56
- 4) If you feed on me you will live, v. 57
- 5) If you feed on me you will live forever. v. 58

The negative implications are just as significant:

- 1) if you feed on me you have life in you.
- 2) if you **don't** feed on me you don't have eternal life.
- 3) if you **don't** feed on me you will not “remain in me.”
- 4) if you **don't** feed on me you will not live.
- 5) if you **don't** feed on me you will not live forever.

Does this amount of repetition occur anywhere else in all of scripture? What is so important as to require the stating of the same idea five times in six verses? ***By taking the Lord's Supper we have life in us, eternal life, remain in Him, we will live and we will live forever.*** All by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. Without the Lord's Supper there is no life in us, we do not have eternal life, we do not remain in Christ, we will not live, and we will not live forever.

There is no way we can fully comprehend the force and magnitude of these statements, ***but please try!*** Even the effort will strengthen your faith and enhance your spiritual growth and improve your attitude at the Lord's Table. Is there any way we could ***overemphasize*** the importance of this act of worship to our God, as we remember their (God [John 3:16] and Christ on the cross) sacrifice for our sins?

As you partake: Let a Man Examine Himself

The Blood of the Covenant is a symbol of the most serious, holy and solemn covenant and Jesus is participating with us as we take it. Therefore we must be very careful how we handle this most reverent Communion. Consider this passage from the ASV, 1 Corinthians chapter 11:

27 Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. 28 But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread, and drink of the cup. 29 For he that eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. 30 For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep. 31 But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

The result of our taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner is:

- 1) "Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," v. 27,
- 2) It can make us "weak, sick and sleep" spiritually, v. 30,
- 3) causes discipline from the Lord, v. 31.

1) If we take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner we will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. What does this mean? How can we be guilty of, ... of nouns (body, blood)? Normally we can only be guilty as a result of some action, either mental or physical! What action can be implied by the nouns *body* and *blood* of the Lord? Could this possibly mean if we take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner we are as guilty as those who crucified Christ? The NIV here says "sinning against" the body and blood. But the words "sinning against" are simply not in the Greek. I presume that the NIV added these words to "help" us understand the meaning. If that was the purpose of the NIV, it failed! How can we be guilty of the body and blood of Christ, unless we are guilty of sacrificing His body and spilling His blood as if we are crucifying Christ all over again. Hebrews mentions that possibility, for a different action on our part, in chapter 6:

4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

and in chapter 10:

26 For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?

Is there any more serious sin than crucifying the son of God? Could God have made this writing more clear? What other words could Paul have used here in 1 Corinthians 11:28-32 to be more arresting? Are better descriptive words available? Would different terminology be more of a warning? Nothing could be more dramatic or alarming than being guilty of crucifying the son of God. Please consider these thoughts carefully.

- 2) If we take the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner we can become weak, sick or dead, spiritually.

29 For he that eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body. 30 For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep

If we do not *discern the body*, the results are very severe: our spiritual life is weakened, damaged or terminated in spiritual death! This consequence demands a careful study of the meaning of "*discern not the body.*"

Discern means: "to separate (a thing) mentally from another or others; recognize as separate or different," (Webster's). We must, therefore, recognize the uniqueness of His body. This body was unique because it was born of a virgin, housed the son of God (after giving up his equality with God, Philippians 2:5-8), was indwelt by the Holy Spirit, without limit, John 3:34, suffered extreme pain on the cross, was resurrected after three days, and ascended into heaven. This is all true even if we take the word *body* to be

As you partake: Let a Man Examine Himself

literal. If we take the word *body* to be figurative to mean the total person of Christ, then we must add to the previously mentioned unique qualities: all His teachings and actions of love, His infinite knowledge, humility and power (manifested in His many miracles), and He was one with the Father. This list, of course, is not exhaustive. We have simply tried to show how unique the Son was in order to help us *discern* his body more effectively as we partake of the Lord's Supper.

I am not, ...repeat, NOT trying to provide a certain series of pictures or words you *must* think or say as you commune with the Lord. All these thoughts are only an effort to help generate an attitude that is needed to commune properly so that we will not receive the negative results promised to those who do not *discern* the body, because none of us can afford to have our spiritual life even weakened a little, much less terminated in spiritual death!

