

## 2. THE LORD'S SUPPER: AN ACTUAL SUPPER



**Premise:** The early church celebrated the Lord's Supper **1)** every week, **2)** as an actual meal, **3)** centered around a single cup and loaf. Jesus empowered the church with this communion plan to create supernatural unity, loving community, and holiness in view of His return.

— Luke 22:14-16 —

**\*\*\*\* Jesus celebrated the Passover his whole life. According to Luke 22:14-16, what was special about this particular Passover?** It was the last supper with them before He suffered, **22:16**. This last supper for Jesus became the Lord's supper for the church.

**Gordon Fee:** "... from the beginning the *Last Supper* was for Christians not an annual Christian Passover, but a regularly repeated meal in 'honor of the Lord,' hence the *Lord's Supper*."<sup>1</sup>

**How much food was typically eaten in the Passover?** See *Exodus 12:1-11, 14, Deuteronomy 16:1-8*. As the name suggests, the Passover feast was an actual meal, with lots of food.

**1. What in Luke 22:16 looks to the future?** The forward-looking aspect is that Jesus said he would not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

**What function does the word "until" (22:16) serve in any sentence?** The Greek is *heos hōtou*; it carries the idea of "before" or "up to the time that." It is a forward-looking word and establishes a time frame (a future reference). The word "until" has to do with *when* something will happen in the future.

**What do we call the things in the Bible that people want to know the fulfillment of?** The word "fulfilled" (**22:16**) suggests that the Lord's Supper functions as a sort of prophecy, or type, of something that was *yet to come*.

**Jesus said that the Passover would be "fulfilled" in the kingdom of God (Lk 22:16). When and how might this fulfillment take place?** See *Revelation 19:7-9*.

NAS **Revelation 19:9** Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

ESV **Isaiah 25:6-8** ... the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined ... He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.

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<sup>1</sup> Gordon Fee, "The First Epistle to the Corinthians," *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 532 & 555.

**Backwards & Forwards:** Greek Scholar **Fritz Rienecker** wrote, “The Passover celebrated two events, the deliverance from Egypt and the anticipated coming Messianic deliverance.”<sup>2</sup> So too, the Lord’s Supper celebrates two events, our past deliverance from sin through Jesus’ death on the cross and the anticipated Second Coming. Thus, it is not unusual that Jesus would have also cast a *forward look* to the Lord’s Supper. Jesus, our sacrificial Passover lamb, promised to come back for His bride, the church, and to set up His Kingdom. The Passover (turned Lord’s Supper) is a foreshadowing of the wedding banquet of the Lamb (**Re 19**). Celebrated as an actual meal, the Lord’s Supper is like rehearsal dinner for the marriage banquet of the lamb.

**The Baptist Faith and Message of 2000:** “The Lord’s Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church ... memorialize the death of the Redeemer and *anticipate His second coming*” (italics mine).

**Reason #1:** *The Lord’s Supper should be an actual meal because the best way to picture the future marriage banquet of the Lamb is with an actual banquet now.*

**2. What do the following texts indicate about how first-century Jews envisioned heaven? Exodus 19:16-23, 24:9-11, Matthew 8:11, Luke 14:15, Revelation 19:7-9.** Some people today think of heaven as a time of floating on clouds, playing harps. This is not how the people of the Bible envisioned heaven. They pictured it as a time of feasting in the Messiah’s presence, thus the imagery of the wedding banquet of the Lamb.

**Matthew 8:11** ... many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

**Luke 14:15** Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!

This Jewish picture of heaven to be feasting in God’s presence may stem from the Sinai experience. Mount Sinai shook as thunder sounded, lightning flashed, a trumpet sounded and smoke clouds enveloped it. God warned that any living thing which touched the mountain would be killed (**Ex 19:16-23**). However, in contrast to this:

ESV **Exodus 24:9-11** Moses ... and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel ... And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

**Reason #2:** *A second reason the Lord’s Supper should be a banquet relates to the Biblical imagery for heaven: feasting in the kingdom of God.*

— **Luke 22:17-18** —

**\*\*\*3. What in Luke 22:17-18 looks to the future?** Jesus said He would not drink of the cup again until the kingdom of God comes, **22:18**.

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<sup>2</sup> Fritz Rienecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 207.

**Application:** When we drink from the communion cup, we should remember that Jesus will not drink of it again until the kingdom of God comes, **22:18**.

**The Point:** Yet again we see a forward-looking aspect of the Lord's Supper. Jesus wanted them to associate drinking from the cup with the thought that Jesus Himself would partake of it again in the future.

- **“until” (22:18):** As before (22:16), the Greek for “until” is *heos hotou*, and simply indicates when something will happen in the future.

— Luke 22:19 —

**\*\*\*\*What symbolism did Jesus give the loaf (Lk 22:19)?** The bread represents His body given for us, and looks back to His death on the cross.

**Timing:** Matthew tells us that Jesus passed around the bread while the meal was still in progress. This means that elements were an integral part of the meal, not separated from it:

NIV **Matthew 26:26** While they were eating, Jesus took bread ...

**In English, what does “remembrance” mean?** In English, a remembrance is like a memorial. It brings to mind something from the past. It is only backward looking.

**Example:** “The flowers were given in remembrance of the late Mrs. Smith.”

**4. What is the difference between a “remembrance” (Lk 22:19) and a “reminder”?** A remembrance is typically backward looking, but a reminder can also look forward.

**Example:** You might tie a string around your finger as a reminder to do something in the future (like to buy milk on the way home).

