

# The Meaning and Practice of the Lord's Supper

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] So my goal for us today is really to do two things. We're going to have two kind of portions to this sermon. The first one is going to be kind of a general overview of what the meaning of the supper is. And we're going to look at two different passages as we do that, maybe three, but at least two different passages in that process. And then after that, we're going to go specifically to 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, and we're going to do just a brief exposition of what this means practically in the church. Okay, so are you with me on the goal? The goal is to first look and say, okay, in the grand scheme of the Bible, in the grand scheme of the redemptive narrative of the scriptures, this is how the Lord's Supper fits in. And this is how we discern its significance and its importance for us and its meaning. And then after we have discovered that, we're going to zoom in a little closer on 1 Corinthians 11 in particular, and we're going to say, okay, this is what God has determined for us to do as a church. This is how we're going to do this practically speaking as a church in order to obey the Lord. Okay, you're with me? All right, we're going to do that and pray that the Lord blesses it as we go. Okay, the first thing really before we turn, in fact, actually, why don't you go ahead and turn to Exodus chapter 12. Exodus chapter 12 is going to be our first place. Before we get there, it is maybe helpful for me just to give a quick, just kind of simple definition of what this is in case you don't know, and especially maybe for our kids here that are just learning these things. The Lord's Supper is one of two rights, not R-I-G-H-T, but R-I-T-E, two rights that are in the Bible, specifically in the New Testament for the church. The other one is believer's baptism. And these are two things that we refer to as gospel ordinances. Now, an ordinance is simply an act that Jesus Christ has ordained for his church to observe that is a means of visibly displaying the gospel. And when we say gospel in this sense, what we're specifically referring to is the death of Christ on the cross, his atoning work in the crucifixion, and his resurrection from the dead. Okay? So we're kind of zooming in on that specific portion of the gospel message. Okay? The crucifixion, the resurrection. A gospel ordinance is something that Jesus has specifically commanded in the scriptures that the church would observe in order to visibly show the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And so we won't talk about baptism much, but if you think about it, the way that we practice baptism as a church, it is for believers after they have made their profession of faith. And if you picture the immersion process as a person stands in the water, as they go down, it is a representation of Christ's death, and it is our death with him, putting our sin to death on the cross. And then as they are raised out of the water, it is a visible display of the resurrection to new life that we have through the resurrection of Jesus

Christ. So you'll see, Jesus has commanded that we do that, and in the process of commanding that we do that, it visibly shows his gospel. Well, the Lord's Supper does the same thing. In using covenantal language of the Bible, we would say that these two ordinances are the signs of the new covenant.

And we're going to talk about it a little bit more in just a moment. But if you look at the scriptures and you see every time God gives a covenant, he always gives a sign to accompany that covenant. Baptism is the initial sign, and it is the initial inaugurating sign of the covenant. It brings us in in a public, visible way into the community of God's people, okay? It's that sign. The Lord's Supper, then, is that ongoing perpetual sign that a person is in this covenant with Jesus Christ, this covenant of faith, this covenant that has provided eternal life. This is the sign that we are his. It marks us as a people. And so before we move on, we need to understand first that neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper is capable of providing salvation.

It's impossible. It doesn't work. Just because you're baptized doesn't mean you're saved.

Just because you happen to take part in this supper today, that's not what makes you a Christian. It doesn't provide salvation for you. And the other side of that equation is if you don't get baptized and

you don't take the supper, but you have genuinely trusted Christ by faith, that doesn't mean that your salvation is removed from you. These are not salvific. They're signs. They don't provide.

[ 5 : 03 ] Neither do they take away salvation. They just point to the grace of God in Christ Jesus, and they are visible signs of his gospel. And we have to remember that. Ephesians 2, it is by grace that we are saved through faith and not of your own doing. It's the gift of God, not of works, even the works of baptism and the Lord's Supper, not of works lest any man should boast. Our boast is not in what we do. Our boast is in the grace of Christ and what he has given to us. And so it's important that we remember that. We don't come to the Lord's table today to gain salvation. We come because we have already received his gracious salvation. Don't do it to get anything from him. We do it as an act of worship.

We don't come out of compulsion. We come first because we love our Savior. And we love what this represents in our Savior. And we also come out of obedience to our Lord who has told us to do this.

