



The Lord's Supper

Its-

- Foundation
- Function
- Focus
- Form
- Fidelity
- Frequency
- Fellowship

The **Lord's Supper** is one of two Christian ordinances; the other is NT (believer's) baptism. The origin, function and focus of the Lord's Supper and the fidelity, fellowship and the frequency with which it is to be observed are vital truths. They all have to do with the glory of the **Lord**, and comprise part of the holy commission of the local church in its witness to that glory.¹

Who instituted the Lord's Supper; when was it instituted?

The origin of the Lord's Supper is presented in the following portions of God's word (the emphasis given in each synoptic Gospel is noted later):

- Matthew 26:26-29;
- Mark 14:22-25;
- Luke 22:19-20;
- 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

The Lord instituted His Supper on the night of His betrayal just before suffering on the cross. "And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me'. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you'" (Lk 22:19-20). It is not "our" Supper nor the "Church's Supper." Neither is it the "Father's Supper." It is not spoken of as the "Son's Supper" in Scripture. It is the **LORD'S SUPPER**—the emphasis is upon His **lordship** rather than on His sonship (1 Cor 11:20). The Corinthian chapter in which it is mentioned is an emphatic reference to Christ's lordship (the *Lord's* Supper, v 20; a revelation from the *Lord*, v 23; the *Lord's* death, v 26; cup of the *Lord* v 27; body and blood of the *Lord*, v 27; the *Lord's* body, v 29; chastening of the *Lord*, v 32). When Paul corrected the Corinthians over their dishonoring observance of the Supper, he aptly reminded them that it was instituted by the **Lord** Jesus, who was his authority concerning it. "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread" (1 Cor 11:23).² The title "Lord Jesus" brings into view the divine lordship of the once despised and rejected Man. The Supper therefore is to be owned by those who acknowledge Him as *Lord* and observed with His *lordship* in view.

¹ The Supper is also referred to in Scripture as "the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42). The terms "the Mass", "the Sacrament" and "the Eucharist" are unscriptural. In Eastern houses a loaf of bread always accompanied meals. To be eaten it had to be broken—hence to partake of a meal came to be known as "breaking bread."

² Though unique to the NT the Lord's Supper is *prefigured* in the OT. It is a memorial or remembrance feast and, as such, it is intimated by the memorial Passover (Ex 12:42-48).

What is the function and focus of the Lord's Supper?

Luke and Paul record the Lord's intention regarding the function and focus of His Supper. The intended sweet simplicity of its observance has over the years become marred by ornate ritual and its sublime purpose maligned by pagan rites. May we who have been entrusted by the Lord with the observance of His Supper, revere its solemn singularity and reverence its simple order, focusing our hearts and minds on its **twofold** purpose as given by Him.

It is a commemoration of the Lord's Person

The Lord instituted the Supper as a **commemoration**, a remembrance of Him. "This do in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19-20). Paul reiterated this truth which was revealed to him by the Lord. "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, 'Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.' After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, 'This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.'" (1 Cor 11:24-25).³ In what sense is the Supper a remembrance of the Lord? In both verses remembrance is *anamnesis* which means "calling to mind"—here of the **Person** of Christ. It is not a memorial in the sense of commemorating a dead person. Quite the opposite is true. The Lord is risen, absent and yet present according to His promise (Matt 18:20). Fittingly we observe the Supper on the day of His resurrection, the first day of the week. It is to do with remembering *His Person* and *rendering* to Him. Neither is it a remembrance in the sense of "do this in case you forget me." We come together at the Supper as believers who have *not* forgotten Him. The Supper is not to revive cold hearts, but it is a *corporate* expression of hearts already glowing with worship and praise.

It is a proclamation of His death

The Supper is also a proclamation. Here the Lord's **death**—His **work** is brought in. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew [declare] the Lord's death" (1 Cor 11:26). To "show" is not an accurate rendering of the verb *kataggello*. The partaking is not in any way a *representation* of the Lord's death. It is a *declaration*, an announcement of it. Why is it a declaration of His *death*?

³ The word "broken", it has been claimed, is not in the original. If genuine and we take it to refer to the Lord's body, can it stand in opposition to the truth that "the scripture should be fulfilled, 'A bone of him shall not be broken'" (Jn 19:36, cf Ex 12:46, Christ the true Pascal Lamb)? If genuine, could not "broken" refer to the bread – the act of breaking it in order to distribute it (the bread which we break), and not to Christ's physical body? Could we paraphrase 1 Cor 11:24 as follows: "This bread which is broken (in order to distribute it) is a symbol of my body (which is given for you, Lk 22:19 "given"). Do this (break the bread and eat it) in remembrance of me."

Because “it pleased *God that* in him [Christ] should all fullness dwell; And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col 1:19-20). Note the correspondence of the order of mention in the institution of the Supper with the order in the Colossian passage. In the institution of the Supper the remembrance of the Lord’s *Person* is spoken of first and then the declaration of His *death*. The reconciling value of His death depended upon who He was and is – Deity and perfect humanity, the perfect Sacrifice.

The Lord’s Table

The Lord Supper (1 Cor 11) is not the same thing as the Lord’s Table (1 Cor 10).⁴ At the latter we sit *individually* and *receive* spiritual *provision* from the Lord, moment by moment and day by day. At the former we sit *collectively* and *locally* as *body* of Christ, and *render praise* to the Lord on a given day. In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul contrasts the food from the Lord’s Table with food from the table of demons.

What is the form and needed fidelity at the Lord’s Supper?

While we are to avoid formalism and ritualism, we are never at liberty to do as we please. The Supper is observed within God’s house. Its conduct therefore must be according to the divinely appointed principles of behavior pertaining to the glory of that house. This ensures the Supper is conducted in a manner which is honoring to God and that its sublime simplicity is preserved. The celebration of the Lord’s Supper is a spiritual occasion not a social one. It must be conducted along scriptural lines.

