

# The Lord's Supper

## (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

Expository Lessons from Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

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### I. Introduction

- a. In Paul's **First Letter to the Corinthians**, he addresses a number of problems in the church. The first was related to division within the church, and the most recent one addressed Christians not following the apostolic teaching on headcovering.
- b. The focus of the current lesson, which covers the second half of **1 Corinthians 11**, is related to problems in the church during their observance of the Lord's Supper.
  - i. In Paul's addressing the problems they were having, we can learn from this passage some foundational things about the nature and importance of the Lord's Supper.
- c. This is not the first time in this letter that the topic of the Lord's Supper has been touched on. For example, consider passages we have encountered thus far:
  - i. "Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, *all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink*. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ." (**1 Corinthians 10:1-4**, NKJV)
    1. Here, Paul said the Israelite journey out of Egypt and through the Wilderness foreshadowed the life of a Christian. The journey began with their "baptism" (crossing the Red Sea to escape the slavery of Egypt). Then, they were all sustained during their journey by the "spiritual food and drink" provided by God (foreshadowing the Lord's Supper for Christians).
  - ii. "I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not *the communion of the blood of Christ*? The *bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ*? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread." (**1 Corinthians 10:15-17**, NKJV)
    1. This is where we get the term "communion", another name for "the Lord's Supper".

- iii. "You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." (**1 Corinthians 10:21**, NKJV)
- d. I would like to use the opportunity presented in the current passage to study the meaning and significance of the Lord's Supper to Christians. Also, I would like to tackle some common questions, such as:
  - i. Why do Christians take communion? How important is it?
  - ii. Do the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, or is this merely a memorial meal where we recall what Jesus did in dying for us?
    - 1. In the Roman Catholic church I was raised in as a child, the most important thing during the Sunday gathering of the church was communion. It was considered the central event, more important than the sermon. Furthermore, I was taught in that church that the bread and wine were changed, so that while they still appeared to be ordinary bread and wine, in reality they became the actual body and blood of Christ.
      - a. What I was taught as a Catholic seemed reasonable to me at the time, based on how the Scriptures were explained to me.
      - b. The Orthodox Church and some other Christian churches hold similar 'high' views of the spiritual significance of the Lord's Supper.
    - 2. On the other hand, years later in a Restoration Movement church, I was taught that no transformation took place. When we ate the bread and drank the wine (or grape juice), we were simply remembering what Jesus did for us.
      - a. Again, this understanding seemed reasonable to me at the time, based on reading the same Scriptures in a different light.
      - b. The viewpoint I was taught in the Churches of Christ was consistent with the understanding in many Protestant churches today.
  - iii. Who should be able to fully participate in the Lord's Supper?
    - 1. Anyone who happens to be present at the service?
    - 2. Limited to members of the local church?

3. Or should *any practicing Christian* be welcome?
- iv. How often should Christians celebrate the Lord's Supper?
  1. Once or twice a year, on special occasions?
  2. Every week on Sundays?
  3. Or more often, for example daily?
- e. My goal in the current lesson will be to search out what the Scriptures teach, and how this was understood and put into practice by those closest to the apostles, at the beginning of the church.
  - i. I do not just want to defend the position of one modern group or denomination. Nor do I want to advance some novel, maverick interpretation that has no historical basis.

## II. Important Passages on the Lord's Supper

- a. Read **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**.
  - i. This is addressing a problem they were having. When the church came together in one place to "eat the Lord's Supper", they were doing so in an *unworthy manner*.
  - ii. Paul urged them to "examine themselves", to "judge themselves" before they took the Lord's Supper, so that they would not be judged (by the Lord).
  - iii. Also, they should show consideration for one another, not coming there hungry to the point where some would go ahead and eat without waiting for the others (who would end up being left out).
    1. He tells them to eat at home beforehand, so that they would not arrive hungry!
- b. Let us review the words of Jesus at the Last Supper before he was crucified, when He instituted the Lord's Supper (which Paul was referring to). From the gospels of **Luke** and **Matthew**:
  - i. "Then He said to them, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, 'Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.' And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after

supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you." (**Luke 22:15-20**, NKJV)