And so let's walk through a few scriptures here. You're in Exodus chapter 12. And what we're going to look at here is the Passover meal from the Old Testament. Okay, the Passover meal. Now to understand the significance of the Lord's Supper, we need to first study the institution of this other meal, which we know as Passover. If you remember back to this story in the narrative, if you know it, you probably will remember at least parts of it. The descendants of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob had spent just over 400 years mostly in slavery in Egypt. 430 years actually to be exact. And in the process of that time, they'd become slaves. They were oppressed by Pharaoh and by the Egyptians.

And Pharaoh was a ruthless taskmaster. He refused to let the people of God go. So God cursed Egypt. And he did that through a number of plagues. You'll remember those 10 plagues as you have studied them in your Bible, or perhaps you remember them from your Sunday school class as a kid.

He gave these plagues, each one an opportunity for Pharaoh to respond, submit to God through the message of his servant Moses and Aaron. And finally, God said in the final plague, he was going to kill the firstborn of every household in Egypt. And if Pharaoh didn't let the people go, well, Pharaoh didn't let them go. And so the judgment night was coming. And so the night before the children of Israel were freed from this bondage and slavery, God told them to observe a feast. And he gave them specific instructions on how this feast was to be observed. And you can read all about it in Exodus chapter 12.

[ 7 : 55 ] They were to take a lamb of one year old, one without spot and without blemish. They were to slaughter the lamb, and then they were to have it as a meal. And there was a particular way that they were to dress during the meal that night. It was all symbolic to what God was about to do. But the most significant part of this is after they slaughtered the lamb, they were to take the blood of the slaughtered lamb, and they were to display it on the doorpost of their house. And what was going to take place is when God came through the land that night to judge the firstborn of every house. Whenever he saw the blood, he passed over that house. It wasn't because the people in that house were worthy of anything. It was because he saw the blood. When he saw the blood, he passed over. Now look at it with me in verse 11. Maybe we can go there. Exodus chapter 12, verse 11. God says, In this manner you shall eat it, with your belt fastened, your sandals on your feet, your staff in your hand, and you shall eat it in haste. It's the Lord's Passover. For I will pass through the land of Egypt that night, and I will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And on all the gods of Egypt,

I will execute judgments. I am the Lord. The blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are, and when I see the blood, I will pass over you. And no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt. Now, you know where this is going, right? This is significant. This is pointing to another sacrifice that would one day come. And we can look back on that sacrifice now and begin to make all of these connections and understand the significance of this. God specifically tells his people, when I see the blood, I will pass over you, not because you're deserving, but because of the covenant I have made with you that has been ratified in blood. And now we look to the cross of Christ, and we see this perfect lamb, as John the Baptist said, behold, the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Well, how did he take away the sin of the world? Through his shed blood on the cross.

And when God sees that blood, he passes over those sins. It's amazing. But we don't know that yet because we're in Exodus 12. Okay, so let's go back to it. This day shall be for you a memorial day. You shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations as a statute forever. You shall keep it as a feast. So the Passover feast was to become an annual memorial whereby God's people would remember and proclaim the deliverance that God had provided in his grace. And again, it foreshadows a greater deliverance that would be made available not merely to national Israel, but to all who would follow Christ in faith. It was a joyful celebration, such as the Lord's Supper. But it's also a serious occasion of worship. And the people of God were not to take it lightly. They were to take it seriously. They were to follow God's instructions. In fact, there were many times within the history of the nation of Israel that they were judged by God for not taking it seriously, for not observing it in the way that God had told them to observe it. They were to teach their children the meaning of all of this. Look at verse 24. You're there still in Exodus chapter 12. Verse 24, you shall observe this right as a statute for you and for your sons forever. And when you come to the land that the Lord will give you as he has promised, you shall keep this service.

And when your children say to you, what do you mean by this service? You shall say, it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover. For he passed over the houses of the people of Israel in Egypt. And he struck the Egyptians, but spared our houses. And the people bowed their heads in worship. There's a specific command here.

[12:02] Teach this to your children. Teach this to your children. We all carry this command still. We're not necessarily focused on teaching our children the significance of the Passover as much as we should be committed to teaching our children the significance of this supper. Because in teaching them the significance of this supper, we teach them the significance and the meaning of the gospel. We need to be bound to that. But it wasn't just that they were to teach their children. Only the people of Israel were permitted to observe this feast.

You couldn't just decide if you weren't a member of the nation of Israel, you couldn't just decide that you were going to participate. It doesn't work that way. In fact, look with me at verse 43. The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, this is the statute of the Passover. No foreigner shall eat of it.