3) Most, if not all, of us would say that we experience enough discipline in our lives. We don't need to look for ways to receive more discipline from the Lord. From 1 Corinthians 11:31-32:

31 But if we discerned [judged, NIV] ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

As we prepare to take the Lord's Supper we must examine (prove, ASV) ourselves. This examination is an internal preparation for the *most holy thing we ever do as Christians*, i.e. partake of the body and blood of our Lord. If we make this preparation we will not be judged. But when we are judged by the Lord (because we did not do this examination or make this preparation ourselves) we are being disciplined (chastened, ASV). What does it mean to be disciplined by the Lord? Hebrews, chapter 12 will help us to understand this:

4 ¶ In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9 Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

If we take the communion in an unworthy manner we will be disciplined by the Lord. This is not a pleasant thing, but painful. The end of the sentence in 1 Corinthians 11:32 tells us the reason for this discipline "*so that we will not be condemned with the world,*" NIV. The last sentence of Hebrews 12:11 adds another reason for the Lord's discipline, "*Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.*" This discipline comes to us because God loves us (Hebrews 12:6) and wants us to change, i.e. *be trained by it*. Does that mean that since God always loves us He will always discipline us until we change or are trained by the discipline??

We have briefly examined the punishment due to the guilt of taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner from 1 Corinthians 11:27 ff. **1** "Guilty of the body and blood of the Lord," v. 27, **2** It will make us "weak, sick and asleep (dead)" spiritually, v. 30, and **3** causes discipline from the Lord, v. 31.

The severity of this condemnation necessitates our careful handling of this most holy act of worship.

Many people make the mistake of reading "unworthy manner" as "unworthy person." There is a great difference. In one sense we are all unworthy because of our sins! And that will never change. The subject, in this case, however, is the *manner* in which we take communion. Our state of mind, our spiritual attitude is the idea explained in this passage. This we can control, if we have sufficient motivation and practice. Both of these are very necessary. This control of our state of mind at The Table should be our constant goal in life.

I have heard people express their concern about partaking of the Lord's Supper because they were particularly aware of their sins the previous week. This awareness should motivate them to repentance not to refusing the Lord's Supper. A humble awareness of their sins should cause them to be even *more* thankful for the Lord's forgiveness and they should appreciate and desire the benefits of the communion *more*, not *less*!

Partaking and Participating

The Lord's Supper is the most holy and reverent act we participate in as Christians. We are to do it, Jesus said, "in remembrance of me." Not just any particular part of Him, but all "of me." The sacrifice of His equality with God, Philippians 2:5-8, His teachings, John 1:1,14; 3:16, His sinless life, Hebrews 4:15, the sacrifice of His body and blood, Matthew 26:26-29 (and parallels in the other Gospels), His resurrection, John 20:1-9, His ascension, Acts 1:3-10, His promised return, Acts 1:11.

What a wonderful savior!!

He loved/loves us so much. He gave up so much to prove His love for us. And He left us this grand, yet simple reminder of all that He did for us, The Lord's Supper.

Paul said "whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he come," 1 Corinthians 11:26. Every time we partake of the Lord's Supper we are making a statement. Each time we partake we are proclaiming His death! Our actions speak louder than our words. We are saying the Lord died for us, and the world. We are remembering His death, all that his death implies, and we are inviting the world to do the same.

Paul says that when we are partaking of the Lord's table, 1 Corinthians 10:16-22 (NIV), we are participating in the body and the blood of the Lord:

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in (a communion of [ASV, KJV]) the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. 18 Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? 19 Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. 22 Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

As we partake of the Lord's Supper we join in union with Christ. This implies that we agree with that for which He stands. We will stand with Him in His sufferings, in His purpose and in His dedication. By eating this sacrifice (the body and blood of Christ) offered to God we are taking a stand with Him and showing the world our commitment. Verse 17 shows that the Lord's Supper is an act of fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ. We all jointly participate and thereby become one in our commitment to Christ and His cause.

Like the Jewish people who ate the sacrifices offered on the altar became part of that sacrifice we too become part of the sacrifice of Christ. These two important facts are then used by Paul to make another point, that if we participate with pagans in their worship service then we are, in effect, becoming partners with their demons. This action is clearly condemned. This whole passage just shows the intensity, seriousness and implications of our Lord's Supper.

What words can adequately describe the event of meeting with Christ and sharing with Him as we take His body and blood? From the sacred blood covenant, to the supreme covenant, to the actual presence of Christ, to the eating of His flesh and drinking his blood, throughout this most holy experience we should be awed, humbled and thankful beyond what words can describe. By taking the Lord's Supper we are showing our weekly **re**commitment to His cause and, at the same time, we gain spiritual strength from this closeness to Christ and our joint participating in **this most reverent Christian fellowship**. Would any of the following words be inappropriate to describe this Communion: serious, holy, sacred, magnificent, magnanimous, glorious, awesome, supreme, solemn?

By willingly drinking of the blood of the covenant we are becoming saturated, inundated, infused with the sacred blood of Jesus, compared to being sprinkled by the blood of animals in the Old Testament, Exodus 24:1-8. In this action we are becoming willing participants in, or cosigners of, the covenant. Which implies:

- 1) we accept the terms of the covenant -"we will obey everything written in the covenant"
- 2) we can expect the Covenantor, God, to fulfill the promises He make in the covenant.