1. Personally, I could read this passage and come to an understanding that the Lord's Supper, which we are called to observe, is *EITHER* (a) a transformation of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, *OR* (b) merely a symbolic representation of what Jesus did for us on the cross.
- ii. "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'" (**Matthew 26:26-28**, NKJV)
  1. The Greek word used in both of these gospel accounts, where it says Jesus "gave thanks" (eucharisteo / εὐχαριστέω) is where the term "eucharist" comes from.
  2. In these passages, it is used as a verb. The noun form (eucharistia / εὐχαριστία) was a term applied by early Christians to the Lord's supper, which means "the giving of thanks" or "thanksgiving".
- c. Many Christians, throughout history, have associated the teachings of Jesus in **John 6** with Lord's Supper that Jesus later instituted. Let us review what it says there and consider that possible connection.
  - i. Jesus miraculously fed a crowd that included 5,000 men at a remote location near the Sea of Galilee, having only five barley loaves and two small fish. His disciples collect twelve baskets of fragments afterward.
    1. This miracle is recorded in all four gospels.
  - ii. The people recognize this as a miracle from God. They think of how Moses fed thousands with bread from heaven in the Wilderness and wonder if Jesus was the promised Prophet to come (from **Deuteronomy 18:15-19**), the one who would be "like Moses".
  - iii. Read **John 6:22-59**. As you read this, consider whether Jesus intended what he was saying to be taken *literally* vs. only *symbolically*.
    1. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life", the true bread from heaven. Then He says we must eat his flesh and drink His blood in order to have eternal life.
      - a. "For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." Then they said to

Him, "Lord, give us this bread always." And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst." (**John 6:33-35**, NKJV)

- b. "I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." (**John 6:48-51**, NKJV)
- c. "Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed." (**John 6:53-55**, NKJV)
  - i. This was so troubling to the disciples who heard it that *many of them stopped following Jesus*.
  - ii. Jesus did not say, "My bad; I only mean this figuratively. Please do not leave." Instead, the Lord doubled down and challenged the twelve regarding whether *they also wanted to leave*.

2. **Question:** Are we to take these words of Jesus here *literally*, or just *symbolically*?

- a. After all, Jesus *did speak figuratively and used symbols* to communicate spiritual things that He did not intend to be taken literally. Below are other passages from the same gospel. In each case, consider whether he was speaking literally, or merely using figurative language to convey spiritual truth.
  - i. "I am the light of the world." (**John 8:12**)
    - 1. Clearly, Jesus was not saying He was a literal flashlight or lamp, from which literal rays of light come.
  - ii. "I am the door (or gate) of the sheep." (**John 10:7-9**)

1. Likewise, here Jesus was not saying that he is a literal door or gate, swinging on hinges.
- iii. "I am the true vine...my Father is the vinedresser (or husbandman or gardener)...you are the branches." (**John 15:1-5**)
  1. Again, Jesus is not saying he is a literal vine, such as a grapevine or tomato plant vine, nor that his followers are literal branches that are physically connected to that vine.
- iv. John the Baptist was "a burning and shining lamp". (**John 5:35**)
  1. Jesus clearly was speaking figuratively here, as well. John was not literally hot and giving off literal rays of light, as an oil lamp would.
- v. "Lazarus *sleeps*...I go that I may *wake him up*..." (**John 11:11**)
  1. The disciples of Jesus took him literally here, but He was using figures of speech, with "sleep" referring to death and "waking up" referring to being raised from the dead.
3. I see parallels between what Jesus said to Nicodemus in **John 3**, and what he has said here in **John 6**.
  - a. In both places, Jesus says something that *is highly offensive and perplexing* to his believing listeners. They struggle with it.
  - b. In both cases, He says that this offensive thing is *essential for eternal life*.
  - c. In both cases, some Christians today apply what He is saying literally, and apply it to something we must do in order to follow Jesus (water baptism and communion). However, there are other Christians who interpret these sayings only figuratively or symbolically.

