

# The Lord's Supper (Holy Communion)

## Bible Reading - Luke chapter 22 verses 7 to 23

*'Then came the preparation day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. <sup>8</sup> So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover meal for us, so that we may eat it." <sup>9</sup> They asked Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?" <sup>10</sup> He replied, "When you have entered the city, a man carrying an earthen jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house that he enters. <sup>11</sup> And say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher asks, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' <sup>12</sup> Then he will show you a large upstairs room, furnished [with carpets and dining couches]; prepare the meal there." <sup>13</sup> They left and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover.*

*<sup>14</sup> When the hour [for the meal] had come, Jesus reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. <sup>15</sup> He said to them, "I have earnestly wanted to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; <sup>16</sup> for I say to you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." <sup>17</sup> And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; <sup>18</sup> for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes." <sup>19</sup> And when He had taken bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." <sup>20</sup> And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup, which is poured out for you, is the new covenant [ratified] in My blood. <sup>21</sup> But listen, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. <sup>22</sup> For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe (judgment is coming) to that man by whom He is betrayed and handed over!" <sup>23</sup> And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this.'*

## SERMON

This month I want to talk about something that I believe is very important to our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. That is 'Holy Communion' or the 'Lord's Supper'. I want to show you what the Scriptures have to say about this Holy

Sacrament and compare it with some of the man-made rules that are prevalent in the Church today.

As Christians, it is essential that we know what God's Word says, and to expose false teaching in the Church, as well as to reveal the Biblical truth. Many followers of Christ do not realise that they may have been subjected to false doctrine because what they have been taught to believe has been entrenched in Church doctrine for centuries and has become accepted as God's truth, even though it is not Biblical.

Jesus fearlessly exposed religious deception, especially when talking to those in authority – like the teachers of religious law, Scribes, Pharisees and other religious leaders. Listen to what He had to say to them in the following verse of scripture. I am reading just one of many hard-hitting accusations He made against their self-righteousness and their error of teaching, - This is **Luke 11 and verse 52**:

***“Woe to you”*** (by that He meant judgement is coming to you), ***“Woe to you, because you have taken away the key to knowledge (scriptural truth). (And) you (have) held back (the people) [by your flawed interpretation of God’s Word and your man-made tradition].”***

What He was saying is that those to whom God had given the responsibility to teach His Truth were not sharing the truth of Scripture with the flock. They were twisting it to suit themselves.

It is STILL the same today, where some religious leaders of many denominations are forsaking the authority of God's Holy Word, and are embracing false teaching and creating false doctrines. We can only guess their motives, but it seems it's a way for some of them to feel more comfortable in disobeying what God's Word actually says. Rather than obeying His word, they are trying to find ways around it by creating alternative doctrines to put into practise.

In His own day, Jesus knew the flock were suffering – were ***‘being held back’*** he said - due to the biased interpretation of Scripture that was being taught, together with a clear preference to replace it with man-made rules.

Let us see how true this has become in the Worldwide Church, by examining the Scriptures and comparing them with what the Church today declares to its members...

Research shows that the early Church met in individuals' homes until the third century AD. That means they didn't meet in Church Buildings until at least two hundred years after the Church was born on the Day of Pentecost around 2,000 years ago.

We can see clearly from the Gospel reading today, that Jesus commanded His disciples to 'take Communion' as we call it, in remembrance of Him. So, those early Jewish believers were only ever meeting in their homes because they were banned from their synagogues due to their declaration of their faith In Jesus Christ as the Messiah. Therefore, it is clear to any Bible-Believing Christian that it is perfectly normal to have Holy Communion at home.

In this Scripture, Jesus and His disciples are about to have a meal to celebrate 'The Feast of Unleavened bread'.

'The Feast of Unleavened Bread' and 'Passover (which we talked about last month) were terms used interchangeably. It was a remembrance feast of celebration and it lasted 8 days.

The blemish-free Passover lambs were carefully selected, killed, and formed part of the meal that all Jewish people shared with their families at that time, as many orthodox Jews do today.