- **“remembrance” (22:19):** From *anamnēsis* (364); *an* means “not”; *amnēsis* (“amnesia”) means “forget.” A “remembrance” is literally “not amnesia.” Although *anamnēsis* can mean “remembrance”, it fundamentally simply means “reminder.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, it can refer to something in the past or the future.

**The literal Greek in Luke 22:19 reads: “unto my reminder.” Is the reminder about Jesus, or is it for Jesus? Is this “reminder” designed to remind *us* about something, or could it be to remind *Jesus* about something? *Rhetorical.***

Suppose you heard me say, **“That’s my picture!”** If I were pointing to Monet’s painting of water lilies, I would mean that the picture belongs to me. I own it. On the other hand, if I were pointing to a picture of me in a newspaper, I would mean that it was about me, but not necessarily that I owned the paper. So too, the reminder could BELONG to Jesus, or it could be ABOUT Jesus.

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<sup>3</sup> Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, Danker, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

**The Issue:** Does Jesus *own* the reminder or is Jesus *in* the reminder?

- **“of me” (22:19):** The standard Greek word for “me” is *mou*; *mou* is grammatically ambiguous; the reminder could be about Jesus or it could belong to Jesus. However, the word *mou* is not used here. Instead, the more emphatic Greek word *emos* is used. The possessive pronoun (*emos*) was used when emphasis was desired (as any basic Greek grammar will confirm;<sup>4</sup> *emos* more specifically denotes possession (“my”).

That Jesus said *emos*, not *mou* strongly suggests that the reminder actually belongs to Jesus. He owns it. The word “*emos*” in the Greek is possessive, suggesting that the reminder is not just about Jesus, but that it belongs to Jesus. If *mou* had been used, there would be more ambiguity of meaning. The phrase might then have been translated, “do this to that you (the church) might remember me.” The word *emos*, however, denotes possession (in this case, Christ’s memory, not the church’s, is in view). Thus, the bread of the Lord’s Supper is specifically designed to be a reminder for Jesus.

**\*\*\*\*5. What can be observed about God remembering from Genesis 9:12-16, Exodus 2:23-25, and Ezekiel 16:59-60?**

ESV **Genesis 9:12b-16** God said, “... I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant ... When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant ...”

According to the text, it is Jehovah God who gets reminded. Notice that this reminder concerns the future. A reminder can remind about a past promise to do something in the future.

ESV **Exodus 2:22-24** During those many days the king of Egypt died, and the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help ... God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham ...

It was God who remembered the promises of the Abrahamic covenant.

ESV **Ezekiel 16:59-60** ... thus says the Lord GOD: “... I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth ...”

The Lord Himself did the remembering about the Sinai covenant.

**The Point:** *God remembers covenant promises.* It is not that God forgets; these are anthropomorphic statements. It is good biblical theology to say God *remembers* His covenant promises. Arguably, the “remembrance” of the Lord’s Supper has to do with reminding Jesus of his new covenant promise to return and eat it again with us.

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<sup>4</sup> Such as *Learn to Read New Testament Greek* by David Alan Black, page 158.

**Truth:** It is good biblical theology to state that God remembers covenant promises. Just like with the rainbow, Jesus sees us eating the Lord's Supper and He remembers His promise to come back and eat it again with us. Jesus remembers covenant promises. The reminder is forward looking.

**An Acted-Out Prayer:** Most prayers we say—the Lord's Supper is a prayer that we *do*. **J. Jeremias** (Professor of Theology, University of Leipzig) understood Jesus to use *anamnēsis* in the sense of a reminder for God: "The Lord's Supper would thus be an enacted prayer."<sup>5</sup>

**6. What would the church eating the Lord's Supper remind Jesus to do (Lk 22:19)?**

The bread serves to remind Jesus that He has not yet finished ("eat it again," **22:16**) what He started ("body given," **22:19**). He still needs to return with His kingdom! Eating the bread serves as an object-lesson prophecy/prayer designed to remind Jesus to fulfill His promise to return so as to eat and drink "again" (**22:16,18**) of the Passover (i.e., "do this so as to remind me").

— Luke 22:20 —

\*\*\*\***In Luke 22:20, what did Jesus say the next time He passed the cup?**<sup>6</sup> He said it represents the "new covenant" in His blood. Arguably, the sign of the New Covenant is the Lord's Supper. The purpose of a sign is to remind the parties of the covenant of their covenant obligations or promises. Thus, Jesus said the Lord's Supper is "reminder." It is a sacred, covenant meal.

**7. What is it significant that Jesus passed the first cup either immediately before or during the meal, the bread while they were eating, and the next cup after they had eaten the bread (Lk 22:16, 22:20)?** See *Matthew 26:26*. Timing is everything. The bread and both cups were given in the context of an actual meal, not separated from it.

**Reason #3:** *A third reason the Lord's Supper should be celebrated as a banquet is because the Lord's Supper grew out of the Passover feast. The Twelve rightly understood that the Lord's Supper would also be an actual feast. Passover was called a feast because it was a feast, and the Lord's Supper was called a supper because that's what it was (a true supper).*

— Luke 22:28-30 —

\*\*\*\***In Luke 22:28-30, what food-related activity will happen in the coming kingdom?** He said the apostles would be eating and drinking at His table, **22:30**.

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<sup>5</sup> Colin Brown, ed., *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 244.

<sup>6</sup> In Jewish tradition, four cups were passed. Only two of the four are referenced in Scripture.