- i. Catholics and Orthodox Christians, and some other groups, tend to take both statements literally and apply them to water baptism (being born again of water and the spirit) and the Lord's supper (eating His flesh and drinking His blood).
  - ii. Most Protestants, on the other hand, consider both statements by Jesus to be taken only symbolically, and do NOT consider them to be referring to baptism or communion.
  - iii. However, in the Churches of Christ, it is 50/50 on this point. They generally take His statement in **John 3** literally, applying it to Christian water baptism; however, they take the parallel statement in **John 6** figuratively, and do not apply it to the Lord's Supper.
- d. Also, in both cases, Jesus is emphatic, saying: "Most assuredly I say to you..."
- i. "Jesus answered and said to him, '*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*' Nicodemus said to Him, '*How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?*' Jesus answered, '*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.*'" (**John 3:3-5**, NKJV)
  - ii. "Then Jesus said to them, '*Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.*'" (**John 6:53-54**, NKJV)
- e. The early Christians understood Jesus to be explaining the necessity of water baptism in **John 3**, and the Lord's Supper in **John 6**.
- i. Recall that Paul, in describing how the Jews in the Wilderness foreshadowed Christians, said "they were all 'baptized' ...all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink". (**1 Corinthians 10:1-4**)

- ii. Both are significant, defining acts in the Christian life. One marks the beginning of the journey out of spiritual slavery, and the other sustains us on our journey through the Wilderness of this life, as the manna fed the Israelites.
- iii. Both are physical things that involve our bodies as well as our spirits. After all, God's plan is to redeem us completely. Man was created body and spirit in the beginning, and God's plan is to save us completely, body and spirit, on the Last Day.
  - 1. Many modern Protestants tend to dismiss the importance of physical actions (involving our bodies) that have profound spiritual consequences.
    - a. Salvation after we die: Most modern Protestants hold that salvation only pertains to our souls (not our bodies). Therefore, they believe that upon death, the souls of the righteous immediately ascend to heaven. While our bodies, which are no longer of any use, will simply decay in the grave forever.
    - b. How someone becomes a Christian: Many Protestants believe that all we need to do is believe, or perhaps say a prayer and mentally accept what Christ did for us. Therefore, they see baptism, washing our bodies with water, as irrelevant to becoming a Christian and being saved.
    - c. Taking the Lord's Supper: This is not seen as essential to the Christian life by many Protestants. Therefore, they may observe it infrequently and do not recognize the body and blood of Christ being present in the eucharist.



- d. Headcoverings: Many have the idea that since the Christian faith is solely a matter of what we believe and feel in our hearts, things we do with our bodies (such as covering or uncovering our heads) do not matter.
  - e. Sins of the flesh: Many falsely believe that sins involving our flesh are no worse than sins that involve only our hearts. (That is in contrast with what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 6:15-20** regarding sexual immorality, a sin involving our bodies.)
2. In contrast, the New Testament teaches that salvation involves all of man. Man was created body and spirit in the beginning (**Genesis 1-2**). God's plan is to save man entirely: the spirit *as well as the body*. On the Last Day all the graves will be emptied. The grave will have no victory, in the end. We will be bodily resurrected and judged after our bodies have been transformed and reunited with our spirits.
    - a. Jesus said: "Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation." (**John 5:28-29**, NKJV)
    - b. "Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be

changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' 'O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?'" (**1 Corinthians 15:51-55, NKJV**)

3. This popular view that salvation is only about our spirits (and not involving our bodies) underlies so many ancient and modern heresies. We look forward exploring this important subject in greater depth when we get to **1 Corinthians 15**.

### III. Taking Jesus and Paul Literally vs. Symbolically Here

- a. On the one hand, Jesus said, "this is my body... this is my blood" (**Matthew 26:26**). On the other hand, Paul says, "whoever eats this bread..." (**1 Corinthians 11:27**).
  - i. **Question:** So what are we eating? Is it bread, or is it the body (the flesh) of Christ?
- b. This comes back to the question I raised earlier, regarding when (and whether) we should take these words of Jesus literally, versus figuratively or symbolically.
- c. One statement by Paul that suggests that communion is *more than simply normal bread and wine*.
  - i. "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep." (**1 Corinthians 11:27-30, NKJV**)

