

the Lord's Supper



For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when 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 also he took the cup, 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.

- 1 Corinthians 11:23-26



ALLIANCE BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

JANUARY

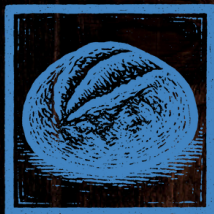


Communion

What should we call this meal? If you have been to other church traditions, you may have heard it called many names. Some call it the Eucharist (from the Greek word Eucharisto, which simply means thankful). Some call it Mass (from the Latin word Missa, which refers to the mission of the church). In the Scripture, the apostles "broke bread" (see Acts 2:46, 20:7). Evangelicals have traditionally called it the Lord's Supper, which recalls the final meal that Jesus shared with his disciples in the upper room (see Matthew 26:26-29).

Perhaps you have heard it called Communion. This is an appropriate name because it goes straight to the heart of what this meal is all about. When we eat together, we are communing with God. This meal is a symbol of the mysterious relationship that now exists between God and man. Because the eternal Son of God took on flesh, and because his body was broken and his blood poured out on the cross, sinful man can be restored to a right relationship with God. Through Jesus we have fellowship with God (1 John 1:1-3). This is amazing. This is communion.

FEBRUARY



Bread

The bread in Communion represents the body of Jesus given for us. On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you" (1 Corinthians 11:23-24). The broken bread reminds us that Jesus truly took on a human body and suffered in our place (John 1:14; Isaiah 53:5). It points us to the cross, where Jesus offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for our sins once and for all (Hebrews 10:10). When we eat the bread, we are not repeating Christ's sacrifice, but remembering and trusting in what He has already accomplished (Luke 22:19). The bread calls us to look back in gratitude and faith at the cost of our redemption. Through this simple act, God helps us remember the gospel in a tangible and personal way.

MARCH



Cup

He took the cup, a common cup, perhaps the third cup of four in the Passover, called the cup of blessing. Paul said in I Corinthians 10:16, "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? The third cup corresponded to the third promise, "I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and great judgments." Taking the cup, they no doubt exchanged shocked glances when He said, "Drink from it, all of you: for this is My blood of the covenant which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sin."

Blood was repulsive to the Jewish mind. They were strictly forbidden from ingesting blood. Now, Jesus says, this cup is my blood - drink it. It is reminiscent of John 6:53, where Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves." When He said those words, many of His so-called disciples turned away and followed Him no longer, because these were difficult words.

What does it mean? Most of you know, unless you are willing to receive, partake of the sacrifice of Christ for you, there will be no forgiveness of sin. Understand, Jesus was instituting a new memorial, yes. But He was doing much more. He was doing away with the Old Covenant and bringing in the New Covenant. Because the Old Covenant would never justify anyone because of the weakness of sinful flesh. A New Covenant was needed by which our sins would be eradicated and forgiven, forever. (Matthew 26:27-30)

GOOD FRIDAY



Remember

That's it. "They crucified Him." There is no lengthy description of being stripped naked, laid on the supine cross, nor the horror of His hands and His feet being nailed to the rough wood before being raised and dropped into a hole with a jarring thud. Such a morose picture was not needed. Most had seen criminals and other enemies of Rome nailed to a cross. They didn't need the picture drawn, because they could see it in their minds' eyes, as much as they tried to erase it.

The earliest record of the day of Christ's crucifixion being called "Good Friday" was 1290 AD. With such a picture, how could it be called good? We know, don't we? What was the consummate horror for Him, bearing our sins on the cross, was the ultimate good for us. While a day of mourning and sorrow for His suffering, it is considered good because it completed God's plan for humanity's redemption, leading to victory over death. His body was broken, His blood was shed for our good. (Mark 15:22-24)

APRIL



Represent

If there was one thing that divided the Protestant Reformers in the 16th Century, it was the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. They all agreed the teaching of transubstantiation in the Roman Catholic Church was in error; that is, they agreed, when blessed by the priest, the communion elements of bread and wine did not literally transform into the body and blood of Jesus. But, in what way was Jesus present at the table when His church observed communion?

Without going into all the nuances of different understanding, while they disagreed on the nature of the presence of Christ at the table, they could all agree that the bread and the wine/juice represented the body and blood of Jesus Christ. In that way, the Lord's Supper is at the very least a remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ as His church partakes of the elements representing the giving of His body and lifeblood to atone for the sins of His people. (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

MAY



Participation

Communion is not something we watch; it is something we participate in by faith. Scripture teaches that "the bread that we break" is a participation in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). When believers eat the bread and drink the cup together, we are declaring our shared faith in Jesus and our unity as His body (1 Corinthians 10:17). This participation does not mean the bread becomes Jesus' body, but that by faith we are communing with Christ and with one another (John 6:56). Paul warns that we should not take the Lord's Supper casually, but examine ourselves and discern the body rightly (1 Corinthians 11:28-29). Communion is for believers who are trusting in Christ and walking in fellowship with His church (Acts 2:42). By participating together, we publicly affirm that we belong to Jesus and to one another.