We cannot partake of the blood of the covenant while ignoring the contents or purpose of the covenant? ...That is, we must recognize: the importance **of**, the cleansing **by**, and the totality of our commitment **to** ... The Covenant!!!

Partaking and Participating

This blood is the physical symbol representing the ideas contained in the words of the covenant. The Blood of the Covenant is similar to the wedding band we wear at all times which signifies our commitment to the vows we swore before God to uphold. Our wedding ring represents our love for, and commitment to, our spouse and family.

Is it possible to even conceive of anything more important than The Blood of the Covenant? More Holy than His blood? More humbling than His sacrifice? More spiritually rewarding than this, John 6:51 ff.? More qualified to demand our submissiveness?

Summary of the whole matter

The Lord's Supper is the most holy, the most reverend, the most humbling, action we ever perform as Christians. As we drink the blood of the covenant (a binding and solemn agreement) we remember that the covenant is made even more important because it is a blood covenant, which is made even more holy because the blood is the sacred blood of Jesus. The final and most important aspect of the covenant is the omniscient covenantor, God.

The Lord's Supper is even *more* spiritual because of the presence of Jesus, partaking of the Communion *with* us, Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 22:16,18.

Yet another aspect of the Lord's Supper that makes it even *more* awesome and desirable is the great spiritual benefit to each one, John 6:53-58:

- 1) If you **don't** feed on me you have **no** life in you, v. 53
- 2) If you feed on me you **have eternal life**, v. 54
- 3) If you feed on me you **will remain in me**, v. 56
- 4) If you feed on me **you will live**, v. 57
- 5) If you feed on me **you will live forever**. v. 58

There is yet one more thing, another reason for this Communion to be a most formidable experience in our short lives. We must examine ourselves so that we **do not take** the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, not discerning (or recognizing) the Lord's body. For the consequences of so doing are dire and onerous: a) we are guilty of crucifying the Son of God all over again, b) our spiritual lives will be weak, sick or dead, and c) we will be disciplined by the Lord!

There is nothing in all Christianity that is more awe-inspiring, more spiritually beneficial and more formidable.

Let us approach The Table **with the proper attitude** so that we can gladly receive the holy benefits and, thereby, avoid the horrendous consequences of not doing so.

Frequency of the Lord's Supper

When I was younger the only discussion of this topic revolved around whether the Lord's Supper should be taken *every* Sunday or could we take it on *any* Sunday and be acceptable. Then, as now, many (if not most) denominations celebrated this supper only quarterly or semiannually or on some frequency other than once every Sunday.

Recently it has come to my attention that one local congregation thought they should give everyone the opportunity to take the Lord's supper at the evening service also, if they so desired. The Supper was therefore passed to all who were present. This event highlights the serious tendency to "try out new things" in our worship to God. I was thus shocked into the realization that more study was needed on this subject. I ask your patient indulgence in reading this chapter for, although I pray it will not be the case, this may one day be an important subject in your congregation.

God has always been very specific in his requirements for worship. Since the purpose of worship is to *give* honor, glory, respect and reverence to God, He is the only one who can prescribe how it is to be done. We are not trying to please ourselves or appeal to the neighborhood. Our worship is only meant to be pleasing to God! Therefore, we must do all that is prescribed by God's Law and only what is prescribed by that law.

We have a very short story in Leviticus 10:1-2:

- 1 ¶ *Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire before the LORD, contrary to his command.*
- 2 *So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD.*

Have you ever wondered why they did this? I sometimes wish I could have been there when they discussed their options on that fateful day. Can't you just imagine the conversation. It might have gone something like this:

Nadab: "Come on Abihu it's time to fire up the altar of incense. I've got some fire here let's use it. That way we won't have to go all the way over to the other side of the temple to get that 'authorized' fire."

Abihu: "I don't think that's a good idea. God is always pretty specific about how to worship Him."

Nadab: "Ah, come on Abihu, it's no big deal. If He had wanted us not to use this fire He would have told us. Remember He told us *'Ye shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall ye pour drink offering thereon.'* (Exodus 30:9, KJV) He said nothing about fire, so come on Abihu this is much easier and quicker and besides, no one will ever know the difference!..."

They did something that was *unauthorized*. They had authority to use a specific fire. No information about "other" fire. They affected the worship in a way that was not specified by God. They died! Can we learn anything from this? Is it possible that we should learn from this that in our worship we can only do what is authorized, no more, no less!

Combine this with 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*"

This scripture teaches that the Bible "*will thoroughly equip us for every good work.*" That is, everything we do religiously is completely described by the scriptures. In an effort to decide when to take the Lord's Supper let us evaluate the few scriptures we do have on this subject.

