

Inaugurated by the Lord

The Lord's Supper is a practice which Jesus said would be observed in His kingdom (Luke 22:29-30). Jesus set forth two emblems to represent His body and blood which were sacrificed for the sins of human kind (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19-20). The purpose for this ritual is explained in Luke 22:19. Jesus said, "Do this in remembrance of Me."

Taught by the Apostles

Jesus instructed His apostles to teach new disciples "to observe all" that He had commanded them (Matthew 28:19-20). This included the observance of this memorial meal. The Lord Himself made a special point of instructing Paul to teach this practice to the church (I Cor 11:23). Paul called it "The Lord's Supper" (I Cor 11:20). Those who observed the memorial were also said to be "breaking bread" (I Cor 10:16) – probably because every gospel writer who recorded the event mentioned that Jesus "broke the bread" before He passed it to the apostles.

Practiced by the Church

Early disciples "gathered together to break bread" on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). This was the day Jesus rose from the dead and made a precedent of meeting with His disciples (John 20:1,19,26). The early church assembled on the first day of every week (I Cor 16:1-2).

Understood by the Participants

It was very important to the Lord that those who practiced this observance should understand what they were doing and why they are doing it. Paul devoted a portion of his Corinthian correspondence to this end. They were not practicing this holy custom in a proper manner (I Cor 11:17-22). In I Corinthians 11:23-34, Paul set forth an explanation concerning what the Lord's Supper should mean to those who participate. It should be observed:

As a Commemoration (I Cor 11:23-25)

It's a time to remember what Jesus has done for us – in his life and in his death.

As a Proclamation (I Cor 11:26)

It's a time to demonstrate our faith that Jesus died for our sins and rose up again.

With Anticipation (I Cor 11:26)

It's a time to demonstrate our faith that Jesus is coming back for us some day.

With Examination (I Cor 11:27-29)

It's a time to recognize our need for a savior and inspect our motives for partaking.

As a Medication (I Cor 11:30-32)

It's a time to refocus our priorities and renew our intention to become like him.

To participate in the Lord's Supper as though it were any common meal; or to partake of the Lord's Supper while thinking about other things, would be an "unworthy manner" of partaking. Those who didn't think about the Lord's body (His flesh and blood), were partaking in an unworthy manner. Those who were inconsiderate toward the Lord's body (His church), were partaking in an unworthy manner. Because they had failed in these areas, many of the Corinthian saints were said to be spiritually weak, or even dead.