JUNE



Union^{w i t h} Christ

In Acts 11:26, the disciples were first called Christians. In Acts 26:28, King Agrippa wondered if Paul could persuade him to become a Christian. In 1 Peter 4:16, Peter encouraged the church who were suffering as Christians. Did you know that these are the only 3 times you can find the word "Christian" in the entire Bible?

On the other hand, the term "in Christ" or "in Him" is found over 160 in Paul's letters alone. The concept is all over John's gospel and letters as well. Jump to almost any page in the New Testament and you will find that this is the way that the Bible speaks of our new identity. We are in Christ. Galatians 2:20 says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." When we eat together, we are remembering our new identity. Being a "Christian" is not simply about what we do, or even who we are, but rather whose we are. We are united with Christ.

JULY



Nourishment

Just as ordinary food nourishes our physical bodies, so the bread and the cup nourishes us spiritually. It is a representation to us the type of spiritual nourishment that Christ provides to our souls. Every time we take the Lord's Supper it is teaching us that very thing, in John 6:53-57 Jesus is telling us that he is the true food, that when we eat of Him we have life. This spiritual nourishment is so necessary for our souls is both symbolized and experienced in our participation in the Lord's Supper.

AUGUST



Reassurance

When taking the bread and the cup we find assurance again and again of Christ's personal love for each of us. We are continually reminded of the sacrifice of Christ for our sin, when the Lord welcomes me to this table, he assures me that he will welcome me to all the other blessings of earth and heaven as well, especially to the great marriage supper of the Lamb, at which a place has been reserved for me. (Luke 22:19-20) As we take the bread and the cup we proclaim our continued trust that Christ's sacrifice was sufficient to save us, and we are assured that his perfect body and perfect blood would be a worthy offering to God for us. So with a mixture of sorrow for the sufferings of Christ and joy and thanksgiving for His love for us.

SEPTEMBER



Worthy

Paul commands believers to approach the Lord's Supper with reverence. This includes both partaking of the elements (1 Cor 11:27) and overall conduct in life (1 Cor 11:28-29). With regards to the elements, they should be treated as symbolic of the body and blood of Jesus (Mark 14:22-24) and eaten together as a communal meal (1 Cor 11:33). With regards to discerning the body, each follower of Christ should examine their heart and confess sin and ask for forgiveness upon approaching the meal (Ps 139:25; 1 Cor 11:28-29). This care with the elements and our hearts before God ensures that we observe Communion in a worthy manner.

OCTOBER



Proclamation

We often think of communion as a look back. As we eat the bread and drink the juice which represent the body and blood of Jesus, we are looking back to His death for sinners like us. But, it is also a look to the present and a look forward. It reminds us presently, as we eat of the same loaf of bread, that we are members together of the body of Christ. It proclaims the family fellowship we enjoy as followers of Christ. Further, it is a look forward because every time we eat and drink the elements, we "proclaim the Lord's death until He comes." It is a proclamation that, not only did Jesus come the first time to seek and to save the lost through His death, He will come a second time to claim those who are His own. (1 Corinthians 10:17, 11:26)

NOVEMBER



Unity

The ordinance of Communion contains the elements of bread and fruit of the vine to signify the broken body and shed blood of Jesus as the atoning sacrifice for sin (Matt 26:26-29). As we partake of these elements, we proclaim Christ's death and celebrate the new covenant in his blood for all believers (1 Cor 11:26). For this reason, this meal is shared only by Christians as a sign of their unity in identifying with the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The gospel of Jesus makes us one family (Eph 2:13-14) and communion is a sign of our unity in Christ (1 Cor 11:33).

DECEMBER



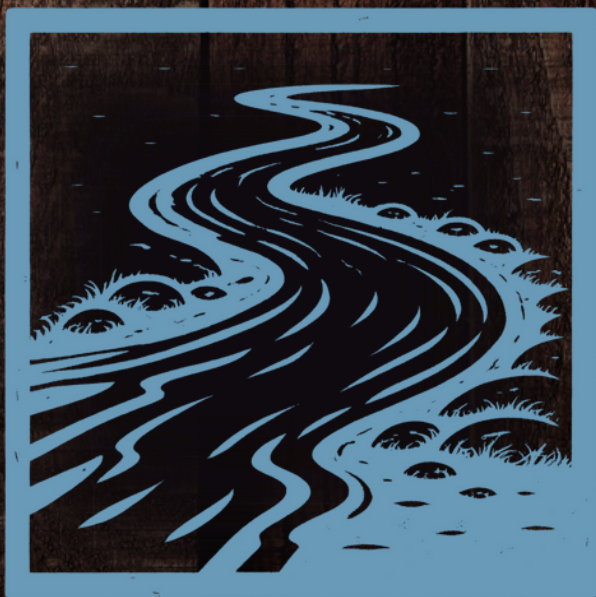
Celebration

Communion is a serious moment, but it is also a joyful celebration. Jesus gave us this meal so that we would remember His death with thankfulness, knowing it secured our forgiveness and new life (Luke 22:19-20). Scripture tells us that every time we eat the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26). This means Communion looks both backward to the cross and forward to Christ's return. Even as we reflect on Christ's suffering, we celebrate the victory He won over sin and death (Romans 6:9-10). The Lord's Supper also points us to the future marriage supper of the Lamb, when God's people will feast with Christ forever (Revelation 19:6-9). Because of this, Communion is marked by gratitude, hope, and joyful expectation.