**8. What is the meaning behind the imagery of eating and drinking at Jesus' table in the kingdom (Lk 22:29-30)?** Compare Exodus 19:16-23, 24:9-11, Matthew 8:11, Luke 14:15, Revelation 3:20, 19:7-9. It meant you were accepted into the kingdom to enjoy the full fellowship of the host. Eating in the Messiah's kingdom was the Jewish imagery of heaven.

**The Main Point:** The Lord's Supper has numerous forward-looking aspects to it (**Lk 22:16, 18-19, 30**). As an actual meal, it prefigures the future feast of the coming Messianic kingdom—the marriage supper of the Lamb.

ESV **Nehemiah 8:10** Eat the fat and drink sweet wine ... for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

**Application:** *What better way to typify the coming Messianic banquet than with a banquet?*

**9. Scholarly consensus is that the early church celebrated the Lord's Supper as a meal. Why does this consensus matter?** The scholarly consensus matters because it leaves little doubt as to how the early church celebrated the holy meal: *as an actual feast*. For example:

**John Drane:** "The early church observed the Lord's Supper as an exclusive community meal."<sup>7</sup>

**Leon Morris:** "Holy Communion was not simply a token meal as with us, but an actual meal. Moreover, it seems clear that it was a meal to which each of the participants brought food."<sup>8</sup>

**Reason #4:** *A fourth reason the Lord's Supper should be a banquet is simply because that is how the New Testament church celebrated it.*

— Acts 2:42-47 —

**\*\*\*\* In Acts 2:42, there is an "and" between "teaching" and "fellowship", then between "bread" and "prayer", but not between "fellowship" and "bread." Why is this significant?**

ESV **Acts 2:42** ... they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

The words "fellowship" and "breaking of bread" are linked together as simultaneous activities (the "and" is missing). They had "fellowship in the breaking of bread." As has been stated above, in Jewish thought to eat with someone was the perfect picture of

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<sup>7</sup> *The New Lion Encyclopedia*, 173.

<sup>8</sup> Leon Morris, "1 Corinthians," *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1976), 158.

fellowship (see also **Revelation 3:20**). It is no accident that communion and community are from the same root word.

**Summary:** The biblical evidence suggests that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated as a feast that is focused on the future. The bread and wine uniquely serve as a sign of the New Covenant to remind Jesus of His promise to return and eat it again with us. It should be celebrated as a wedding, not a wake; as a marriage rather than a memorial.

**11. Why do commentators interpret “the breaking of bread” (Acts 2:42) as a reference to the Lord’s Supper? See for example Luke 22:19.** It is because all the synoptic Gospels recorded that Jesus “broke” the bread of the Lord's Supper.<sup>9</sup> It has also been argued that “break bread” was not a common idiom in Judaism for eating together.

**John Gooch:** “In the first century, the Lord's Supper included not only the bread and the cup but an entire meal.”<sup>10</sup>

**Application:** When the early church celebrated the Lord's Supper, it was a time of fellowship and gladness. It did not seem to carry a funeral atmosphere as do modern observances of the Lord's Supper.

**12. In Acts 2:46-47, how would you describe the mood of their meals?** Their meals were times of fellowship (**2:42**) and gladness (**2:46**).

**Reason #5:** *A fifth reason that the Lord's Supper should be a banquet is because it serves as a wonderful time of edification through fellowship.* It is a fellowship feast with a future focus.

### Acts 20:7

\*\*\*\***13. Based on Acts 20:7, why did the church at Troas come together?** They met “to break bread” (the Lord's Supper). The phrase “to break bread” is, in Greek, a telic infinitive that denotes a purpose or objective. Their meeting was a meating!

**The Primary Purpose: The Lord's Supper.** The main reason the church at Troas met each Lord's Day was to eat the Lord's Supper. If this reflects the general practice of the early church, it should also be the main reason for our church meetings today.

**The Secondary Purpose: Paul's Teaching.** The church gathered on the first day of the week to eat the Lord's Supper. Paul used that gathering as an opportunity to teach to the gathered saints.

• **“the first day of the week” (20:7):** The early church's regular practice was to meet on the first day of each week. Early church father **Justinian**, about A.D. 160, stated that “And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to

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<sup>9</sup> William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 962.

<sup>10</sup> John Gooch, *Christian History & Biography*, Issue 37 (Carol Stream: Christianity Today), 3.

one place ... when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought ... and everyone participates in that over which thanks have been given.”<sup>11</sup>

— 1 Corinthians 10:17 —

\*\*\*\* According to 1 Corinthians 10:17, what is theological significance of using a single loaf in the Lord’s Supper? It has to do with our unity in Christ (10:17).

If a single loaf symbolizes Christian unity, what does a tray of individual wafers represent? It would picture division, and isolated individualism.

14. Observe the prepositions in 1 Corinthians 10:17; what is cause and what is effect?

NIV 1 Corinthians 10:17 Because there is one loaf [**<<cause**], we, who are many, are one body [**<<effect**], for [**cause>>**] we all partake of the one loaf.

Using one loaf at the Lord’s Supper actually *creates* unity within a body of believers! It is more than a mere memorial or an object-lesson prayer. Some type of grace unto unity is actually conferred. Consider the opinions of well-known Bible scholars concerning this verse:

**Geoffrey Wainwright** (English theologian) wrote that the bread “both *signifies and causes* churchly unity” (emphasis his).<sup>12</sup>

**Gerd Theissen (University of Heidelberg)**: “Because all have eaten portions of the same element, they have become a unity in which they have come as close to one another as members of the same body, as if the bodily boundaries between and among people had been transcended.”<sup>13</sup>

**Robertson and Plummer**: “The single loaf is a symbol and an instrument of unity.”<sup>14</sup>

**Gordon Fee** wrote of the “solidarity of the fellowship of believers created by their *all* sharing ‘the one loaf.’”<sup>15</sup>

This view is also shared by **C.K. Barrett, F.W. Grosheide, Leon Morris**, and the majority of scholars.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1, 186.

