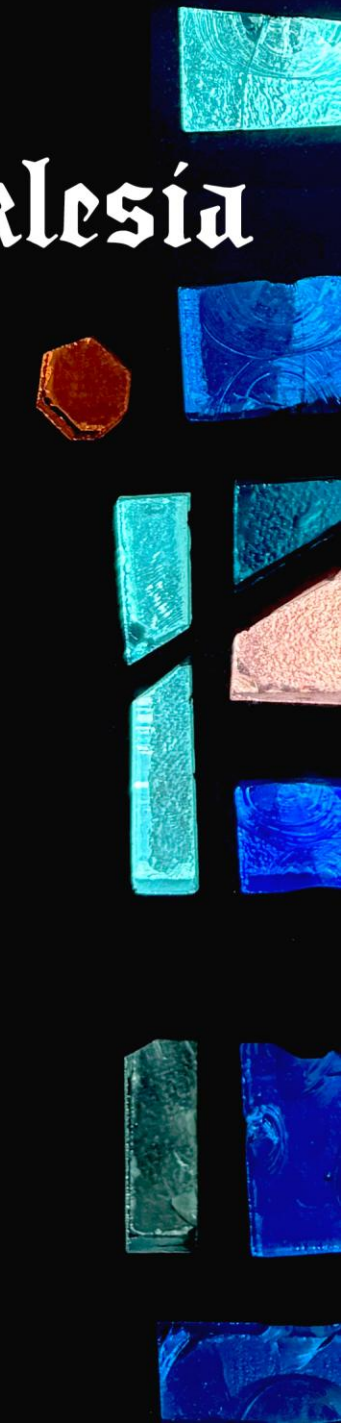

Men of the Word
Ekklesia
THE LORD'S SUPPER

Seven Characteristics of the Lord's Supper

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I. IT IS ORDAINED BY JESUS CHRIST



- The Lord's Supper is not a human invention.

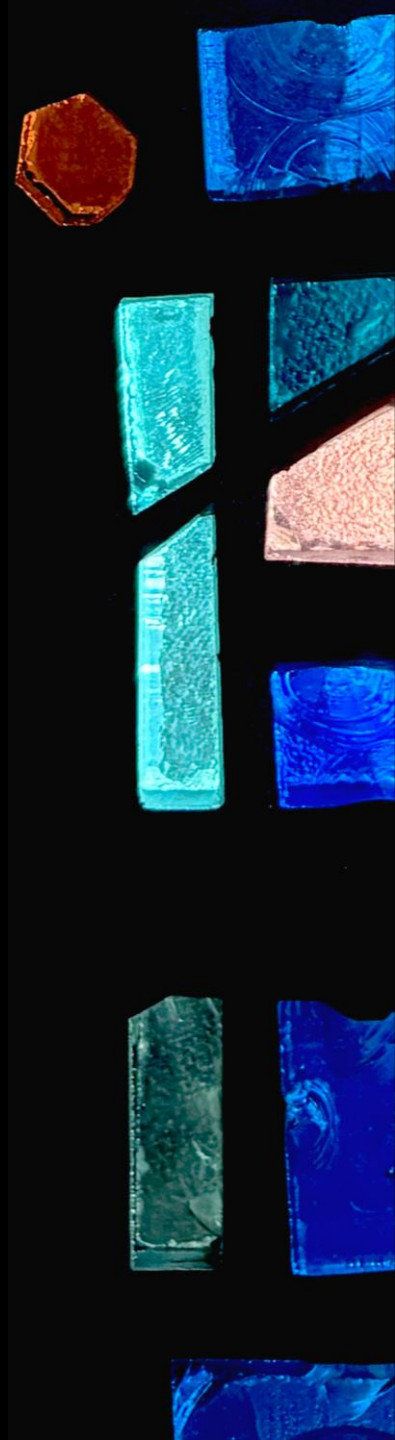
- The Lord's Supper—along with baptism—was *ordained by Jesus Christ* as a practice for the church and therefore considered His **"ordinance."**

  - **Luke 22:19–20 –** "And when He had taken *some* bread *and* given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.'"

  - "Continually do this in order to bring Me to mind"—that is, "remind yourselves and others of the redemption which I have won by My death" (Alfred Plummer, *Luke*, 494–95).

“Baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances of positive and sovereign institution, appointed by the Lord Jesus, the only lawgiver, to be continued in his church to the end of the world.”

