

A STUDY OF FELLOWSHIP AND COMMUNION

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This study book begins a series of lessons by Buddy J. Duncan, a church of Christ evangelist.. He is 75 years old and has been preaching the gospel nearly 45 years. At present, he is preaching part time and teaching a class.

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Introduction

I shall begin by giving different definitions of the word “communion”; first I will refer to Webster’s dictionary: **Communion** 1. Fellowship; intercourse between two persons or more; interchange of transactions, or offices; a state of giving and receiving; agreement; concord. We are naturally led to seek communion and fellowship with others. What communion hath light with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6.

2. Mutual intercourse or union in religious worship, or in doctrine and discipline.

Next we will look to Parson’s Bible Dictionary: **COMMUNION: FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD** (Gen. 18:17-33; Ex. 33:9-11; Num. 12:7, 8), between Christ and his people (John 14:23), by the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1), of believers with one another (Eph. 4:1-6). The Lord’s Supper is so called (1 Cor. 10:16, 17), because in it there is fellowship between Christ and his disciples, and of the disciples with one another.

From Easton’s Bible Dictionary: **Communion**

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD (Gen. 18:17-33; Ex. 33:9-11; Num. 12:7, 8), between Christ and his people (John 14:23), by the Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14; Phil. 2:1), of believers with one another (Eph. 4:1-6). The Lord’s Supper is so called (1 Cor. 10:16, 17), because in it there is fellowship between Christ and his disciples, and of the disciples

And this is from Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words

<A-1,Noun,2842,koinonia> "a having in common (koinos), partnership, fellowship" (see COMMUNICATE), denotes (a) the share which one has in anything, a participation, fellowship recognized and enjoyed; thus it is used of the common experiences and interests of Christian men, Acts 2:42; Gal. 2:9; of participation in the knowledge of the Son of God, 1 Cor. 1:9; of sharing the realization of the effects of the Blood (i.e., the Death) of Christ and the Body of Christ, as set forth by the emblems in the Lord’s Supper, 1 Cor. 10:16; of participation in what is derived from the Holy Spirit, 2 Cor. 13:14 (RV, "communion"); Phil. 2:1; of participation in the sufferings of Christ, Phil. 3:10; of sharing in the resurrection life possessed in Christ, and so of fellowship with the Father and the Son, 1 John 1:3,6,7; negatively, of the impossibility of "communion" between light and darkness, 2 Cor. 6:14; (b) fellowship manifested in acts, the practical effects of fellowship with God, wrought by the Holy Spirit in the lives of believers as the outcome of faith, Philem. 1:6, and finding expression in joint ministrations to the needy, Rom. 15:26; 2 Cor. 8:4; 9:13; Heb. 13:16, and in the furtherance of the Gospel by gifts, Phil. 1:5.

<B-1,Adjective,2844,koinonos> "having in common," is rendered "have communion with (the altar)," --the altar standing by metonymy for that which is associated with it -- in 1 Cor. 10:18, RV (for AV, "are partakers of"), and in 1 Cor. 10:20, for AV, "have fellowship with (demons)."

From these definitions we see that the word “communion” has to do with the fellowship that Christians have with God and with one another. And the word “communion” is also used to describe Christians partaking of the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week. We will be considering both of these aspects in our study.

Introduction Questions

1. What does the word “communion” mean?

2. As Christians we participate in two kinds of “communion” what are they?

Notes

Fellowship of Christians

Since the word “fellowship” is so closely related to the word “communion” the bulk of this section of discussion will deal with the word “fellowship”.

We should take the subject of “fellowship” with one another very serious as Jesus prayed for this very thing: (*John 17:20-21*) “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; ²¹That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.” In this prayer of Jesus he is asking that there might be unity of faith; it is my opinion that we cannot have peaceful fellowship unless we have unity of faith. I also believe that Jesus was aware of this fact and that is why he prayed this prayer. We must admit that God and Jesus believed the same thing and we too must believe the same thing even as they believed. According to scripture there is only one faith: (*Ephesians 4:1*) “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,” If we have the “one faith” [that which God and Jesus shared] it is then possible to have the unity that Jesus prayed for resulting in having “fellowship” with God and Jesus as well as fellowship with one another.

