

## **COMMUNION**

### **THE BREAD AND THE CUP-**

Sometimes called the Eucharist, the Greek word for "thanks" the bread and cup isn't complete without remembering the price Jesus paid to secure eternal life for us. Because of His broken body and shed blood, God the Father declares us righteous.

Theologians call this "justification." The broken body...The shed blood...The sacrificial death endured by God's perfect Son. Because of that, when people become followers of Christ a great exchange takes place: God considers our sins paid for by Jesus' death; and considers the righteousness of Jesus to be ours (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The bread and cup, symbols of His broken body and shed blood, also picture a unique way of relating to God. No more animal sacrifices. No more priests to intercede. Instead we have direct communication with the Creator because of the body and blood of His Son. (1 Timothy 2:5-6) He asks us to keep on observing this symbol of love until He returns. (1 Corinthians 11:25-26) We do this so we won't forget the price He paid.

The symbols of communion are solemn and holy, yet joyful and peaceful. So serious are they that we are warned to examine our own lives and thoughts before participating in communion, making sure we are in right relationship with God and others. (1 Corinthians 11:27-30)

### **WASHING FEET –**

This part of communion reminds us of our need for daily cleansing from sin. It's a time of introspection and self-examination. Jesus wants us to remember that even though believers have been forgiven for all sin--past, present, and future--we are in need of His cleansing power and forgiveness on a daily basis.

Theologians call this "present, progressive sanctification." Present: it's happening now; progressive: it will continue throughout our lives on earth; sanctification: it is the process by which Christ sets us apart for the special treatment of being transformed into His likeness. (Romans 8:29) Washing feet as a symbol of this isn't something thought of by the Church or the Apostles. It is something Jesus asked us to do. *"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."* (John 13:14)

When Jesus washed His disciples' feet, He left us an example. It was an example to be followed in practice, not merely known. (John 13:12-17) There's more to this symbol than at first appears. It is more than a middle-eastern custom. Jesus said, *"You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."* (John 13:7) The custom they understood; the new meaning they did not.

It was much more than an example of humility. When Peter said no to feet washing, Jesus gave a curious answer: *"Unless I wash you, you have no part with me...A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet, his whole body is clean. And you are clean, though not every one of you."* (John 13:8, 10) Judas wasn't. There is a cleansing of feet and there is a bath. The disciples had the bath, but needed their feet washed. To use our terminology, they were "saved," but not clean from the contamination of daily sin.

It is more than an outward cleansing. Scripture presents water and cleansing as word pictures of true cleansing by the Word (Ephesians 5:26). Feet washing is a symbol; a symbol of love. It's a statement a church makes together, as they have communion, that Jesus is the one who does the real cleansing on the inside. He does that constantly, as we seek His forgiveness. At a church communion service, we picture this in a very meaningful, Christ-like way.

### **THE LOVE FEAST-**

The Love Feast reminds us that Jesus will welcome us to His celebration in heaven; and that we are His believers, His loved ones...His future bride. Theologians call it "glorification"--seeing and sharing the glory of Christ (1 John 3:2). This part reminds us of our future. When it happens, God's special plans for us will be brought to completion (Romans 8:29-30).

It's appropriate that a meal, shared in Christian fellowship, be one of the symbols Jesus left behind. Scripture promises a special future occasion, the ultimate love feast, with Jesus Himself as host. (Revelation 19:7-9) We practice the love feast because Jesus included it in the "communion service" He had with His disciples (John 13) and because the early church perpetuated its inclusion. (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Jude 12)

The meal is a fellowship time characterized by His love. Eating together reminds us of our special bond to Christ, but also to each other. We feel something of the secure love those early believers must have felt as they ate together and talked about His love and His plans.

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### **Biblical Teaching on Communion**

1. **The Bread and cup** -- The symbol of Christ's past ministry of justification.
  - Where it's mentioned: Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 11:23-25.
  - Authorized by Christ: 1 Corinthians 11:23-25.
  - Its meaning: Matthew 26:26-28; 1 Corinthians 11:25-27.
  - Command to continue: Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24-25.
2. **Feet Washing** -- The symbol of Christ's ministry of sanctification.
  - Where it's mentioned: John 13:1-17; 1 Timothy 5:10.
  - Authorized by Christ: John 13:3-6.
  - Its meaning: John 13:7-11.

- Command to continue: John 13:13-15.
- 3. **Love Feast** -- The symbol of Christ's future ministry of glorification.
  - Where it's mentioned: John 13:2,4; 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 33-34; Jude 12.
  - Not the same as bread and cup: Matthew 26:20-29; Luke 22:14-23; 1 Corinthians 11:20-22.
  - Apostles continued to practice the meal: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; Jude 12.
  - Its meaning: 1 Corinthians 11:34; Revelation 19:7-10.

## Quick Reference

Bread and the Cup	Past	<b>Justification</b> The act of God whereby humankind is made or accounted just, or free from guilt or penalty of sin.
Footwashing	Present	<b>Sanctification</b> The process by which Christ sets us apart for the special treatment of being transformed into His likeness.
Love Feast	Future	<b>Glorification</b> Seeing and sharing the glory of Christ in heaven.