—*London Baptist Confession* (1689), 28.1



- The apostles, Christ's authorized spokesmen, also *commanded* the Lord's Supper.
  - **1 Corinthians 11:23–25 –** "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.'"
  - Paul recognized he was not introducing something new; it had already been established "from the Lord" and he was obligated to convey it to others (v. 23).

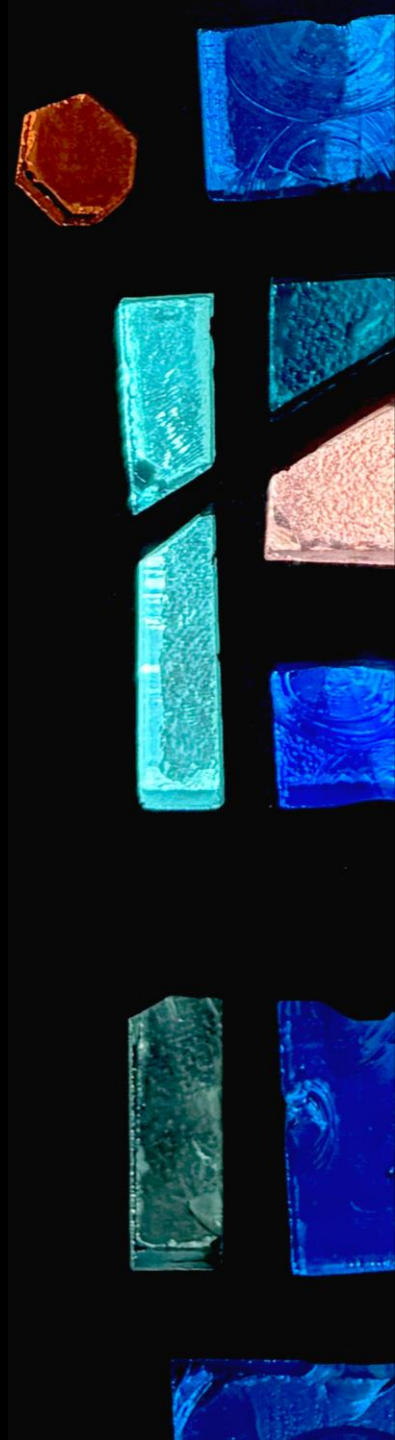
- It was received as an ordinance by the early church:
  - **Acts 2:42 –** "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."
  - **Acts 2:46 –** "Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart."
  - **Acts 20:7 –** "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight."
- Thus, because the Supper is *ordained* by Christ, the believer's participation is *not optional*.

“From the earliest time of the church, therefore, the sharing of the Lord’s table played a significant part in the worship and edification of God’s people as they met together.”

—Robert Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program*, 216

“Every believer should observe it routinely, and prolonged failure to do so constitutes a sin.”

—John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 788



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II. IT IS A MEANS OF DIVINE GRACE

