

Communion



"And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart."

Acts 2:46

COMMUNICATING AND COMMUNING
WITH A LIVING GOD

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TITLE: **COMMUNION**

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COMMUNION

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PREFACE

Welcome to the discipleship / leadership series. These little booklets were designed to give basic information concerning various topics about our Christian faith in Christ Jesus.

The purpose of this series is to stimulate thought and to foster a clearer understanding of discipleship and servant leadership. These booklets can be used as a discussion tool for personal study, family devotion, youth meetings or in cell groups. Our hope is that this information will stir the readers and encourage them to go deeper into personal research and study.

Our desire is that these booklets will be a blessing to the reader and a tool that can be shared with others as a gift of encouragement.

Please feel free to mail or e-mail us for more copies or to just write to us with any feedback concerning the content of these studies. We hope you enjoy this offering of knowledge and experience. We pray that Christ will draw you into an ever deeper personal relationship with Himself as you study.

Your servants in Christ,

Rev. Dr. James and Hkaw Win Humphries

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And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.

Acts 2:46

INTRODUCTION

Communion brings the disciple into a deeper fellowship with Jesus Christ. It personalizes what He did for us on the cross, causing us to remember and reflect on the covenants and promises that Christ has made to every disciple.

Communion also brings us together to examine ourselves, looking at how we are living our faith and commitment to Christ. It is a time for the Church body to minister to itself.

Before we go any further it would be helpful to define some key words that will give us greater insight into the subject of communion.

Communion: An act or situation involving sharing; possession in common; joint ownership; fellowship of members in a church. *Synonyms:* Fellowship, kinship, friendship, togetherness, harmony, understanding, connection, communication.

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Remember: Have in or be able to bring to one's mind an awareness of (someone or something that one has seen, known, or experienced in the past) *Synonyms:* Recall, call to mind, recollect, think of think back to, look back on, cast one's mind back to, summon up, commemorate, pay tribute to, honour, celebrate, pay homage to, memorialize, keep alive the memory of.

These words are important for the disciple to understand and are foundational principles in the communion service. The more we grasp what communion means, the greater the blessing we will receive when we partake of it together with other believers.

Communion can also be known as a “Love Feast” or celebration. For the disciple it represents His deliverance from the curse of the Law, giving us freedom from sin and death. We are not to focus solely on Christ's death, but should rejoice in the victory that Christ achieved in the resurrection. Jesus now gives to us His grace and righteousness. We are full of hope and power through the shedding of His blood.

Let us look at a passage in Matthew to see what Jesus was trying to teach His disciples in the last few hours of His life.

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“On the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, “Where do you want us to make the preparations for you to eat the Passover?” He said, “Go into the city to a certain man, and say to him, ‘The Teacher say, My time is near; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.’” So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover meal. When it was evening, He took His place with the twelve; ...While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it He broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.” Then He took a cup, and after giving thanks He gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Matthew 26:17-20, 26-30

Matthew tells us that Jesus was coming to celebrate the Passover – something that He had done dozens of times. The hour had come and He sent the disciples ahead to make sure preparations were ready for what would turn out to be a life changing experience. This event would become one of the

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emblems and foundation stones of the Church. It brought the head and body together for the very first time. The Jews followed a strict routine in celebrating the Passover and soon this symbol of the Old Testament would become a major event in the New Testament. Completing the Old Covenant, the disciples were building a foundation of walking in the New Covenant that Christ was birthing for them and the Church.

Just days or maybe even hours before, Jesus had taught the disciples principles of the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matt 25:1-13), the Parable of the Talents (Matt 25:14-30) and the teaching concerning the Sheep and Goats (Matt 25:31-46). He knew that the people were plotting His death and told the disciples that one of His own would betray Him into the hands of man. In the upper room they reflected back to the days of Moses when God delivered them out of the hands of Egypt.

This time Jesus knew that the Passover was going to be different. He would become the Passover Lamb whose blood was to be shed for the remission of sins. He knew what lay ahead and what the Scripture had prophesied would take place. He also discerned that one of His own twelve disciples, whom He had walked and lived with for the last three years, would betray Him with a kiss. A kiss was a symbol that normally represented a deep friendship and love for one another.