According to the apostle John we can have “fellowship” with God: (*1 John 1:3*) “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.” That which John and the other apostles saw and heard when they were with Jesus for the three years that he ministered on earth they as John said he declared to them; the reason for declaring to them what they had seen and heard was so that they could also have fellowship with them [the apostles]. The reason it was important to share what they had seen and heard was so that they those who heard and believed what they were told could be in fellowship with John and the other apostles and in turn they would also be in fellowship “with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”. This is why it is so important for us to preach and teach only what is written; because by doing so we too can have fellowship with God and his Son Jesus Christ and one another. In a sense when we hear the gospel we are hearing, seeing and handling Jesus Christ is a spiritual sense. Furthermore, we can enjoy the same privileges as they of long ago enjoyed. It is through hearing and obeying the gospel that we become partakers of his blessings and of his grace. It is by the grace of God that we are called into fellowship with God and His blessed Son.

There is only one way that we can continue to enjoy this fellowship and that is to “walk in the light”: (*1 John 1:7*) “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” Once we gain fellowship with God and Jesus I am sure that we will want to retain that fellowship and John tells us how and what we must do to maintain that fellowship; he says “**walk in the light**”! Those who are enlightened by the truth are children of the light. By this light they have a true sense of sin, they know Christ and the way of salvation, remembering that you have been called out of darkness into marvelous light: (*1 Peter 2:9*) “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: If you have been enlightened do not turn back to darkness and forfeit your forgiveness of sins: (*Acts 26:18*) “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may re-

ceive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.” By resisting temptations you will continue to walk in the light and have the fellowship with God, His Son and with fellow Christians.

Brethren need to desire to be in fellowship with the saints or other brethren; (*Galatians 2:9*) “*And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*” As Paul is the writer of this epistle it was to him and Barnabas that “the right hands of fellowship” was given. As the Bible speaks of more than one James this James is to be identified as the brother of Jesus Christ, who wrote the epistle that goes by his name and he also made that famous speech at Jerusalem [Acts 15]. Cephas is another name for Peter; Cephas was a name that Jesus gave to Simon Peter: (*John 1:42*) “*And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.*” John was an evangelist who wrote the gospel of John, the epistles bearing his name, as well as the book of Revelation. John was the beloved disciple who lived longer than any of the apostles. It was when these three saw that the Lord had given grace to Paul that they gave Paul their right hands of fellowship. If these three men who were esteemed by others to be pillars and they saw fit to be in fellowship with other gospel preachers should we not follow their example and be in fellowship with one another? I would include all gospel preachers who preach the whole truth and also all Christians who follow the word of truth. How can we expect to succeed if we don’t labor together? These men had the same commission to “go preach the gospel: (*Mark 16:15*) “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*” Therefore, a good reason for not joining hands together to accomplish their mission could not be found. These men were steadfast and unmovable in their work and as long as we are steadfast and unmovable in our labors today we should be in fellowship with one another!