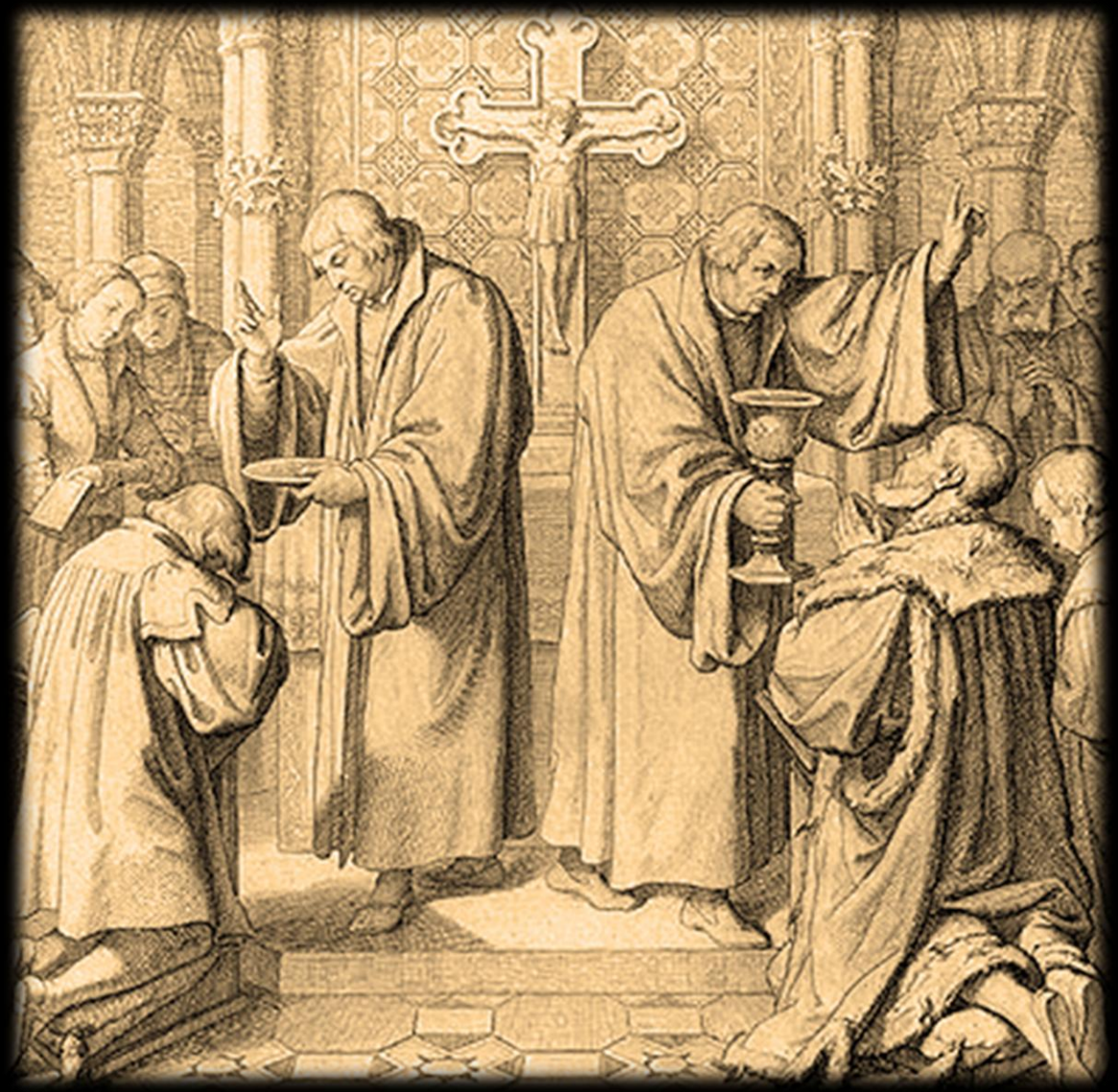


- Four main views have formed throughout church history regarding the *function* of the Lord's Supper:

    1) **Transubstantiation –** the view of Roman Catholicism; the bread and the wine are not symbolic; the priest has the power to transform the elements into Christ's literal flesh and blood during the *mass*.



The Lord's Supper is thus the offering of a *sacrifice*—a *re-sacrifice* of Christ, necessary for the forgiveness and preservation of church members; the elements become worthy of veneration.



2) **Consubstantiation –** the view of Lutherans and some Anglicans; the bread and the wine do not *become* the body and blood of Christ, but Christ comes to be "in, with, and under" the elements when they are offered.

Christ's presence is distinct from the elements, yet He co-exists with them in a real way, analogous to His divine and human natures co-existing in one Person.



3) **Spiritual Presence –** the view of Anglicans, Reformed Churches, Presbyterians, and Reformed Baptists; the bread and the wine are not merely symbols; Christ is *spirituallly present* with the church in an exceptional way during the Lord's Supper.

The Supper is an extraordinary *means of grace*; to partake of the elements by faith is to partake of Christ and the fruit of His redemption in an extraordinary way.



4) ***Memorial** – the view of many Baptists and independent evangelical churches; the elements of the Lord's Supper are *symbols* that represent the body and blood of Christ—His atoning sacrifice on the cross.

Like the Passover of the Old Testament, the elements of the Lord's Supper serve *to remind and encourage* believers of the redemption that was obtained on their behalf.

