

THE  
LORD'S SUPPER



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**Front Cover**

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# **THE LORD'S SUPPER**

This book is being written after some discussions during the past several weeks with one of my brothers in Christ. Also, we at Mission Printing have had a number of questions raised by brethren writing to us asking questions about the observance of the Lord's Supper.

The brother with whom I have been holding discussions is considered to be a good student of the Bible and one that gives his time in meditation on the Word. Brother Daniel Skinner has been a faithful member of the Lord's church for many years and has the respect of those that have known him through the years. At the time of this writing, he is 85 years young and spends much of his time working at Mission Printing in Arlington, Texas, where he is a dependable worker in getting the gospel to thousands each year by the printed page.

Much has been written by a number of individuals concerning the Lord's Supper and its observation. It is hoped that the information in this book will be of help to those that read it. It is being written primarily for those in third world countries who have very little information in written form to aid them in a study of the Word of God.

It is my suggestion that you carefully examine all that is contained in this writing and then study the Bible to get a complete study of what inspired writers had to say about the Lord's Supper.

While this writing will be rather brief it will address such matters as the institution of the supper by our Lord with some general background, the practice of early Christians, some of the written teachings to local congregations by the writers of the New Testament, and what is expected of us that are participating in the partaking of the Lord's Supper.

We should remember that the teachings of the Bible always take precedence over what man may have written or said. God's word is truth and we must follow it to be pleasing to Him. Quotations contained in this book are taken from the New King James translation of the Bible.

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## **BACKGROUND AND INSTITUTION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER**

Jesus, nearing his death on the cross for the sins of all mankind, saw the necessity to provide a way whereby individual Christians could, by faith, look back to the cross and remember Him. This was not the first time that some type of remembrance was used to help man recall a past event.

One that readily comes to mind is that after God had destroyed the world by water, He told Noah that He would make a covenant with man to never again destroy the world by water. To keep this firmly in the mind of man, God promised to place a rainbow in the sky and each time He looked and saw the rainbow He would be reminded that God had made a promise to man. Today many of us vividly call to mind the occasion of the flood when we see a rainbow in the sky. You can read about this event in Genesis, chapter 9, beginning with verse 8.

Just prior to the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt, God sent a plague to take the life of every first born unless a lamb was killed and eaten and a portion of the lamb's blood was placed on the two side post and the upper post of the door of the home in which the lamb had been eaten (Exodus 12:3-51).

The lives of the children of those who fully obeyed the Lord's command were spared. Moses had been very careful in his instructions to the children of Israel and, as a result, all of those that faithfully followed his instructions did not see death come to their households. Many families did lose their first born children and the first born of their animals because they refused to obey God. As the people of that day looked upon the blood that had been placed on the doorpost, they would recall that the Lord had passed over their house because they had obeyed God. This became a remembrance to them as to how God had been with them during this period of time in their lives.

Very specific instructions were given to the priest under the law of Moses concerning how each sacrifice was to be offered and the purpose for which it was being offered. God was not pleased unless the priest fully obeyed and followed His instructions.

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Remember Nadab and Abihu in Leviticus 10:1-2 and what happened to them for offering strange fire upon the altar? A reading of the entire book of Leviticus will give us a good background on the expectations for the priest under the law of Moses. As the lamb without spot or blemish was the sacrifice under the Old Law, Jesus Christ becomes our sacrifice under the New Covenant and that is the law under which you and I live today.

Jesus was totally aware of all that had happened in times past because he was there from the beginning (John 1:1). He knew that He would give His life for the sins of man. He instituted the Lord's Supper as something that would be helpful to man to remember his suffering and death and His resurrection. We read about the institution of the Lord's Supper in Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:14-22, and I Corinthians 11:23-29.

In the three gospel accounts, we find that Jesus took bread and, after blessing it, He broke it and gave it to His disciples and told them to "take, eat; this is My body." We learn from this that Jesus blessed or prayed over the bread before it was broken. The bread was symbolic of His body as being whole and unblemished as it was offered as a sacrifice on the cross. It was a perfect sacrifice and would

provide many benefits for His disciples of that day and future generations, as well as be beneficial to all those that had been followers in times past.