This event in the Upper Room occurred just prior to Jesus' death. This is clear because in verses 15 and 16 Jesus says to them ***"I have earnestly wanted to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God."*** And in verses 21 and 22 He says:

***"The hand of the one betraying Me is with Mine on the table. For indeed, the Son of Man is going, as it has been determined; but woe (judgment is coming) to that man by whom He is betrayed and handed over!"***

Jesus knew His crucifixion, death and resurrection were imminent and this meal was the last 'feast' He would have with His closest and dearest friends.

But the key verses I want to read to you one more time are these: **Verses 17 to 20....**

***'When (Jesus) had taken a cup and given thanks, He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on, until the kingdom of God comes."***

***And when He had taken bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me." And in the same way, He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup, which is poured out for you, is the new covenant [ratified] in My blood."***

Jesus took some unleavened bread, He took a goblet of wine and He gave some to each of His disciples saying "Do this in remembrance of me".

Here is where I want to say some hard-hitting truths:

Jesus didn't ask his followers what Christian denomination they belonged to (Yes I know the Church hadn't been formed then – This didn't happen until the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, - but we will come on to that in a moment, when we look at one of Paul's New Testament letters written to the Churches, after Christ's death).

Jesus didn't say to His followers, "You can only celebrate this communion in a formal Church service in an official church building," and He didn't say "Make sure you have been **confirmed** if you are a Methodist or an Anglican" (and **I'm speaking** here as an 'Anglican').

He didn't say "You can only take this Holy Sacrament from an ordained minister".

And in my experience it is this last point that causes most concern for Christians. Some may even be wondering, "Should an ordained Priest be present at this service and should he have consecrated the sacraments?"

Well, the answers to any concerns that we may have about this issue are right here in the Bible. (Hold up Bible)

The Bible does not say anything about the need for a religious leader - whether a Bishop, Vicar, Priest, Minister, Pastor, Deacon, or any other ordained person - to be involved in any way in the distribution, or consecration of the bread and the wine at Holy Communion?

Of course they CAN be involved in it, but what I am trying to point out is that, from a Scriptural perspective, it is not *necessary* for them to be involved. And please do not misunderstand me – I am not having a go at Church leaders – no way – they are essential to the Church and to what God is doing on the earth – and I pray for them daily.

But the truth from Scripture is that the distribution of Communion only by an ordained and consecrated leader is simply a man-made rule, a tradition, which prevails in many Church denominations. So why then do some churches, and not others, allow ordinary folk like me or you to do this?

Well, the New Testament Holy Scriptures are clear that if you and I are believers in Christ, **then we are priests**. As it says in 1 Peter Chapter 2 verse 5, ***'You [believers], like living stones, are being built up into a spiritual house for a holy and dedicated priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices [that are] acceptable and pleasing to God through Jesus Christ.'***

And in any case Jesus didn't say to His followers, "go to a religious, ordained Priest and do this in remembrance of me" He said **"YOU** do this in remembrance of me".

He was talking to His disciples. They were His **followers**, none of them were **priests**. In fact it was the priests of their day, and in particular the High Priest, who took great exception to Jesus' teaching and eventually had Him put to death!

If you are interested in this concept of 'believers being priests', it was first widely proclaimed by Martin Luther in 1520.

He put forward the doctrine that all **baptised** Christians are "priests" and "spiritual" in the sight of **God**. Here is a quote of his, from the time:

***"That the pope or bishop anoints, makes tonsures, ordains, consecrates, or dresses differently from the laity, may make a hypocrite or an idolatrous oil-painted icon, but it in no way makes a Christian or spiritual human being. In fact, we are all consecrated priests through Baptism, as St. Peter in 1 Peter 2[:9] says, "You are a royal priesthood and a priestly kingdom," and Revelation [5:10], "Through your blood you have made us into priests and kings."***

His teaching has become known as 'The priesthood of all Believers'.

