

Communion: Three Absolutes 4-21-13

The record of the New Testament provides us with an image of the church that Jesus built. In places such as Acts 2:42 and Acts 20:7 we see this church assembling to the purpose of what we call worship. Both accounts specifically mention the “breaking of bread”. We see this as an expression for what we call communion, or the Lord's Supper.

What is the breaking of bread? In 1 Corinthians 11:23-34 the apostle Paul speaks to the church of Christ in Corinth. There he admonishes them for failing to properly understand and observe this special moment. It can be called an institution (as it was created with specific intent and purpose); it is also a measure of maturity; finally, we see in this passage that it is in fact a dangerous action.

Looking at these passages, we are able to put together an image of communion that contains three absolute portions: With whom we partake of communion, the emblems we use to commemorate, and the day on which we partake. These three absolutes themselves each point to a specific day that we are meant to bear in mind.

Jesus gave us specific emblems in places such as Mark 14:22-26. There is important symbolism in these emblems that we will investigate in later sermons. For now we need to see that both the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine point to the physical death of Jesus of Nazareth (1 Peter 2:24, Colossians 1:20). The emblems point to that Friday on which Jesus died.

Acts 20:7, 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, and Revelation 1:7 all tell us that early Christians met on the first day of the week to break bread. This creates for us the second absolute, the day on which we partake. This second absolute also corresponds to a day, the day of His resurrection from the dead. All of the Gospel accounts tell us it was on Sunday Jesus left His tomb (Luke 24:1, John 20:1).

Finally, 1 Corinthians 11 speaks to the importance of those with whom we partake of communion. 1 Corinthians 11:33 says that we must wait for one another to partake. That communion is necessarily taken as a congregational family cannot be missed in this passage, making those whom we partake with an absolute of communion. He also says in verse 27 that we proclaim the death of Christ until He comes; this points us to our third day, the day of His return. (1 Corinthians 15:23)

These three things are necessary to make us mindful of communion's intent and purpose. These three absolutes are NOT traditions, but part of the Law of the Lord's Table. Keeping this law honors the one who died for our sins.