

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this teaching series, you will have an opportunity to learn about the practical life of the Christian community. Two teachers will teach from the Bible about the Christian ceremonies. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. Today's teaching is: THE LORD'S SUPPER, the ceremony in which Christians remember and proclaim the death of Jesus Christ. The Lord's Supper is a *sacrament*, that is, a Christian ceremony or act regarded as an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.

(S) **POINT 1. THE INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

First. Biblical names for the Lord's Supper.

What are the various names for this sacrament in the Bible?

One. In 1 Corinthians 11:20 it is called *the Lord's Supper*. That was to distinguish it from *the love-feast*, which the Corinthians connected with it and which they abused. It was not a supper (meal) in which the rich invited the poor as their guests and then treated them niggardly.

Two. In 1 Corinthians 10:21 it is called *the Lord's Table*. That was to distinguish it from *the table of demons*. The Gentiles at Corinth used to sit down to sacrificial meals after they had brought their sacrifices to their idols. Those meals were called the table of demons, because sacrificing to idols is in reality sacrificing to demons and the sacrificial meals connected with it are in reality exercising communion with these demons.

Three. In Acts 2:42 and 20:7 it is called *the breaking of bread*, which is really a term for *the love-feast*, which included the Lord's Supper.

Four. In 1 Corinthians 10:16 it is called *Eucharist*, which means *thanksgiving*, because during this ceremony Christians give thanks to God.

(T) **Second. The command of Jesus Christ to celebrate the Lord's Supper.**

Where in the Bible is the sacrament of the Lord's Supper instituted?

The Lord's Supper is instituted in the first three Gospels, for example in Matthew 26:26-29, and in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. "During the Passover festival in the evening before he was crucified, Jesus took bread, gave a blessing and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, 'Take and eat; this is my body'. Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins'."

How the Lord's Supper should be celebrated. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-29, the apostle Paul teaches five significant things.

One. Celebrating the Lord's Supper was a command that Paul had received from the Lord Jesus and which should be passed on to all Christians.

Two. Matthew speaks of Jesus *giving a blessing* for the bread. *To bless* means to call down God's powerful grace. Paul speaks of Jesus *giving thanks* for the bread. *To thank* means to send up a grateful acknowledgement of God's grace. In all probability the two words were used interchangeably and refer to a blessing and a thanksgiving combined.

Three. The Lord Jesus taught Christians to celebrate the Lord's Supper *in remembrance of him*.

Four. Whenever Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper, they *proclaim* the Lord's death until his second coming.

Five. The Lord's Supper must be celebrated *in a worthy manner*. Therefore, every Christian ought *to examine himself* before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. The Christian ought to be able *to recognise the body of the Lord*, that is, what he is doing in the Lord's Supper. If he doesn't, he eats and drinks judgement on himself!

(S) **Third. The elements used in the Lord's Supper.**

In this section we want to study the relationship between the Passover festival in the Old Testament and the Lord's Supper in the New Testament.

One. The Passover festival was instituted when God rescued his people from slavery in Egypt (Ex 12). They had to slaughter a lamb and put some of its blood on the sides and top of the doorframes of their houses, so that God would

pass over them when he struck the oppressors with the last of the Ten Plagues. Meanwhile they had to eat the roasted lamb together with bitter herbs and bread made without yeast. They had to eat it in haste, with their cloak tucked into their belt, their sandals on their feet and their staff in the hand, as if they were beginning a journey.

Two. The Lord's Supper was instituted when Jesus Christ ate the Passover meal on the evening before he was slaughtered on the cross. Jesus took the elements of bread and wine, which were present in the Passover festival, and consecrated them to a new use in the Lord's Supper. The third of the four cups of wine, which they drank, was generally called *the cup of blessing*. Jesus used this cup of wine for the second element in the Lord's Supper.

Why did Jesus substitute *the sacrificial lamb* of the Passover festival by *the bread and wine* of the Lord's Supper? Jesus did this because he fulfilled the symbolical and typical significance of the Passover festival. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, "Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed." It teaches that the Passover festival in the Old Testament had typical significance for the New Testament. The New Testament views the Passover festival not only *as a reminder of the deliverance from slave labour* in Egypt, but also *as a sign and seal of the deliverance from the bondage of sin*. And it views the Lord's Supper as *a communion* (fellowship) with God through the promised Messiah, Jesus Christ.

(T) POINT 2. THE FULFILMENT OF THE MEANING OF THE PASSOVER

First. The symbolical meaning of the Passover lamb was fulfilled in Christ.

Hebrews 9:22 says that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Hebrews chapters 9-10 teaches that the lamb sacrificed during the Passover was just a symbol. It pointed to Jesus Christ who was the real Lamb of God that was slaughtered on the cross. The sacrificed animal in the Old Testament was replaced by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross in the New Testament, because the blood of an animal could never take away sins. The sacrificed animal was only an annual reminder of sins that need to be atoned (Heb 10:3-4). The blood of the sacrificed animal only cleansed the people in the Old Testament *outwardly and ceremonially*, because the people still felt guilty for their sins (Heb 9:13; 10:2). But the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses people *inwardly and completely*, because their sins are taken away permanently (Heb 9:14).