And according to Wikipedia, and I quote *'The universal priesthood or the priesthood of all believers is a foundational concept of Christianity.'*

Finally, on this subject of whether or not we need an ordained priest to administer Holy Communion, the word 'priest' is mentioned in the letter to the Hebrews 43 times (in The Amplified Version) and that letter is a great one to read if you want to know about how and why **only Jesus is now our Great High Priest** and that we therefore no longer need to **confess our sins** to an ordained priest. We need only to confess and repent of them to Jesus and receive God's forgiveness. As it says in 1 John 1 verse 9, ***'If we [freely] admit that we have sinned and confess our sins, He is faithful and just [true to His own nature and promises], and will forgive our sins and cleanse us continually from all unrighteousness [our wrongdoing, everything not in conformity with His will and purpose].'***

As Scripture clearly teaches us that ALL believers are deemed to be 'priests' in God's eyes, we no longer have to go to an ordained priest to confess and receive absolution and forgiveness; on the contrary, it exhorts us in James 5 verse 16: ***'Therefore, confess your sins to one another [your false steps, your offenses], and pray for one another, that you may be healed and restored.'*** (of the damaging effects of our sins).

When Jesus died on the cross, the temple curtain was supernaturally torn in two from top to bottom. At that time, under the Old Testament, the purpose of the Temple curtain was to prevent people from going into the Holy of Holies. Only the High Priest could enter that most Holy place and He could do so only once a year on the Day of Atonement, in order to offer the sacrifice of innocent blood of a carefully selected animal so that God would forgive the people's sins.

Because of Jesus' death on the cross for our sins, He has torn down that Temple curtain and has entered the Holy of Holies, so if we believe in Jesus Christ for our Salvation, then we can walk straight into the throne-room of God (as it were) to ask Him to forgive us. We do it through our High Priest, Jesus Christ. Jesus brought about this change in the Old Testament laws that God had laid down, concerning priesthood. The old has gone, the New has come. According to the New Testament we have direct access to God, through faith in Jesus Christ. Praise His Holy Name.

Returning now to the Act of Holy Communion.

Satan clearly knows how important it is to God that all believers take Holy Communion as often as possible. Because the enemy is doing all that he possibly can, to distort any teaching in the Church on this subject so that he

can hinder many people who are followers of Christ, from partaking in this Holy Sacrament.

Why am I making the point so passionately about the Truth of Scripture, when we hold it up against the teaching of the Church?

Because many people are prevented by Church leaders from doing what Jesus wants and expects His followers to regularly do today.

In most Anglican churches today, and certainly in the first three that I attended in my teens, 20's and 30's, at the point in the Communion Service where it was time to go up to the altar rail for communion, if you hadn't been confirmed, you had two choices. Either to go up and kneel with your hands behind your back to signify you hadn't been confirmed, and only receive a blessing from the priest, or you could stay firmly in your pew seat and not move during the proceedings. Either way you felt conspicuous, not to mention embarrassed, and so in some cases, people simply stayed away from these Communion Services so as to avoid feeling uncomfortable or feeling a bit like an outcast. In extreme cases, some people decided not to go to Church at all. This is tragic....

Some would say that the solution to the problem is in the hands of the unconfirmed person.... "Just get confirmed". But some people find getting confirmed an issue, for a variety of reasons, and the process usually takes months, and my point is that according to Scripture they don't need to!

The religious act of Confirmation isn't in the Bible. It was introduced centuries ago in order to get around the awkwardness and inconvenience of adult baptism by full immersion in water. Having said this, many churches are slowly but surely bringing back full immersion baptism...praise the Lord!

Now, I am NOT saying that it is *wrong* to get confirmed. Both Michele and I have. All I am saying is that it is not in the Bible, and is not something that needs to be fulfilled in order to take Communion. However, the Church HAS made it into a doctrine, so that believers must adhere to if they wish to take Holy Communion. And furthermore I was delighted to learn last week, that Prince Harry's Christian faith is so important to him, that he and his fiancée Meghan Markle will both be getting confirmed before their wedding and I also read that Meghan is getting baptised too.

