

C. The Lord's Supper

Although formal churches observe more than seven sacraments, only two are mentioned in the Bible: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Therefore, we limit ourselves to the observance of these two only.

The word "sacrament" never appears in the Bible. It is a Latin word, meaning an "obligation" or "sacred oath." It is applied primarily to baptism and the Lord's Supper, because their observance was commanded by Christ (Matthew 28:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24, 25). A sacrament is a sacred observance through which Christ confers grace upon those who observe it.

Different Names

There are two different names which are often used to identify the Lord's Supper. Formal churches call it the "eucharist," which means "to give thanks." This describes the first aspect of the Lord's Supper. We are "giving thanks" to God for sending His Son to pay the price for our sins.

Less formal churches usually call the Lord's Supper "communion." This is our English translation of the New Testament Greek word, *koinonia* {*koy-nohn-ee'-ah*}, which means, "fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse." The New Testament writers used it to describe the sharing, intimacy, participation and fellowship which believers have with Christ and one another. Communion is the outward demonstration of our membership in the body of Christ, the church. We have gained membership in His church through the "new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20).

The Use Of Symbols

The "elements," or ingredients used in communion, are simple: bread and wine. But Jesus gave them new meaning. He gave bread and wine to His disciples, and then declared, "Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, this cup is the new testament in My blood." (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25) Jesus never intended for the bread and wine to be more than symbolic. Yet, symbols are powerful tools for worship. They make spiritual truths more easily understood through visible expression. They connect past events with the present. It's as if Jesus is saying, "Remember, your sins are forgiven, your life in this world is renewed, and you have eternal life, because My body was 'broken' for you; My life's blood was 'poured out' for you." Thus, crucifixion is connected with our lives today.

Meaningless Rituals?

Some have come to view all rituals as being meaningless. In many cases that is true. But the sacraments are only meaningless to those who perform them out of tradition or habit. For those of us who truly believe in the Savior and His atoning work on the cross, communion is a divine moment of renewal, commitment and recommitment of faith.

That is why Jesus used the term “remembrance” (Luke 22:19) - “something that serves to keep a person or thing in mind”- in describing its observance.

Refocus

“Remembrance” is one of the means which God uses to refocus the lens of our lives to bring the thoughts, desires and motives of our lives back into agreement with our profession of faith. We all experience some degree of drifting away from God. Communion is one of the many ways God has given us to keep our lives aligned with Him. How does communion do that?

- 1) It reminds us “all” our sins have been forgiven and we have been cleansed because He perished and suffered in our place. This creates a thankfulness toward God, producing true, heartfelt worship.
- 2) We realize, once again, that the life we now live is a gift of God. Therefore, we should no longer live for ourselves but for Him who died for us (2 Corinthians 5:14,1).
- 3) It bridges the gap between His first and second coming. “For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes” (1 Corinthians 11:26). It reminds us to live each day in the imminence of His return.

Encounter God?

Each time we observe the Lord’s Supper, we encounter God anew. It provides us with direct access to God. It gives us a time to receive forgiveness for our sins, strength against our weaknesses, courage in the face of our fears.

Join with us, the first Thursday of each month, as we come together around the Lord’s table to partake in “the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death” (Philippians 3:10).