1. The *commemoration* and *proclamation* is through the collective act of partaking—eating and drinking. The expression “breaking bread” essentially means to partake of a meal. Any initial breaking of the bread or pouring of the wine into the cup, is *not* part of the commemoration or proclamation. The *communal* eating and drinking is the *sole* expression of the Supper—it is as often as ye *eat this bread, and drink this cup*. The singing of hymns, prayers and Scripture readings though fitting to the occasion are *not* part of the instituted Supper and its commemoration and proclamation. In this the *silent* and *solemn* communal *act* of eating and drinking stands alone and complete. It was the intemperate eating and drinking that violated the Supper at Corinth.
2. The bread is taken first then the cup (1 Cor 11:24-25; Lk 22:19-20 etc). Both

⁴ Refer to the booklet *The Lord’s Table and the Lord’s Supper*.
The Lord’s Supper © J W de SILVA

are passed to all of the local church. The bread first speaks of the Lord's body given as a Sacrifice; then the cup, speaking of propitiation and redemption on the basis of His shed blood.

3. The bread and the cup are purely symbolic. They are not *types* of Christ of which there are many in Scripture. A type refers to that which was fulfilled in Christ. Joseph is a type of Christ – the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow (1 Pet 1:11). The Ark of the Tabernacle with its various materials is also a type of Christ, e.g., the acacia wood typifying His humanity, the gold His deity. Because the emblems are not types, it is pointless to debate whether or not the bread should be unleavened and the wine unfermented, said to typify Christ's perfect humanity. To have them conform to such specifications is to regard them as types of the Lord. To have a type of Christ before us (as in the case of an image or icon), is to deny Him as the *Anti-type* (the Reality) in our midst. Symbols, on the other hand, *represent* a biblical truth—the bread and cup being purely *representative* of the Lord's *body* and *blood* respectively (they are not representative of *bread* or *wine*).⁵
4. Scripture in its *sum* does not say the bread is “His body”; nor of the cup, “His blood.” The bread and cup represent His body **given** and blood **shed**—a *completed*, never to be repeated sacrifice. The bread and the cup therefore cannot be anything but symbolic. So, too, if they are a commemoration and a proclamation. We say reverently, that Christ's body and blood existed before His death; they became efficacious *upon* His death, when given and shed respectively. When we partake of the Supper we proclaim His death, which entailed both the *giving* of His body and the *shedding* of His blood.
5. There should be an exercise of heart in partaking that can only come from prior presence with the Lord—abiding at His Table. This will avoid ritualism, formalism and irreverent liberty. We are to be occupied with His Person and work— His deity, eternal sonship, perfect humanity and the efficacy of His death, His suffering, the worth of His death to God and its worth to us as sinners reconciled to God.
6. Where this provokes audible Spirit-led *worship* and *praise*, the Spirit of God

⁵ The Supper was instituted with unleavened bread, but no significance is attached to this by the Lord. There is no record of it (or unfermented wine) being used or mandated in the celebration of the Supper in the NT. 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 is not a reference to the Lord's Supper: “Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (v 8). It is keeping the “festivity” - the Christian life free of leaven—the spiritual impurities are contrasted with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Reference here is to the OT seven days of unleavened bread which was called a “feast” (Lev 23). The Israelites kept it acknowledging the cover of the blood of the pascal lamb. We too, are to keep such a feast, in the sense of a life without leaven (sin) because Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

must be given liberty to lead. The former presents Christ to God. Here we speak of the precious glories of the Lord to God. It brings into view the Lord typified by the Burnt Offering - what He is to a Thrice-Holy God. The latter expresses our thanks to God for Christ and here we acknowledge His victory over sin and death – the Lord as the Sin Offering. There must be an attitude of reverence and a display of obedient subjection in regard to headship i.e., the divinely appointed roles of the men and women must be observed. The priesthood of all believers too must be observed. A presiding official or representative person in any shade or form is unscriptural. No person should direct another in regard to prayer, the reading of Scripture or in the announcing of hymns. All must be left to the *personal* heart-felt exercise of the believer as led by the Spirit of God.

7. Thanksgiving is offered before partaking (Matt 26:26-27; Mk 14:22-23; Lk 22:19-20; 1 Cor 10:16). The words “bless” (*eulogeo*) and “thanksgiving” (*eucharistia*) used in these portions are interchangeable (cf Matt 14:19; 15:36).
8. “Consecrating” the emblems is unscriptural. The Lord never “blessed” the emblems, setting them apart as something “sacred.” The Lord “blessed.” He did not bless “it”; “it” is not in the original text (Matt 26:26).
9. “Dispensing” the emblems is unscriptural. The brother who initially physically “breaks the bread (loaf)”, does so as a matter of convenience. He does *not* do this on behalf of others. As noted, this act has no doctrinal significance. Any such representation is a gross presumption, the height of which is seen in the priest-craft of Rome. It is the “bread which *we* break” (1 Cor 10). There can be no intermediary between the gathered believers and the Lord in their midst.
10. The Lord’s Supper is not an occasion for Gospel outreach, teaching, intercession or supplication for others, nor a time to seek or receive forgiveness of sins. It is improper to remember our sins at the Supper for these have been put away (Heb 10:2, 17). It is not an occasion for displaying natural talents, for “no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Cor 1:29).
11. We do not partake of the Supper to receive a blessing (although we are blessed by being in the presence of the Lord and His people). The Lord never said in relation to the Supper, “Do this for blessing and spiritual strength.” Nor do we focus on our blessings, but on the One *in whom* we have all blessings. The Supper is “Christ-centered” – for Him and unto Him.
12. Punctuality and regularity evince reverence and devotion.

When and how frequently is the Lord's Supper to be observed?