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As Jesus spoke, He shared with the disciples many word pictures. The Jewish people understood the meaning of these stories through the Hebrew Scripture and from their oral traditions. Each year as they celebrated the Passover they would reflect back on the stories and teachings that had been passed down. They would come together from all over to celebrate in Jerusalem what God had done for them hundreds of years before. It was a very special time of year for a Jew.

There were at least two key things to remember. The first would be ridding one's house of leaven bread. Leaven bread was bread made with yeast (causing bread to rise). Yeast represented sin and a little bit of yeast (like a little bit of sin) spoiled the whole loaf. They were to eat only unleavened bread. So symbolically they were to rid their homes and lives of sin (Exodus 12:14).

The second thing they had to do was kill a lamb without blemish or sickness, take its blood and put it on the mantel and doorpost of their houses (Exodus 12:1-13, 20). God was sending a death angel to kill all the first born sons of the land. This vow was told to Moses and Aaron, but the blood on the doorposts kept death from coming to them. It was also a sign that they had faith in God to look after them, take care of them and carry them through this very dark time.

During the time of Christ the Passover evening would be an occasion to gather together and eat as families, praying that God

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would show His mercy and power over their enemies. The Passover was the door that allowed the people of Israel the ability to leave 400 years of bondage in Egypt and head on their exodus journey into the promise land (Exodus 13:21-22).

Jesus then explained to the disciples another thing that was to take place during this Passover weekend. He showed them that He would be the unleavened bread, the one without sin that would be broken for them. Jesus would be the one and only bread that they must partake from.

Secondly, He showed them that His blood would be shed like the Passover lamb and it would need to be spread over the mantel and doorpost of their lives. When the death angel would come he would not destroy them because their hearts would be covered by the blood of Jesus Christ.

Jesus said in the book of John, “I Am the bread of life.” This symbol of bread would now become true for those who believed in Him. Reflecting back to the “Show Bread” in the tabernacle, it would also remind them of the manna that God sent from heaven, pointing to the bread that was eaten during the Passover. The Israelites knew that the bread was a symbol of God’s presence with His people. There was a table in the

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Tabernacle and Temple called “the Table of Show Bread” (Exodus 25:23-30).

In the same manner, blood was poured out or sprinkled on the mercy seat, a symbolic gesture from the life of Jesus. Blood was a covering that allowed them to come to God. He would see that they were clothed in Christ’s righteousness and their sins had been forgiven.

Also, the blood represented a new covenant, a pledge and commitment between God and themselves. Today when we take and drink of the cup it causes us to remember the agreement made between ourselves and Christ. He becomes our Lord and Saviour and we become stewards of all that He gives to us. We also become His children, joint heirs of His Kingdom. He was poured out for many, so that all who come to Christ could have their sins forgiven. Our shepherd was laying down His life for His sheep (Psalm 23:1-5, John 10:11).

Then Jesus told His disciples that He would not eat or drink of the cup until He meets with us again in the Kingdom of Heaven. This picture points to the marriage supper of the Lamb, when the church is called up and we gather together with Christ for all eternity (Revelation 19:9). We will meet Him face to face and will be in His very presence. Incredibly, as Jesus was on His way to the

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cross, He was thinking of and foretold of the day He would meet with us again.

Closing this time of communion with a hymn, they proceeded to the Mount of Olives. They went across the valley to the other side which overlooked the city of Jerusalem. This was Jesus' Prayer Mountain. It was where He had talked with His Father so many times before. He went there to wait for His accusers to come and take Him away as the Passover Lamb.

Now let us turn to how communion affects our lives today as disciples. Communion can be broken down into many pieces or areas. We are going to look at 12 key principles that will help the disciple to understand why we should come together and meet for communion. We also use the word "time" at the beginning of each principle. It takes time to enter into what God has for us during communion. It takes time to prepare one's heart to hear the voice of God. It takes time to prepare one's life for the giving and receiving that will follow.

Time of Communication:

This is a time of talking with God and having Him talk with us. It is also a place where we can share our hearts with other believers. As we do this, we will learn how to pray and help each other. Communication is something to be worked at.