<sup>12</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 117.

<sup>13</sup> Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1982), 165.

<sup>14</sup> Alfred Robertson & Archibald Plummer, “1 Corinthians,” *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1911), 213.

<sup>15</sup> Gordon Fee, “1 Corinthians,” *New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 515.

<sup>16</sup> Eric Svendsen, *The Table of the Lord* (Atlanta: New Testament Restoration Foundation, 1997), 32.



**Application:** In our Lord's Supper, the congregation should partake of one cup and one loaf. At the very least, it pictures our unity in Christ. Moreover, actually creates unity.<sup>17</sup>

— 1 Corinthians 11:17-22 —

\*\*\*\***According to 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, why did their meetings do more harm than good?** The rich did not want to eat with the poor. Unfettered by employment constraints, the rich arrived early, specifically so as not to have to eat with the poor. It was a similar problem to that dealt with in **James 2:1-7** (the church paid special attention to the rich man and neglected the poor man). The sin of division (**11:18**) led to the sin of some going home hungry (**11:21a**) and others getting drunk (**11:21b**).

**15. What in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22 indicates the Lord's Supper was as an actual meal?** That some went away hungry demonstrates that they came to the meeting expecting to satisfy hunger. That some became drunk shows that more than a thimble full of wine was used.

**Observation:** Paul wrote to the Corinthian church some twenty years after Jesus first turned His Last Supper into our Lord's Supper. Just as the Last Supper was an actual meal, so also the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper as an actual meal.

**It is obvious from 11:20 that the Corinthians came together for the purpose of eating the Lord's Supper. What had they done wrong that made it cease being the Lord's Supper?** 11:21-22. Their divisions had turned the "Lord's Supper" (*deipnon*) into their "own supper" (*deipnon*, **11:21**).

ESV **1 Corinthians 11:20-21** When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk.

- **"supper" (1Co 11:20):** "Supper" (as in Lord's Supper) is from *deipnon*, which means "dinner, the main meal toward evening, banquet."<sup>18</sup> It does not mean snack, appetizer, nor *hors d'oeuvres*. Here are other places *deipnon* is used:

NIV **Luke 14:16** A certain man was preparing a great banquet (*deipnon*) and invited many guests ...

NIV **Revelation 19:9** Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper (*deipnon*) of the Lamb!

**J.G. Simpson:** "The name Lord's Supper, though legitimately derived from 1 Cor 11v20, is not there applied to the sacrament itself, but to the Love Feast or Agape, a meal commemorating the Last Supper, and not yet separated from the Eucharist when St.

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<sup>17</sup> The Lord's Supper is also a time of "participation" (10:16, *koinonia*, #2842) with both Christ (1Co 10:14-17) and His people (in Acts 2:42, "fellowship" is also from *koinonia*). The bread of presence in the Old Covenant was not eaten by the people. In contrast, the bread of presence in the New Covenant is to be eaten!

<sup>18</sup> The word supper is not in the ESV for Luke 22:20 (It is found in the KJV and the NIV). This is because the verb form (*deipneo*) was used by Luke, which means "eat, dine" (BAGD, *Lexicon*, 173).

Paul wrote.”<sup>19</sup> (Simpson recognized that the Lord's Supper originally was a meal, but was later replaced by bread and wine services with the name 'the Lord's Supper' when the meal was phased out by the early church fathers.)

**Thought-provoking Observation:** It was a sin that the poor were humiliated by going home hungry from the Lord's Supper. If people go home hungry from the Lord's Table at your church, then your church clearly is not observing it the way the early church did.

**16. What in 1 Corinthians 11:17-22 indicates that the Lord's Supper was the main reason for the weekly meeting?** Compare 11:17-18 to 11:20, 11:33. Their “meetings” (11:17) were doing more harm than good because when they came “together as a church” (11:18a), there were deep divisions. Thus, Paul wrote: “when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat” (11:20). The ostensible reason for the weekly church meetings was to eat the Lord's Supper.

**I. Howard Marshall:** “This simple rite was observed by His disciples, at first as part of a communal meal, Sunday by Sunday.”<sup>20</sup>

*Encyclopaedia Britannica* has described the Lord's Supper as “the central rite of Christian worship” and “an indispensable component of the Christian service since the earliest days of the church.”<sup>21</sup> For the early believers, participation in the Lord's Supper was one of the main reasons for their coming together as a church every Lord's Day.

**The Lord's Day & The Lord's Supper (11:20):** Another evidence of weekly communion is grammatical. To Christians, Sunday is the “Lord's Day” (Rev 1:10), the day Jesus rose from the dead. This is a translation of *kuriakon hemeran*, unique technical Greek wording. It is literally “the day belonging to the Lord.” The phrase “belonging to the Lord” is from *kuriakos*, which is found in the New Testament in only **Revelation 1:10** and **1 Corinthians 11:20**, where it refers to the Supper as “belonging to the Lord” (*kuriakon deipnon*). The connection between these two unusual but identical ways in which these words are used must not be overlooked. The *supper* belonging to the Lord was eaten every week on the *day* belonging to the Lord. The Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper are a weekly package deal.<sup>22</sup>

**We Came Together to Break Bread:** More evidence for the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper is found in the only clear reason given in Scripture for regular church meetings: to eat the Lord's Supper. In **Acts 20:7**, Luke stated: “On the first day of the week we came together to break bread.” The words “to break bread” are a telic infinitive, denoting a purpose or an objective. They met for the purpose of breaking bread (the Lord's Supper).