Though there are no specific instructions concerning these matters in Scripture, God has recorded for our obedience and learning what the believers of the NT Church **did**, as they moved according to His Spirit. They came together to break bread on the **first day of the week**. “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow” (Acts 20:7 cf Acts 28:14).⁶ The Holy Spirit records the *regularity*, the *frequency* as well as the specific *purpose* for which they were gathered. It was not a spasmodic observance—a “do as we feel” exercise or a matter of convenience. It was not a daily, fortnightly or a monthly observance, but a weekly one. In the absence of a specific command, this documented practice becomes a biblical precept which we are to follow. In following it we are assured that we are in the will of God.

What biblical truth underwrites the biblical practice of observing the Supper on the *first day* of *each* week? This first day was the day of the Lord's *resurrection*—and marked His *weekly* resurrection appearances among the gathered disciples. “Then the same day [the first day of the week] at evening being the first day of the week...came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you” (Jn 20:1; 19; 26). On *that* day before He uttered a word in their presence, the Lord took His rightful place among them—in their midst, revealing the marks of Calvary. Note that they owned *Jesus* as *Lord* (Jn 20:20). On *that* day, Christ's **resurrection** testified that His **death** had vindicated a Thrice-Holy God and brought victory over sin and death (1 Cor 15:54-57). And, God having been reconciled, His Son the Reconciler, on *that* day came among His own and announced the fruit of His reconciliation—Peace (Jn 20:19; 26)! The observance of the Supper is therefore *historically* and *doctrinally* connected with the first day of the week. The local church is to remember His Person and proclaim His death on the weekly anniversary of the day which marks His **resurrection glory**. To do otherwise denies this blessed connection and reduces the observance to a hollow ritual. Consider, too, the connection *typically*. The first day of the week is the day of resurrection—the *eighth day* (Jn 20:26, our Sunday). As such it symbolizes the order of a new creation pertaining to a heavenly people—the Church, the day when Christians gather locally to remember the heavenly Lamb. In contrast, the Sabbath (the seventh day) is

⁶ The correct rendering is, “When we were gathered together”, confirming that the first day of the week was the determined time of celebration. See also 1 Cor 16:2 - on “the first day of the week”, when the assembly came together and gave their freewill offering unto the Lord.

associated with the old creation and an earthly people—Israel. It is a day of local gathering among the Jews.

Did the early believers observe the Supper daily?

“And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart” (Acts 2:46). Given the embryonic circumstances and the large number of believers in Jerusalem, the Lord’s Supper would, in all probability have been observed in homes. The church itself met in homes. However, the term “daily” is connected with activities in the *temple*, not with the activities “house to house.” Therefore a daily observance of the Lord’s Supper is not supported by this verse. Furthermore, the context deems that ‘breaking bread’ here refers to the sharing of common meals (their meat) and not to the Lord’s Supper. These meals were part of the domestic communal arrangements among the believers in Jerusalem—having “all things common” (v 44).

Should the Lord’s Supper be observed only in the evening?

Some say the Lord’s Supper should be kept at evening because it was instituted during the Passover meal which was an evening celebration. But the Lord’s Supper is *not* the Passover supper. There is no doctrinal reason for limiting its observance to the evening, although we note it was kept at that time in the early Church period because Christians were not free to meet during the day.

1 Corinthians 11:25-26 – function and fidelity not frequency

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.” This verse states the *function* of the Lord’s Supper in order to address the improper observance of it at Corinth. It can be paraphrased as follows: “Be aware, that every time you [the church at Corinth] eat this bread and drink this cup you are showing forth [declaring] the Lord’s death.” The verse is to do with fidelity not frequency and does not give us liberty to “break bread” apart from the first day of the week.

Is the weekly celebration of the Lord’s Supper ritualism?

Regularity is not ritualism and neither does it encourage ritualism. To say otherwise is to cast God and many of His faithful servants as “ritualists.” It was God-Jehovah who established *unto His glory*, the regularity of the feasts of old, and commanded obedience to it. Daniel prayed three times each day, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime (Dan 6:10). The weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper by the assembly is part of the blessed pattern revealed to the

glory of God in Christ. Religion, ritualism and formalism are all born out of a heart full of dead men's bones, not regularity (Matt 23:27).⁷ But what of Paul's rebuke to the Galatians over their return to bondage by observing "days, and months, and times, and years" (Gal 4:9-10)? We must remember that Paul is referring to the *conditional* Mosaic covenant where blessings were dependent upon keeping the law.⁸ It was a case of "do this" and be blessed. We are not such a people. We *do* and we *obey* NT principle and practice *because* we have been *unconditionally* blessed in Christ. This is never bondage, but a moral compulsion devolving upon all under grace!⁹

The Lord's Supper is to be observed locally by the local church

The Supper is a *local* testimony. As we have noted, it is a vital part in the *collective* testimony of the local church. It is "where" and not "when" two or three are gathered together unto my name (Matt 18:20; cf Deut 12:5). It is essentially the "place" and not the "occasion" in view here. The context (Matt 18:16-20) is the local church, which is always identified with a particular place.¹⁰ Paul identifies the churches as "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Cor 1:2). And, it is not simply where two or three are gathered, but gathered *together* – not as individuals but as one – as the local church. This is also confirmed by the expression "unto my name." The Lord Himself is the focus and foundation of this unity, as He is in His Supper. For an assembly to observe the Supper in another town or district impairs the divine principle of a local lampstand (Rev 2; 3). What triumphant joy and hallowed responsibility is ours! This is the local assembly's testimony when gathered to observe the Lord's Supper; "to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God" (Eph 3:10). It was for this holy profession that many local churches throughout history met in secret defiance of the prohibitions under oppressive regimes.¹¹

⁷ The weekly observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week was the practice of the Christians in the early Church - the *Didache* (the Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, c 100 AD).

