

Getting the Most From Communion 01-19-20 AM

Last week we discussed that we should work to get the most from our time together. The assembly is that time of worship that revolves around communion, the Lord's Supper. Saying that our assembly revolves around communion neither declares it the most important nor the exclusive act of worship. But we understand other acts we take up (prayer, doctrine and singing) are not specific either to our assembly nor do they require us to be together. The exception to this might be the collection, authorized only at our assembly.

What is communion? Communion means "common union", that things which binds a group of people together. When we have communion, it is communion because of the people we take it with. In the New Testament it is usually referred to as "breaking bread" or as "the Lord's Supper".

It is described as a memorial feast. The Israelites had another memorial feast they partook of in the Passover. It was at a specific time (15th of Nisan, the first month), a specific place (Deut. 12:5, 1 Kings 8:29), and a specific meal (Exodus 12). It was a memorial of the night that the firstborn of Egypt died, thereby freeing Israel.

*Exodus 12:14 'So this day shall be to you a **memorial**; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance.*

This word is much like that used by Jesus in Luke 22:19

Luke 22:19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

Getting the most of the Lord's Supper requires us first to understand it and second to consider ways we can make an application of it.

Understanding Communion

Communion is not a supernatural meal meant to transform our lives spiritually by being consumed. Instead, its value (just like baptism) is in our understanding. Let us be clear not to believe that we must be thinking of a particular thing as though that is the "magic" means of properly performing communion; instead we need to understand why we are doing what we are doing.

1 Corinthians 11:9 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

First, let us cover the basics of the composition of communion. Communion, like Passover, is actually three elements: the Day we partake of it, the Place we partake of it, and the Emblems we use. The Day is the first day of our week (Acts 20:7). This reflects the day that Jesus rose from the grave. The Place is the New Jerusalem, which is the church. This reflects those whom we believe Jesus died to set free, and those who Jesus will return for (thus reflecting on the day of His return as stated in 1 Corinthians 11:26). Finally, the emblems are the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, taken in an order that reflects first His death in the flesh (and the death of our sins), and then the purchase of His blood (our covenant with God). This reflects on the day of His death.

Let us now consider the meaning of Paul's admonition that we must discern the Lord's body. In the context of 1 Corinthians 11, the Lord's body is the church:

1 Corinthians 10:17 *For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.*

1 Corinthians 11:18 *For first of all, when you come together as a church*

1 Corinthians 12:12 *For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.*

The great matter of condemnation was that there were divisions among the brethren when they gathered, and they were not waiting for each other. The problem was NOT that they were not thinking of Jesus' body on the cross; it was that they were not thinking of each other.

Application

If communion is meant to be a memorial of the work of Christ (in His life, His death, and His resurrection), and it is meant to reflect on our unity in this, then fundamentally we grow our engagement by (1) understanding what communion is about and (2) dwelling on one another.

Paul gave us a key to making the Lord's Supper more profitable: examining ourselves.

1 Corinthians 11:28 *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.*

What would the context of such a self-examination be? Since the relationship with others seems to be the main theme, that would certainly be the most obvious part of such an examination. Examining my heart towards my brethren would be a proper exercising of this command. Consider also that this is the same word used by Paul to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 13:5 (*examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith*). So perhaps too this is a moment to consider where you stand before God. This is not about worthiness (as none are worthy), this is about desire – how much does this mean to me? How much do I understand about this?

Conclusion

The power is not in the supernatural, but in our understanding of what we are purposed to be doing, on those whom we gather with, and on our relationship with God.