Fellowship of Christians Questions

1. What word is closely related to the word “communion”?

2. Who prayed for unity among believers? [Jn. 17:20, 21].

3. Do you think that we can have peaceful fellowship without unity?

4. How many faiths are there? [Eph. 4:5]

5. Is it possible to have fellowship with God?

6. What can be accomplished by “walking in the light”? [1 Jn. 1:7].

7. We have been called “out darkness” into what? [1 Pet. 2:9].

8. Who extended their “right hands of fellowship to Paul and Barnabas? [Gal. 2:9].

9. What other name is Peter known by? [Jn. 1:42].

That Which Troubles Perfect Fellowship

I think that we will all agree that we do not all enjoy perfect fellowship in the Lord’s church. I want to share some of my experiences. I started my ministry as a member of the independent Christian church; attended their Bible collage in Southwest Missouri. While there they impressed upon us to “speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent”. With this being impressed upon my mind I saw that they were not practicing what they were preaching. So my family and I began to study with a church of Christ group. We had a study every week for six months before my wife and I accepted that they were the true church. At this time I was preaching part time; filling in for other preachers while working on a job full time. We were with this congregation for nearly four years before my job required me to move to a different area. Being young and dumb I thought we could go to any church of Christ and it would be the same as we were used to. Was I ever wrong! We were practically driven from one church as they knew we had come from a church with different doctrinal teaching. We never tried to stress any of our previous doctrine on them; but they insisted that we confess that we had been in error and accept their teachings as the truth. I or my wife was not ready to do this so we left and began attending another congregation; and to our surprise it too was different in some of their doctrine. I will admit after some years in personal study we came to agree with the congregation that nearly drove us out and began to worship with them once again. My wife and I both taught Bible classes there and I filled in for the preacher as well as spoke at their lectureships.

Perhaps you are wondering why I have informed you of my past. The answer is simple; I did so to show that there are divisions in the Lord’s church. Furthermore; I believe that these divisions are an extreme enemy to the communion [or fellowship] of the Lord’s church. There

may be many things upon which brethren in Christ disagree but I think most will agree that we are at a very critical point in the Christian era. Some of you will remember a few years ago when the church of the Lord had a major split over the use of instrumental music in our worship. It is most disturbing that some of the congregations that once insisted that the use of instrumental music was wrong have now brought it into their worship services. There are two major divisions within the churches of Christ; referred to by some as the “Liberal” and the “Anti”. Each blames the other as the cause of division. I have yet to find a congregation that will admit to being liberal; instead they all claim to be conservative. It is doubtful that our divisions have been generated by any one group in the Christian brotherhood. However, some of the more conservative brethren have contributed to the division as they attempt to

make every disagreement a matter of fellowship. This often causes the weaker, uninformed brethren to depart adding to the division. Some division can certainly be accredited to personality differences. One of our more liberal writers wrote this: “from whose company I have sought to sever myself” (Shelly 1993, 5). Without doubt such an attitude draws a line of separation; but Shelly is not the only brother who is of this same attitude.

Some have adopted an anti biblical view of the scriptures. They argue that the Bible is not a verbally inspired document. Believe it or not compromises have been made concerning creation and evolution. It is hard to imagine that a brother would insist that the theory of evolution shows an amazing agreement on all issues? (Clayton 1990, 135). Do we even dare to tolerate such error? The Bible says “In the beginning God created” (Genesis 1:1); it goes on to say that He created male and female in his own image: (*Genesis 1:27*) “*So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*” I believe this! It has always been my contention that if there is one lie in the Bible it is not worth the paper that it is written on. Brethren we should be in perfect fellowship where the Bible plainly speaks.

Questions Concerning That Which Troubles Perfect Fellowship

1. Does perfect fellowship always exist in every congregation?

2. Are there divisions in congregations of the Lord’s Church? [A yes or no answer is all that is required].

3. Is division harmful to the church? What often occurs when there is division?

4. How did the world and everything in the world come into existence? [Gen. 1:1].

Fellowship In Public Worship

In a psalm written by David he asks people to join him in magnifying the Lord and to exalt his name: (*Psalms 34:3*) “*O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.*” David invites those whom he knew would rejoice at the blessings and goodness of God to him to join him in declaring the greatness of God. God does not need or depend on any man to make Him great as God is and has always been great; the only thing that man can do is to declare how great God is! You and I have many blessings from God and we should as a body of Christians declare to one another and to the whole world how great God is. David wrote “let us exalt his name TOGETHER”. I cannot help but to wonder if we as the Lord’s church exalt the name of the Lord enough. I feel as though we could spend a little more time in our worship services and our prayers exalting the name of the Lord.