- ii. Eating the bread and drinking from the cup at the Lord's Supper is a very serious matter, according to Paul. Doing so in an unworthy manner, "not discerning the Lord's body" can bring judgment upon us.
    - 1. Paul brings the fear of God to the Corinthian Christians!
  - iii. Paul says that because of this, some have become sick, and "many sleep", clearly using a common Biblical metaphor for death.
  - iv. That does not sound like simply a memorial meal to recall what Jesus did for us!
    - 1. Paul is putting the fear of God into people, warning of dire consequences, including sickness and even death.
- d. Value of early Christian witness.
- i. Jesus said that the apostles would be inspired by the Holy Spirit after He departed, Who would remind them of everything He said and would guide them into "all truth" (**John 14:25-26** and **16:13**)
  - ii. Therefore, we know that what the apostles handed down was inspired by God. Furthermore, since they received "all truth", they had the full package. Nothing more would be revealed afterward regarding the faith.
  - iii. The source of authority we have is in what the apostles handed down, inspired by the Holy Spirit.
    - 1. We have this in written form, in the New Testament gospels and letters.
    - 2. They also were authoritative and inspired when they spoke.
      - a. **Question:** Is there anything handed down by the apostles that was not recorded in Scripture?
      - b. Perhaps, if it could be traced back to the beginning. For example, the practice of the church gathering once a week, every Sunday.
        - i. (While I have heard **Acts 20:7** cited, it does not seem to me that passage *proves* this weekly observance.)
  - iv. Early Christian writers (those who came shortly after the time of the apostles) were not inspired by the Holy Spirit as the apostles were. Therefore, unlike the Scriptures, their writings are not authoritative. However, they had the advantage of being closer to the apostles and

being fluent in the same language that the New Testament was written in (Koine Greek).

1. They also were not influenced by theological fads that came hundreds of years later.
2. I do not look to the early Christians as an independent source of authority, but rather as providing insight into how to interpret a statement by Jesus or the apostles when there are two or more possibilities (for example, whether to take something literally or symbolically when I am not 100% sure).

#### IV. Early Christian Writings on the Lord's Supper

- a. One of the most useful sources of information, to me, is Justin Martyr's *First Apology*. He is writing it to the Roman pagans, including to the emperor and the senate, to encourage them to stop persecuting Christians.
  - i. Therefore, this is not a theological treatise. It is a practical explanation of what Christians believe and how they live, to skeptical unbelievers.
  - ii. In it, Justin dispels a number of myths and rumors regarding the Christians.
  - iii. He also explains what Christian gatherings are like, how someone becomes a Christian. He also provides reasons why those he is writing to should investigate this further and become Christians as well!
  - iv. Keep in mind that Justin (who originally had studied Greek philosophy and was from Samaria) was in Rome, a church where Peter and Paul had been decades earlier.
- b. From Justin Martyr's *First Apology*, chapter 67, on the weekly gathering of the church (written c. 160 AD):
  - i. "And on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place, and the memoirs of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read, as long as time permits; then, when the reader has ceased, the president verbally instructs, and exhorts to the imitation of these good things. Then we all rise together and pray, and, as we before said, when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought, and the president in like manner offers prayers and thanksgivings, according to his ability, and the people assent, saying Amen; and there is a distribution to each, and a participation of that over which thanks have been given, and to those who are absent a portion is sent by the deacons.