⁸ The *days*=weekly Sabbaths; *months*=new moons; *seasons*=the annual Jewish feasts (Passover etc); *years*=Sabbatical years.

⁹ So, too, is Romans 5-6 a moral compulsion under grace – "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?" Such compulsion marks and distinguishes the character of this dispensation from that of the old.

¹⁰ The word "For" in verse 20 is connected with the Lord's instruction - "tell *it* unto the church" and the church's responsibility in the matter of discipline (v 17-19).

¹¹ Some claim that the church at Jerusalem in Acts 2 would number too many (some 3,000 plus) to meet in one place at one time. Even if this was so, the indisputable fact is that all the houses were within one geographically identifiable place – Jerusalem (which in those days would in area measure no more than two miles across).
The Lord's Supper © J W de SILVA

What about John 4:21-23?

Some, claiming that believers can observe the Lord's Supper anywhere, cite the Lord's words to the Samaritan woman as proof. Jerusalem they say is no longer "the" place of worship and, further, the Lord does not mandate other places – i.e., the locality associated with an assembly. There are at least two errors in this assertion. First, it fails to understand the context. In verse 23 the Lord is contrasting the **earthly** sanctuary at Jerusalem with the **heavenly** sanctuary that will be brought in when the veil of the temple is rent upon His death. Why does He do this here? He "must needs go through Samaria" – to the Jew first and then to the Gentiles beginning with the Samaritans (v 4).¹² There was a temple to Jehovah built by the Samaritans on Mt Gerizim.¹³ Which one of these places - Jerusalem or Mt Gerizim is the true place of worship (vv 19-21)? It will not matter declares the Lord, because there will be a heavenly sanctuary opened which will be available to all Spirit-led believers in Him. The Samaritan woman can therefore forget about any rivalry between Jerusalem and Mt Gerizim – both will become irrelevant. We worship God in the heavenly place as individuals and as an assembly. This is where the Lord is. No longer does the Shekinah glory dwell within the earthly holy of holies. Second, the assertion fails to understand that Lord's purpose in this portion is *not* to give specific teaching on the Supper or the local assembly – this He does elsewhere which is amplified by His apostles. His purpose here is solely to mark the distinction in the **character** of worship between the old and coming new economy - between an earthly sanctuary and the coming heavenly one in HIM.

But there is a practical lesson here for the assembly. When an assembly observes the Lord's Supper this new and true character of worship is to be part of its local testimony. The assembly corporately testifies that there is now a *heavenly* sanctuary accessed by a *heavenly* people having a *heavenly* calling (Heb 3:1) who are all priest unto God within the veil, owning no intermediary between God and His Spirit-led worshippers - save only the Great High Priest who has passed into the *heavens* (Heb 4:14). This is the true character of worship which we find revealed when consulting the *whole* of the Bible. Keeping to it is to worship in "Spirit and truth."

square kilometers). There was thus an identifiable "local testimony" in Jerusalem; even identified in Scripture as the church "at Jerusalem" (Acts 8:1).

¹² In order to fulfill His divine mission – to the Jew first and then a light to lighten the Gentiles.

¹³ The Samaritans though Gentiles claimed Jehovah as their God and worshipped Him. They set up their temple to Him on Mt Gerizim and adopted the Jewish law. They claimed it was on this mount that Abraham offered up Isaac and met Melchizedek.

Who can have fellowship in the Lord's Supper?

When the Lord instituted His Supper He intended that *all* who are His *would* partake of it. Matthew records the totality of His invitation—"drink ye all of it" (Matt 26:27). Mark records the totality of its spontaneous acceptance—"they all drank of it" (Mark 14:23). However, when we read the Spirit-inspired record, we see plainly that not all believers *could* partake of the Lord's Supper. This is because not all believers can take their place in a local assembly and respond to the Lord's invitation. They are precluded from the Lord's Supper because they are precluded from the Lord's house. The Lord's Supper can only be observed by the local assembly—the house of God. Its observance is the responsibility of the local assembly. It meets for this purpose—clearly and *sufficiently* taught in the first Epistle to the Corinthians. "When ye [the church at Corinth] come together ..to break bread" (1 Cor 11:17-33).¹⁴ "For as often as ye [not 'we' but 'ye' – the church at Corinth] eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye [the church at Corinth] do shew the Lord's death till he come" (11:25-26). Despite their haste (Acts 20:16), Paul and His companions broke their journey and waited *seven days* to join the church at Troas in their observance of the Supper (v 7). They could have saved time by breaking bread on the journey but did not do so.¹⁵ They also found brethren at Puteoli and tarried with them *seven days*, we suppose to partake of the Supper with the assembly (Acts 28:13-14). What is clear from the entire biblical narrative is that there is no record of the Lord's Supper being observed anywhere else but within a **local** assembly. Why is this? It is because the Lord's Supper is a mark of the character of God's house - its witness to God's glory in the new way of worship in spirit and truth. Note here Paul's rebuke to the Corinthians over their impious celebration of the Supper—"have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God" (1 Cor 11:22)? It is evident from this verse alone, that the Supper was not only to be observed by the **local** church, but that it was part of its **testimony**, a testimony that must not be desecrated by an improper observance of the Supper. Though they were indeed desecrating the Lord's Supper, the emphasis in *this* verse is not that "despise ye the Lord's *Supper*" - but "despise ye the Lord's *house*"!¹⁶

¹⁴ That is, when they come together as an assembly—the house of God at Corinth.

¹⁵ It is clear that there were believers—an assembly resident in Troas. Paul preached unto *them* not *us* (Acts 20:7); "*they* brought the young man alive ... and *we* went" (vv 12-13). Paul preached at Troas and took his leave of *them* (2 Cor 2:12-13, cf Acts 16:8). Acts 20 relates to the return—leg of Paul's third missionary journey ending at Jerusalem. He had visited Troas twice previously.