Today, prior to the breaking of bread, we are to express to our Father through His Son our thanks for the giving of His Son on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. Today, the breaking of the bread is done by each individual rather than by Jesus Christ since Jesus is not longer on the earth as He was on the original occasion.

This should help us to better understand the perfect sacrifice of Christ's body as it was offered upon the cross and as He underwent great suffering. Even so, today, we will suffer as His disciples. The breaking of the bread will strengthen us to be willing and prepared to undergo the suffering that comes into our lives as we live for Him.

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Jesus also took the cup and, after having given thanks, gave it to His disciples and told them to drink of it. Observe here, again, that thanks were offered prior to the drinking of the fruit of the vine. Some today have misunderstood the matter of the cup. In eating the bread we do not eat the dish on which it is served and, in drinking the cup, we do not drink the container. We drink the contents of the cup. It is the contents of the cup that Christ is setting forth as the memorial of His blood and not the container. Jesus tells the disciples on this occasion that His blood is given for the forgiveness of sins. He tells them that he will not drink of the fruit of the vine until he drinks it new with them in His father's kingdom.

This signifies that today as we partake of the bread and drink of the fruit of the vine we are communing with the Lord. In order for us to receive the benefits we must be in His kingdom.

## **EARLY CHRISTIANS PARTAKE OF THE SUPPER**

In the book of Acts of the Apostles, we read, "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

From this reading, we find that Paul, along with other followers of Jesus, met together upon the first day (Sunday) of the week. Some would try and confuse us as to the day we are to meet, but Paul had no doubt about the meeting day. Since Paul was inspired of God and full of the Spirit, we look to Him as to when we are to come together, rather than some man's idea.

It appears that since the text does not mention Paul having to teach them about the Lord's Supper, that they were already aware of when to observe it from previous teachings. Each week has a first day, and this being the case, we are to partake of this memorial upon every first day of the week. In my study of the Scriptures, I find no other teaching that would set out any other day or other regular time other than on the first day of the week.

Here, again, some have tried to confuse others by stating that the observation of the Lord's Supper is to be in the evening or the night. While it is true that the supper was taken during the night

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on the occasion of Acts 20:7, when this group had come together, I see nothing in the Scriptures to limit partaking of it to the night and the Scripture clearly states upon the first **day**. As far as I have been able to determine, no exact hour has been commanded. Nothing in the New Testament sets out that it must be partaken of on the first night.

### **Paul's Teachings to the Corinthians**

In I Corinthians chapter 11, we find that even during the first century the Christians were misusing the Lord's Supper by confusing it with a common meal. Paul rather severely admonishes them in this regard. In fact, in verse 20, he tells them that "when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper." Some were eating and leaving others hungry and others were becoming drunk. This was clearly a misuse of the Lord's Supper according to the inspired apostle, Paul. Therefore, he issues a strong statement condemning this practice. "What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you" (I Corinthians 11:22).

After Paul has pointed out their unacceptable practice of the Lord's Supper, he proceeds, in the next verses of the chapter, to teach them the proper way to observe this memorial supper. First of all, he tells them that which he received of the Lord is what he has delivered to them. This is in order that they might not have any question as to where this practice has its origin. This was from the Lord. Here again, Paul related the institution of the Lord's Supper by the Lord. He tells them that after having given thanks, He broke the bread and told them to partake of the bread and eat it in remembrance of Him.

Likewise, He took the cup in the same manner, and then told them that as often, not seldom, as they drank it they were to do this in remembrance of Him. Then, in verse 26, He tells them that "as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

To proclaim is to make known publicly; publicly declare, therefore, we show forth the Lord's death as we partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of each week. This is not for

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physical fulfillment, but is for our spiritual nourishment and our worship of our God. How long are we to proclaim the Lord's death? Paul tells us that it is "until He comes." Since He has already come one time this refers to His second coming. Of course, when one departs from this life he can no longer partake of this memorial since it is a physical act for spiritual enrichment.