Some churches on the island are very happy to give Holy Communion to anyone who professes to believe. St Paul's is one example where I am pleased to say that our 'stand-in vicar', Carol Smart, always says at the beginning of our

Communion Services “**All** are welcome at our Lord’s table.” By that she means all followers of Christ of whatever denomination, and includes those who have not been confirmed.

WHY does she say this? Because she knows her Scriptures.

As hard as it is to hear and accept, because of the long-standing history in Church teaching, both ‘Confirmation’ and ‘Christening’ are man-made ideas. Neither of these words nor concepts are anywhere to be found in the Bible.

Regarding Baptism, Jesus and the apostles talk only in the manner - ‘**Believe** and be baptised’. Baptism is a command of God to all who **believe** in the Lord Jesus as their Saviour. According to the Bible, very young children and babies can’t be baptised unless and until they believe! By all means have your children and grandchildren christened as an act of dedicating them to the Lord, but if they grow up to be followers of Christ, do encourage them to obey Jesus’ command to be baptised by full immersion, in accordance with God’s Word.

Regarding the subject of ‘Confirmation’, and also in what kind of building to take Communion, and who can distribute the sacraments of bread and wine, Jesus simply says to His followers “Do this in remembrance of Me”.

I’m sorry to say that the Church has made it into something it never was. And if we want to be totally true to God’s Word, it was, in any case, originally part of a meal – a feast, and a very special one at that – the eating together of the Passover Lamb. But from that point on, Jesus told the believers to eat the bread and drink the wine OFTEN, in remembrance of Him.

If you love the Lord Jesus as your Saviour He invites you to ‘Do this in remembrance of Him’. Eat the bread – consider it as His body which was broken for you. Drink the wine, considering it as His shed blood, cleansing you from your sins.

There are many things Jesus commands us to do that we don’t understand. Our understanding is not important. But our obedience is. On a personal level, although it doesn’t say this in Scripture, I feel that taking the bread and wine, keeps us humble, cleanses our sinful soul, and imparts something of the Holy Spirit into our lives.

My dear mum, died in October 2000. She was an Anglican, but spent the first 70 years or so of her life being denied Holy Communion. Why was this???

Because she had not fulfilled the Church’s teaching that she must be confirmed in order to take Communion.

But in the mid- to late-Nineteen Nineties she came to an Old People's Home on the main land where, once a month, a Godly friend of mine helped me to do what Michele and I do here at Homewight House. His name is Rex Landon. And one day Rex and I managed to persuade my mum from Scripture that she would be fine to take Communion irrespective of the man-made rule preventing her from doing so. I remember crying tears of joy when I witnessed my mum take her first Communion, which Rex gave to her just a few years before she died.

The last thing I want to talk about is whether or not there are times when it would **be wrong** to take Communion?

So, are their times when it would-be wrong to take Communion?

When we look at the New Testament Epistles, we see Paul talking about Holy Communion in his first letter to the Corinthians. This is the Scripture most Church denominations quote during the Communion Service.

Let's take a look (you can follow this short reading on the back of your sheet).

It's **1 Corinthians 11 v 26 to 34:**

In this reading Paul repeats part of the Scripture we read earlier from Luke 11 concerning how Jesus took the bread and wine and blessed it, and told his disciples to eat and drink the Sacraments in remembrance of Him, and then Paul writes:

***<sup>26</sup> For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are [symbolically] proclaiming [the fact of] the Lord's death until He comes [again].***

***<sup>27</sup> So then whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in a way that is unworthy [of Him] will be guilty of [profaning and sinning against] the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> But a person must [prayerfully] examine himself [and his relationship to Christ], and only when he has done so should he eat of the bread and drink of the cup.***