- ii. “And they who are well to do, and willing, give what each thinks fit; and what is collected is deposited with the president, who succours the orphans and widows and those who, through sickness or any other cause, are in want, and those who are in bonds and the strangers sojourning among us, and in a word takes care of all who are in need. “
  - iii. “But Sunday is the day on which we all hold our common assembly, because it is the first day on which God, having wrought a change in the darkness and matter, made the world; and Jesus Christ our Saviour on the same day rose from the dead. For He was crucified on the day before that of Saturn (Saturday); and on the day after that of Saturn, which is the day of the Sun, having appeared to His apostles and disciples, He taught them these things, which we have submitted to you also for your consideration.”
- c. From Justin Martyr’s *First Apology*, chapters 65-66:
- i. “There is then brought to the president [= *presiding brother* – CP] of the brethren bread and a cup of wine mixed with water; and he taking them, gives praise and glory to the Father of the universe, through the name of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and offers thanks at considerable length for our being counted worthy to receive these things at His hands. And when he has concluded the prayers and thanksgivings, all the people present express their assent by saying Amen. This word Amen answers in the Hebrew language to *genoito* [so be it]. And when the president has given thanks, and all the people have expressed their assent, those who are called by us deacons give to each of those present to partake of the bread and wine mixed with water over which the thanksgiving was pronounced, and to those who are absent they carry away a portion.
  - ii. “CHAPTER 66 -- OF THE EUCHARIST. And this food is called among us Eucharistia [the Eucharist], of which no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is so living as Christ has enjoined.
  - iii. “For not as common bread and common drink do we receive these; but in like manner as Jesus Christ our Saviour, having been made flesh by the Word of God, had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so likewise have we been taught that the food which is blessed by the prayer of His word, and from which our blood and flesh by transmutation are nourished, is the flesh and blood of that Jesus who was made flesh.

iv. “For the apostles, in the memoirs composed by them, which are called Gospels, have thus delivered unto us what was enjoined upon them; that Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, said, ‘This do in remembrance of Me, this is My body;’ and that, after the same manner, having taken the cup and given thanks, He said, ‘This is My blood;’ and gave it to them alone. Which the wicked devils have imitated in the mysteries of Mithras, commanding the same thing to be done. For, that bread and a cup of water are placed with certain incantations in the mystic rites of one who is being initiated, you either know or can learn.”

d. Take-aways from Justin Martyr’s *First Apology* include the following:

- i. Christians gathered together from the city and countryside every week, on the first day of the week (Sunday). That was tied back to the creation account of **Genesis 1** and to the resurrection of Jesus on the first day of the week.
- ii. They read at length from the prophets and the New Testament writings left by the apostles, and then exhorted the church to follow these things.
- iii. They celebrated the Lord’s Supper, which they called the *eucharist* (from the Greek word meaning ‘thanksgiving’), taking the bread and wine.
- iv. Those who could participate had to meet three criteria:
  1. Believed these things are true;
  2. Had been baptized into Christ; and
  3. Were living according to the teachings of Christ.
- v. They held that the bread and wine somehow became changed into the body and blood of Christ.
  1. The word in the English translation just quoted is “transmutation”. Since that English word is unfamiliar to me, I went back to the Greek of Justin’s first apology to try to discern what he meant here. The Greek word he uses here also shows up a few times in the LXX, and generally just means “changed”.
  2. For example, that same Greek word (*metabole*) is used in **Wisdom of Solomon 7:18** where it speaks about “the *changes* of the seasons”.

3. Justin explains that the Christians understood the bread and wine to be changed into the body and blood of Christ, a food to nourish and sustain us spiritually. He gives no further explanation regarding how that takes place; clearly it is a mystery.
- vi. Justin makes it clear to the Romans that while the worshipers of Mithras may have a similar ritual, *the Christians were not copying some pagan custom!*
- e. Other quotes from early Christian writers.
    - i. Below are quotes from two of the earliest Christian writers after the time of the apostles. Ignatius, bishop of the church in Antioch, writing c. 105 AD, would have personally known one or more of the apostles. Irenaeus, bishop of the church in Lyons, in Gaul (modern-day France), writing c. 180 AD, had been a disciple of Polycarp in his youth, who in turn would have known one or more of the apostles. The quotes immediately below are taken from *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot, pp. 251-252.
      1. "...breaking one and the same bread, which is the medicine of immortality, and the antidote to prevent us from dying, so that we should live forever in Jesus Christ."
        - a. (Original source: Ignatius, *Epistle of Ignatius to the Ephesians*, chapter 20; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 58)
      2. "I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life—which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.... And I desire the drink of God, namely His blood, which is incorruptible love and eternal life."
        - a. (Original source: Ignatius, *Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*, chapter 7; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 77)
      3. "Our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and, in turn, the Eucharist establishes our opinion. For we offer to Him His own, announcing consistently the fellowship and union of the flesh and spirit. For the bread, which is produced from the earth, when it receives the invocation of God, is no longer common bread, but the Eucharist—consisting of two realities, earthly and heavenly. So also our bodies, when they receive the Eucharist, are no longer corruptible, having the hope of the resurrection to eternity."