But every slave that is bought for money may eat of it after you have circumcised them. No foreigner or hired worker may eat of it. It shall be eaten in one house. You shall not take any of the flesh outside the house, and you shall not break any of its bones. All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. Shall keep it. All of them. And if a stranger shall sojourn with you and would keep the Passover to the Lord, let all his males be circumcised first. Then he may come near and keep it. He shall be as a native of the land, but no uncircumcised person shall eat of it. So it was necessary for all of Israel to observe the Passover. And only the community of Israel could celebrate this Passover. So God's people did so. Annually, year by year, they went through this in the way that God had commanded. I want you to flip over to chapter 13. Perhaps you're already on that page. And look with me at verse number eight. I want you to see another significance to this meal.

Chapter 13, verse eight. You shall tell your son on that day, on the day that you observe this feast, it is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt. And it shall be to you a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes that the law of the Lord may be in your mouth. For with a strong hand, the Lord has brought you out of Egypt. You shall therefore keep this statute as it appointed from year to year. Now notice how personal of a memorial this meal was. Did you see the language there in verse number 13? You shall tell your son on that day, it is because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt. Now we of course understand that initially to be applied to this first generation of delivered Israelites. But this was something that was repeated beyond that first generation. For hundreds of years after that, as they would gather around their table in their homes to observe the Passover, whoever's leading the Passover would look at their son and they would say, this is to remind you of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Israel. It wasn't that they had to be a part of that first generation. That's not what made this significant to them.

[15:16] It was the very fact that they were the people of God. That was the significance to them. It was personal. No matter how long the Passover went, no matter how many hundreds of years it went on, it was personal because they were God's people. And it marked the identity of the nation.

It was a significant mark on them. The nation that God had chosen, whom he had delivered from bondage, its observance represented who they were. The Passover was just for them because they were a peculiar people. The Lord's table is just for believers because we too are a peculiar people.

And this is a peculiar thing. It's significant to us. As believers, it was significant to the nation. At Mark 2, they were. All right. Now we're going to go to another Passover passage. Okay. This time, it's in the New Testament. I want you to go to Luke 22. Luke chapter 22. At this point, the nation has observed the Passover for thousands of years. And the scriptural narrative zooms in for us on a specific Passover meal taking place with a specific group of people in Jerusalem.

Jesus is leading this Passover meal with his disciples. And we look at it in verse 14. And when the hour came, he reclined at table and the apostles with him. And he said to them, I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

Now it's not by chance that Jesus instituted the Lord's supper as he and his disciples gathered for the Passover celebration. Notice the words that Luke records the Lord saying. He had longed to eat this meal. He had had Passover with them before, but it was this Passover that he longed for. He earnestly desired for this one because he knew that his suffering would provide salvation that was so much greater than what the Passover represented. This is important. He was about to radically transform the meaning of that meal. When Jesus died on the cross, he was not instituting the Lord's supper in addition to the Passover. He was fulfilling the Passover. And then he was transforming the feast.

[ 17 : 55 ] He's transforming the memorial. Now when they would come together for this meal, it would mean something totally different than it had meant up to that point. And he longs for this. He longs for this moment because he understood the significance of what he was about to do. And he longed for it joyfully to have this meal. And then he began to transform it. Look at verse 19. And he took the bread. And when he had 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. Now there's a particular structure and liturgy to how Jews go about observing the Passover meal. It was true then. It's still true today. You'll find this in the Passover cedar.

There are various stages of this meal. It's very structured. There are various stages of the meal, various cups that are used throughout the meal. And intertwined with all of that are statements that are repeated annually during the Passover. Lessons that are given. The story of the Exodus is told. All of those things are happening in the course of this meal. Now what the disciples would have been accustomed to hearing when whoever was leading the Passover was holding the bread, taking the bread in their hand at this point in the meal, they would be used to hearing this. This is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt. If you went to a Passover cedar today, you would hear the same statement. When whoever is leading it holds the bread at a particular moment in the meal, this is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in Egypt. And it goes on from there to say a few other things. Now imagine the disciples have participated in this their whole lives.

They've heard this statement every time the Passover has come. But on this occasion, Jesus takes the bread in his hands and he does not say this is the bread of affliction that our forefathers ate. It must have come as a surprise to them when now he changes the language and he says, this is my body.

This is now my body. He's transforming the meal. We're not going to look at this meal anymore, fellas. And we're not going to look at Egypt anymore. We're not going to talk about bondage from Egypt or deliverance from Egypt anymore. This no longer represents the bread of affliction.