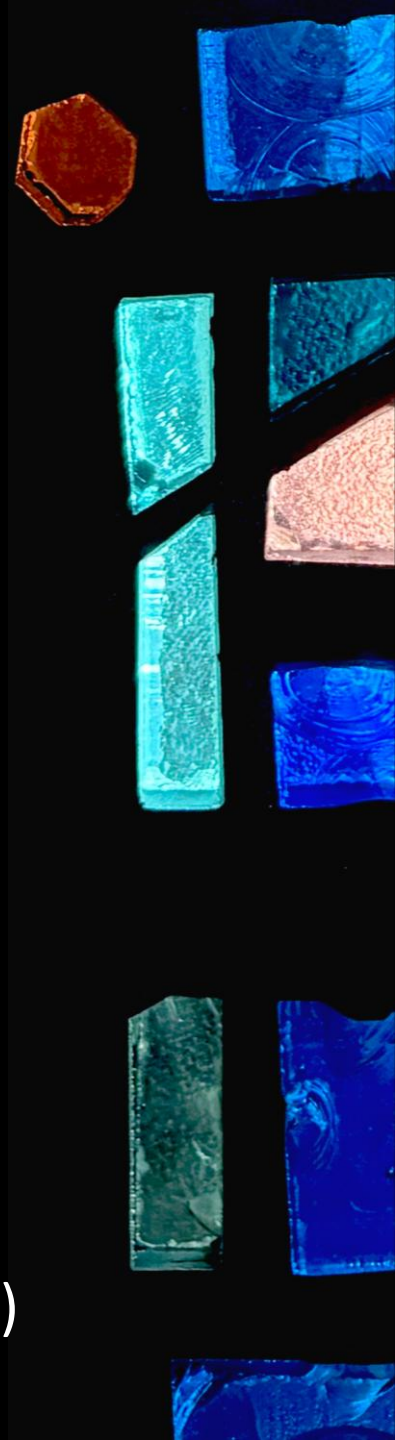
- The Lord's Supper is indeed **a *memorial***—an act focused specifically on *remembrance*—but with it does come a special blessing; it is a unique *means of grace*.

- "The cup" in the Lord's Supper is called **"the cup of blessing"** or "the cup that conveys blessing":

    - **1 Corinthians 10:16–17 –** "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread."

- Partaking of "the cup" and "the bread" indicates a unique "sharing in" or "fellowship with" (κοινωνία, *koinōnia*) Christ.

grace community church



“We teach that the Lord’s Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self-examination (1 Corinthians 11:28–32). We also teach that, whereas the elements of communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, participation in the Lord’s Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ, who indwells every believer, and so is present, fellowshipping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).”

—“What We Teach” (the doctrinal statement of Grace Community Church)

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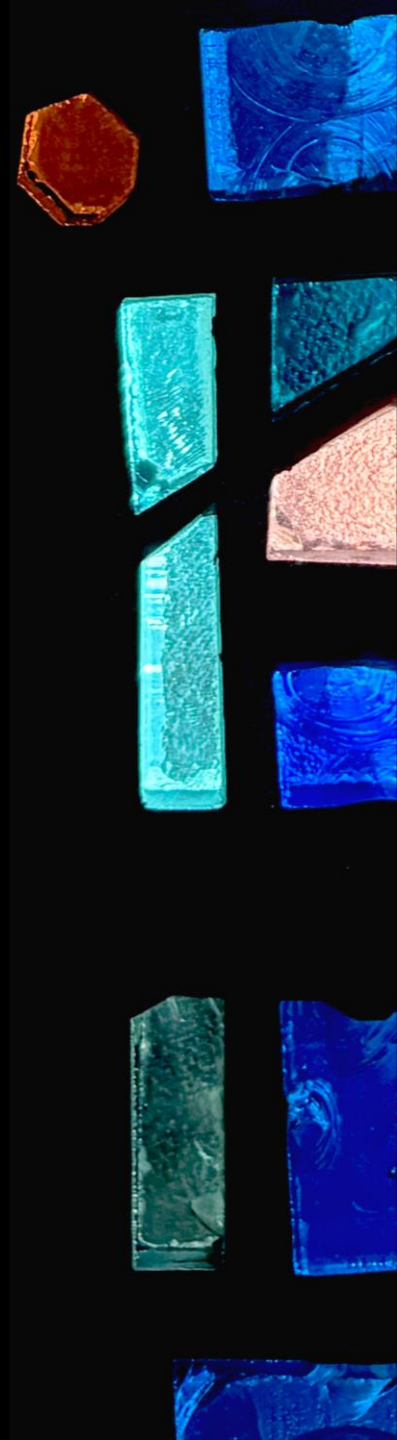
III. IT FOCUSES ON CHRIST'S ATONEMENT



- The precursor to the Lord's Supper was the Passover meal, which was prescribed as a *memorial* for the exodus from Egypt (Exod 12:1–14).
  - **Exodus 12:14 –** "Now this day will be a memorial to you, and you shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord; throughout your generations you are to celebrate it as a permanent ordinance."
  - **Exodus 13:3 –** "Remember this day"; **Exodus 13:9 –** "as a reminder"; **Deuteronomy 16:3 –** "so that you may remember."
- Jesus commemorated the *last* Passover meal and *transformed it* into a *new memorial*—one that "remembers" a greater redemption: the redemption from spiritual bondage to sin.
  - **Luke 22:19 // 1 Cor 11:24, 25 –** "Do this in remembrance of Me."