David also wrote that they entered the house of God together; this indicates that they were in fellowship when going to worship God: (*Psalms 55:14*) “*We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.*” They consulted together with open minds and made plans to go together to the house of God. It is a wonderful thing that they were united together in worshipping God. Although very few people walk to the services today we can and should make plans to attend all of the worship services and Bible studies; if everyone made plans to be present the buildings would be full and perhaps overflowing. Too many do not heed the words of *Hebrews 10:25* “*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*”

While waiting for the promise of the Father Jesus’ disciples were assembled together in fellowship as they waited: (*Acts 1:4*) “*And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.* In verse fourteen we are told of what this fellowship consisted of: (*Acts 1:14*) “*These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.*” The words “one accord tells us that they were of the same mind, doing the same thing and even having the same thoughts on their minds. Is this not what fellowship is all about? The words “prayer” and “supplication” are nearly synonymous and are often used interchangeably. The meaning is that they were all making petitions to God for His blessings and the sending of the promise that Jesus had told them that was to come. So this is an example of fellowship before the establishment of the church.

Fellowship in Public Worship Questions

1. What did David invite the people to do? [Psa. 34:3].

2. What is meant to exalt His name?

3. How would you exalt the name of God?

4. How did David encourage them to go to worship? [Psa. 55:14].

5. What is the common practice of some people? [Heb. 10:25].

6. Name one occasion when the when the disciples when they waited together. [Acts 1:4].

7. What were they doing while having this fellowship?

8. Had the church been established at this time?

9. When men pray in our public worship service are they praying in fellowship of all who are present?

Aspects of Christian Fellowship

There are many areas in which Christians can and should have fellowship; one such area is prayer: (2 Corinthians 1:11) *“Ye also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gift bestowed upon us by the means of many persons thanks may be given by many on our behalf.”* We do not have to be in the presence of others to have fellowship with them; we can have fellowship with others through prayer. Notice that Paul states that they were helping by praying for him and his co-workers. This is a worthy example for churches to follow today; prayer for other ministers should not be neglected and especially when they are under affliction and persecution. Remember when Peter was in prison that the church prayed for him without ceasing: (Acts 12:5) *“Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him.”* Fervent prayer can avail much: (James 5:16) *“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.”* Besides praying for ministers we have fellowship with all saints when we pray for them: (Ephesians 6:18) *“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints;”* Do you include saints of all nations, age and sex in your prayers? Let

us remember that God loves those of different skin colors just much as He loves you; I say this without respect of whatever skin color you may have.

Perhaps you are unaware that when those who fear the Lord simply converse with one another they are having fellowship: (*Malachi 3:16*) “*Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.*” From the context of this verse it is indicated that they were speaking of spiritual matters. It could be said that they were fellowshiping when simply talking about the weather; but to keep matters in context we will only be referring to spiritual conversations. Those who spoke often to one another are said to have feared the Lord [I.e. they had a holy fear of God or a reverential affection for Him]. This being the case I must assume that they were speaking about spiritual matters. These people were true and sincere worshippers of God. They were well aware of God’s love and grace and they could not stop talking to one another about the blessings they had received. Remember Malachi was written in a time prior to the coming of Christ and they were looking forward to his coming and the redemption that he would bring. I suggest that they often spoke of God’s glory and grace and this gave them comfort, strength and edification. Can we not see the benefit that their fellowship served them and it will do the same for you and me? My greatest fear is that we do not speak to one another about spiritual matters enough outside of the worship services. If this is the only spiritual conversation you have can you not see the importance and the need to attend every worship service? A very interesting point is that the Lord hearkened and heard” what they were saying. I do not mean to say that God does not hear everything that we say; I am only referring to the fact that God takes special notice of His people’s words and actions. Brethren, we have a lot more to talk about than to complain about the weather; which is what we usually do. How many times have you heard “its too hot” its “too cold” its “too wet” its “too dry”? Why not spend more time talking about how great and glorious God is or about Christ’s second coming?

