

The LORD'S SUPPER



Understanding the Lord's Supper

By Harold Fanning

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drink the cup, you
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death until He comes.

1 Corinthinans 11:26

INTRODUCTION

Photographs are powerful tools for preserving memories. Over time, memories have a way of fading. Looking through old family photographs uniquely helps us reconnect with simple, precious moments that might otherwise be forgotten. It allows us to reflect on our personal history, reinforces our sense of identity, and reminds us how past experiences have shaped who we are today.

The Lord's Supper can be viewed as a divine photograph that captures a pivotal moment in the life of Jesus Christ. Participating in the Lord's Supper provides a symbolic snapshot of our true selves before God, illuminating the sins that may hinder our relationship with Christ. Self-examination at the Lord's table is a valuable practice that fosters consistent fellowship with Christ and with one another.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus Christ established two ordinances for the Church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Both are outward, physical acts that symbolize the believer's identification with Christ's death, burial, and resurrection. The Lord's Supper has been faithfully observed by Christians throughout the centuries as a memorial of Christ's sacrificial death. While the specific form and frequency of its observance may vary among denominations, nearly all Christian traditions recognize the Lord's Supper (also called Communion or the Eucharist) as a central act of worship. Scripture teaches that participation in the Lord's Supper is reserved for those who have repented of their sins and placed their faith in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

The Apostle Paul offers a solemn warning in 1 Corinthians 11:28, urging believers to "examine themselves" before partaking the Lord's Supper, so as not to receive it in an unworthy manner. This underscores the seriousness and reverence with which this ordinance should be approached—it is not to be taken lightly or treated as a mere ritual, but as a sacred remembrance of Christ's atoning work.

The bread and the cup are representations of the body and blood of Jesus. Prior to His arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Jesus established this important ordinance as a means of remembering His sacrifice on the cross. In 1 Corinthians 11:23–25, Christ said, "Do this in remembrance of Me." This simple act provided a visual depiction of the profound truths of the gospel.

Sharing in the Lord's Supper serves not only as a visible reminder of Christ's mission on earth but also as a catalyst for deep gratitude in the heart of the believer. Partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine symbolizes the body and blood of Christ, which were given for the redemption of sin. Participating in this sacred ordinance is a proclamation to the world that believers are members of the body of Christ—His Church.

The Lord's Supper also points forward to the promise yet to come. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." The Lord's Supper affirms both the authority of the gospel and the certainty of Christ's promise to return for His Church (Matthew 24:30-31). Upon Jesus' return, believers may look forward to the "marriage supper of the Lamb," a celebration described in Revelation 19:6-9. The partaking of the bread and the cup today offers only a glimpse of the glorious feast that awaits!

The Lord's Supper teaches us of God's immeasurable love for His people, demonstrated by the sending of His only begotten Son to redeem the world from sin. It serves as a remembrance of what Jesus accomplished on the cross, a reinforcement of our present relationship with Him, and a reminder of the promise of what He will do in the future.

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS A REMEMBRANCE

Scripture uses the word *remember* 253 times, with 100 of those occurrences found in the Psalms (Stewardship Library).¹ In Deuteronomy 32:7, Moses instructed the people: "Remember the days of old; consider the years of all generations. Ask your father, and he will inform you, your elders, and they will tell you."

Remembrance is a powerful concept in our spiritual journey because Scripture reveals a deeper meaning than simply recollecting a past event. Dr. Michael Horton, professor at Westminster Theological Seminary, writes: "In our Western (Greek) intellectual heritage, 'remembering' means 'recollecting'—recalling to mind something that is no longer a present reality. Nothing could be further from a Jewish conception. For example, in the Jewish liturgy, 'remembering' means participating here and now in certain defining events in the past and in the future" (Allen, 2014).²

Partaking of the Lord's Supper serves as a remembrance of the grace that purchased us through Christ's death. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26: "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, 'This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes."

While the observance of the Lord's Supper is often a solemn and reflective occasion, it is by its very nature a celebratory event. Jesus, the Lamb of God, took away the sin of the world by providing sinners with the ultimate sacrifice—an astounding act on our behalf. His death on the cross accomplished what the sacrificial lamb of the Old Testament Passover could only foreshadow (1 Corinthians 5:7). When Christians partake of the bread and the fruit of the vine, they not only memorialize Jesus' death but also praise and thank God for the victory and freedom accomplished through His resurrection. It is a celebration of the eternal salvation made possible through Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:57).

