

Communion:

The Church's Way of Celebrating the Lord's Death and Second Coming

The Lord's Supper, consisting of the elements --bread and the fruit of the vine-- is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Pet 1:4), a memorial of his suffering and death (1 Cor 11:26), and a prophecy of His second coming (1 Cor 11:26), and is enjoined on all believers "till He come!"

- I. The _____ of Communion as a Church practice precede the Last Supper event in the Gospels.
 - A. The Communion "meal" initiates a _____ and arises from an ancient context.
 1. One way to establish a covenant (relationship) was by eating a meal together (Gen. 26:28-31; Gen 31:54).
 2. The Old Testament illustrates this kind of communion meal.
 - a. Gen. 14:17-20: Abraham and Melchizedek, the king of Salem.
 - b. The Levitical fellowship offering (Lev 3)
 - B. The background for the New Testament Communion meal stems from two separate events in Israel's history.
 1. The _____: the rescue of the Israelites' firstborn males from death in Egypt.
 - a. A one-time event which protected firstborn boys from death (Ex 12:14-16)
 - b. An annual meal to remind Israel of God's deliverance was celebrated during a feast called "Unleavened _____" (Matt 26:17, 19-20)
 - c. A regular celebration of a new covenant initiated by Jesus (**Luke 22:14-20**; see also 1 Cor 5:7).
 2. The establishment of the _____ covenant (Exodus 24:1-18)
 - a. The shedding of blood, the announcement of the covenant, and the fellowship meal establishing the Mosaic covenant all find parallels in the new covenant initiated by Jesus (**Matthew 26:26-30**; also Mark 14:22-26 and Luke 22:14-20).
 - b. The author of Hebrews explained that the New Covenant/Testament could not be initiated without the death of the One who held the will (Heb. 9:16-22).
- II. The _____ of the Church's Communion practice arise from the teaching of Jesus.
 - A. Jesus provided the meaning of the communion meal.
 1. This meal is a commemoration or _____ of the atoning death of Jesus (Luke 22:19-20).
 2. This meal is also a meal of _____ because it reminds us of our deliverance from sin (1 Cor 10:16-17). Even Jesus gave thanks before distributing the bread and cup (Matt 26:26, 27; Luke 22:19; Mark 14:22, 23; 1 Cor 11:24).
 3. This meal represents the _____ of believers with the Triune God and with one another in the Church (1 Cor 10:16-17, 25).

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4. This meal serves as a reminder and proclamation of Christ's promised _____ . (1 Cor 11:26; Luke 22:18; Rev. 19:6-8).

B. The practice of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament Church emphasized the _____ of the believing community (Acts 2:42; see also 2 Peter 2:13; Jude 12).

III. The _____ of the Communion celebration are both internal and external.

A. Internal benefits include:

1. The _____. Communion is not a formality to be *rushed* but a relationship to be *relished*.
2. Reminders of what the Lord has done and will do for us.
 - a. Communion reminds us of the great gift of _____ we have been given. "*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.'*" (1 Cor. 11:23-24)
 - b. Communion reminds us of our hope and _____. "*Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."* (1 Cor. 11:26)
 - c. Communion reminds us that we have contributed nothing to all of this. It _____ us.

B. The external benefit is a _____ to share the _____. Paul wrote, "*Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."* (1 Cor. 11:26)

Additional Resources:

- Dusing, Michael L. "The New Testament Church." In *Systematic Theology*, edited by Stanley M. Horton. Revised edition. Springfield, MO: Logion Press, 1995, 525-566.
- Gerish, B.A. *Grace and Gratitude: The Eucharistic Theology of John Calvin*. Edinburgh, UK: T&T Clark, 1993. Quoted in Michael Horton. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Grudem, Wayne. *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2020.
- Horton, Michael. *The Christian Faith: A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims On the Way*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2011.
- Menzies, William W. and Stanley M. Horton. *Bible Doctrines: A Pentecostal Perspective*. Springfield, MO: Gospel Publishing House, 2012.
- Michaels, J. Ramsey. *The Gospel of John*. The New International Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Gordon D. Fee. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010.
- Viola, Frank. *Reimagining Church: Pursuing the Dream of Organic Christianity*. Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008.