Then, Paul tells them that it is possible to partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner and, therefore, be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. How would we be found guilty of the body and blood of the Lord? This would occur anytime that we eat the bread and drink the fruit of the vine in such a manner as not to remember Jesus and His giving of His life on the cross for us. Examination is to be made by each individual Christian each time we partake of this memorial. We are to guard our thoughts so as to partake of these representative emblems remembering Jesus and His death on the cross for our sins and, upon remembering, we are spiritually moved to be willing to suffer for His cause.

Paul, in his writing, states that many are weak and sick and a number sleep concerning this matter. Therefore, we today need to give heed so that we will not become such that we will partake of the Lord's Supper in such a way as to become weak or fall asleep.

## **CHRIST VS SATAN**

After having spent some time in looking at the cross and the suffering of Christ and all that He has done for us, we should now ask ourselves what has Satan done for us. First of all, he lied to our forefathers, Adam and Eve, in the garden and caused them to be driven out of a perfect place for man to live. He has caused misery, suffering, pain, anguish, heart break, and all such bad things to happen to men throughout the history of mankind.

Satan continues today to try and place stumbling blocks in our pathway to cause us to leave the Way of the Lord. His appeal is based upon lies about happiness, joy, peace, and all good things that man is seeking. God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit base their appeal to us upon a great love that has been and continues to be manifested toward us daily. In view of the contrast should we not choose to remember Jesus and follow Him?

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## **SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS**

1. We should guard our minds and the thoughts that enter them in such a way as to allow us to remember Jesus as we partake of the Lord's Supper. We will have difficulty in controlling the thoughts that enter our minds, but we can readily control what remains in our meditations.
2. Either memorize the scriptures pertaining to the Lord's Supper and use this as a time to reflect upon them, or open your Bible and read from these

sections of scripture. Many people have found this to be very beneficial in helping to remember Jesus.

3. Many very good songs have been written that can be used to help us properly reflect as we observe this feast by thinking about the words and their meanings.
4. In I Corinthians 10:16, we find that the cup of blessing which we bless is a sharing in the blood of Christ. From this we find that we do share with Christ as we partake of His Supper. This gives us sufficient motive to be willing to suffer physically or mentally and we signify this each time that we engage in the observation of this supper

How more readily could you and I draw nearer to Jesus than to be given a memorial in which we can remember His suffering and death upon the cross for us. It was out of love for each of us that Jesus was willing to be used as the perfect sacrifice upon the cross, therefore, we today need to remember Him and in so doing we will be drawn to Him.

Love is the strongest motive that is possessed by man and to be Christ-like, we are to love. No motive will move us to obedience, service, or worship of God like love. Love will be a lasting motivation and will bind us together with those of like faith.

5. You might develop a picture in your mind from the teaching of Christ and the writers of the New Testament regarding this memorial. This could be helpful in helping you to vividly recall the suffering and death of Christ upon the cross.

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## CONCLUSION

My hope and prayer is that this short book will be of help to you in your weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. This study is not presented in great detail and, therefore, you should go to the Word of God and meditate on it to become fully aware of His teachings.

God's Word will stand the test of time and it will be used to judge man in the last days. The Bible is true. Following it will prepare us to meet our Savior. Paul felt strongly enough to correct those at Corinth that had begun to observe the Lord's Supper in an improper manner and we must be careful, today, that we properly participate in this communion service. Partaking of the Lord's Supper is for individual Christians. From its proper observation, we will gain spiritual strength. The strength we gain will help us to live our daily lives for Jesus. Each first day of the week, we should look forward to communing with the Lord in His Supper.

## SUMMARY

**When:** Upon the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

**Where:** When gathered together (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:20).

**How:** Worthy manner (I Corinthians 11:27).

**Why:** To remember Jesus (I Corinthians 11:23–29).



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