**When You Come Together:** Another New Testament passage in which the purpose of a church gathering is stated is **1 Corinthians 11:17–22**.

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<sup>19</sup> James Hastings, ed., *The Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909), 244.

<sup>20</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Christian Beliefs: An Introductory Study Guide* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1972), 80.

<sup>21</sup> Pelikan, “Eucharist,” 807.

<sup>22</sup> Eric Svendsen, *The Table of the Lord* (Atlanta: NTRF, 1997), 140.

**Come Together to Eat:** Looking ahead in our text, yet another explicitly stated reason for assembly is found in **1 Corinthians 11:33**, “When you come together *to eat*, wait for each other” (italics mine). As before, the verse indicates that they came together to eat. The Scriptures give no other reason for weekly church meetings. It is clear that there were times for prayer, praise, and teaching each Sunday; however, the central focus was communion.

**Early Testimony:** Early extra-biblical sources also indicate that the Lord’s Supper was celebrated weekly, such as the *Didache*, and **Justin Martyr’s First Apology**, written in the middle of the second century. Around A.D. 200, **Hippolytus** wrote of the typical church meeting in Rome—it included the Lord’s Supper.

Furthermore, **John Calvin** advocated weekly communion.<sup>23</sup>

**Karl Deddens** wrote: “If the Lord’s Supper were celebrated more often, we should not view such a change as an accommodation to ‘sacramentalists’ who wish to place less emphasis on the service of the Word; rather, we should view it as an execution of Christ’s command....”<sup>24</sup>

The fellowship and encouragement that each member enjoys in such a weekly gathering is significant. This aspect of the Church’s Sunday meeting should not be rushed or replaced. It is also important that the meeting be devoted to prayer and the apostle’s teachings (**Acts 2:42**); however, this should not be at the expense of the weekly Lord’s Supper. The weekly celebration of the Holy Meal adds an unparalleled dynamic to church meetings.

**Poor Results:** Imagine someone going to a weight trainer to put on muscle. The trainer prescribes a certain regimen five times a week. A few months later, however, there was no difference. Upon inquiry, the trainer learned that rather than doing the sets five times per week, the man only did them once a month. To get the results Jesus intended, a church needs to not only celebrate the Lord’s Supper as an actual meal, but every week.

— 1 Corinthians 11:26 —

\*\*\*\***What new information about the Lord’s Supper is revealed in 1 Corinthians 11:26?**

**17. Exactly to whom do we “proclaim” (1Co 11:26) the Lord’s death? See Luke 22:16.** It may be to Jesus Himself that we are proclaiming His death (“in remembrance of me”). The Lord’s Supper is a reminder to Jesus how His death on the cross initiated the new covenant and reminds Him to fulfill (**Lk 22:16**) His promise to return (“until he comes,” **1Co 11:26**).

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<sup>23</sup> David Koyzis, “The Lord’s Supper: How Often?” ReformedWorship.org, accessed September 1, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Deddens, “Everything Points,” 93.

**18. Based on 1 Corinthians 11:26, why are we to proclaim the Lord's death (for what purpose)?** The wording of the text suggests we are to do it so that the Lord will come back (purpose). This is a prophetic aspect of the Lord's Supper.

- **“until” (11:26):** Previously in this study, the Greek for “until” is *heos hotou*. It simply indicates *how long* a condition will last. For example, “until” in **Luke 22:16** (“I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God.”); this means that Jesus will not eat the Lord's Supper again before the kingdom of God comes. It is a time frame.

In English, I might say that I used an umbrella “until” it stopped raining (denoting a mere time frame); the umbrella had nothing to do with causing the rain to stop.

However, the Greek for “until” in **1 Corinthians 11:26** is different than in **Luke 22:16**. It is *achri hou*. When used along with an aorist subjunctive verb, it grammatically can denote a goal. Much more than a mere time frame, the Greek behind “until” in **11:26** refers to an objective (“until the goal is reached”).<sup>25</sup> The purpose of the proclamation of the Lord's death through the bread and the cup is in order to persuade Jesus to come back!

**Prophecy Passages:** *achri hou*, used in conjunction with an aorist subjunctive verb, and that denotes a goal or objective, is used in several eschatological passages:

NAS **Luke 21:24** ... Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

NAS **Romans 11:25** ... a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

NAS **1 Corinthians 15:25** ... He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

**19. How do the following texts hint that our prayers may impact the timing of Jesus' return?** *Luke 11:2-3, 2 Peter 3:11-12, Revelation 6:9-10.*

**The Lord's Prayer:** The eating that is associated with the coming of Christ's kingdom may be reflected in the model prayer suggested by Jesus. In reference to the kingdom, Jesus taught us to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done” (KJV, **Luke 11:2**). The very next request is “Give us each day our daily bread” (NIV, **11:3**). The Greek underlying Luke 11:3 is difficult to translate. Literally, it reads something akin to, “the bread of us belonging to the coming day give us today.” Thus, the NASV marginal notes read, “bread for the coming day.” Linking together both **11:2** and **11:3**, Jesus may have been teaching us to ask that the bread of the coming Messianic banquet be given to us today: “Let your kingdom come—Let the feast begin today!”

