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APPENDIX:

Lord's Supper

When Jesus originally spoke the words: "Take, eat; this is My body" (Mat. 26:26), and "...Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant..." (Mat. 26:27-28), was He stating to His disciples that the bread truly had become His body and the wine His blood? No, that was not His point. His disciples would have known in context that when Jesus presented the bread and then the wine, that these were symbols. This is why He tells them to do this; to use these objects in "remembrance" of Him. As Paul stated, this memorial is for the church (1 Cor. 11:18,20; cf. Acts 2:44,46) that is to be observed in His remembrance (1 Cor. 11:24-25), proclaiming His death until He returns (1 Cor. 11:26). Therefore, this is a significant event in the life of the church which should not be taken lightly.



How often then should the church observe this memorial? The New Testament does not specify this. Some churches have communion every time they gather, some weekly, others monthly, some quarterly, while others yearly. Some churches do not practice it at all. Since the Bible does not prescribe a set pattern, it is up to the church to decide how often and in what manner it will observe the Lord's Supper (cf. Acts 2:46; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:26).

Should unbaptized individuals be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper? The Bible does not state specifically. Yet in Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus told His disciples: "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you..." In this command, Jesus states that once a person is saved and then baptized, they are to be taught. One could conclude from this that during this time of teaching, the new believer would be instructed about the Lord's Supper and its significance. If a church followed these words of Jesus, baptizing new converts immediately after they believed, the original question would never be an issue. It becomes an issue when a church only baptizes once a year. In a case like this, a new believer may have to wait a long period of time before being allowed to take part in the communion service. Therefore, it is the author's conviction that a person should be baptized as soon as possible, enabling him to join with his church family in the memorial of the Lord's Supper. (See the article titled "Baptism.")

What should be done with the bread and wine which remains after the communion service? The answer to this question depends upon a person's view of the communion service. If, as some teach, the bread and wine, after being blessed, actually come to contain the body and blood of Christ or become the body and blood of Christ, then this would cause a person to be very careful about what he does with what remains. If however, he views the bread and wine as merely symbols and nothing more, then his actions would be different. In determining this issue, one must realize that the Lord's Supper is a memorial or a remembrance of Christ's death. The words which the pastor or elders pray over the bread and wine do not change them into something other than what they are. Also, it would not be outside of reason to believe that at a love feast, after the communion service had ended, that the bread and wine which remained would be consumed for nourishment. Are the words prayed at a communion service any more holy or powerful than the words prayed at a church gathering over food which is served? No. The only difference is a change in context. In both instances food is being consumed; in one context for the purpose of remembering the death of Jesus, and in the other for group fellowship. Should the food that remains after the fellowship time be handled in a special way because it was prayed over and consumed in the church? No. It could be taken home and eaten later. In the case where wine is used in the communion service, the disposal of it for obvious reasons is prudent (cf. Rom. 14:13-23).

One passage that also needs to be discussed in reference to the Lord's Supper is John 6:26-71. The question is: "Does this passage have anything to do with communion?" The answer is no, because the two passages are not in any way related. In John 6, Jesus was not talking about His coming death, just as He was not talking about eating His flesh or drinking His blood in the communion service. The communion service was instituted the night that Jesus shared His last Passover with His disciples; about a year after the event in John 6. In context, after Jesus had fed about 5,000 men (vs. 10), the result was that they were amazed (vs. 14), wanting to make Him king (vs. 15). They did not want to make Him king because they understood that He was their Messiah (vss. 29-30); at best they viewed Him only as a prophet (vs. 14). They simply wanted to be fed by Him (vss. 26-27). Therefore, Jesus knowing their unbelief (vss. 36, 41-42, 60-64) and ulterior motives, spoke to them metaphorically (vss. 58-52). He did this in a way which would cause them to think about and consider truth (cf. vss. 48-58). He also did this to separate the unbelievers from (cf. vs. 66) the believers (cf. vss. 67-69). It was never Jesus' intention for anyone to become a cannibal and eat His flesh or drink His blood. It was, however, His desire for people to know who He was and is -- the Bread of Life (vs. 48) who came from the Father (vss. 32-33, 35, 57-58). He also wanted them to know that whoever accepted Him completely (all of Him), would receive eternal life (vss. 50-51, 54-58). Whereas this passage is speaking about salvation through Christ metaphorically to all who would believe in Him, the communion service is a commemoration which looks back to His death on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. The two passages, while both related to the issue of salvation, each have a different focus.