This means that, at the Lord's table, we are not struggling to mentally visualize Jesus on the cross. Rather, we are celebrating our victory through Him. We must remember that, through His sacrificial death and resurrection, we are positioned to be seated with Him in Heaven (Ephesians 2:4-7). Therefore, we are not mourning someone who is absent but rejoicing in a Savior who is alive and present with us.

THE LORD'S SUPPER REINFORCES OUR RELATIONSHIP

The Lord's Supper is not merely a religious ritual; rather, it is an invitation to draw near to Christ. As Moses was at the burning bush (Exodus 3), he was beckoned to approach a holy environment. We too have an invitation to "come and dine" with our Savior, and it too should be regarded as a sacred event. The Lord's Supper serves as a holy point of contact between God and His people.

God created humanity in His own image (Genesis 1:26-28). Therefore, as creatures made in the image of God, we are created for relationships—both with God and with others. God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone" (Genesis 2:18). He designed us to have genuine relationships

with Him and one another. Communion with God is the foundation for love and contentment. Sharing together around the table is one of the primary ways relationships are established, deepened, and enjoyed—both with God and with our family of faith.

The early church understood this. From its inception, believers gathered not only to hear the Word and pray but also to break bread together in sacred fellowship. The Lord's Supper is not just about "me and Thee" but about "us and Him." It is a celebration of the spiritual bond between all who have been redeemed by Christ. The Lord's Supper is a family meal that boldly proclaims that we belong to our Heavenly Father as well as to one another. The Lord's Supper means that the relationship between God and His people is a special bond that only the cross of Christ can accomplish.

THE LORD'S SUPPER IS A REMINDER OF HIS RETURN

Each time the Church gathers for the Lord's Supper, it is a foretaste of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19). When the Church observes the Lord's Supper, it is a preview of the fellowship believers will one day enjoy in the presence of Christ for all eternity. Jesus said to His disciples, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:15-18).

Jesus' promise assures us that the coming Kingdom of God is eternal. Every Christian should eagerly anticipate the return of Christ. While we await the fulfillment of His promise, we are instructed to faithfully participate in fellowship with other believers in observing the Lord's Supper. By obeying Jesus' command to remember Him in this way, we remain focused on the sufficiency of His sacrifice on the cross and enjoy fellowship with both Him and other believers. Approaching the Lord's table with humility rightly reminds us of our sinful state in light of Christ's perfect holiness. During this sacred observance, we are reminded of the certainty of death, but reassured of our own coming resurrection and bodily transformation into the likeness of Christ. The Lord's Supper opens our spiritual eyes to see from a temporary perspective to our coming eternal glory!

Is the Lord's Supper important? The answer is an emphatic yes! The next time you observe communion, take a moment to reflect on the past, the present, and the future! "O taste and see that the LORD is good" (Psalm 34:8).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, consider the following quote: "We live between the cups, the first cup representing the death of Christ on our behalf, and the second cup of the gathered saints who will celebrate with Christ and His final victory at the marriage supper of the Lamb. When we observe the Lord's Supper, we anticipate that final Day by faith" (Rseverino, 2014).³

We hope that this brochure will be a helpful resource as you consider the importance of observing the Lord's Supper. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this topic further, please do not hesitate to contact Whitesburg Baptist Church at the address and website on the back of this brochure.

ENDNOTES

1. Stewardship Resource Library.
2. Allen, M. (2014). The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way - by Michael Horton. *International Journal of Systematic Theology*, 16(4), 475-479. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2400.2012.00639.x>
3. Rseverino. (2014, December 5). *Five Reasons We Observe the Lord's Supper - Adults*. Adults. <https://leadership.brentwoodbaptist.com/adult-discipleship/five-reasons-observe-lords-supper/>
4. All Scripture taken from the New American Standard Bible 1995.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Harold Fanning has served as a senior pastor since 1981 until retirement in 2018. He attended New Orleans Theological Seminary, and Luther Rice Theological Seminary. Over the years, Harold has served as a hospice chaplain, taught at Samford University's Extension Center, been President of the Alabama Pastor's Conference, and served on various committees of the Alabama State Board of Missions. Harold is currently a Life Group teacher at Whitesburg Baptist Church, where he and his wife, Debbie, are active members.



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