

**I CORINTHIANS**  
**Chapter 11:23-34**

**VERSE 23:**

Paul says, **"I have received of the Lord..."** about the detailed account of Christ's first giving of the Lord's Supper the night before the crucifixion. Note the miraculous form of inspiration. Paul was not present when Christ gave the Supper, the accounts of the Gospels were not yet written, and none of those present had told Paul what had happened. Rather, the Holy Spirit revealed the exact details.

He wanted them to understand the instructions he was about to give them concerning the Lord's Supper were not his suggestions, but the Lord's command. He was saying, "This is what the Lord said about the Lord's Supper."

Compare this account of the Lord's Supper with - **Matthew 26:26- 29; Mark 14:22- 25; Luke 22:19-20.**

**VERSE 23b-25:**

The ordinance was instituted and first observed on the night before Christ's crucifixion. Jesus gave an example of what to do. We are to take and eat bread as well as take and drink of the cup. He also told us why we should do it. It is a time of rejoicing. He gave **"thanks"** - **v: 24**, this is a time when we come with a spirit of thanksgiving that Jesus paid the price for our sins and saved us by His grace. It is also a time of meditation. Jesus said, **"this do in remembrance of me"** - **vs: 24-25**. It is a time not only to be thankful, but also a time of reflection. It's also a time to stop, be silent, and to meditate on what Jesus has done for us.

**"...took bread"** - Since Jesus used bread from the Passover it had to be unleavened bread. Note the numerous times God commanded the children of Israel to observe the Passover with unleavened bread, and strictly prohibited the use of any leaven - **Exodus 12:8, 15-20, Deuteronomy 16:1-8**. Leaven is ALWAYS used throughout the Bible as a symbol of evil and corruption.

Christ took four steps in the observance of the supper: (1) He took bread (large piece of unleavened bread), (2) He gave thanks, (3) He broke it, (4) He spoke.

He gave three simple commands: "Take...eat...and do." In the observance of the Lord's Supper we're to remember Him. He, who was God, had taken upon Himself human flesh and was about to die. He suffered and died not because of any personal sin He had done, but because God the Father had - **"made Him to be sin for us", "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him"** - **II Corinthians 5:21**. Therefore, by the observance of the Lord's Supper He was to be remembered as the One who suffered and died that we should live, and praise His Holy name for His sufferings and death.

When Jesus said - **"this is my body..."** He was saying the bread and wine represented His body and blood. They were not actually eating His physical body as He was present, at that time, in His own body. During the life of Christ, He often used this figurative style of language in the Bible. In **John 6:35, 40, 48**, Jesus said - **"I am the bread of life"** - not literally bread, of course. He said - **"Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you"** - **John 6:53**.

He did not mean that taking the Lord's Supper is the way to be saved. And He could not have meant the bread and wine in the supper became His body and blood. Because in the same chapter, Christ already said very plainly twice that one who believes or trusts in Him already had everlasting life!

In **John 6:40** He says - **"And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on Him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."** In **John 6:47**, the words of Jesus are - **"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life."** Therefore, to make the Supper a way of salvation is a perversion of the Gospel. Besides this - **Hebrews 10:14** says, **"For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."** That was enough; that settled it. In the same chapter, look at **verse 18** - **"there is no more offering for sin."**

So when Jesus said - **"this is my body"**, He was speaking figuratively just as He was when He said - **"I am the door," John 10:9** - and just as when John the Baptist said - **"Behold the Lamb of God."** These expressions are all pictures of Him. What blasphemy Rome has committed here to pervert the Gospel and try to put salvation exclusively in the frail, carnal hands of her priests!!

His actions were the same when He introduced the - **"cup"**. The **"cup"** (the wine), symbolized the blood that was shed on the cross for the remission of sin. Since it is stated clearly here that He took the cup after - **"the same manner"** in which He had taken the bread, it is therefore, evident that Christ took one of the cups of wine used in the observance of the Passover. What was in the cup, wine or grape juice? This is like asking whether the bread was leavened or unleavened. There was no such thing as "pure" grape juice in the strictest sense of the word. It is absolutely certain that grapes, and grape juice, contain a leavening agent.