- a. (Original source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 4, chapter 18; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 486)
  - 4. “He has acknowledged the cup (which is a part of the creation) as His own blood, from which He refreshes our blood. And the bread (also a part of the creation) He has established as His own body, from which He gives increase to our bodies. When, therefore, the mingled cup and the baked bread receive the Word of God, and the Eucharist of the blood and the body of Christ is made (from which things the substance of our flesh is increased and supported), how can they [the Gnostics] maintain that the flesh is incapable of receiving the gift of God?”
    - a. (Original source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 2; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 528)
  - 5. “[The wine and bread] having received the Word of God, become the Eucharist, which is the body and blood of Christ.”
    - a. (Original source: Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, book 5, chapter 2; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 1, p. 528)
  - ii. For additional *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot, article on ‘Eucharist’.
- f. Old Testament Foreshadowings
  - i. Melchizedek offering bread and wine (**Genesis 14**).
    - 1. From Clement of Alexandria, writing c. 195 AD:
      - a. “Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, gave bread and wine, providing consecrated food as a type of the Eucharist.” Clement of Alexandria (c. 195, E),
      - b. (Source of above quote: *Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs*, ed. David Bercot, p. 252. Primary source: Clement of Alexandria, *The Stromata*, book 4, chapter 25; found in Ante-Nicene Fathers vol. 2, p. 439)
  - ii. Passover Lamb: God’s people must eat the flesh of lamb after it was sacrificed (**Exodus 12**)
  - iii. Table of showbread in the tabernacle (**Exodus 25, Leviticus 24:5-9**)
    - 1. Recall that the high priest (who entered the Most Holy Place with blood) foreshadowed Jesus (**Hebrews 5-10**). The priests,



who ministered in the Holy Place, foreshadowed the Christians (**1 Peter 2:9**).

2. The ministry of the priests in the Holy Place was marked by the altar of incense (prayer, **Revelation 5:8**), the lampstand giving light (word of God, **Psalms 119:105, 2 Peter 1:19**) and the table of showbread (bread of the Lord's supper).
3. Note that the bread is changed out every seven days.
- iv. Manna in the Wilderness, the bread from heaven to sustain God's people on their journey through the Wilderness (**Exodus 16**)
  1. Note that it comes in a 7-day cycle (appearing for 6 days, then skips one day and the cycle repeats).

## V. Take Aways for Us

- a. The Lord's Supper provides spiritual food to sustain us on our journey.
- b. It is very important; to be an important part of when we gather each week as a church on Sundays.
- c. It binds us all together as one body.
- d. We proclaim the Lord's death through this.
- e. It is a mystery; bread and wine somehow changed to become the body and blood of Christ.
  - i. I don't believe we need to split hairs doctrinally in an attempt to precisely define how this takes place. This is a mystery, something we accept by faith.
- f. We must examine ourselves before we eat and partake in a worthy manner.
  - i. Danger of judgment from God, sickness and death.
  - ii. Here, the onus is put on those taking it. Some here confess sins beforehand.
  - iii. Recall Jesus saying we need to be reconciled before bringing our gift to the altar.
  - iv. Some will take in an unworthy manner, but face danger in so doing.
- g. Church leaders have a responsibility to apply church discipline to restrict from communion those who are in serious sin and are clearly in an unworthy spiritual condition. However, this will only happen if and when they become aware of such sin.

- i. However, most sins are hidden from view. It will be *impossible* for the church leaders to catch and discipline every sin in the church.
- ii. Jesus alluded to this, I believe, in his Parable of the Wheat and Tares, and Parable of the Dragnet, in **Matthew 13**. There will be some in the kingdom who will only be sorted out at the end.
- iii. Also consider what Paul said in **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**. The forefathers were all “baptized” and all “ate the spiritual food and drank the spiritual drink”, but most of them did not make it to the Promised Land...*to teach us a lesson!*
- iv. Also, as Paul points out here in **1 Corinthians 11**, there will be some who do not heed the warnings to examine themselves who will take the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner, who will suffer the consequences (including sickness and death)!