The ASV and NIV use *break(ing) bread* only 11 times and taking the Lord's Supper once. The quotes from the NIV are:

Matthew 26:26 *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."*

Mark 14:22 *While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."*

Luke 22:19 *And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."*

Luke 24:30 *When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.*

Luke 24:35 *Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.*

Acts 2:42 *They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*

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Acts 2:46 *Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,*

Acts 20:7 *On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.*

Acts 20:11 *Then he went upstairs again and broke bread and ate. After talking until daylight, he left.*

Acts 27:35 *After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat.*

1 Corinthians 10:16 *Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?*

1 Corinthians 11:18 *“when you come together as a church,” v.20 “When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat” v.33 “when you come together,” v. 34 “when you meet together.”*

Please note the wording of **Acts 20:7** *On the first day of the week we came together to break bread...* This breaking of bread was not an incidental thing. **It was the purpose for the meeting!** When was this purpose fulfilled? On **THE** first day of the week. With this description and no other modifiers, it can only mean each first day of the week. If it does not mean each first day of the week then we have no information about which first day of the week to use to fulfill this purpose! If the purpose of the meeting was the Lord's Supper and that purpose was fulfilled *any* Sunday, it naturally follows that the general meeting of the saints can also meet *any* Sunday, maybe only once a year or once in a lifetime? Which also implies that the only purpose for which we should meet *every* week is the contribution, 1 Corinthians 16:2, all other activities for the congregational meetings are scheduled randomly! All these undesirable conclusions necessarily follow if “the first day of the week” from Acts 20: 7 does not mean **THE** first day of the week!

This expression "breaking bread" has only two meanings: The Lord's supper (Matthew 26:26-28 and Gospel parallels, Acts 20:7, etc.) or a regular meal (Luke 24:30, 35; Acts 20:11; 27:35). Only the context can tell which meaning is intended. Acts 2:42 starts with "they devoted themselves," not mentioning any time or frequency. Also both before and after "breaking bread" we have a religious expression: "Apostles teaching" and "prayers," which seems to imply a religious context and would be harmonious with understanding this as the Lord's Supper. Acts 2:46 (ASV) says:

46 *And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart,*

Verse 46 starts with a time of frequency, "Day to day" and a location, "broke bread in their homes" (NASB: "from house to house") and "with glad and sincere hearts." The Greek Interlinear say *“...breaking bread from house to house, sharing their food with joy and simplicity of heart...”* These expressions seem to describe a fellowship meal at home instead of the religious worship were we take the Lord's Supper.

As we have just illustrated only the immediate context of verse 42 justifies the conclusion that the Lord's Supper is meant by "breaking bread." If we use the same procedure for verse 46 we must conclude that it is not talking about the Lord's Supper because the phrases that make up the immediate context, i.e. *“...breaking bread from house to house, sharing their food with joy and simplicity of heart...”* are not suggestive of the reverent attitude required by this most holy and solemn action. Also this immediate context says nothing about a congregational meeting or that the whole church was at each, or *any*, of these meetings. If this context (v. 46) implies the Lord's Supper, then any group of Christians, two or more, could take the Lord's Supper at any meeting. If this conclusion is true it is in stark contrast to the example of Acts 20:7 and the teachings of 1 Corinthians 11:18, 20, 33, 34. If Nadab and Abihu teach us anything it is we must be very sure of our actions in the worship service because the consequences of being wrong are very serious.

Compare the context of Luke 24:30-35 (ASV),

30 *And it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed; and breaking it he gave to them. 31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight. 32 And they said one to another, Was not our heart burning within us, while he spake to us in the way, while he opened to us the scriptures? 33 And they rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, 34 saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon. 35 And they rehearsed the things that happened in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of the bread.*

And Acts 20:9-11 (ASV):

9 *And there sat in the window a certain young man named Eutychus, borne down with deep sleep; and as Paul discoursed yet longer, being borne down by his sleep he fell down from the third story, and was taken up dead. 10 And*

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Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Make ye no ado; for his life is in him. 11 And when he was gone up, and had broken the bread, and eaten, and had talked with them a long while, even till break of day, so he departed.

And Acts 27:33-35:

33 And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take some food, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye wait and continue fasting, having taken nothing. 34 Wherefore I beseech you to take some food: for this is for your safety: for there shall not a hair perish from the head of any of you. 35 And when he had said this, and had taken bread, he gave thanks to God in the presence of all; and he brake it, and began to eat.

Now compare these three contexts with Acts 2:46, and see if there is a close similarity. If not, maybe we should conclude that all these verses are talking about the Lord's Supper?

