The Lord’s Supper

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The *Last Supper,* usually referred to as the *Lord’s Supper*, is one of two sacraments (a visible sign of an inward grace) enjoined by Jesus Christ while here on earth, the other being *Baptism*. It is also referred to as *Holy Communion* or t*he Eucharist*. Roman Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches promote five other activities they term as “sacraments” (confirmation, matrimony, penance, holy orders, and extreme unction), which this commentator finds no basis for in God’s Word.

The basis for the *Last Supper* was established during the last meal in the “upper room” and attended by Jesus Christ and His disciples prior to going to His death on the cross of Calvary, as seen in [Matthew 26:26-29](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+26.26-29&t=NKJV); [Mark 14:22-25](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Mark+14.22-25&t=NKJV) and [Luke 22:14-20](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+22.14-20&t=NKJV). This was the Passover feast at which pious Jews looked forward to a second “deliverance” like that from Egypt ([Isaiah 51:9-16](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+51.9-16&t=NKJV)). It was within this setting around this “expectation” that Jesus instituted a communion supper, which emphasized the messianic and eschatological aspects of the Passover meal and which, in the Church Age, replaced the Passover Feast.

*Now it is the Messiah who has come in person to this paschal feast, taking the cup of judgment and salvation which means deliverance for God’s people. Yet the meal also anticipates the final messianic banquet (*[*Isaiah 25:6*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Isaiah+25.6&t=NKJV)*; cf.* [*Luke 14:15-24*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Luke+14.15-24&t=NKJV)*) when the divine work of salvation is consummated and there is a fulfillment of fellowship with the Lord (*[*Matthew 26:29*](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Matthew+26.29&t=NKJV)*)*. (Wycliffe Bible Dictionary, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2000, Glenn W. Barker, Th.D., Dean & Professor of Christian Origins, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, California)

It was during this particular Passover Meal between Jesus and His disciples, a meal which portrayed the deliverance of the children of Israel from the yoke of Egypt, that Christ substituted the reality of Himself as the true (Passover) Lamb of God who would through His suffering (signified by the “broken bread” as His broken body) and death (signified by the cup of the “fruit of the vine” as His spilled blood) take away the sins of the world. But it was only after the death of Christ and His resurrection that the necessity to continue such a meal of this nature, with this new meaning, was understood by Christ’s followers.

The necessity for continuing the *Lord’s Supper*, along with the reasons for its observance is found in [1 Corinthians 10:16-17](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10.16-17&t=NKJV); [11:23-26](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+11.23-26&t=NKJV), as follows:

*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread. . . . For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes*.

From this passage the Christian understands that he is to observe the Lord’s Supper for the following reasons:

1) To *remember the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.*

The eating of the bread, which represents the broken body (suffering) of Christ, and the drinking of the “fruit of the vine,” which represents the spilled blood (death—both spiritual and physical) of Christ, is to vividly and personally call to memory the physical and spiritually substitutional payment of sin’s penalty-price, which Jesus Christ discharged on the cross of Calvary. The bread and “fruit of the vine” are symbolic of spiritual truths; they *do not*, as some would believe, become the actual flesh and blood of Jesus Christ. In observing this sacrament there is no “fresh atonement made for the temporal guilt of post-baptismal sin or for offenses against the church, as Romanism claims.

2) To *proclaim* the *gospel* message.

Each time a person takes the *Lord’s Supper*, he “proclaims the Lord’s death.” And Paul uses the phrase, “cup of blessing which we bless.” The Greek word for “blessing” is *eulogia*, a form of *eulogeo* (bless), which comes from *eu* (good) and *lego* (to speak), and literally means to “speak well of.” Therefore, the “cup of blessing” is also the “cup of expression of good.” Here the meaning is not referring to just a proclamation of the fact of Christ’s death, which of course is included, but it is a declaration of the *meaning* and *significance* of His death. It was on the cross that Christ bore, the Scripture says *became*, the sins of the world in order that man may become the “righteousness of God in Christ” ([2 Corinthians 5:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=2Corinthians+5.21&t=NKJV)).

On the cross Jesus Christ fully paid through “spiritual death” (separation from God the Father) during a 3-hour period of darkness the penalty-price required by a holy God for all man’s sins. The only action man then may take in order to apprehend God’s gift of salvation is to appropriate it *solely by faith*. When an individual who understands his need of salvation turns *solely to Christ* in complete and genuine dependence (trust, faith) for his personal salvation (a decision of the will), he is instantly saved. The *act of faith* is represented by the consumption (receiving) of the bread and the “fruit of the vine” during the supper.

3) To *affirm* the *spiritual union* all Christians have in Christ and with each other.

The passage in [1 Corinthians 10](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+10&t=NKJV); [11](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+11&t=NKJV) (above) that Paul penned to the Corinthian body of believers was a result of division caused by *heresies* (incorrect doctrine) and the introduction of *worldly pleasures* in that local church. This led to their observing the *Lord’s Supper* incorrectly and with improper attitude—all of which was highly displeasing to God. Therefore, in addition to correcting the *theology* pertaining to the sacrament, Paul stressed that participation in it was to *affirm* the *spiritual union* they had with Christ and with each other, “*For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread*.” In fact Paul uses the Greek word Koinonia, meaning “fellowship with and participation in” (regarding the blood and body of Christ), twice within this passage. In addition to demonstrating the faith-acceptance of Christ and His sacrifice, the *union* with Christ and each other is seen in the physical consumption of the bread and the “fruit of the vine” during the supper.

4) To *reinforce* the *belief that Christ will return*.

Paul specifically states that the *Lord’s Supper* was to proclaim the death of Christ “until He comes,” a reminder to the Christians that Christ would return to them at the Rapture ([1 Corinthians 15:51-55](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Corinthians+15.51-55&t=NKJV); [1 Thessalonians 4:13-18](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=1Thessalonians+4.13-18&t=NKJV)); and, possibly, a reminder to the “lost” that Christ would once again return to this world to rule and to execute His judgment ([Revelation 19:11-20:15](https://www.blueletterbible.org/search/preSearch.cfm?Criteria=Revelation+19.11-20.15&t=NKJV))—both doctrines clear and emphatic in Scripture.

How often does Scripture require the local church to perform the sacrament of the *Lord’s Supper*? There is no specific time frame mentioned, either by Christ or any of the Apostles. It only says “for as often as” you do it, it should be done for the correct reasons and in the proper frame of mind (attitude). It may be assumed that the frequency of it may be determined by the local body of believers (church). There are Christians who prefer to execute it daily, some who observe it weekly or monthly, and there are those who do it quarterly or less frequently. It is not how often one participates in it; it is *how* one participates in it that is important.