¹⁶ Is breaking bread where there is no assembly (while on holidays, on business or even when on a missionary journey), in accordance with biblical principle and practice? Some say any such limitation deprives them of "remembering the Lord." We should however consider what it is that the Lord desires unto His *glory*. The Lord's Supper is essentially an *assembly* testimony. The divine principle has never altered. The Lord's Supper © J W de SILVA

It is clear therefore, that fellowship in the *Lord's assembly* is a prerequisite to fellowship in the *Lord's Supper*. Any limitation to the totality of the Lord's invitation to the Supper, arises out of some spiritual failure in the individual believer - for all believers *should* be part of a local assembly. Once this is acknowledged, we will better understand why some who belong to Christ *cannot* partake of the Supper. It is not in the first instance a matter of fitness for the Supper, but of fitness to be one of the company and its testimony as *the house of God*. This relates to the **purity** of the testimony of God's house. For example, the believer who has been judged by the assembly according to 1 Corinthians 5 and put away from it cannot be part of a local church. *Therefore* he/she cannot partake of the Supper. So too the believer who holds false doctrine. The question is not, "Can he/she break bread?" It is "Can he/she be part of a local assembly?" The answer in this case is of course, "No." If the Lord's Supper is not an assembly meeting then what sort of meeting is it? If it is not an assembly meeting, then the assembly has no right to exclude *anyone* to it who professes faith in Christ and, even less right to insist on the order of the Supper (Judges 21:25). If it is an assembly meeting, then the principles relating to God's house apply to its observance—even His lordship and headship!

A proclamation of the Lord's death – in its entire efficacy

We noted that Scripture declares the Supper is to "show forth His death" because **all** that we possess in Him is by virtue of His death. His death "brings us to God" (1 Pet 3:18). How sad that some people limit this to eternal salvation and ignore that blessed work of Calvary which rent the veil enabling us to enter into God's very presence as purged priestly worshippers. Is it not incongruous and grieving to the Lord to have those who *deny* this precious legacy of His death participate in the proclamation of His death. A further example of the dangers of liberal reception to the local church and hence to the Lord's Supper, is the error and alarming incidence of Calvinism among evangelical denominations today. Love for our brethren in Christ moves us to warn that such error defiles the true observance of the Supper, grieving the Spirit of God. How can we be of one mind in proclaiming Christ's death – a finished work, with those who believe they are receiving some spiritual blessing when they partake of the bread and wine in the Supper or indeed profess "limited atonement"?

"Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the LORD shall choose there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee" (Deut 12:13-14).

The unbaptized believer

What of the case of the unbaptized believer, one who is unbaptized through ignorance or through choice? Can he/she “break bread”? We speak here of NT baptism – complete immersion after confession of faith in Christ. Let us seek to be guided only by what is written, and conduct our enquiry out of a heart-felt desire to further the spiritual welfare of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are found to be in this situation. In this way we cannot disobey God nor offend the sincere child of God. We seek, too, the help of the Spirit of Truth to discern and follow that which is taught in God’s word without fear or favor towards man. “The fear of man bringeth a snare” (Pr 29:25). But “the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Pr 9:10).¹⁷

The question is, “Can such a person be part of the testimony of the local assembly?” This matter was never an issue in the early Church. What we have is the Spirit-inspired account of what was done—divinely recorded principle and practice which we are to follow. From the references to believer’s baptism in Scripture, we can say categorically that the word of God never anticipates the existence of an unbaptized believer (i.e., Acts 2:38, 41; 8:12, 16, 36, 38; 9:5; 10:47-48; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 1 Cor 1:13). There is no record in God’s word of an unbaptized believer in local assembly fellowship. It follows therefore, that Scripture never anticipates an unbaptized believer within a local church and celebrating the Lord’s Supper.

Moreover, there is a clear biblical practice to be noted and followed. “Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added [to the Lord] about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:41-42). We note the divine order:

- *conversion* to the Lord in salvation,
- *confession* of the Lord in baptism,
- *compliant conduct* before the Lord in sanctification,
- *corporate fellowship* in the Lord – His house, and then,
- *collective participation* in the Lord at His Supper.

The pattern of Paul’s life reveals that his baptism preceded assembly fellowship (and fellowship in the Supper) (Acts 9—see also Acts 10:47-48; 16:32-34).

Some assert that there is no need to be baptized if the believer is “living the

¹⁷ It is imperative when dealing with circumstances to first examine Scripture, and *then* visit the circumstances in the light of that examination. To reverse this process has the inherent danger of interpreting Scripture through circumstances.

baptized life.” But a person cannot live the baptized life apart from being baptized, any more than a person can live the Christian life apart from being born again. Some say we should we exercise patience and allow such persons into fellowship and admit them to the Supper hoping that in time they will come to obedience through understanding? But does this not oppose biblical practice noted above? Could it not also be unwise, because consistency demands that we apply this rule to all like cases, the end of which will be confusion and contradiction within God’s house? For instance, we must then allow the woman who has not yet understood the teaching of 1 Corinthians 14 and 1 Timothy 2, to teach and take up leadership in the assembly. We must then also allow the recent Jewish convert to have his head covered in the house of God, for he has not yet come into the truth of 1 Corinthians 11. But most importantly, is not the first order in all things divine obedient *subjection*, and not understanding? This is the way of obedient faith noted throughout Scripture. Understanding is bestowed in blessing when subjection is exercised in obedience. “Through thy precepts I get understanding” (Ps 119:104). The apostle of love said, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 Jn 4).¹⁸