Another fellowship that can be very beneficial is to “comfort one another”: (*1 Thessalonians 4:18*) “*Wherefore comfort one another with these words.*” I suspect that there are many in the brotherhood who would appreciate being comforted. I know that during my lifetime there have been times that I felt down and would have certainly appreciated someone speaking comforting words to me. The context that Paul is referring to is when we recall those who have passed on and we are feeling sorrowful Paul says to comfort them with what he has just written: (*1 Thessalonians 4:13-17*) “*But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. ¹⁴For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. ¹⁵For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep. ¹⁶For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: ¹⁷Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.*” These words can be very comforting at the time after the passing of a loved one. We are aware of the need of comfort at this time but these words can also be comforting to those who are spiritually ill. Can you think of a better way to fellowship than to spend some time comforting one another? Paul exhorts us to “comfort yourselves together”: (*1 Thessaloni-*

ans 5:11) *“Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do.”* There are many ways that we can comfort one another but to suggest a few we can comfort each other by reminding one another of Christ’s second coming or of eternal life with him. We can comfort one another by reminding each other that we are children of the light; having been called out of darkness into marvellous light: (*1 Peter 2:9*) *“But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show* The several members of the church of Christ; particular believers are indeed many, considered in themselves, in their own persons; yet by virtue of their union to Christ, which is manifested by their communion with him, they are one bread with him, the bread of life, and one body with him, signified by the bread; they are of one and the same mass and lump, they are incorporated together, they are flesh of his flesh, and one spirit with him: or they are one bread and body among themselves; as bread consists of many grains of corn [or wheat] which have been ground and kneaded together, and make up one loaf; and as the members of an human body are many, and make up one body; so believers, though they are many, yet are one body, of which Christ is the head; one in union with him and one another, and one in their communion together at the Lord's table; and so the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read, "as therefore the bread is one, so we all are one body"; having communion with Christ and one another; remember he *“called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:”* Isn’t that a cheerful thought? Wouldn’t being reminded of this cheer you up if you are feeling down? These are only a few of the many benefits of having fellowship with each other.

What Are The Aspects of Christian Fellowship

1. How did some have fellowship with Paul when he was not in their presence? [2 Cor. 1:11].

2. What did the brothers and sisters do when Peter was in prison? [Acts 12:5].

3. Do you think this helped Peter’s situation?

4. When we pray for one another is anything availed? [James 5:16].

5. When we make supplication for the saints should we include all saints?

6. What conclusion can be drawn from the context of Malachi 3:16?

7. What did the people that Malachi write about have in common? [Malachi 3:16].

8. Should we speak about spiritual matters outside of our worship services? Would this not be building one another up?

9. What is another fellowship that can give us comfort? [1 Thess. 4:18].

10. What does Paul suggest that we use to comfort one another? [1 Thess. 4:18].

Communion of The Lord's Supper

We of the Lord's church partake of communion; also called the Lord's Supper each and every week. We know that some do not do this but we feel it is only correct to follow the example of the early church: (*Acts 20:7*) "*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.*" Here we find that the early church "came together to break bread" [I.e. they had communion]. So we come together on "the first day of the week" as they did so many years ago to worship and just as the early church broke bread in their worship service so we. If you would take a minute to look at your calendar you will find that there are fifty two weeks in a year and you will also find that each of the fifty two weeks has a first day of the week; therefore if we truly follow the example of the early church you will partake of the Lord's Supper each and every "first day the week, not quarterly or yearly. The example that we follow from Acts 20:7 is a good example to imitate because you not only find that it is an example of the early church but there was also an apostle present.

By simply reading the book of Acts I think you will agree that there were many members of the church of Christ; now we turn to *1 Corinthians 10:17* "*For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.*" Even though they were many in number they considered themselves to be one through Christ because they were all of the same body. This was manifested by their communion with him. When you stop to think about how bread is made you come to realize that a loaf of bread is made up of many grains of wheat just as the Lord's church is made up of many members yet they were of one body just as the many grains make up a loaf. It is when we partake of the Lord's Supper that we have union with our head of the church. This is how the Syriac, Arabic, and Ethiopic versions read, "as therefore the bread is one, so we all are one body"; Thusly we are having communion with Christ and one another. Why would anyone want to miss the opportunity to have communion with the Lord and with the brethren? Partaking of the Lord's Supper weekly is indeed a pleasure and a blessing.