Agreed, these implications concerning Acts 2:42 and 46 cannot be proven beyond a reasonable doubt. But think of the alternative:

Remembering 2 Timothy 3:16-17, if a person decides to take the Lord's Supper other than only once on every Sunday, he must:

- 1) assume that in Acts 2:46 it was the Lord's Supper (and not a common meal) they took, which cannot be proven,
- 2) assume that this assumed practice was not corrected by the example of Acts 20:7 and teachings of 1 Cor. 11:18-34.
- 3) assume that the Lord will be happy with these assumptions.

Some may think we do not have enough evidence to reach the conclusion that we should only take it once on every Sunday, but consider the alternatives. There are only eight options. The Lord's Supper should be shared by Christians:

- 1) Only once on every Sunday
- 2) Only once on any Sunday
- 3) Any frequency on every Sunday
- 4) Any frequency on any Sunday

OR

- 5) Only once on every day
- 6) Only once on any day
- 7) Any frequency on every day
- 8) Any frequency on any day

All the specific information we have on this subject supports option 1, Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 11:18-34; 16:2. Any evidence in support of options 2 - 8 is only vague assumption, at best, and dangerous fabrications at worst. Since there are no instructions, and no clear examples to take the Lord's Supper other than once on every Sunday, why risk offending God like Nadab and Abihu? Everyone seems to agree that the Bible teaches it is acceptable to God to take the Lord's Supper once every Sunday. Why change a practice that is certainly pleasing to God for one that most probably is not?

We should not "test the Lord" (NIV), "tempt Christ" (KJV), "make trial of the Lord" (ASV), as some of the Israelites did. They were punished by being killed, 1 Corinthians 10:9. Would choosing other than option 1 be testing the Lord??

If someone will not accept option 1 because we have too little evidence, how then can they accept any one of the other options which has significantly less support, if any at all? Anything other than option 1 is definitely unauthorized, meaning no written authority to support the action. Consider 1 Corinthians 10:1-11:

¶ For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptised into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. 6 ¶ Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry." 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did— and in one day twenty-three thousand of

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them died. 9 We should not test the Lord, as some of them did —and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did —and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

Please meditate on the above passage as you remember Nadab and Abihu before you decide to follow any option other than 1, above.

This decision is impossible to ignore! Please note: If you live, **you will practice one of the eight options listed above.** Why not practice the option with the most supporting evidence? ...and the one least likely to offend the Lord.

The Lord's Supper, while singing

In some congregations today there is a desire to sing a hymn while partaking of the Lord's Supper. Is this practice acceptable to the Lord? Before we can answer this question we must look at a few definitions.

When I use the phrase "congregational act of worship" in this writing I will mean that action performed or engaged in by the whole congregation, generally speaking, which shows or demonstrates honor for and reverence to God. Thus singing is an act of worship because by design and desire each member is singing together at the same time. Allowing for the fact that someone may momentarily be coughing or disciplining their child during a song will not negate this definition.

The Lord's Supper is also considered an *act of worship* because the whole congregation, by design and desire, is participating in this most holy act of reverence together.

It is generally accepted that the Bible teaches there are only five acts of worship for Christians to practice each Sunday, i.e. singing, giving, preaching, praying and the Lord's Supper. These are the only congregational acts authorized by scripture, therefore these five acts are the only activities that are acceptable to God during the congregational worship service.

An unauthorized act of worship, simply means an action with no written authority to support it. Any unauthorized act of worship in our congregational meetings is, by definition, unscriptural i.e. there is no scripture to support it. Such an action is therefore sinful. If this conclusion is not true then *any* act, not of itself sinful, can be performed in our worship to God, such as: dancing, any kind of music, working a crossword puzzle, adding a little pizza to the Lord's Supper, etc.

Is the Lord's Supper an individual or congregational activity? Since there is one specified time for the whole congregation to participate in it, and since all Christians do partake during this allotted time, it is a group activity. But considering the instructions to "examine yourself" and "remember me" which can only be done individually, it must also be a personal communion between the Christian and the Lord. So the short answer to the question is: it is *both* a congregational and an individual activity.

Can we have congregational singing during the Communion? Please consider the following six points before making a final decision:

1) If anybody in the congregation is distressed or distracted from individual concentration and communion with God by the singing, the singing must not be done. We have learned in our earlier discussions the importance of the mental attitude of the participant. If we knowingly do anything that interrupts the focus and concentration of the person communing with God, we are, at the very least, not showing love, 1 Corinthians 8:9-13; 13:4-7.

2) If we can combine these two acts of worship, i.e. Lord's Supper and singing, then we can combine any or all the acts of worship. Maybe reading the scriptures or preaching during Communion, or preaching during a hymn sung softly, or passing the collection plates during the sermon, etc.