The animal sacrifices in the Old Testament period were repeated endlessly year after year, because they could never make people perfect in God's sight (Heb 10:1-2). However, the death of Jesus Christ on the cross made real *atonement* for sins in God's sight: it satisfied God's holy and just indignation against sin and took his anger against sinners away (Heb 2:17). The death of Jesus Christ on the cross provided genuine *purification* for sins in the experience of believers: believers really experience inward and complete forgiveness for all their sins (Heb 1:3). And the death of Jesus Christ on the cross made believers *holy* in God's sight: believers are set apart from the sinful world and are dedicated to serve God within this world (Heb 2:11). The once-for-all and all-sufficient sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross has rendered all further shedding of blood in animal sacrifices unnecessary! Therefore, it is entirely fitting that the bloody element should make way for an unbloody element like bread.

(S) Second. The typical meaning of the Passover lamb was fulfilled in Christ.

In Matthew 26:1 Jesus says that the Passover is two days away and that he would be crucified. Jesus Christ predicted that *the type or illustration*, which is the slaying of the Passover lamb, would be closely followed by *the antitype or fulfilment*, which is his crucifixion. In John 1:29 John says that Jesus Christ is the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. And in 1 Corinthians 5:7 Paul teaches that Christ, our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed. The yearly recurring Old Testament types or illustrations of sacrificing animals has once-for-all time been fulfilled in the New Testament antitype or fulfilment of Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

(T) Third. The national meaning of the Passover lamb had to disappear.

Exodus 12 says that the Passover festival also had *national* meaning: it commemorated Israel's deliverance from slavery in Egypt.

However, by his death on the cross Jesus Christ has broken down the barrier or the dividing wall of hostility that had separated the Jews in the Old Testament from the Gentiles (Eph 2:14). Therefore it is quite natural that the Passover festival, which was a symbol with a national flavour, should be replaced by the Lord's Supper, which is a symbol that carries with it no implication of nationalism. The Lord's Supper is celebrated by Christians in every nation of the world!

(S) Conclusion. The New Testament is the fullness of time, when the different meanings of the Passover festival in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ came from God and died as the Lamb of God on the cross. Because Jesus Christ fulfilled these meanings of the Passover celebration, the Passover celebration had to be substituted by a new celebration. This new celebration is called the Lord's Supper.

(T) POINT 3. THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

First. The Lord's Supper is a sign. A *sign* is an outward symbol that has spiritual meaning. The characteristic of a sacrament is that it represents one or more spiritual truths by means of sensible and outward signs. The outward

signs in the Lord's Supper are the visible elements of bread and wine, the breaking of the bread and the pouring of the wine, the eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine, and doing all this in communion (fellowship) with Jesus Christ and other Christians.

The spiritual truths symbolised in these outward signs are the following:

One. The *bread and wine* symbolise the body and blood of Jesus.

Two. The *breaking of the bread* symbolises the body of Jesus, which was broken on the cross, and the *pouring of the wine* symbolises the blood of Jesus, which was shed when he was nailed to the cross. They symbolically represent the death of Jesus Christ as a sacrifice of atonement for our sin and a redemption from the punishment for sin.

Three. The *words that Jesus spoke* teach that his death was a substitution. He died in our place. When Jesus says, "This is my body, which is for you" (1 Cor 11:24) and "this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many" (Mt 26:28), he teaches that his death was a sacrifice in the place of his people.

Four. The *eating of the bread and the drinking of the wine* symbolise that the Christian actually participates in Jesus Christ and that he symbolically appropriates (makes his own) the benefits that Christ secured by his death. Just as eating ordinary bread and drinking ordinary wine nourishes the physical body, likewise in the Lord's Supper they represent the effect of believing in Christ. Believing in Christ gives spiritual life, strength and joy. The Lord's Supper sustains and renews the spiritual life.

Five. *Celebrating the Lord's Supper together as Christians* symbolises the union of believers with one another. 1 Corinthians 10:17 teaches that partaking of the one loaf of bread symbolises that all Christians are members of the one body of Christ, the Church world-wide.

(S) **Second. The Lord's Supper is a seal.**

One. The Lord's Supper is a seal from Christ to the Christian. A *seal* is an outward symbol that guarantees genuineness and certainty of the spiritual truth. The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is not only the sign of Christ's death, but also the seal that the benefits of his death are for believers. It *certifies* to the Christian that he is personally the object of Christ's love. It *solemnly promises* the Christian that he has a personal claim on all the benefits of Christ's death, like forgiveness of his sins, freedom from the punishment for his sins and a clean conscience. It *assures* the Christian that the blessings of salvation are his actual possession for all eternity.