The Lord's Supper was instituted by Jesus: (*Matthew 26:26-29*) "*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.* ²⁷*And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;* ²⁸*For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.* ²⁹*But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.*" This occasion is often referred to as the "Last Supper" as it was the last time that our Lord partook of the Passover Feast. Some question as to whether this was the Passover Feast offering this information; "Though this supper is distinct from the "passover", and different from any ordinary meal, yet there are allusions to both in it, and to the customs of the Jews used in either; as in this first circumstance, of "taking" the bread: for he that asked a blessing upon bread, used to take it into his hands; and it is a rule (l), that "a man does not bless, "until he takes the bread into his hand", that all may see that he blesses over it". They conclude that "Jesus took the bread in his hand and held it up for the brethren to see." Since it was common practice for the Jews to ask a blessing for the bread this is exactly what Jesus did as the scriptures inform us.

After Jesus asked for the bread to be blessed he then broke the bread; Gill says there were certain rules that were followed. "'The master of the house recites and finishes the blessing, and after that he breaks:--no man that breaks, is allowed to break, till they have brought the salt, and what is to be eaten with the bread, before everyone--and he does not break neither a small piece, lest he should seem to be sparing; nor a large piece, bigger than an egg, lest he should be thought to be famished;--and on the sabbath day he breaks a large piece, and he does not break, but in the place where it is well baked: it is a principal command to break a whole loaf." Christ broke the bread, as the symbol of his body, which was to be broken by blows, and scourges, thorns, nails, and spear; and die as a sacrifice for the sins of his people.

After taking the bread, blessing it, breaking it and giving to those who sat at the table with him Jesus then took the cup which contained the wine or the fruit of the vine and he gave thanks; this was also a common practice for the Jews to give thanks for the wine that they had with their meal. To the Jews the wine fitly represented the blood sprinkled on the door posts of the Israelites, when the Lord passed over their houses; so to the Christian the fruit of the vine represents Jesus' shed blood for the remission of the sins of his people. There may be some confusion to Jesus' last statement of verse twenty seven where Jesus stated "Drink ye all of it". Some may believe that Jesus meant for them to drink all of the contents of the cup; however, I believe he is simply telling everyone to partake of the fruit of the vine. Others hold that Jesus was inferring that everyone was to drink of the one cup. I can only speak for myself but when I eat a meal I want more than a sup from one cup to wash my food down In verse twenty eight Jesus tells them what the wine is emblematic of; he says it is emblematic of his blood that was shed "for many for the remission of sins". Christians today take of the fruit of the vine remembering the blood that Jesus shed for our sins. Although Jesus' blood had not been shed at the time he set forth this remembrance it was only a short time before he did actually shed his precious blood.

I find the words of the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians to be very interesting: (*1 Corinthians 11:23*) "*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread:*" What I find so interesting about this is that Paul was not present when the Lord instituted the Lord's Supper; neither had he received this information from any of the other apostles because Paul clearly states that he had received this information from the Lord. The information that Paul had received from the

Lord he in turn delivered unto to those at Corinth. My friends this also is really all of the authority that we as Christians need today to partake of the Lord's Supper. Paul wrote this to the Corinthians because of the disorder that existed when they were partaking of the Lord's Supper and his advice to them should also be used in today's observance of the Lord's Supper.

Why do Christians partake of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine? To answer this I refer to Paul's epistle to Corinthians where he was telling them what the Lord had instructed him: (*1 Corinthians 11:24-25*) "*And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.*"²⁵ *After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.*" Jesus, himself tells us to partake of these emblems "in remembrance of him". So as we partake of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine we do so remembering his suffering and his shed blood when he was crucified for our sins.

How long are the Lord's people to partake of these emblems? This ordinance that the Lord instituted is to be continued until Jesus returns to this earth: (*1 Corinthians 11:26*) "*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come.*" The design of the Lord's Supper is to declare that Christ died for the sins of his people and to represent him as crucified by having his body wounded and bruised and broken and his blood shed. Further as we partake of these emblems we show our gratitude and thankfulness to him. The words "till he comes" shows the continuance until the end of the world as we know it; because when Jesus comes again the world that we presently know will be destroyed by fire. When Jesus returns contrary to what some are teaching there will not be one thousand years following his return as the Bible in the New Testament clearly teaches that when Jesus returns the world will be destroyed by fire: (*2 Peter 3:7*) "*But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.*" (*2 Peter 3:10*) "*But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*" To say there will be another thousand years that this earth shall exist after the second coming of Jesus is to deny the words of Peter and to say that he was not inspired by the Holy Spirit when he wrote these words.