“Whereas the Passover commemorated Israel’s deliverance from slavery in Egypt (Exod 12:1–14), the Lord’s Supper points to the ultimate deliverance of God’s people from slavery to sin and death. The Passover looked back to the temporary rescue from physical bondage; the Lord’s Supper commemorates the eternal and spiritual deliverance provided through the new covenant.”

—MacArthur and Mayhue, *Biblical Doctrine*, 786



- But to **“remember”** (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24, 25) is no simple, rote, or momentary recollection of an historical event; the act includes *dedicated contemplation.*

- “To recall means to transport an action which is buried in the past in such a way that its original potency and vitality are not lost, but are carried over into the present” (Ralph Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 126).



- “Here the gospel is being proclaimed in dramatic form—as our forefathers used to say, not only to ear-gate, but to eye-gate” (Sinclair Ferguson, *Devoted to God’s Church*, 160).

- The Lord's Supper becomes the ultimate "table talk"—the picture that is worth a thousand words.
  - **Matthew 26:26–28 –** "While they were eating, Jesus took *some* bread, and after a blessing, He broke *it* and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave *it* to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.'"
  - **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."
- Participation in the Lord's Supper connects us personally and directly to the very roots of the church—to something two thousand years ago.

Each participation in the Lord's Supper should serve as a resounding "I believe" statement:

"I believe that two thousand years ago, Jesus Christ suffered and died for my sin, once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might free me from sin's tyranny, absorb the wrath of God against me, reconcile me with God, and grant me eternal life."



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IV. IT UNIFIES THE MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH



- The Lord's Supper is to function as a *unifying act*—the culmination of the church's life of *spiritual fellowship.*
  - **Acts 2:42 –** "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread . . . ."
  - **Acts 20:7 –** "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, ..."
  - **1 Corinthians 10:16–17 –** "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread."
  - **Jude 12 –** "love feasts."

- Paul strongly rebukes the Corinthian church for its celebration of the Lord's Supper while engaging in *schism*:
  - **1 Corinthians 11:17–22 –** "But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse. For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you. Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you."



The Lord’s Supper is not intended for an individual experience; it is not to be taken in privacy.

It is to be celebrated *corporately*, together with as many of the members of the local church as possible.

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V. IT IS INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE WORLD

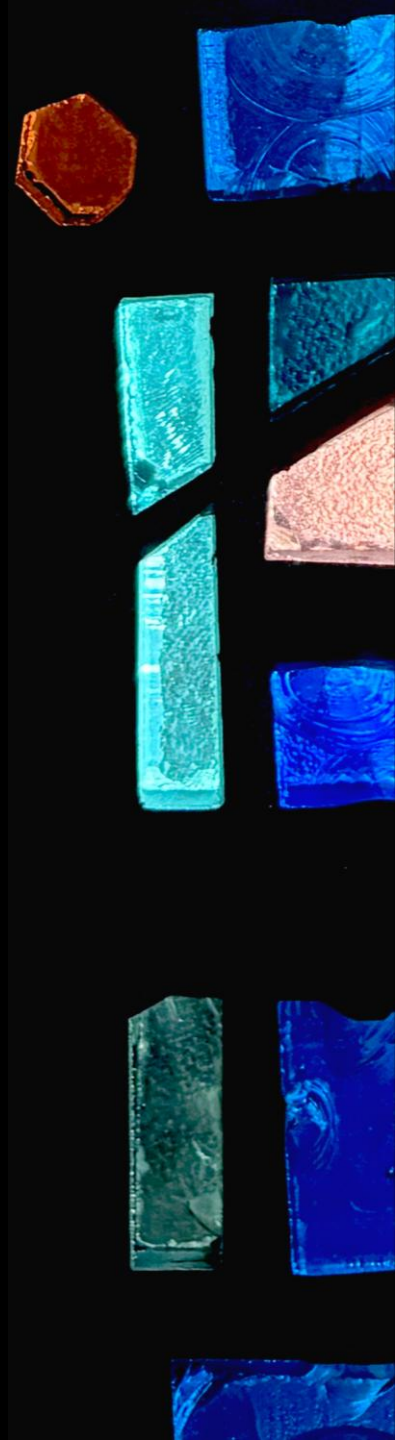


- The Lord's Supper is intended to highlight the *distinction between* the church and the world and declare that the two are *incompatible*.
  - **1 Corinthians 10:21–22 –** "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? We are not stronger than He, are we?"
  - **2 Corinthians 6:14–15 –** "Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"