3) If the Lord had only known that singing while partaking of the Lord's Supper was spiritually beneficial, I'm sure he might have changed the following scriptures to:

- a) Matthew 26:26-27 (and parallels) to say "*Take it (bread or cup) all of you, as you sing a hymn.*"
- b) 1 Corinthians 11:24 to say "*...do this in remembrance of me, as you sing a hymn.*"
- c) Col. 3:16 to say "*... sing psalms, hymns ... as you brake the bread...*"

It would have been so easy for Him to do. He could have, but he did not, therefore we can not! The Bible is not only correct it is also complete, and it is also the *best* choice of words. The way The Holy Spirit inspired the instructions for worship is the very *best* way to do things. God never tells us to do something that is second-best, especially in worshipping Him.

4) Singing in the worship service is mentioned at least three times and the Lord's Supper is mentioned at least seven times. Each time these acts are mentioned they are separate acts. Combining them is never commanded, mentioned, suggested *or even hinted at!* Therefore it is *un*authorized, which makes it unscriptural, which makes it a sin, 1 Corinthians 4:6.

5) When the congregation sings while taking the Lord's Supper **is it** doing the same thing as when the congregation sings alone, without the Lord's Supper? Of course not. When the congregation is doing one thing, singing OR the Lord's Supper, it is not the

The Lord's Supper, while singing

same thing as when it does two things, singing plus the Lord's Supper, *at the same time*. If it is not the same then it is a different and therefore an additional act of worship! An additional and therefore unauthorized act of worship.

This same logic can be applied to any combination of the authorized acts of worship. It is therefore sinful to combine any two, or more, acts of worship!

6) If we can do anything at all, that is not mentioned in scriptures, and conclude that it is acceptable to God in His worship, then we can do *anything at all* (not in and of itself wrong) in the worship service!!

One day we will have to give an account to Jesus, our judge, for everything done while in the body, 2 Corinthians 5:10. Let us give all diligence to following the plan He prescribed for us so we can have a clear conscience on our fateful last day.

The Lord's Supper, while eating a meal

Is it acceptable to God for us to eat a common meal while taking the Lord's Supper? We must consider three examples, **I**) when the Lord instituted the Supper it happened during the Passover meal. Although sparse, it was a meal. **II**) From 1 Corinthians 11:20-22 we know that it was a practice of this very new congregation to eat a meal, or some part of one, during the Communion. Also **III**) Acts 2:46 mentions *breaking bread* and *eating* in the same verse. Should we follow these examples today?

Please notice that all these verses tell us of things that were done by the apostles or the early church. There is absolutely no command, instructions or even suggestions that we *should* follow these examples.

Whether or not to follow early Christians in their practices is a very difficult question. There are even many questions about how to follow the *commands and teachings* in the Bible though most, if not all, of the *commands and teachings* are much clearer than the various New Testament examples. If we are told to perform a certain action, i.e. pray, worship, be kind, tell the truth, etc. but, at the same time, are not told how to do it, the *how* is left up to us and a good conscience. If we plan to do something only because of the example of the early church we must answer at least these two questions:

- 1) Is it *necessary* to follow the example? Implying it is a sin not to follow the example.
- 2) To what degree do we follow the example, completely or partially, and who decides?

For example, if we met on Sunday *only* because the early Christian did, then *must* we also meet at the same time as they did? If they met in a home, *must* we meet in a home? If we sing in worship *only* because they did, must we use the same type of music as they did? In other words to what extent do we follow their examples? And *who decides*?

We will try to answer these questions as we examine the three examples mentioned in the first paragraph.

I) Christ established the Lord's Supper during the Passover Feast. If we want to eat a meal during communion *just because they did* (without any *instructions* to do so), then must we also eat the same meal as they did, i.e. the Passover Feast? If not why not. If we *must* follow their example in eating, must we also follow their example in lying down to eat? If not why not? And who decides? If we want to eat a meal with the Lord's Supper just because they did, must we eat it in an upper room as they did? (note: Acts 20:7 was also in an *upper room*, Acts 20:8-9) If their example of eating during the Communion means that we *must* also eat a meal, must we eat it on the same day of the week as they did? And who decides these questions? Based on what evidence are the decisions to be made? Who should make these decisions and *must* we follow these decision makers?