Household baptism – baptism apart from personal faith in Christ

Scripture cannot bear witness against itself. We have the incontestable truth repeatedly stamped in God’s word that NT baptism is a *personal* act of obedience by one who has repented and believed in Christ *for* salvation (i.e., Acts 2:38; 41; 8:36-38). It is inexorably linked *to* personal salvation being enjoined upon its confession (Rom 6). It is as individual a matter as salvation itself. The appeal of the Gospel – to confess Christ and identify with Christ is *always* to the individual. There is therefore no NT *biblical principle* supporting household baptism - nor the infant baptism it spawns. For this reason its proponents are forced into the OT for support, and even then, they have to rely on misappropriated “types” of NT baptism - circumcision and crossing the Red Sea.¹⁹ Because there is clear biblical principle *against* household baptism there can be no *biblical example* of it. When we come to portions such as Acts 16:15

¹⁸ What of a believer who is unable to be baptized due to old age or infirmity? Where a believer is able to attend the meetings, then he/she would be able to be baptized, the needed assistance given. (The the lame man at the pool of Bethesda is an illustration. He needed a man to put into and out of the waters (Jn 5)). If this is not possible there should be a prayerful waiting upon the Lord and His guidance sought, for He knows all circumstances and can alter them according to His will to comply with His word. A mind in subjection to the teaching and a willing heart becomes the guiding principle to assembly reception and participation in the Lord’s Supper.

¹⁹ Circumcision is not a type of believers’ baptism. It is vital to note that Abraham was counted as righteous through *faith* (Gen 15:6) – and this was before and apart from the rite of circumcision which was initiated later (Gen 17:11).

(Lydia's household) and 16:31-34 (the jailor's household), we have the assurance of knowing what it is that they *do not* teach – household and/or infant baptism. Furthermore, in the case of Lydia, can we justifiably conclude as the proponents of this doctrine seem at liberty to do, that just because there is no mention of prior belief in Christ among her household, such belief did not exist (cf the house of Crispus, 18:8)? Indeed not! In the case of the jailor, all in his house heard the Gospel (16:32). He “set meat before them, and rejoiced, believing in God with all his house – the condition upon which their baptism was undertaken (16:34).²⁰

Household baptism is not supported by Scripture. Those who come under it, especially the “infants” may never see the need for personal repentance and salvation. It is vital therefore that a person's status in regard to baptism is known before he/she is received into the Lord's house and to take part in His Supper – for the sake of the testimony of His house, *and* concern for that person's spiritual standing before God. We see more of the divine wisdom in the biblical pattern given for our learning and obedience noted above (Acts 2:41-42 etc).

Did Judas partake of the Supper?

Some infer that he did. Therefore if the Lord who knew the carnal heart of Judas allowed him to partake, who are we to deny the Supper to anyone who professes Christ. The first point to note is that in John 13:2 the AV incorrectly interposes the word *ended* into the text. It is not in the original which reads - “And supper being [in progress], the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him.” Secondly, there are vital differences between the post-Pentecostal *celebration* of the Supper in the *house of God* and its pre-Pentecostal *institution* in the *upper room*. A person such as Judas we trust would not knowingly be received into the testimony of the local church. Third, John's Gospel clarifies the order of events. Matthew and Mark place the identification of Judas as the betrayer *before* the institution of the Supper, Luke *after* it. Matthew and Mark record the chronological order, Luke the moral order of events, his verses 22:17-20 relating to the Supper are parenthetical. John records Judas receiving the “sop.” This was an integral part of the Passover celebration. At this point Judas went out “immediately” (Jn 13:26-30). We know that the institution of the Supper was after this point in time, towards the latter end of the Passover celebration (Matt 26:21-23).²¹ Judas had by this time left to return later with his

²⁰ Some have “And believing God, he rejoiced with all his house.” This is an incorrect rendering that seeks to confine belief to the jailor. In any case, why would (how could) his household rejoice unless they too were of the same heart and mind – a rejoicing that only faith in Christ as Savior can produce?

²¹ The statement “after He had supped” (1 Cor 11:25; cf Lk 22:20) refers to the Passover Supper. It confirms that the Lord's Supper was instituted after Judas left. The taking of the sop preceded the partaking of the Passover roast lamb and after-dish. This was followed by the communal drinking of the third cup—the cup The Lord's Supper © J W de SILVA

partners in treachery. This is consistent with 1 Corinthians 11:23—the Lord instituted the Supper on the night in which he was *being* betrayed” - while His betrayal was in progress. It is worth noting that Judas had not acknowledged Jesus as Lord as had the eleven, preferring to ask, “Master, is it I” (Matt 26:20-25). The institution of the Supper could not involve one unprepared to bow to Christ’s lordship.

1 Corinthians 11:28 - self examination

“But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup” (we again note that it is the *eating and drinking* which constitutes the Supper). First, note two matters that often trouble young believers. This self examination is not in regard to our *depth of understanding* of the Supper beyond its simple purpose as a remembrance of the Lord and a proclamation of His death. The new converts in Acts 2 were day-old babes in Christ, yet we see them in assembly fellowship and readily breaking bread. Neither does the examination refer to our *depth of appreciation* of the Lord and His work. We may only be able to bring a turtledove or pigeon before the Lord as our offering, but it is as worthy and acceptable to *Him* as the bullock brought by another.

Returning to verse 28. It is not an exception to the corporate fidelity and fellowship noted above in regard to the Supper. It was an exhortation to the Corinthians, **all of whom were already of the church at Corinth**. They were observing the Lord’s Supper during an ordinary meal, believed to be the “*agape—love feast*.” In their festivity they failed to discern the true meaning of the bread and cup. They were not unworthy to observe the Supper, for all were redeemed in Christ (1 Cor 1:1-3) and all baptized (1 Cor 1:13). However, they were *observing* the Supper *unworthily* by not having proper regard to the meaning of the emblems.²² We ought to continually examine our hearts, and then eat (not stay away). So, too, if we are absent from the Supper, let us examine the reason why. What is it that keeps us from that feast which is so precious to the Lord, whose promised presence has an irresistible claim upon loyal redeemed hearts?²³ As another has said, we missed the first Supper, let us not miss the last!

of blessing, which appears to be the cup used in the institution of the Supper (see Edersheim, “*The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*”, Book V, Cp 10 pp 510-11). This was followed by the Hallel and the drinking of the fourth cup. Note, too, that the “cup” in Luke 22:17 is one of the four Passover cups and not the cup of the Lord’s Supper (v 20).

