



Communion — “Do this in remembrance of Me.”

Within the teaching of Jesus we see that there are two “sacraments” or ordinances, that Jesus Himself establishes for His church. One of them is baptism, this he establishes with His command, at the great commission, the other is communion this he establishes by

command at the last supper. Sacrament is not a biblical word but has at its heart the idea of an ordinance that is established by the command of Jesus Himself. It is an physical action, with material elements that portrays the reality of God’s blessing, grace and truth.

Discuss - (In group / or small groups)

- Q1) Why do you think it is important to remember Jesus through the act of communion?
- Q2) Do you think Jesus can use the act of communion to affect His people? If so how?
- Q3) How do you think you can prepare yourself to take communion?

Point 1 – Command and Promise! Throughout Scripture we see how God calls His people to respond to Him in certain ways. Linked with these acts of the heart and obedience are blessings of grace and provision that God promises to give when His people respond to Him in certain ways. The reason why we take communion is because the Lord Jesus Himself commanded that we remember Him this way. As we respond to His command we believe that a fuller measure of Christ’s grace, forgiveness and love can be present. This happens as we respond to God in a fitting way and with a sense of deep faith in His Son and the present power of His Spirit. Many people testify how at communion they have felt their sins forgiven and have been given a deeper sense of acceptance and assurance through this dynamic meal. Matt 26 v 17 – 30.

Point 2 – A remembrance of the once and for all giving of Christ At the heart of communion is the call to remember all that Christ has done for us in His death and resurrection. Jesus at the last supper declared to the disciples as he gave them the elements, “Do this in remembrance of me.” As we take communion we refocus our lives on the fact that Jesus came into the world to be a sin offering for all mankind. What He did upon that cross, He did once and for all. When we take communion we are not crucifying Christ all over again or re-inacting His sacrifice. We are simply participating in a real, personal act of remembrance. When we talk about remembrance we do so in the context that Jesus is no longer dead, but has risen and is seated at the right hand of the Father. So this remembrance is centred on the act of sacrifice, but with the joy of victory through His resurrection, with the eager anticipation that as He has promised He will come again soon. The bread and wine are symbols to help us focus on the fact that Yes His body was broken and Yes His blood was shed for you and for me. He has taken our sin and been punished in our place. He has died our death and satisfied the justice of God so that through faith in Him we might go free. As we take the bread and wine we are declaring that we belong to Jesus and He and all that He has done belongs to us 1 Cor 11 v 23 –26, Hebrews 9 v 11 –14, 24 – 10 v 18

Point 3 - A place of grace and an encounter with Christ. As we have seen taking communion has a remembrance aspect to it. However we need to understand that by faith, it has a much greater reality to it than just a remembrance. Two ideas that have shaped the churches understanding of communion have tried to say that somehow Jesus Himself is present when His people take this special meal. Transubstantiation (the bread and wine actually turn into the body and blood of Jesus as the priest says the words of institution) and Consubstantiation (That somehow the body and blood of Jesus are hidden with the bread and wine.) are ideas that are taught in many churches to declare the mystery that the Lord is present at the giving and receiving of communion. However these ideas are not biblically and corrupt the idea that Jesus is present at communion, but it is not in a physical way but a spiritual one. Because Jesus has commanded us to take communion, we are assured that His Spirit is present when we do so in obedience of His command. As a result of this there is a sense that in communion we can encounter the spiritual presence of Jesus and receive His grace, forgiveness and strength. What happens in communion is a spiritual act, not a physical one, where the Holy Spirit ministers to Christ’s people His grace and blessing. In this way we encounter the risen Christ and are given a foretaste of the heavenly banquet prepared for all those who believe in Him.

Calvin explained it this way. “partaking in the bread and wine is an actual prayer, on behalf of a promise that we will encounter Jesus in the participating of communion.” The bread is only the bread and the wine only wine, but by the Holy Spirit we are united with Christ in this moment of intimacy and are open to His grace and favour.

Point 4 – It is a Covenant Meal In the early church communion was an important expression of all that they had in common in Christ. In the context of a love feast, as they took the bread and wine, it deepened their sense of identity and commitment to Christ and to one another. There is rich imagery in the breaking of the one loaf, into many pieces, for it declares to us that although we are many and different we are in fact one, as one body in Christ. We

belong to one another, we share a common identity and we serve one another the elements because we are all one priesthood and there is only one high priest, which is Christ. Communion is a time to recommit ourselves to Christ and one another. It should be a celebration of all that unites us and in every sense should unite us in deeper love and care for each other.

Point 5 – Personal preparation is important

A number of times in Scripture we are told that before we approach the Lord we need to examine our hearts and relationships and make sure we have both asked for forgiveness for our own sin and forgiven those who are sinned against us. In fact in 1 Corinthians 11 we are told if we take communion in an unworthy manner we eat and drink judgement upon ourselves. 1 Cor 11 v 27 – 34, Matt 5 v 21 – 24.