**Athanasius** explained it as “the bread of the world to come.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Rienecker, *Linguistic Key*, 427.

<sup>26</sup> Frederic Godet, *Commentary on Luke*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981), 314.

In the *Didaché*, an early Christian document, the Lord's Supper was connected to the second coming, reflected in their practice of praying *maranatha* ("Come, Lord") when observing communion.

### 1 Corinthians 11:27-30

\*\*\*\***What in 1 Corinthians 11:27-30 reveals the seriousness of the Lord's Supper?**  
11:27b, 29b, 30.

**20. Exactly what was the "unworthy manner" (11:27) that made them guilty? See 1 Corinthians 11:17-22** First, notice that it was not the people themselves who were said to be unworthy but rather it was their "manner" that was unworthy. The unworthy manner consisted of eating the Lord's Supper with unresolved divisions so extreme that the rich ate all the food before the poor arrived (causing them to go away hungry). Others were so insensitive to the sacred nature of the meal that they had become drunk from the wine.<sup>27</sup>

**How might believers commit this same sin today (11:27)?** More modern parallels might be Chinese Christians refusing to eat with Japanese Christians, or white believers avoiding eating the Lord's Supper with black Christians, or an upper-class Christian in India not eating the sacred meal with a brother from a lower class.

**Remember:** The root problem was division, and that division resulted in the unworthy manner.

**21. How does eating the Lord's Supper in a "unworthy manner" make one guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord (1Co 11:27)? Compare 1 Corinthians 10:14-17.** Jesus died to buy us forgiveness, and to make us one body of believers. The divisions and selfishness of the Corinthians ran directly contrary to everything Jesus died to accomplish. Such division is almost blasphemous.

**22. According to 1 Corinthians 11:28-29, for what specific sin should a man examine himself to avoid judgement?** It is not to search his soul for unconfessed sin, but to be sure he realizes both what the Supper is all about, and that it is his brothers who constitute the "body of the Lord" on earth. The Lord's Supper is not just another meal. It is a holy, sacred, covenant meal.

**What penalty can result if we fail to examine ourselves?** Failure to recognize this truth can lead to judgment, sickness and death.

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<sup>27</sup> The KJV has "unworthily" (1Co 11:27). This is misleading, confusing. The actual Greek is from *anaxios*, which means "in an unworthy manner." Thus, the ESV has "unworthy manner," the NASV has "unworthy manner," and the NIV has "unworthy manner."

— 1 Corinthians 11:33-34 —

**\*\*\*\*23. What, in 1 Corinthians 11:33-34, was the inspired solution to the unworthy manner (11:17-22)?** The solution was not to jettison the meal, but simply to wait for each other (see 11:21). Those who felt they could not wait for the others to arrive were instructed to “eat at home.”

**C.K. Barrett:** “Paul’s point is that, if the rich wish to eat and drink on their own, enjoying better food than their poorer brothers, they should do this at home; if they cannot wait for others (verse 33), if they must indulge to excess, they can at least keep the church’s common meal free from practices that can only bring discredit upon it ... those who are so hungry that they cannot wait for their brothers should satisfy their hunger before they leave home, in order that decency and order may prevail in the assembly”<sup>28</sup> (underling mine).

**24. Based on 1 Corinthians 11:33, why did the church meet each week?** They came together as a church in order “to eat” (another telic infinitive).

**Donald Guthrie:** [Paul] “sets the Lord’s supper in the context of the fellowship meal.”<sup>29</sup>

**Observation:** This is the only reason ever given in the New Testament as to why the early church came together each Lord’s Day. See also Acts 20:7a, 1 Corinthians 11:20. Doubtless they did other things when met besides eat, but the driving purpose behind their gatherings was to celebrate the holy meal.

**25. Based on 1 John 3:2 & Titus 2:11-13, what additional benefit comes from understanding the prophetic aspects of the Lord’s Supper?** It generates second-coming holy living:

ESV **1 John 3:2** ... we know that when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

ESV **Titus 2:11-13** ... the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ ...

— Summary —

**26. How would you summarize what the above texts reveal about the Lord’s Supper?**

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<sup>28</sup> C. K. Barrett, “The First Epistle to the Corinthians,” *Black’s New Testament Commentary*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1968), 263 & 277.

<sup>29</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 758.

**What was the original form of the Lord's Supper (symbolic token or actual meal)? One loaf or pre-broken cracker remnants? Why are each of these forms important?**

In the modern church's Lord's Suppers, the deacons who carry the bread and wine of the Supper are more like pallbearers! **Was the overall focus of the Lord's Supper originally intended to be past looking (funeral mode) or forward looking (wedding atmosphere)? Fellowship or funeral? Why?**

**What were the original functions of the Lord's Supper?** The functions were 1) to serve as a **reminder** to Jesus of His promise to return, 2) for the **fellowship** of the saints, and 3) in order to create **unity** among a body of believers.

**What evidence is there as to the frequency with which the early church ate the Lord's Supper? *Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 11:18-20, 33.***

The elements of communion look back to Jesus' death on the cross to pay for sin. The *agapé* adds a forward look. When celebrated as an actual feast in a joyful wedding atmosphere, the Lord's Supper typifies the wedding supper of the Lamb. It is a reminder of Jesus' promise to return and eat it with us. A major benefit of celebrating the Lord's Supper as a holy banquet is the fellowship and encouragement experienced by each member of Christ's body. This relaxed, unhurried fellowship meal with God's family is a significant means of edifying the Church, building community, cementing ties of love, and supernaturally creating unity.