**"This cup is the new testament (covenant) in my blood"** - We must remember that by - **"the cup"** is meant the wine in the cup. The wine represents the "new covenant" in Christ's blood. This new covenant is ratified, sealed, and made eternally sure by Christ Jesus shedding His blood, His sufferings and death.

In **Exodus 19:1-7**, we see the old covenant that God gave to Moses and to the children of Israel. We see the people agreeing in **Exodus 19:8** to this covenant with it being solemnly ratified by blood - **Exodus 24:3-8**. They did not yet understand (though they should have) they could not within and of themselves measure up to what the thrice-holy God demanded of them.

The new covenant was established with Christ's own blood, of which the wine in the cup was a sign and symbol. Neither the cup nor the wine in it can be thought to be the covenant or **"testament"** of itself. It means the covenant of grace as administered under the Gospel dispensation is called - **"new"**. This was not because it was newly made for - **Hebrews 13:20** declares it to be from everlasting. **"New"**, simply makes a distinction from the covenant with Moses and the children of Israel and the covenant of grace.

The New Covenant is, therefore, unconditional. The Gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ - **I Corinthians 15:1-4**. It declares that Jesus did not come merely to make salvation possible, nor that He came to "help" save sinners, but it declares that Jesus came to save sinners, and He shall not fail - **I Timothy 1:15, II Timothy 1:7-11; Matthew 1:21, Isaiah 53:10-11**.

In conclusion of these verses, let me say again the two symbols, bread and wine, are used for the purpose of reminding us what our salvation cost. The bread speaks of His body. It reminds us that God became flesh and became a man that He might be our Saviour. The cup speaks of the blood He shed, and the brutal death He died that we might be saved. **Hebrews 9:22** tells us that **"without shedding of blood is no remission"** or forgiveness of sin and the Lord's Supper is a reminder of that fact. **Verse 26: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."** He does not tell how often we ought to observe the Lord's Supper but he does tell us that we should regularly observe the Lord's Supper on a permanent basis.

### **VERSE 26:**

Based upon revelation and divine illumination, Paul pointed out that the meaning of the observance is more important than its frequency of practice. He did not say that it should be done "often", but rather that the truth of the crucifixion is proclaimed whenever they observe it - **"as often as"**. The church at Jerusalem probably practiced the Lord's Supper often, but it also met the requirements that the Lord of God sets forth in order to be able to observe the Lord's Supper. The apostle did not say that they were to observe it as often as they met as a church body "but as often".

The Lord's Supper is not a sacrificial presentation to God rather, it is a visible proclamation of the gospel message to men **"ye do show"**. As long as Christ is absent, His New Testament Baptist churches are to observe the ordinance as they were delivered unto them until He returns.

### **VERSE 27:**

Since the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ and should be observed in remembrance of Him, it should be seen as a solemn occasion of worship. The Corinthians had violated its sanctity. Paul therefore, gave them a warning introduced by the connective - **"wherefore"**.

In this instance, chastisement is based upon an unworthy participation of the ordinance. The word "unworthy" is an adverb. The lack of worth does not refer to the person himself, but rather to the manner or attitude in which he eats. All are unworthy, including believers. Late in his life, Paul still saw himself as the chief of sinners - **I Timothy 1:15**. In himself, no one is worthy to approach God; but an unworthy person saved by the grace of God can partake in a worthy manner. However, the Corinthian's were persistently approaching the table - **"unworthily"**.

We might ask then what does the adverb - **"unworthily"** mean. It refers, to manner or behavior. If I come to the Table of the Lord in a light, frivolous, or careless way; as the bread and the wine are being prayed over, if I am thinking of a thousand and one other things, perhaps occupied with the business of the week, or recalling the latest foolish joke I heard; if when the bread and cup are actually passed to me, I am not thinking of the Saviour of whom they speak, but habitually participating in it as a religious ordinance, then I am taking the loaf and the cup - **"unworthily"**.