The Lord's Supper will naturally appear bizarre to the outside world—and that's *good.*

The Lord's Supper is to be utterly separate from worldly rituals and practices—there is no *common ground*.

Although the Lord's Supper proclaims the gospel, it is not for unbelievers—it is reserved for *the redeemed*.



VI. IT REQUIRES CAREFUL SELF-EXAMINATION

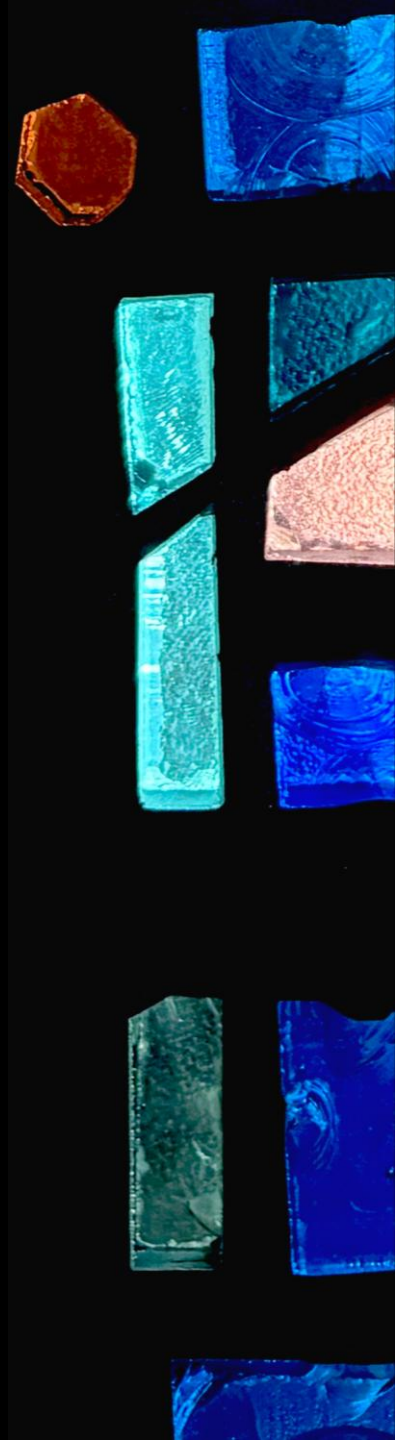


- The Lord's Supper is intended to promote regular self-assessment.
- The key question: "Am I harboring sin for which the body of Christ was broken and the blood of Christ was shed?"
  - **1 Corinthians 11:27–32 –** "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world."

- As the commemoration of the Lord's atonement is brought before the believer, the believer is reminded of his *ongoing need*—even in that moment—to confess his sins and enjoy forgiveness (1 John 1:8–9).
- If there are sins that have not been confessed, if there are broken relationships that have not been reconciled, let the plate and the cup pass so as not to desecrate the Lord's Supper. But then do what is needed.
- Abstaining from the Lord's Supper should never be on-going; it is never a license to harbor sin or leave broken relationships unreconciled.
- Repeated non-participation proclaims a message as well!
- Ultimately, participation in the Supper is the acknowledgement that Christ's sacrifice on the cross is still sufficient and necessary for my sins *today*.

The prohibition of 1 Corinthians 11:27–32 “does not shut out the man who is a sinner and knows it to be so. . . . If the table of Christ were only for perfect people none might ever approach it. The approach is never closed to the penitent sinner. To the man who loves God and loves his fellow man the way is ever open and his sins, though they be as scarlet, shall be white as snow.”

—William Barclay, *Letters to the Corinthians*, 117



VII. IT ANTICIPATES CHRIST'S RETURN



- Our celebration of the Lord's Supper is done *without* the physical presence of its Host.

- But His physical absence among us will not be forever; He is coming again, and our participation in the Supper anticipates it!