²² If this self-examination is not undertaken and fidelity fails, then the Lord Himself will judge (temporal not eternal), for He only, in divine omniscience can search the hearts.

²³ Romans 14:5, “Let each man be fully persuaded in his own mind”, has no bearing on the Supper. Paul here refers to a person’s own observances in everyday eating and drinking.

When will the Lord's Supper cease to be observed?

There is no record in Scripture of the disciples celebrating the Lord's Supper in the period between His crucifixion and the coming of the Church (Acts 1-2).²⁴ The Lord instituted (established) His Supper before His death. But its observance had to await not just His crucifixion but His ascension and the descent of the Spirit. This is because the observance of the Supper is solely an activity for those within the Church, which began after the Lord's "going" and the Holy Spirit's "coming." To have observed the Supper prior to His ascension (His 'going away', Jn 16:7) would not comply with the blessed hope in which it is to be kept—**until He come**. "For as often as ye [the local church] eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye [the local church] do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor 11:26). The coming here is the Lord for His Church, which marks the close of the Church age at which time the Supper will cease to be observed. We have here the *attitude* in which the commemoration and proclamation of the Lord's Supper is to be *kept* – in *anticipation* of "the coming of the LORD...the Lord Himself" (1 Thess 4:15-16). The witness of Scripture is clear and consistent:

The **Lord's** Supper was observed by those who were of the **Lord's** house on the **Lord's** day; who had owned Christ as **Lord** (in baptism); and who had, as their blessed hope the **Lord's** return.

The New Covenant

All divine covenants are with the nation Israel, not the Church. When the Lord instituted the Supper He spoke of the new covenant, the new covenant of Jeremiah 31:31. Though made with Israel and realized in the Millennial Kingdom, the Church comes into the blessing of this new covenant through its relationship to Christ and His mediatory work in regard to it. Like the old covenant, it had to be made and sealed by blood (Ex 24:8, "the blood of the covenant"). We have the blood of its making—"This is my blood of the new covenant" (Matt 26:28; Mk 14:24); and the blood of its seal, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood"—the cup represents the new covenant and this new covenant is sealed in His blood (Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25).

²⁴ The Lord 'breaking bread' on the Emmaus road is not an exception (Lk 24:30). They "sat at meat", which is the expression for a common meal—not the Lord's Supper. At such meals the blessing for the food and the breaking of bread was done by the host—the Lord took this position (cf Matt 14:19). There is no intention of remembrance or any mention of the cup. The intent was to have a fellow 'traveler' abide with them (Lk 24:29).

Drinking of the fruit of the vine

“But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom (kingdom of God)” (Matt 26:29; Mk 14:25; Lk 22:18). The Lord's deferred desire relates to the earthly Millennial kingdom—the fulfillment of the new covenant with Israel. That future kingdom will witness the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev 19:9), at which the Lord will partake of the fruit of the vine. The godly, living remnant of Israel will be guests at this Supper (Matt 25). The marriage of the Bridegroom and Bride (the Church) will have already occurred in heaven (Rev 19:7).

Doctrinal error regarding the Lord's Supper

Transubstantiation: The doctrine of Rome. The bread and wine at the time of their consecration by the priest are transformed *literally* into Christ's flesh and blood—although they retain their original appearance.

Consubstantiation: The protestant (Lutheran) doctrine. The substance of the body and blood of Jesus *coexists with* the substance of the bread and wine. Both doctrines ignore the use of figurative language in Scripture. The Lord was speaking *figuratively* when He said “this is my body”; “this is my blood.” If taken literally, the Lord had two bodies when He instituted the Supper. We see this figurative language again in John 10:7, “I am the door of the sheep”; “I am the bread which came down from heaven” (Jn 6:41); “I am the true vine” (Jn 15:1); “Thy words were found and I did eat them” (Jer 15:16). Christ taught that the Supper is commemorative and the emblems symbolic. He said nothing of them being *transformed* into His body and blood.²⁵

Calvinism: Though Calvin opposed the above errors, he wrongly taught that spiritual benefits are derived through the Supper when it is taken in faith. This faith grows and strengthens the believer's union with Christ when the bread and wine are taken. He saw the Supper as a “sacrament”; those involved are “recipients” of it. The bread and wine are signs of the invisible food which God provides; namely, His body and His blood. Young believer beware – there is a good deal of Calvinism infiltrating the assemblies both here and overseas. This has happened because those who superintend the truth among the Lord's people have been less than diligent in Scripture and in their hearts, preferring to be sociable rather than scriptural Christians. The extract from the *Westminster Larger Catechism*, to which Presbyterians and some other Protestant's adhere,

²⁵ John 6:51-58 *pre-dates* the institution of the Supper. The Lord speaks here of eating and drinking His flesh [cf His “body”] and blood respectively in a *spiritual* and not in a literal sense. This portion has nothing to do with the Supper. If it did then it would be possible to have eternal life apart from repentance and personal faith in Christ (Rom 5:1). The context is Christ given as a provision for the “world” – to “any man” of the Supper.

shows how false and dangerous Calvinist teaching is concerning the Lord's Supper.²⁶

The “sacraments” so called

A sacrament is defined generally as an outward sign of an inward grace. These signs take the form of ceremonies, which are the *means* through which certain graces are bestowed upon individuals. The Church of Rome has seven; Protestants two (the Lord's Supper, baptism). God's word speaks of none!