1. The Lord's Supper is the **primary purpose** for which the church gathers each Lord's Day. Indeed, it is the *only* reason ever given for a church meeting.
2. The Lord's Supper should be **eaten as a full meal** to typify the wedding supper of the Lamb. We deny that taking the Lord's Supper as a snack is a legitimate option.
3. Typifying the wedding supper, it is thus **forward-looking** and is to be eaten with a **wedding atmosphere**, not a funeral atmosphere. It is the original "happy meal"!
4. A major benefit of eating the Supper weekly as a meal is the **fellowship and edification** of the church. It is the Christian equivalent of the neighborhood pub.
5. Within the context of the full meal, there should be **one cup and one loaf** from which all partake so as to **create unity** within the church. These are also **symbolic of Jesus' body and blood**, poured out for the forgiveness of sins.
6. The wine and loaf serve to **remind Jesus** of His promise to return.

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**\*\*\*\*What praise did Paul have for the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 11:2? He commended them for holding to the traditions just as he passed them on to them.**

- **“traditions” (11:2):** From *paradosis*, “that which is handed down” (be it custom or information).<sup>30</sup> It is an inherited pattern of action or thought. It is a different Greek word than that for “teachings.” In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, **Gordon Fee** pointed out that it refers to “the ‘traditions’ that have to do with worship.”<sup>31</sup>

**27. The word “traditions” is in 1 Corinthians 11:3 is plural. What bearing does this have on celebrating the Lord’s Supper weekly as a meal?** Paul had in mind all of the church practice traditions he passed on to the church, and would be pleased if we followed them, too.

- **“delivered” (11:2):** From *paradidomi*, the verb from of *paradosis* (tradition).<sup>32</sup> Paul commended the church because they held to the church practice traditions that he had traditioned on to them. This same verb, *paradidomi*, was used by Paul in **11:23** with reference to the practice of Lord’s Supper:

NIV **1 Corinthians 11:23** ... I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread ...

That which Paul received from the Lord he “traditioned on” to them.

**\*\*\*\*What were the Thessalonians commanded to do (2Th 2:15)?** They were commanded to follow apostolic traditions. This constitutes divine direction. Many believers feel that while apostolic traditions are interesting, following them is never commanded. This, however, is not the case.

This is the same Greek word for “traditions”, *paradosis*, that was used in 1 Corinthians 11:2. The Thessalonians were specifically commanded to follow, to hold to, the “traditions” of the apostles, whether received by mouth or by letter (whether oral or written).

**28. What impact does the command of 2 Thessalonians 2:15 have on how we celebrate the Lord’s Supper?**

**Humorous Example:** During the American Civil War Battle of Chickamauga, a chaplain rode out to encourage the soldier. Private Sam Watkins recorded, “He was eloquent and patriotic. He stated that if he only had a gun he too would go along as a private soldier. You could hear his voice echo and re-echo over the hills. He had worked up his patriotism to a pitch of genuine bravery and daring that I had never seen exhibited, when fluff, fluff, fluff, fluff, FLUFF FLUFF—a whir, a BOOM! a shell screams through the air ... the reverend ... says, ‘Remember, boys, that he who is killed will sup tonight in Paradise.’ Some soldier hallooed at the top of his voice, ‘Well, parson, you come along and take supper with us.’ Boom! whir! a bomb burst, and the parson at that moment put spurs to his horse and was seen to limber to the rear, and almost every soldier yelled

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<sup>30</sup> Rienecker, *Linguistic Key*, 423. See also Bauer, *Lexicon*, 615.

<sup>31</sup> Gordon Fee, “Corinthians,” *New International Commentary on the New Testament*, 499.

<sup>32</sup> “Passing On the Faith”, CatechesisRenewal.com. Accessed January 4, 2024.



out, ‘The parson isn’t hungry, and never eats supper.’”<sup>33</sup> Don’t be like this parson with respect to the Lord’s Supper! It is to be celebrated weekly.

### Extra Thoughts

**Jesus said that He would not eat of it again until its future consummation; should the church wait for Jesus to return before eating it again? Why?**

**How can the Lord’s Supper be celebrated like a wedding banquet when the threat of death is made (1Co 11:27-30) and when 1 Corinthians 10:20-21 speaks of eating with demons (even more frightening!)?**

**How can the cup and loaf be integrated into the meal so that they are not seen as separate from the rest of the feast?**

**What bearing should the practice of the early church have on how the contemporary church celebrates the Lord’s Supper?**

**What blessings is a church missing by not celebrating the Lord’s Supper as an actual holy meal?**

**When in history did the church stop celebrating the Lord’s Supper as a holy meal?**

It appears that from the mid-third century (A.D. 250) onward the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper were separated from the meal. However, even though the two were separated, the church continued to practice both until sometime after Constantine (who died in A.D. 337). Perhaps the love feast would have continued on down to the present had the original apostolic tradition (keeping the two together) not been abandoned.

### — Practical Issues —

**a. Exactly what type of beverage was in the cup (Lk 22:18)?** Jesus simply called it the fruit of the vine.

**What in 1 Corinthians 11 indicated whether the “fruit of the vine” (Lk 22:18) was wine or grape juice? See 1 Corinthians 11:21.**

**What good imagery is wine associated with in the Bible? Genesis 27:28, Isaiah 25:6.**

**What do you think Jesus will be drinking when he finally drinks “again” of the cup at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb?**

**How would Romans 14:21 apply to using wine in the Lord’s Supper?**

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<sup>33</sup> Sam Watkins, “*Co. Aytch*” (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 103.