Two. The Lord's Supper is a seal from the Christian to the world. It is the Christian's *badge of profession*. Every time the Christian eats the bread and drinks the wine, he *professes his faith* in Jesus Christ as his Saviour and his allegiance to Jesus Christ as his King and he *solemnly promises* to obey Jesus Christ and his words in the Bible. Every time Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper, they *proclaim* the gospel that Jesus Christ died for sins and that whoever believes in Jesus Christ will be forgiven and saved.

(T) **Third. The Lord's Supper is a real communion (fellowship) with Jesus Christ.**

Jesus Christ is present among the Christians when they celebrate the Lord's Supper. However, he is not present with Christians in a physical or material way. He is not present in the bread and wine, but he is present through his Holy Spirit.

If that is so, what does Jesus mean when he says in John 6:54 "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and I will raise him up at the last day"?

One. John 6 does not speak of the Lord's Supper, but speaks of evangelisation, of believing in Christ for the first time! In verse 40, Jesus himself explains what he means in verse 54, "Everyone who *believes* in the Son shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day". Jesus does not teach that the bread and the wine in some magical way become the body and blood of Christ, but that *eating and drinking* are words symbolising *believing and receiving* Christ into one's heart and life! In John 6, Jesus is speaking to *unbelievers* and he says that he is the Bread of Life that gives eternal life to those who believe in him (Jn 6:35). Jesus was not speaking to believers about the Lord's Supper.

Two. With respect to *his physical body, his body and blood*, Jesus Christ ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God, the Father. Nevertheless Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit makes all the virtues and effects of the sacrifice of his body and blood on the cross present during the Lord's Supper. He strengthens and encourages Christians through it.

The Lord's Supper is not only *a sign or symbol* of something that happened *in the past*. The Lord's Supper is also *a seal* guaranteeing the genuineness of the completed work of God's love and grace *in the present*. It is a seal giving certainty to the Christian that the completed work of Christ on the cross belongs to him *now*! It is a seal guaranteeing the

Christian that his sins are atoned for and that he is redeemed and justified! The Lord's Supper is not a mere *commemoration* of the Lord's death. It is also a *communion* with the resurrected Christ in which he sustains, renews and strengthens the spiritual life of the Christian.

(S) **Fourth. The Lord's Supper is a means of God's grace.**

God begins his work of grace in the hearts of sinners when he regenerates them. And God *continues* his work of grace in the hearts of Christians by means of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper increases the Christian's assurance of salvation and strengthens his faith. This does not happen automatically. The Lord's Supper is not a magical rite. The understanding and attitude of the Christian remains important.

(T) **POINT 4. THE PRACTICE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

First. Who may participate in the Lord's Supper?

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 teaches, "Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without *recognising* the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgement on himself." From these words it is clear that non-believers and generally Christian children may not participate in the Lord's Supper, because they do *not recognise* the body of Christ. They would not know what they were doing in the Lord's Supper. The believers who may participate in the Lord's Supper are those who *examine themselves*. They admit that they would have been lost without Christ. They earnestly repent of their sins, sincerely believe that Christ's blood has cleansed them from all their sins and desire to grow in faith and holiness of life.

(S) **Second. How should the Lord's Supper be celebrated?**

One. Jesus does not teach *how often Christians should celebrate the Lord's Supper*. Therefore, some Christians celebrate it every Sunday, but most Christians celebrate it once a month or once a quarter.

Two. Jesus also does not specify *what kind of bread or wine should be used*. Therefore, some Christians use unleavened bread and others use ordinary bread. Some Christians use real wine, while other Christians use wine diluted with water or even grape juice. Not the bread and wine are important, but what these elements signify and seal!

Three. Jesus does not teach *how the one bread and one cup of wine should be divided among the Christians*. Therefore, some Christians break the one bread into small pieces and divide the one cup of wine into small cups of wine before or during the Lord's Supper. Other Christians let people break their own piece off the one bread and also let all people drink from one cup during the Lord's Supper. Not how many pieces of bread and cups of wine are important, but that people understand the meaning of the Lord's Supper and participate with the right attitude. The right attitude certainly includes accepting and loving Christians that celebrate the Lord's Supper in a different way than we do. The Lord's Supper may be celebrated while Christians sit or stand.

Four. Jesus does not teach *who may lead the Lord's Supper*. Therefore, an elder or a member *should read the words of Matthew 26:23-26 or 1 Corinthians 11:23-29 and explain the meaning* of the Lord's Supper. He should *give a little quiet time* for Christians to examine their own lives and confess their sins to the Lord. And he should *follow the words and example* of Jesus in Matthew 26 or 1 Corinthians 11 when the Lord's Supper is celebrated.

(T) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Teach new believers what the Bible teaches about the meaning and practice of the Lord's Supper.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and build Christ's Church" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".