Or perhaps I come altogether unprepared, I spent no time with God in prayer nor spent no time thinking of the solemnity of all this. I rush into the presence of God, failing to

recognize that in the loaf and the cup, we have set forth the precious body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. To partake in such a spirit is to do so **"unworthily"**.

Therefore, to observe the Lord's Supper in an irreverent and improper way is to **"be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."** To partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner is to mock, scorn, and despise the Lord's body, His Person, in the same sense as did those who crucified Him. Thus, we are guilty of the same awful sin of which they were guilty, mockingly putting to death the Lord Jesus, not recognizing Him, not reverencing Him for whom and what He is.

#### **VERSE 28:**

**"But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup."** The word **"examine"** means, "to put on trial, prove or test." The only way of proving or testing what is acceptable to God is that which is done by the Word of God. The Lord does not permit us to go by our "feelings" as to whether or not we are in the proper spiritual condition to partake of His Supper. The responsibility is placed upon the individual to examine – **"Himself"** in light of God's Word.

Simply put, before we partake of the Lord's Supper we should put ourselves on trial, and do an intense searching of the heart in light of God's Word to see if there is any unconfessed sin in our life. We should examine our hearts to see if there is anything in our life that displeases God - **Psalm 139:23**.

"Self-examination" by the believer should precede participation. He should put his life to the test by the objective standards of the Word of God. Does he love his spiritual brothers, all of them? Is he selfish? Christ taught that reconciliation between brethren should precede one's worship of God - **Matthew 5:23- 26**.

No matter what he sees in himself of that which is evil and unholy, if he judges himself before God and confesses his own un-holiness, he is in a spiritual condition where he is free to **participate** in this sacred service.

#### **VERSE 29-30:**

**"Damnation"** here simply means judgment. It is the kind of judgment that is administered by the Lord as disciplinary chastisement as in - **verses 30-32**. Members of New Testament churches bring upon themselves such chastisement because they fail to **"discern the Lord's body."** **"Discern"** means to distinguish, to separate, to discriminate. Thus, to fail to clearly recognize the body of Christ, which is represented by the elements, is to fail to discern the Lord's body. **"The Lord's body"** - here refers to the actual body of Christ, not to His church.

Unworthy participation brings the chastisement of God. The word for **"damnation"** (krima) does not mean eternal punishment. The believer has forever been positionally delivered from Hades and the lake of fire - **John 5:24; Romans 8:1**. Chastening is a sign of spiritual Sonship and is designed as corrective discipline, **Hebrews 12:3-11**.

Because they had improperly observed the Lord's Supper many had suffered the judgment of God. Specifically, some of the Corinthians had received degrees of chastisement doubtless in direct proportion to the severity of their sins. **"Many"** were physically **"weak"**

which means a condition someone is left in after a long illness. Many others were **"sickly"** *which* speaks of someone who has poor health. Then lastly, we see that some had even died. The word **"sleep"** is used to show the death of a believer in anticipation of the resurrection, **John 11:11-14; Acts 7:60; I Corinthians 15:51; I Thessalonians 4:13-18; II Peter 3:4.**

### **VERSE 31:**

This verse is a call to self-judgment. But, how am I to judge myself? By bringing my innermost thoughts, ways, and outward behavior into the light of the Word of God and asking myself, "are these thoughts and behaviors of mine in accordance with what is written here?" If I find there is something I am cherishing that is contrary to the Word of God, then I am to turn to God and confess my failure, acknowledge my sin, and seek by His grace to walk in obedience to His Word. As I judge myself I come out from under the place of discipline - **"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged."** Oftentimes, people say that they are going to let the Spirit lead them in the direction of life they should go. They wait and wait for that feeling that they expect from the Spirit. Folks, let me say, you will never get any feeling from the Holy Spirit contrary to the written Word of God. What we need to do is get busy obeying the written Word, and seek constantly to learn what the Word has to say to me that I may be a better Christian. I should always judge myself according to the standards of God's Word.

### **VERSE 32:**

When a believer is being judged, he is actually being chastened or disciplined as a father would correct his son for wrong and would guide him toward proper goals, **Hebrews 12:6.** To whatever extent we fail to judge ourselves by the Word of God, our Heavenly Father judges and chastise us accordingly.