The Lord's Supper and the Passover

There are Jewish Christians today who keep the Passover, albeit with a different focus to that enjoined upon their ethnic forefathers. Now it must be understood that no matter how sincere the motive, for those in Christ to celebrate the Passover whatever the focus, is a denial of the character of this dispensation and a contradiction to the glory of Christ and His work. Sincerity, however virtuous, does not give us liberty to add to or subtract from that which has been patterned by God, as repeatedly exemplified in Scripture. Aaron's eldest sons in sincerity offered “strange fire” unto God and were destroyed; the Ark of the Covenant was placed on a cart in sincerity, but God came down in judgment; the Israelites in sincerity kept the animals from the sword to be offered unto God, but were rebuked by God's prophet Samuel.

So, too, the Spirit of God through Paul, rebuked the Galatians, because they were turning again “to the weak and beggarly elements” of Judaism. In so doing they placed themselves under bondage, observing days (Sabbaths), and months (new moons), and times (feasts), and years (Sabbatical year) (Gal 4:9-10). Paul warned the Colossians against keeping holy days, Sabbath days and new moons, reminding them that such observances were but “shadows of things to come” (Col 2:16-17). The redeemed in Christ are not to abide in the shadows, but to live in the liberty of the radiant substance that is of Christ. Beloved in the Lord, to fall back into the shadows is to abide in bondage and darkness, and fail to bear a pure testimony to the truth of Christ and His finished work on the Cross. The Passover is no more – *Christ* has deemed it so by His words and His work. It was

²⁶ *New Dictionary of Theology* p 568. Calvin's view is represented in the reply to question 170 of the *Westminster Larger Catechism*: “they that worthily communicate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, do therein feed upon the body and blood of Christ, not after a corporal and carnal, but in a spiritual manner; yet truly and really, while by faith they receive and apply unto themselves Christ crucified, and all the benefits of his death.” Can we say “Amen” to this doctrine? What dire contradiction if we were to join in the breaking of bread with those who hold and support such teaching! Those who hold it have a vastly different notion of what it is to “remember the Lord.” How vital is biblical reception to the purity and integrity of the assembly's celebration of the Lord's Supper!

instituted for a distant and departed day, for a delivered *earthly* nation.²⁷ Indeed, what divine purpose is served in keeping the Passover today, whatever its focus, by a redeemed and *heavenly* Body? There is none at all, making the whole thing a man-made ritual. But more, observing the Passover can only grieve the Lord, for He said - “Do this in remembrance of me.” And why? Because **the true Lamb had come!** *This* is the testimony of those in Christ and it is proclaimed through the Lord’s Supper. A profession that has to do with the type denies the true Lamb has come and contradicts the Gospel. It is the responsibility of the redeemed in Christ to testify according to the appointed divine manner and to witness that shadow has given way to reality.

Furthermore, the precious dispensational truths, that the middle wall of partition has been broken down and there is neither Jew nor Gentile in Christ, are obscured and confounded by the extent to which the observation of the Passover is the preserve of “Jewish” Christians (Eph 2). Here a schism is set up denying the truth and reality of the One New Man in Christ. Predictably error leads to further error, and so we find such practices serve denominationalism. Sects are spawned comprising those who are Jews by birth who believe that Christ is the Saviour-Messiah, setting them apart from others in Christ.²⁸ Any celebration of the Passover today by Jews or “Jewish’ Christians” is a denial of the prophetic truth that “the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim” (Hos 3:4). The celebration of the Lord’s Supper is for *all* in Christ irrespective of nationality – a blessed legacy of the death of Christ. It is the *Lord’s* Supper, not the Messiah’s Supper. The divine title Messiah is not for the Church but for Israel. The Church keeps the Supper until the Lord’s coming – not until the coming of the Messiah.

The synoptic Gospel accounts

Matthew, Mark and Luke follow similar accounts of the life of Christ and so they are referred to as the “synoptic gospels.” They each contain a record of the Lord’s institution of His Supper. We have an instructive comparison in the accounts of the institution of the Supper in regard to three OT sacrificial offerings, in the order in which they typify the sinner’s reconciliation to God and the work of Christ.

²⁷ It will however be revived in a day to come – the Millennial Age when it is celebrated in retrospect (Ezek 45:21-25).

²⁸ These sects take the name “Messianic Jews” and many are affiliated with “Christian Zionism.”

- First an awareness of what *we have done* – our *sins* - **trespass** offering.
- Second, awareness of what *we are*, sinners of Adam’s fallen race – Christ was made sin - **sin** offering.
- Third, awareness of what *we have* in Christ - peace, we have been reconciled unto God, the **peace** offering.

Gospel	Text	OT Type	Significance
Matthew	“For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. ”	Trespass Offering	The trespass offering was for <i>sins</i> . “But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God”, Heb 10:12.
Mark	“And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. ”	Sin Offering	The sin offering was for <i>sin</i> and it typifies what we are. “For he hath made Him to be sin for us”, 2 Cor 5:21. He put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9).
Luke	“Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. ”	Peace Offering	The peace offering spoke of peace between God and man, typified here in the death of Christ – His shed blood (Col 1:21).

We note the connection between the three feasts and the blood of the New Covenant. In Matthew and Mark we suggested it was the blood of its **making**. “This is my blood of the new covenant” (Matt 26:28; Mk 14:24). So in Matthew and Mark we get the trespass and sin offering respectively. These offerings were primary and mandatory because sin had to be dealt with *before* God could move in grace. In Luke however it was the blood of its **seal**. “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” The cup represents the new covenant and this new covenant is sealed in His blood (Lk 22:20). In Luke fittingly we have the outcome of the New Covenant – peace, the peace offering. The peace offering evinced peace between God and man (“shed for you”). There is no mention of the blood of New Covenant or of the institution of the Supper in John’s Gospel. This Gospel presents Christ as the Burnt Offering which speaks of Christ *Himself* as an offering unto God – what *He* is to God.

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