ALLIANCE BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Believer's Baptism



Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.

- Romans 6:3-4



ALLIANCE BIBLE FELLOWSHIP



Believers

In the New Testament, baptism is given only to those who personally repent of their sin and believe in Jesus Christ. Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples first and then baptize them, showing that baptism follows faith, not birth or family background (Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:15). Throughout Acts, people are baptized only after they receive the gospel and respond in faith, such as at Pentecost and in Samaria (Acts 2; 8:12). When Peter said, "the promise is for you and your children," he immediately called everyone—young and old—to repent and believe personally. Only those who received his word were baptized (Acts 2:38-39, 41). In Acts 16, baptism followed belief, even in the jailer's household, as all who heard the word and believed were baptized (Acts 16:31-34). Baptism does not save us, but publicly displays the saving work God has already done in our hearts through faith alone (Ephesians 2:8-9; Colossians 2:12). In baptism, a believer openly identifies with Christ and declares allegiance to Him before the church and the world (Romans 6:3-4; Matthew 10:32). At the same time, the church affirms that profession of faith and welcomes the believer into visible membership in Christ's body (Acts 2:41; 1 Corinthians 12:13). For this reason, baptism is reserved for believers who consciously trust in Jesus and desire to follow Him as Lord.



Immersion

The practice of Baptism in the New Testament is carried out one way, the person was immersed in water or completely put in the water. The word that is used in the Greek for baptism is the word baptizo, which means to dip, plunge or immerse something in water. An example can be found in Mark chapter 1, John the Baptist is baptising people in the Jordan river (Mark 1:5) not next to the river but in the river; also when Jesus was baptized in Mark 1:10 the scriptures says he came up out of the water. So it is clear to us that baptism is by immersion, one goes down into the water and is raised up out of the water.

When we are baptized by immersion we are reminded of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. Romans 6:4 illustrates this really well, "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." The picture is that we go down in the water just as He died and we are raised up just as He was raised from the dead, and because He is alive we are spiritually alive in Him.



Obedience

The last verses of Matthew's Gospel are the marching orders for the church. It was forty days after the Resurrection and right before Jesus ascended to the Father when, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus gave them the Great Commission. He commissioned His disciples to make disciples in three ways: by going, by baptizing, and by teaching. Please notice, we rightly do not call this the Great Suggestion. It is the Great Commission because Jesus commanded us to make disciples, and one way we proclaim that we are His disciples is through obedience to this command to be baptized. In other words, baptism is not optional. It is an act of obedience to Jesus as Lord of our lives. (Matthew 28:18-20)



Sign

Baptism is a symbol of the atoning work of Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. This ordinance is an outward sign of an inward faith (Gal 2:20). The candidate confesses Christ publicly and then symbolically is lowered into the watery grave and raised to walk in newness of life (Rom 6:3-5). The old sinful self is symbolically washed clean in the death of Christ (Is 1:18; Col 2:12-15) and the new self is reborn in the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom 8:11; 2 Cor 5:16-17). Baptism is done as a sign of our union with Christ (1 Pet 3:21) and our commitment to the body of Christ, the Church (1 Cor 12:13).



Washed

When I have the privilege to meet with people and talk about baptism, I often tell them to think of baptism as a picture. While a photograph is a picture of something, it is not the thing itself; it is a picture. So also, baptism is a sign, a symbol, a picture representing what happened to us internally when we confessed our sins, believed in the gospel, confessed Jesus as Lord of our lives, and committed to follow Him all the days of our lives. It is not our salvation, it is a picture of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a picture of being buried with Him and being raised in newness of life. It is a picture of our sins being washed away, "the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." In that way, baptism is one of the most wonderful of days as those being baptized confess their faith to their church family, to their brothers and sisters in Christ. It is a proclamation of the gospel, and that the gospel has eternally changed their lives. It's no wonder that baptism Sundays are always some of the best Sundays of the year! (Titus 3:4-7)



Trinity

When the Israelites were wandering the wilderness, God commanded Aaron to speak a blessing over the people. You are probably familiar with these verses in Numbers 6:24-27 - The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace. But do you know how this blessing ends? God said, "So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them." God's blessing was associated with his name.

The same thing happens to us in our baptism. When a person goes under the waters of baptism, we say the words that Jesus taught us to say: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit." God gives us a new name in baptism, and this transforms our identity. For the rest of eternity, our lives will be marked with the name of the Triune God! Praise the Father, praise the Son, and praise the Holy Spirit.