II) Doesn't the passage in 1 Corinthians 11 help to strengthen the desire to have a meal with the Lord's Supper? Let us look at these verses in three translations:

NIV	ASV	KJV
17 ¶ In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.	17 ¶ But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse.	17 ¶ Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.
18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it.	18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it.	18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.
19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval.	19 For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you.	19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.
20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat,	20 When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper:	20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.
21 for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.	21 for in your eating each one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken.	21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.
22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! ... 34 If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.	22 What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you? In this I praise you not. ... 34 If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come.	22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. ... 34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

Look closely at verses 20-21 in the ASV, KJV and NASB:

ASV	KJV	NASB
20 When therefore ye assemble yourselves together,	20 When ye come together therefore into one	20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat

The Lord's Supper, while eating a meal

it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper: 21 for in your eating each one taketh before other his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. 21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

the Lord's Supper, 21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

This paragraph contains a little Greek and English grammar for those who are interested in these details, this paragraph can be bypassed if desired. -- In verse 20 the Greek word translated *to eat* is φαγεῖν. This Greek word appears 33 times in the New Testament. The ASV uses *to eat* 30 times to translate this word. How this word is translated makes a big difference in how we understand this verse. When this infinitive is translated as such, and the words *Lord's* (adjective, accusative, singular, neuter) and *supper* (noun, accusative, singular, neuter) are put in the English sentence word order, we get: "When you meet together '...it is not to eat the Lord's Supper."

As is frequently true the word order of the three translations mentioned above is very important. When we have a sentence where an infinitive follows the main verb the infinitive implies the purpose of the action of the main verb. If there was a negative preceding the infinitive it identifies a specific action that is NOT the purpose. For example: 1) I went to the store to buy supplies, i.e. *to buy supplies* is the purpose for *going to the store*. 2) I called him to find out, i.e. *to find out* was the purpose for *calling him*! 3) I read the book not for pleasure, i.e. *pleasure* was not the purpose for the *reading*. 4) I ate my vegetables not because they tasted good, i.e. the *taste* was not the purpose for the *eating*.

The NASB and KJV give us the proper intention of the verse. When the Corinthians met together it was not for the purpose of partaking of the Lord's Supper, as it should have been, Acts 20:7. The first word in verse 21 is *for*, indicating verse 21 is giving the reason for the previous sentence. The reason why Paul said their meeting together was **not** to eat the Lord's supper was because "each one went ahead of others '...to his own supper.'" As a sidebar this indicates that the meal eaten was not what we call a "potluck" where all the food was available to everyone. It seems everyone brought their own food which was not shared with others, leaving some with too little food (hungry) and others with too much to drink (drunk). Paul's suggested solution (if inspired teachings can ever be relegated to a "suggestion") was to eat at home, v. 22.

Paul said that their meetings were not for the purpose of eating the Lord's Supper because they ate their common meal at the same time. This verse condemns the eating of a common meal with the Communion because it interferes with the purpose of the gathering, i.e. partaking of the Lord's supper. Those who use this verse as justification for eating a meal with Supper must ignore the very words of verses 20 and 21.

Paul then spends the next nine verses explaining in detail about the Lord's Supper. Please notice that in these verses there are no commands, teachings, instructions, suggestions or even hints at how to coordinate the common meal with the Lord's Supper.

If we were permitted or required to eat our meal with the Communion Paul should have answered, at least, some of these questions:

- 1) Should we eat the Lord's Supper before we eat our own meal?
- 2) Should we begin our meal then pause and take the bread of Communion, continue our personal meal then pause again for the fruit of the vine? This seems to have been the sequence when Christ instituted it, Matthew 26:20-29.
- 3) Should we eat our main course then pause for the Communion then continue with desert?
- 4) Can we take a large helping of the bread of the Communion so that we can use it as we finish our common meal?

If it does not matter, i.e. any of the above examples, or any others you can think of, are OK, then the most practical thing would be to have the bread first and each one take enough for eating with his personal meal, then the fruit of the vine and also take enough to drink with your meal. That would solve the problem of the poor going hungry. When the Lord instituted the Supper the same bread was used both for the meal, the passover meal, and for The Communion. If we have a meal with the Lord's Supper must we also use the same bread for both purposes? And the same drink?

From all we have studied about the seriousness and holiness and sanctity of the Lord's Supper, I am sure that most will see that any mixing of the Lord's Supper with a common meal would be denigrating the whole idea and purpose of The Communion.

Looking again at 1 Corinthians 11:22, 33 and 34 from the ASV:

22 *What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you? In this I praise you not. ... 33* *Wherefore, my brethren, when you*

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come together to eat, wait one for another. 34 If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment.

If verse 22 did not resolve the question, verses 33-34 should. After a detailed discussion of The Communion with no reference of any kind to the common meal, we have verse 33 as a summary verse saying when we come together to eat, wait for each other. Does the *eat* of verse 33 refer to eating the bread of The Communion or eating a common meal? The verb *eat* is used in verses 26, 27, 28, and twice in 29 referring to the Lord's Supper, with no indication of a change of subject before this usage in verse 33. Since there is no credible evidence to indicate a change, therefore verse 33 is also talking about eating the Lord's Supper. This is solidified and finalized by the next verse which says "*If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment.*" In summing up this subject Paul commands *anyone* who is hungry to eat at home, so that your coming together will not lead to judgment. Implying that their past practice of eating a meal with the Lord's Supper would do just that, i.e. lead them "unto judgment."