God does not take it lightly what Jesus did to purchase our salvation and neither should we. Therefore, the observance of the Lord's Supper should be a serious and sacred matter.

**"...that we should not be condemned with the world."** There is a sharp distinction between the world of believers and the world of unbelievers. God will deal with unbelievers in His wrath, and according to His just condemnation and holy wrath - **John 3:18, 36.** His wrath will yet be experienced by everyone who remains in unbelief - **II Thessalonians 1:7-9, Revelation 20:11-15).**

But for the child of God there can never be any condemnation — i.e., condemned of God to everlasting destruction, for they are delivered from such condemnation through faith in Christ Jesus - **John 3:18a, 5:24, Romans 8:1.**

### **VERSE 33:**

This verse is a very precious verse. It shows that the Lord's Supper is a matter of fellowship and that is why we observe it together. This certainly does away with the hospital observance. This is an ordinance that is to be done together. We tarry and together **"shew the Lord's death till He come"**. We are to come together, not to condemnation, but in a serious matter, so truly occupied with Christ that we will have the Lord's approval.

**VERSE 34:**

**"If any man is hungry, let him eat at home"** to satisfy his physical appetite. The Lord's Supper is not for that purpose; in no way is it designed to take the place of an ordinary meal. If a church comes together to eat a meal to satisfy physical hunger under the pretense of observing the Lord's Supper, then they come together **"unto condemnation"**, or judgment as we saw in - **verse 29**. This is what was earlier referred to as **"coming together for the worse"** in **verse 17**.

**"...and the rest will I set in order when I come."** Whatever the **"rest"** or other matters were, it would seem there were some minor details pertaining to the subject under discussion. Had they been matters of great importance so that the Lord's churches would need instruction in them, the Holy Spirit would have had Paul to include them in this epistle.

**I CORINTHIANS 11:23-34**

## Study Guide

1. What does Paul mean when he says - **"I have received of the Lord..." in verse 1?**
2. Paul wanted them to understand that the instructions he was about to give them was not a \_\_\_\_\_ but a \_\_\_\_\_ from the Lord.
3. Give the three places in the New Testament the institution of the Lord's Supper is given. \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_.
4. For what are we to give **"thanks"** for when we observe the Lord's Supper?
5. Where did the **"bread"** and **"cup"** come from when Christ instituted and observed the Lord's Supper?
6. Throughout the Bible leaven is always used as a symbol of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Why is it necessary for the "bread" and "cup" to be free of leaven?
8. Name the four steps Christ used in the observance of the supper:  
\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_
9. Name the three simple commands Christ gave: \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
10. When Jesus said - **"this is my body..."** He was saying the bread and wine \_\_\_\_\_ His \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
11. What does the word **"testament"** mean?
12. What is the difference between the old covenant and the new covenant?
13. What does the **"cup"** speak of? What does the "bread" speak of?
14. The Lord's Supper should be seen as a \_\_\_\_\_ occasion of \_\_\_\_\_.
15. Who is worthy to partake of the Lord's Supper?
16. The lack of worth does not refer to the \_\_\_\_\_ himself, but rather to the \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_ in which he eats.
17. Therefore, **"unworthily"** refers, to \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_.
18. Therefore, to observe the Lord's Supper in an irreverent and improper way is to **"be \_\_\_\_\_ of the \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_."**
19. The word **"examine"** means, "to put on \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ or \_\_\_\_\_." By what standard does one "examine" themselves?
20. "\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_" by the believer should \_\_\_\_\_.

21. **"Damnation"** here simply means \_\_\_\_\_. Unworthy participation inevitable brings the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
22. What do the words **"weak"**, **"sickly"** and **"sleep"** mean?
23. **Verse 31** is a call to \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_.
24. To whatever extent we fail to judge ourselves by the Word of God, our Heavenly Father \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ us accordingly.
25. The Lord's Supper is not for the purpose of satisfying of the \_\_\_\_\_ but a time of \_\_\_\_\_ of His broken \_\_\_\_\_ and His \_\_\_\_\_.