The early church "continued stedfastly" in communion: (*Acts 2:42*) "*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*" While some may argue that this is referring to the common meal I offer Gill's interpretation of this verse: "and in breaking of bread; or "of the eucharist": as the Syriac version renders it, which was an usual name with the ancients for the Lord's supper; and which seems to be intended here, and not eating common bread, or a common meal; seeing it is here mentioned with religious exercises: and though the Jews used to begin their meals with breaking of bread, yet the whole repast, or meal, is never by them called by that name; and for what reason these saints should be commended for keeping their common meals". Others say it cannot be determined if this is the common meal or the Lord's Supper, I tend to agree with the Syriac version that this is the Lord's Supper. If this is referring to the Lord's Supper the first part of this verse where it is stated that "they continued stedfastly" cannot not be understood to mean that they partook of the Lord's Supper every day as there was one day as it is stated that they came together on a certain day to partake of the Lord's Supper: (*Acts 20:7*) "*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to*

depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.” The “first day of the week” is another way of referring to “the Lord’s day”: (Revelation 1:10 (KJV) ¹⁰I was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet,” Justin Martyr called “the first day of the week Sunday and he further said on this day all, both in city and country met in one place for religious worship and it was on this day as it appears from this verse and from other places that the apostles and the early church did meet for religious worship. As Luke wrote in Acts 20:7 “they came together for the express purpose of breaking bread” or to partake of the Lord’s Supper and so should we do likewise today”

Questions Concerning The Lord’s Supper

1. When do Christians partake of the Lord’s Supper?
[Acts 20:7].

2. Would that be Saturday or Sunday?

3. Should we partake of the Lord’s Supper monthly, quarterly, yearly or weekly? Prove your answer.

4. The early church had many members but what did they believe about themselves? [1 Corinthians 10:17].

5. When we partake of the Lord’s Supper we have fellowship with one another, who else is included in this fellowship?

6. What did Jesus and all Jews do before they partook of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine? [Matt. 26:26].

7. When Christ broke the bread what did it symbolize? [1 Cor. 11:24].

8. What did the fruit of the vine represent to the Jews?
[1Cor. 11:25].

9. What does the fruit of the vine represent to Christians?

10. What should we remember when we partake of the Lord's Supper? [What proof do you offer?]

11. How long are the Lord's people to partake of these emblems? [1 Corinthians 11:26].

12. What will happen to the world as we know it when Jesus comes again? [2 Peter 3:7].

Self Examination Commanded

This is not an option that we can either do or neglect as we are expressly commanded to "examine our self: (*1 Corinthians 11:28*) "*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.*" Before you partake of these emblems ask yourself, "Do I have a true sense of sin, am I truly sorry and have I really repented of my sins?" If this is not in your heart at the time of partaking of the Lord's Supper you will not see a need of a Savior nor will you look to Christ for salvation and neither will you be thankful to him for your redemption. I firmly believe all of the mentioned thoughts should go through our minds before partaking of the Lord's Supper. When we partake of the Lord's Supper in the proper frame of mind we do show our love to Christ.

There is danger in not conducting a self examination: (*1 Corinthians 11:29*) "*For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.*" From this verse don't you get the idea that to eat and drink of the Lord's Supper without examining yourself that you are partaking in an "unworthy" manner? If you don't you should because Paul wrote that you are eating and drinking "damnation" to yourself! I feel certain that Paul's statement of "eateth and drinketh damnation" needs no explanation but I would like to say this; "Mankind commits many sinful acts that bring damnation upon himself but it would certainly be a shame if while worshipping we were to bring damnation upon our self".