***<sup>29</sup> For anyone who eats and drinks [without solemn reverence and heartfelt gratitude for the sacrifice of Christ], eats and drinks a judgment on himself if he does not recognize the body [of Christ]. <sup>30</sup> That [careless and unworthy participation] is the reason why many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep [in death]. <sup>31</sup> But if we evaluated and judged ourselves honestly [recognizing our shortcomings and correcting our behaviour], we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we [fall short and] are judged by the Lord, we are***

***disciplined [by undergoing His correction] so that we will not be condemned [to eternal punishment] along with the world.***

But the key point I want to bring out of this Scripture is that the Bible warns us here in verse 27, that there is a consequence to eating the bread, or drinking the wine in an unworthy manner, because ***‘He will be guilty of [profaning and sinning against] the body and blood of the Lord.’***

And in the verses that follow we are told ***‘we must examine ourselves and our relationship with Christ’***. If we are aware of any sin in our life however big or small it may be, before we partake of Holy Communion, we need to confess it to Jesus immediately, and repent of it, and receive His forgiveness. Once we have done this we can partake in Holy Communion with a clear conscience.

Next we are told if we do not recognise or believe in Jesus Christ ***‘then we eat and drink a judgement on ourselves’***.

Finally we learn that ***careless and unworthy participation] in Holy Communion ‘is the reason why many become weak and sick, and a number sleep [in death].’***

This is serious stuff, but I’ve hardly ever heard it preached in the 40+ years I have been a Christian.

At an Anglican Church on the mainland, that Michele and I attended ten years ago, I was talking to a member of the congregation about his faith. To my horror, I discovered he did not believe in Christ as his Saviour, nor did he believe in the Holy Spirit. He claimed to have some vague belief in ‘God’. But what concerned me greatly was that every week he went up and took Communion.

I felt convicted to do the difficult thing of privately bringing it to the attention of the Priest in Charge. A Godly man, he told me that he was aware of this man’s non-belief, and also that, apparently, he had been made to leave his previous church over the same issue, but this priest wanted to encourage this man to attend his church because he believed in an Anglican Church that was all-inclusive, and he would not refuse Communion to someone who did not believe in Jesus or the Holy Spirit.

I was stunned by this response because it is completely contrary to the very sobering scripture passage that I have just read a moment ago. Because of this

Scripture, I feel that this unbelieving man should have been shown the Scripture concerning the taking of communion in an unworthy manner, and then be led to confess and repent of his sin and receive Jesus Christ as His Lord and Saviour.

What Church leaders should NOT do is affirm people's unbelief whilst at the same time allowing them to partake in the sacred act of Holy Communion, which carries with it eternal consequences for all those who take it in an unworthy manner.

In telling you of this example, I hope you do not feel I am being in some way self-righteous. We are all guilty of sin, but because of this Scripture I believe this rebellious man should have been brought to task and lead in confession and repentance for his own sake. I still pray for him to this day and hope that He has since given his life to Christ.

I will close now with this summary:

The following points are clear from Scripture:

1. It's perfectly normal and fine for Bible-believing Christians to have Holy Communion at home instead of in a Church Building.
2. Church denominations are not Biblical. There is no Biblical reason why Christians from different denominations and free churches cannot have Holy Communion together.
3. Jesus does not concern Himself with whether or not you have been confirmed. He simply said "Do this in remembrance of me".
4. And finally He didn't say, "You can only take this Holy Sacrament from an ordained minister". As followers of Christ, each of us is consecrated and set apart for God's purposes, the moment we put our faith in Jesus. It is a work of the Holy Spirit, enabling us to be considered, by God, as priests in His Kingdom. Being consecrated and set apart for God is NOT something that should be reserved solely for those who go forward for ordination, (although this is the predominant teaching and belief of many in the Church today).

As such, each one of us can give Communion to each other in our own homes, or anywhere else for that matter. This should come as a liberating truth, setting us free from the bondage of years of believing and following man-made doctrines, which have largely stood unchallenged by those of us in the pews.

Remember, Jesus said “You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

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