

Christians Gone Wild!
1st Corinthians, week 23
The Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 10:15–22; 11:17–34)
July 9, 2006
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A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

1 Corinthians 11:28–29

There are innumerable ways to view human history. One is through the partaking of five meals.

Meal #1 — Forbidden Fruit

Our first parents, Adam and Eve, committed the original sin when they ate a meal without God in disobedience to Him.

Meal #2 — Passover

In Exodus, God redeemed His people from slavery to the tyrannical Pharaoh in Egypt to allow them to worship Him freely. He did this by passing over those homes that slaughtered a lamb in faith and covered the entrance to their home with its blood in faith, foreshadowing the death of Jesus the Lamb of God (John 1:29; Revelation 5:12) who removes our sin and death by His blood (Romans 5:8–9; 1 Peter 1:2). Exodus 12 describes in great detail the Passover meal that was to be eaten each year in memory of that event. Passover also foreshadows the freedom that Jesus provides. The church in the Old Testament would sacrifice a young and healthy male lamb for each household, typifying Jesus as our unblemished sacrifice (1 Corinthians 5:8; Hebrews 9:12–14).

Meal #3 — The Last Supper

The Passover meal was celebrated by God's people until the time of Jesus. In Luke 22:1–20 we see that as Passover approached, Jesus (the sinless Lamb of God foreshadowed in the meal) sat down with His friends. But in a startling change to a thousand-year tradition, Jesus claimed that the bread was His body and the wine was His blood to be shed for the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31–34), or forgiveness of sins. He then commanded His people to continually do the same in remembrance of Him.

Meal #4 — Communion

Following Jesus' command to eat and drink in His memory, Christians began participating in the Lord's Supper (or "communion") shortly after He rose from death to redeem them from sin and death. The earliest biblical account of such a meal occurs in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 10:15–22

¹⁵I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because

there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. ¹⁸Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? ¹⁹Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. ²²Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

If someone claims to be a Christian they are not permitted to partake of pagan practices and communion because it is a sin to maintain devotion to both Jesus and demons. In Paul's day this included avoiding pagan sacrificial meals to false gods. In our day this includes avoiding membership in a cult or witches' coven, employing a psychic, or having lunch at the strip club buffet.

1 Corinthians 11:17–34

¹⁷In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. ¹⁸In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. ¹⁹No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. ²⁰When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, ²¹for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. ²²Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!

The Lord's Supper was held in homes. The wealthy would arrive first, be given the best seats, and were offered choice food and wine. By the time poorer Christians arrived, other church members had already gorged themselves and gotten drunk, dishonoring both Jesus and their fellow Christians.

²³For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. ²⁷Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. ³¹But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. ³²When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. ³³So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. ³⁴If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet

together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

In this packed section of Scripture, Paul gives the following directives for the Lord's Supper:

- It is about Jesus and therefore only for Christians.
- It requires prior self-examination and repentance of sin.
- It is to be done in a way that honors all Christians as equals in Christ.
- It is to be a source of unity and not division among Christians.
- It is not to be eaten as a normal meal.
- Anyone who disobeys these directives may become ill or even die as God's means of chastening the church for disobedient sin.

Meal #5 — Wedding Supper of the Lamb

Because human history began with a meal eaten without God it is only fitting that history will end with God's church, typified as a bride, eating a glorious meal with Jesus Christ, her groom (Revelation 19:6–9). Isaiah 25:6 speaks of this feast, which includes the finest cuts of meats and the choicest wines laid out in honor of Jesus to be enjoyed by those who love Him.

Here at Mars Hill we partake of the fourth meal each week, as was the practice of Christians until a schism at the time of the Reformation. At that time the Catholic Church said that the bread and wine became the actual body and blood of Jesus and that He was recrucified each week, which contradicts Scripture (Romans 6:10; Hebrews 7:27; 9:12, 28; 10:2, 10). Ulrich Zwingli said that the Lord's Supper was merely a memorial of Jesus, which led to some Christian traditions partaking less than weekly. Martin Luther said that Jesus was mysteriously actually present with God's people in communion. And John Calvin said that above all else we should simply repent of sin and partake of communion as a visible demonstration of our personal faith in Jesus Christ. At Mars Hill we lean toward Luther's position and follow Calvin's counsel. We also long for the day when we will sit down with all of God's people for that fifth and final meal. As Paul says, "Until he comes."

Verses for next week: 1 Corinthians 10:23–11:1