Paul was aware that many were partaking of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner as he so states in the next verse: (*1 Corinthians 11:30*) "*For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.*" While most commentators say this verse is making reference to bodily ailments that God had sent upon those who partook of the Lord's Supper in an

unworthy manner may I suggest that they were spiritually ill? These same commentators also say that the sleep referred to here is a physical death I would suggest that it may also refer to being spiritually dead. Regardless of what Paul actually meant it is certain that the honest Christian will examine himself [or herself] before partaking of the Lord's Supper to avoid being found unworthy.

When we partake of the Lord's Supper we should be wholly separated unto God; (*1 Corinthians 10:21*) "*Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.*" When Paul wrote "you cannot drink the cup of the Lord" he did not mean that they did not have the physical ability to drink of the cup; what he did mean is that it was not proper or decent to drink of the cup; this an instance where the word "cannot" is used to denote that it was an immoral act to do so. At Corinth there were those who consistently drank of the cup of the Lord at the communion table and the cup where a prayer is offered to a false god which is nothing more than a mockery to Jehovah God. God will accept nothing less than complete devotion to Him. Paul means that Christians could not join in the worship that was offered to false gods and partake of the Lord's Supper also in a worthy manner.

Questions Concerning Self-examination

1. Before partaking of the Lord's Supper what should we do? [1 Cor. 11:28].

2. What danger do we face if we don't examine ourselves before taking communion? [1 Corinthians 11:29].

Notes

Conclusion

Regardless of whether you are considering the fellowship that is enjoyed by the brotherhood or if you are considering the communion of the Lord's Supper there is one word that should describe your fellowship and that word is LOVE! We ought to love to be together with our brethren even if it is sharing a common meal or simply setting around visiting. If you don't love to spend some time with your brethren you won't love heaven either. It has always been my contention that we should spend more time together; being together for three or four hours each week will not give you much of a foretaste of what heaven will be like.

When we break the unleavened bread and partake of the fruit of the vine together it too should be done with love in your heart. We love God for the wonderful gift He has given us; that is, eternal life through the shed blood of His only begotten Son. Everyone who carefully considers what Jesus Christ has done for them cannot help but to love our Lord and Savior for the sacrifice he made in our behalf. Jesus paid the price that you and I should have paid. He died the death that we are worthy of dying. But we know that even if we were to shed our own blood that our sins still would not be forgiven; neither can we offer a sacrifice that would be acceptable to Jehovah God: (*Hebrews 10:4*) "*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.*" If you are not grateful to Christ for the sacrifice he made and if you don't love him for this you have no business partaking of the Lord's Supper. When we partake of the emblems it is a time to remember and to love our Lord and Master.

God has called us through His inspired word so that we might have fellowship with Jesus Christ: (*1 Corinthians 1:9*) "*God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.*" I know of no other time that we are in closer fellowship with Jesus than when we partake of the Lord's Supper. Although the entire congregation partakes of the emblems we do so as individuals. I have noticed some husbands and wives partaking of the emblems in unison [there is nothing wrong with this] but I feel it is an individual act of worship; therefore, if I am seated beside my wife I usually hold the containers for her to partake of the emblems. Please notice that this call of God is not merely a call to the fellowship of his saints or for that matter the churches but the fellowship that we have been called unto is the fellowship "of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord". The joint fellowship that we enjoy is that everyone who has heard, believed and obeyed the gospel enjoys the same fellowship with Jesus that each and everyone have received from God.

Brethren must also work together in the ministry; if you will recall the apostles worked together. As the apostle Paul was well aware there were those who questioned his apostleship. But according to Paul's own testimony James, Cephas [Peter] and John extended to Paul their right hands of fellowship: (*Galatians 2:9*) "*And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.*" Even though they were laboring for the same reason they went to different areas and different people but they still had fellowship and worked together. Bible teachers and preachers should be of the same mind and work together in fellowship for the cause of Christ. As the above verse states James, Cephas and John seemed to be pillars among the apostles but I dare to say that the other apostles still worked together with them. There is no room in the ministry for jealousy; Christ and his cause must be first in all of our efforts.

Yes communion is a very important part of our worship services; but I also believe that our fellowship is also very important. Let me remind you that the very people you worship with may just be your neighbors in heaven.

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