**Joke:** *What is the difference between Baptists and Presbyterians?* Two Presbyterians would speak if they happen to see each other in a liquor store!

- b. Should all drink out of the same cup?** The Anglicans have done this for centuries without obvious harm to their health! However, another option is to pour from the same container, or to dip one's bread into a common cup.
- c. Should the bread be unleavened?** The Jews ate unleavened bread in the Passover meal to symbolize the quickness with which God brought them out of Egypt. Certainly, Jesus used unleavened bread in the original Last Supper. However, nothing is said in the New Testament about Gentile churches using unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper. Though sometimes in the New Testament yeast is associated with evil (**1Co 5:6-8**), it is also used to represent God's kingdom (**Mt 13:33**). It is a matter of freedom.
- d. Should unbelieving children or adults be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper?** Many churches practice closed communion and doubtless can make a compelling argument for it. These same churches usually also observe it as a ritual, not a full meal. Celebrating the Lord's Supper as it was celebrated in the New Testament, as a full meal, arguably changes one's perspective on the presence of unbelievers. Certainly, the Lord's Supper, as a sacred, covenant meal, has significance only to believers. Yet to nonbelievers, it is merely another meal. It is clear from 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 that unbelievers will occasionally attend church meetings. Unbelieving adults and our own children too young to believe get hungry just like believers do, so invite them to eat too. Love them to the Lord! The danger in taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner applies only to believers (**1Co 11:27-32**).

If an unbelieving child desires to drink the grape juice just because he likes grape juice—no problem. However, if the parents purposely give it to an unbelieving child as a religious act, then that would be a violation of what the Lord's Supper is all about. It would be closely akin to the error of infant baptism.

- e. It is necessary for ordained clergy to officiate at the Lord's Supper?** This notion is foreign to the New Testament and perhaps is a holdover from Catholicism. All believers are priests under the New Covenant.
- f. Should the meal be planned out? Should it be pot luck?** Many churches have found excessive planning to be wearisome. In over twenty years of eating the Lord's Supper as a full meal, one church has been following the "pot luck" (or pot providence) method. It has served them very well. Only once did everyone bring a dessert! Ask folks to bring plenty of something to share with everyone else. Remind them to see this as a giving expense, a ministry, an offering to the Lord.

To help with cleanup, consider using paper plates and plastic cups and forks.

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### **Structural Summary:**

1. There are more forward-looking aspects to the Supper than is commonly recognized. **Examples: Luke 22:15-16 & 17-18** (“until” and “fulfillment”) & **1 Corinthians 11:26** (“until he comes”).
2. Eating the Supper as a full meal is important because it pictures the Hebrew idea of heaven and looks forward to the wedding banquet of the Lamb, **Luke 14:15, 22:30 Revelation 3:20 19:7-9**.
3. Eating a sacred meal was already associated with a biblical covenant, **Exodus 24:9-11**.
4. “Reminding” God of His covenant promises is good Hebrew theology, **Genesis 9:12-16, Exodus 2:23-25, Ezekiel 16:59-60**.
5. *Anamnesis* can clearly mean either remembrance (past) or reminder (future).
6. The “my” of **Luke 22:19** denotes possession (*emos*) and suggests that the reminder belongs to Jesus.
7. Paul’s solution for Corinthian abuses was that they wait for each other (**1Co 11:21**), not that they abolish the meal. The “eat at home” remedy was second best, for those who felt they could not wait for the others (the best option).
8. The word “until” in **1 Corinthians 11:26** is from two Greek words that (when used with an aorist subjunctive verb) can mean “goal” or “objective.”
9. The lack of imperatives about the Lord’s Supper weekly as a full meal is dealt with in our chapter on apostolic tradition, which we are commanded to hold to, **2 Thessalonians 2:15**. Virtually no ecclesiology is commanded in the New Testament, but the pattern is clear for many of the things they practiced. Scholarly sources generally agree that the church ate the Supper weekly, as a full meal. I see this as part of the “tradition” the apostles laid down; to neglect it is to miss a blessing!
10. Arguably, the word *deipnon* (“supper”) never refers to anything less than a full meal, and is so used throughout the Scriptures.

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### Wording for Announcements to Create Interest:

The Lord’s Supper is a growth strategy of the ancient church for supernatural unity, strong community, and seconding-coming purity?

Did you know ...

- *The early church ate the Lord’s Supper as a fellowship feast that looked both back to Jesus’ death but also forward to the wedding supper of the Lamb?*
- *The Ancient Church’s way of observing the Lord’s Supper resulted in strong community?*
- *God confers grace unto unity through the one cup and one loaf?*
- *The Lord’s Supper is a second-coming prayer we enact?*
- *The main reason the New Testament church met every week was to eat the Lord’s Supper?*
- *Communion is to be more of a celebration than a funeral?*

**Next Lesson:** E-mail the next set of discussion questions out to the class (or print them up and hand them out at the end of this lesson). Ask them to consider the issues, answer the questions and be prepared to discuss them at the next meeting.

\*\*\*\* = Ask this question before having someone read the text aloud.

**Teacher Preparation:**

- You can view NTRF's video on this topic on NTRF's YouTube channel.
- You can hear an mp3 on this topic at [SermonAudio.com/NTRF](http://SermonAudio.com/NTRF).
- You can read more about this topic at [NTRF.org](http://NTRF.org)

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