III) Does Acts 2:42-47 give support to the practice of eating a meal with the Lord's Supper? The context from the ASV:

42 ¶ And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 and they sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, according as any man had need. 46 And day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 praising God, and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved.

In order for this passage to be used to support eating a common meal as the Lord's Supper is taken, several assumptions must be made:

- 1) assume that "breaking bread" in verse 46 is referring to the Lord's Supper, which is very unlikely (see p. 18-19 for a detailed discussion),
- 2) assume since it was occurring in the home it included a common meal.
- 3) assume that this practice was not corrected by the example of Acts 20:7 and/or the teachings of 1 Corinthians 11.
- 4) Assume that the Lord will be pleased with these assumptions.

In my own meditation it is sometimes difficult to determine if my love of truth supersedes my love for my traditions or personal desires. As we have studied this subject and are convinced that the Lord's Supper is the most serious, holy, reverent and spiritual action we perform as Christians, let us encourage each other to be very careful not to stray from that narrow path which is supported by the scriptures.

Appendix A -- The Lord's Supper -- N. I. V.

Matthew 26

- 26 ¶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."
- 27 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.
- 28 This is my blood of **the covenant**, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.
-
- 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew **with you** in my Father's kingdom."

John 6:

- 53 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, **you have no life in you.**
- 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood **has eternal life**, and I will raise him up at the last day.
- 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.
- 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood **remains in me**, and I in him. (cf. 1 John 1: 7)

Mark 14

- 22 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is my body."
- 23 Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.
- 24 "This is my blood of **the covenant**, which is poured out for many," he said to them.
-
- 25 "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine **until that day when I drink it anew** in the kingdom of God."

John 6:

- 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me **will live because of me.**
- 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread **will live for ever.**"

Luke 22

- 19 And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."
- 20 In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is **the new covenant** in my blood, which is poured out for you.
- 15 "...I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.
- 16 For I tell you, I will not eat it again **until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.**"
- 17 After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you.
- 18 For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine **until the kingdom of God comes.**"

Acts 20:7 ¶ On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight

1 Corinthians 11

- 23 ¶ The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,
- 24 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."
- 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is **the new covenant** in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."
- 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death **until he comes.**
- 27 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an **unworthy manner** will be guilty of **sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.**
- 28 A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.
- 29 For anyone who eats and drinks **without recognizing** the body of the Lord eats and **drinks judgment on himself.** (cf. Heb. 10:29)
- 30 **That is why** many among you are **weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.**
- 31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.
- 32 When we are judged by the Lord, we **are being disciplined** so that we will not be condemned with the world. cf. Heb. 12:5-11 (11*)

Appendix A -- The Lord's Supper -- N. I. V.

Mark 14

1 Corinthians 11

Matthew 26

Appendix B

John 6:25-59, with enhanced fonts

25 When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, "Rabbi, when did you get here?"

26 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. 27 Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."

28 ¶ Then they asked him, "What must we do to do the works God requires?" 29 Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent."

30 So they asked him, "What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? 31 Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'"

32 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. 33 For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

34 "Sir," they said, "from now on give us this bread." 35 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

41 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?"

43 "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. 44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. 47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"

53 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live for ever." 59 He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum.

Appendix C

the last day

John 6:39 And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at *the last day*.

John 6:40 For this is the will of my Father, that every one that beholds the Son, and believes on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at *the last day*.

John 6:44 No man can come to me, except the Father that sent me draw him: and I will raise him up in *the last day*.

John 6:54 He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood hath eternal life: and I will raise him up at *the last day*.

John 7:37 Now on **the last day**, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.

John 11:24 Martha says unto him, I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at *the last day*.

John 12:48 He that rejects me, and receives not my sayings, hath one that judges him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in *the last day*.

Appendix D
“flesh” and “blood” in John

*John 1:14 The Word became **flesh** and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

*John 3:6 **Flesh** gives birth to **flesh**, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.*

*John 6:51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live for ever. This bread is my **flesh**, which I will give for the life of the world."*

*John 6:52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his **flesh** to eat?"*

*John 6:53 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the **flesh** of the Son of Man and drink his **blood**, you have no life in you.*

*John 6:54 Whoever eats my **flesh** and drinks my **blood** has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*John 6:55 For my **flesh** is real food and my **blood** is real drink.*

*John 6:56 Whoever eats my **flesh** and drinks my **blood** remains in me, and I in him.*

*John 6:63 The Spirit gives life; the **flesh** counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.*

*John 19:34 Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of **blood***