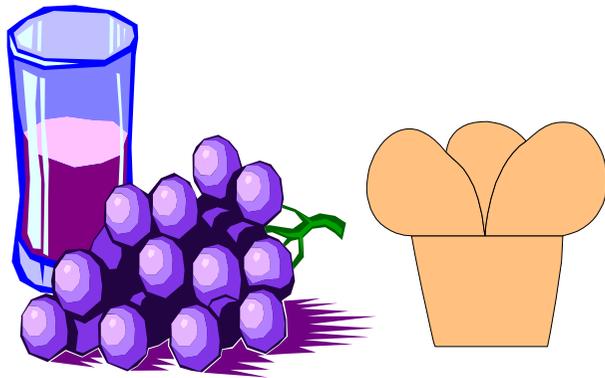


COMMUNION MEDITATIONS

FOR THE

THE LORD'S SUPPER



by Bob Sheffler

with informative article by Wayne Meece

INTRODUCTION:

I feel that the Lord's Supper is the most important part of every worship service. It deserves special attention and special planning. There is one thing that does concern me. I hear the same passage of scripture used over and over for the communion meditation. As you well know, that passage is First Corinthians 11:23-32. Sometimes only one or two of these verses are used but usually the entire passage is used. This passage is indeed central to having the Lord's Supper in the worship service for several reasons.

1. It connects what Christ did in the upper room to the actual application of his request among Christians.
2. It warns against abuse of the memorial.
3. It show the importance of observing the Lord's Super since the information was given to the Apostle Paul by special revelation.
4. It points out the value of observing it as a witness for Christ.
5. It gives us the correct attitude to have as we participate.

The purpose of this little booklet is to point out to worship leaders some of the other passages in the Bible that are directly and indirectly related to the observance of the Lord's Supper. After all, there is only so much that can be said about one passage of scripture before you start repeating yourself. The habit of using the same passage of scripture over and over can turn the Lord's Supper into a ritual instead of a worship experience. In a ritual we go through the actions but our heart and our mind are not involved. It is just something that we do. This problem can be avoided by using other passages of scripture in the Bible that are related to this important part of our worship. These passages bring out many things about the sacrifice of Christ that are significance to the grace God has given to us through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Before you consider these communion meditations from other passages of scriptues, read the following informative article by Brother Wayne Meece. He explains some things that people misunderstand about the Lord's Supper. As a worship leader, you should try to correct any wrong ideas that worshipers may have about the Lord's Supper.

WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER?

by Wayne Meece

Most of what we know about the Lord's Supper comes from two main places in the Bible. One is in 1 Corinthians 11:23-32. The other is found in the Gospels. Matthew, Mark and Luke give us details about what people often call "the last supper." John tells us many things Jesus taught the disciples that night, and adds the story of Jesus washing their feet. In a few other places we learn some things about the Lord's Supper, and we will refer to them as we go along.

ITS MEANING:

First, we need to know what is the meaning of the Lord's Supper. Paul reminds us that Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of me." The Lord's Supper is a remembrance of the death of Jesus for our sins. Jesus shared this simple meal with his disciples "on the night he was betrayed." It was just before his crucifixion and obviously given as a memorial of that event. The Gospels record that Jesus took a piece of bread, broke it, and then blessed it and said, "This is my body." Meaning, my body will be broken, but there will be a blessing. He also took a cup of juice, and said, "This is my blood, the blood of the covenant shed for many." Meaning, my life will be taken for the benefit of many people. Jesus wanted the disciples to remember, and he also wants us to remember. We cannot remember in the same way as one who was present with Jesus, but we can remember what we have learned from the Scripture. Perhaps frequent reminders of what Jesus did is more important to us than for those who were physically present when Jesus was crucified. To forget is a very human thing. The Lord knew that we would forget what he did, if we were not reminded frequently.

Paul also said that the Lord's Supper is a PROCLAMATION. When we observe the Lord's Supper, we are giving a demonstration of what Jesus did for us. We are telling anyone who sees or listens that Jesus died for the sins of the whole world. What are we proclaiming? Paul says that we are proclaiming the Lord's death. We are to continue to do this until Jesus comes again. So, we are also proclaiming the Lord's return.