  - **Matthew 26:29 –** "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."

  - **Mark 14:25 –** "Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God."



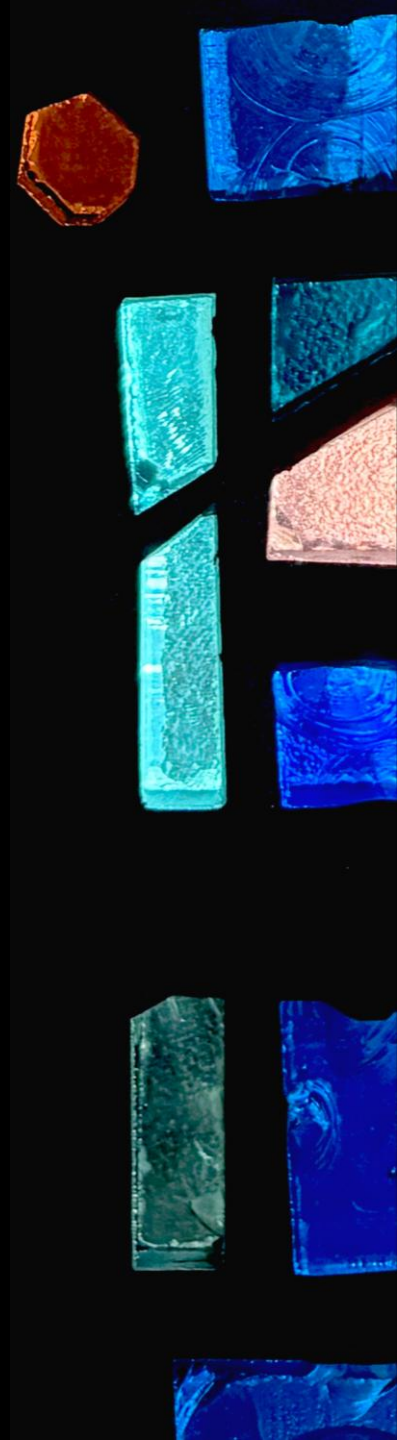
- **Luke 22:15–18 –** “And He said to them, ‘I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.’ And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He said, ‘Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.’”

- **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 is not only a declaration about an historical event—the all-sufficient atonement of Christ on the cross.

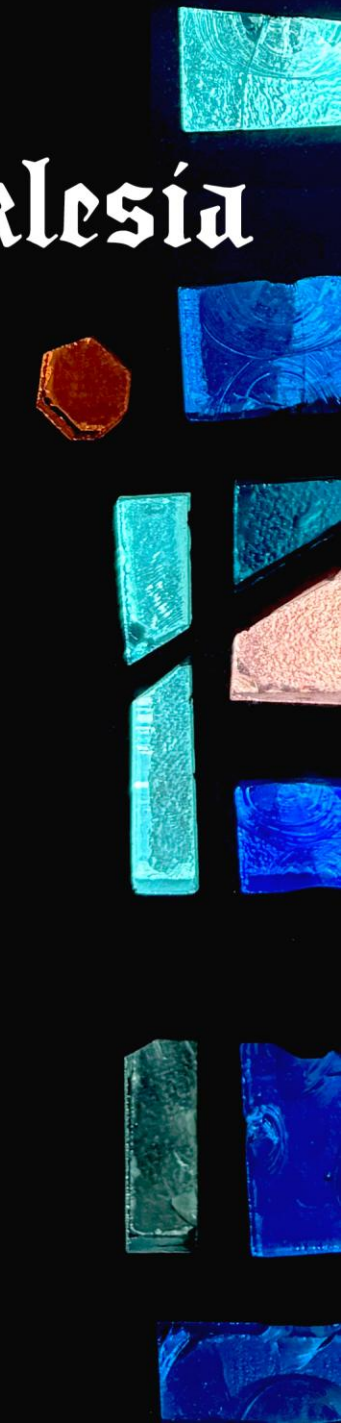
The Lord’s Supper is a declaration about a future event—the return of the King with His glorious kingdom.

The Lord’s Supper is our “Maranatha!” declaration.



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IMPLICATIONS FOR TODAY





1. Prioritize participation in the Lord’s Supper.

2. Appreciate the value of remembering Christ’s atonement together with the church.

3. Receive the blessing that comes through participation in the Lord’s Supper.



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Tonight's resources will be posted on-line at

gracechurch.org/motw