Who learns the things that are proclaimed? The first are our children, and the young people among us. In the Old Testament book of Joshua, chapter 4 tells the story of the people of Israel crossing the

Jordan River into the land of Canaan. The Lord stopped the flow of the river Jordan, and Joshua and the people of Israel crossed the river on dry ground. The Lord told Joshua to have one man from each tribe to carry a stone from the river, twelve stones, one for each tribe. These stones were used to build an altar for the Lord. Then the Lord said to Joshua, "When your children ask you, 'what do these stones mean?,' you are to tell them how the waters of Jordan were opened for you this day." These stones were always to be a reminder to Israel. In the same way, when your children ask about the meaning of the Lord's Supper, they can be told what Jesus did on Calvary. When they ask you why you take the little piece of bread and the little cup every Sunday, you can teach them about Jesus.

The next group who are to hear the proclamation are the visitors and strangers who might be among us. Although they are not children, they do not know the meaning of what we do. They will often ask questions. It is a great opportunity to teach them about the Lord.

Another group we may not think about are those who pass by. Our actions can be understood. The Lord's Supper is a simple demonstration of an event that literally changed the history of the world, the death of Jesus.

WHEN:

Jesus gave no clear or definite instructions about when or how often we should keep this memorial. Jesus left many things for the Apostles to teach the church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. You remember he said to them that the Holy Spirit would lead them to all truth. Those truths were to be passed on to the church. It is the Apostles who give us the pattern and who led the early church in the keeping of the Lord's Supper. Today, if we do the same things as the early church, we should be doing the will of the Lord.

There are some passages that help us to understand about the keeping of the Lord's Supper. One such passage is Acts 2:42. This is the record of the beginning of the church. Three thousand people had just been converted, baptized, and added to the church. Then this statement is made about the new believers: "they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread (The Lord's Supper) and prayers." One translation says, "They met constantly to..." Another says, "daily." Obviously, the first Christians kept the Lord's Supper very frequently.

Another passage is in Acts 20:7. "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread; Paul spoke to the people..." On this

occasion, Paul is passing through the city of Troas, where he had established a church some time before on one of his missionary journeys. It was the Lord's Day, and he met with them for their regular Lord's day, Sunday, worship. The description of the meeting is important. Luke tells the story, "On the first day of the week, we came together to break bread." When we use the phrase, "the first day of the week," it means the first day of every week. We say, every Sunday. If we say our Bible study meets on Fridays, we mean every Friday. In 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul tells the church they should have a collection on the first day of the week, the same phrase is used here. In that passage, the translators made it, "On the first day of every week, each of you should put aside some money..." No one has a problem accepting the fact that the church should take an offering every Sunday. The instructions for the Lord's Supper are exactly the same.

WHO:

The next question is: Who should take the Lord's Supper? The most obvious answer is, all committed believers. Or, better stated, all baptized believers. If your faith in the Lord has not led you to obey him in being baptized, it would make little sense for you to take communion. There is no record in Scripture of anyone except baptized believers taking the Lord's Supper. The Acts 2:42 passage shows this. It was those who had just been baptized who continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread (the Lord's Supper) and prayer.

HOW:

Paul warns about a proper manner of taking the Lord's Supper. Often I hear those who lead the communion service warning people from 1 Corinthians 11:27-28: "Therefore, 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 recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself." What does this mean? Some think that if a Christian has a problem with sin that week, he should not take communion that day. If that is the reason someone does not take communion, it is a very dangerous thing. In the first place, it means that there is sin in your life and that you have not repented. That sin stands between you and your Lord. If you are not prepared to meet

him at this table, you are not prepared to meet him at all. If he should call you home, if you should die, or he should return while you are in that condition, you would not be ready.

All of us have problems with sin in our life, but the answer to our sin problem is not found in staying away from the Lord's table. The Bible is very clear. 1 John 1:8-9 says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." You must first repent: stop the sin. Then, confess the sin to the Lord and ask him to forgive. The time of meditation before we receive the Lord's Supper is a perfect time to think about our sin, confess it to the Lord and ask his forgiveness.

Many people misunderstand the phrase, "unworthy manner" in verse 27. The King James translation says, "unworthily." The question is not whether we are personally worthy to partake. In fact, none of us would be personally worthy. The problem is the "manner" (way) we partake. From Paul's words, we understand that the unworthy manner, or way, is to fail to recognize and respect the body and blood of Christ which is represented by the emblems. What do you think about when you hold that small piece of bread in your hand? Do you try to remember that his body was broken for you? When you drink the cup, do you try to remember that his blood was poured out for you on the cross? That is the worthy manner Paul is talking about. Try to do those things when you take the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper should be a time of great joy to all Christians. It is the Lord's table. He alone has a right to invite anyone to eat with him. People who lead the service around the Lord's table are not in charge. They have no right to invite or prevent anyone from partaking. That is why every person must examine himself. It is the Lord's table. He is the host, and all of us, even those who serve the emblems, are the invited guests. Remember who invited us, and remember how much it cost him to prepare this feast. Then you will take the Lord's Supper worthily.

HOW TO USE THESE COMMUNION MEDITATIONS:

The meditations are divided into two sections, one with Old Testament passages and one with New Testament passages. Each passage is listed with brief thoughts taken from the text that apply to the Lord's Supper and to the sacrifice that we are to remember.

As you prepare a communion meditation for the worship service based upon one of these passages, do the following:

1. Read the passage carefully and thoughtfully.
2. Read the points in the booklet that are listed under the passage.
3. Pray about each point listed and ask God to show you how it applies to the observance of the Lord's Supper.
4. Ask God to show you other points from this passage that apply to the observance of the Lord's Supper.
5. Ask God to show you what you should say during the communion meditation.
6. Some passages have several points of mediation concerning the Lord's Supper. Be careful that you do not cover too many points in one meditation. It is better to make one point of meditation clear and personal to the worshiper than to list several ideas and not make any of them personal.

OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES:

Genesis 3:15

This is the first prophesy of Christ. These words were spoken to Satan by God.

1. Satan and mankind were enemies after the fall of Adam and Eve.
2. *Offspring*: Those who follow Satan and those who follow God will also be enemies in this world.
3. The offspring of woman - Christ - will crush the head of Satan. Christ was victorious over sin through his sinless life and then through his sacrifice that paid the penalty for everyone's sins. Finally he was victorious over death through his resurrection from the dead.
4. Satan will be cast into hell when Christ comes the second time.
5. Satan did manage to cause Christ some pain such as his death on the cross- "you will strike his heel." We should hate Satan and the work he does because it brings us pain as well.
6. This pain, however, is only temporary. We have the final victory over Satan, sin and death through Jesus Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3

This is the promise given to Abraham when God called him to leave his family and establish a special nation.

1. God promised to bless him.
2. God said that he would be a blessing to others
3. God said that "all peoples on earth will be blessed through you." This blessing came through Jesus Christ. Jesus, a descendant of Abraham, paid the penalty for the sins of the world. Anyone in the world who accepts him as Lord and Saviour can have their sins forgiven and can become right with God.

Psalm 22:1-21

This Psalm of King David seems to reflect the feelings of our Saviour as he was nailed onto the cross. Some of the very words are the same words spoken by Christ as he hung on the cross. Some of the actions described are the same things that happened to Christ as he was being crucified. This Psalm helps us to understand the physical and emotional feelings of our Saviour as he was crucified on the cross.

1. Verses 1-2 express the feeling of being abandoned by the Heavenly Father even though he knew it was the Father's will and his duty. Even though he did it out of love for you and me he still could not stop these feelings from coming. He was still human in nature as well as divine.
2. Verses 3-5 seem to be the answer of the Heavenly Father to this complaint. You, Jesus, are the Holy One promised to save your people. Your people are trusting you to deliver them. They have cried out to you for help and you have not disappointed them because you are giving your own life as a sacrifice for their sins.
3. Verses 6-8: The response of Jesus comes again. Look how they are treating me - like I am a worm instead of a man. They insult and mock me. They even insult you, Father, when they are insulting me. They say let God save him if he is so precious to the Heavenly Father.
4. Verses 9-11 seem to be reminding the Father that this was all the plan of the Father and based on this fact the Father should give him some comfort as he dutifully does what the Father has asked.
5. Verses 12-18 describe the emotional and physical pain he is