[ 20 : 13 ] This is my body given for you. It would no longer be a time to reflect on Egypt. It would be a time to reflect on this deliverance that believers experience from sin and death.

And how would they remember this salvation? Because that's what he said to do in the verse. Do this in remembrance of me. Well, how would they do that? By remembering the sacrifice that he made for their sins. Moving forward, they were to observe this new supper in memorial of what he was about to accomplish in just a matter of hours. Now look at verse 20. And likewise, the cup after he had eaten, saying this cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood. He's continuing this transformation of the meal. There were four cups of wine during the Passover cedar. And this would have been the third cup that's referred to as the cup of redemption or the cup of blessing. Now, David Brickner is a converted Jew. This is what he said about this cup. The cup of redemption stood for more than the Hebrews' escape from Egypt. It stood for the plan and purpose of God for all ages.

Even the Israelite understanding, though they reflected on the deliverance from Egypt, they understood this to represent God's purposes of redemption and blessing for the people of God.

And then later in the evening, after the supper, Jesus would go to the garden of Gethsemane and he would pray, let this cup pass from me, not my will, but thy will be done. Well, what is the cup he's referring to? He's referring to the cup of wrath, the cup of God's wrath. Now, what's the disciples supposed to do with this? He was enduring the cup of wrath in order that believers could look back and take it as the cup of blessing. Do you see what Jesus is doing? Jesus doesn't drink the cup. He drinks a different cup that day. He drinks what the Old Testament said was the cup of God's wrath. In that moment, he's preparing to take on himself to become sin for us who knew no sin, as Paul said.

[ 22 : 42 ] So that we could then take this supper and we could take this cup and we could legitimately call this the cup of blessing and the cup of redemption because he took for us the cup of wrath.

That's what's happening here. That's what's happening in the supper. And then notably, he links this to the new covenant. Jeremiah 31 talks about this new covenant. Here's what he says. This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord. I will put my law within them. I will write it on their hearts. I will be their God. They shall be my people and no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each one his brother saying, know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more. Just as the old covenant in Moses was ratified with the blood of the lamb, so God ratified this new covenant with the blood of the perfect lamb. Jesus was linking this moment of his crucifixion to the inauguration of this new covenant. And the supper is to be the sign that calls our focus and our attention back to the fact that Jesus has borne our sins on the cross. In this new covenant, God can say, I will forgive their sins because Christ was punished for our sins. Now we take the cup of blessing truly.

So what is the meaning of the Lord's Supper? What's a memorial meal in which those who have been saved by God's grace remember and proclaim the glorious gospel of Christ?

[ 24 : 37 ] Christ. It's an identifying mark of God's new covenant people. And it's a visible witness of how sinners are saved through the death and resurrection of Jesus. You say, well, is this really that important?

Yes. Yes. It marks us. It marks us as a people. It demands our reflection so that we remember and proclaim our Savior.

Now let's quickly look at the practice of the Lord's Supper. Okay, so we've seen the meaning of the Lord's Supper. And there's so much more we could say that I'm going to refrain from saying. Now we're going to look at the practice of it. And I want you to go specifically to 1 Corinthians. We're going to look at chapter 10 briefly, and then chapter 11, mostly. And I'm going to do my best to make this as brief of an exposition as I can.

Okay, so we're going to look at the practice of the Lord's Supper. If this is what it means, and if this is what God has demanded, our Lord has demanded that we observe as his people, how are we then to observe it?

And so as we come to this passage, it may be helpful for us to remember that outside of the gospel, when Christ instituted the supper, and then the book of Acts, when we see it really for the first time being practiced, this is the only place in the New Testament where it's mentioned here in Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. Now the very fact that Paul addressed it tells us that churches did indeed regularly follow this after the ascension of Christ. Okay, so it's not like a question because it's not everywhere in the New Testament. It doesn't mean that it's not important or that we don't have to observe it. The very fact that Paul's addressing it means that this was a common thing. They were doing this, and they were doing it regularly. But rather than doing it like the annual Passover, it also tells us that they regularly did this, and they regularly did this as the church gathered together. And then it also reminds us that this ordinance can very easily be corrupted, which is the context in which

[ 26 : 52 ] Paul is writing this. It's not that he's laying out a manual here, for these are the steps that you go through in the Lord's Supper. We don't have that in the scripture. We have grace to do that in different ways. But what he's dealing with is correcting the manner in which they were coming to the table and how they were perverting and distorting what it actually was. They had abused this time of worship.

Paul even says, I think in verse 20 of chapter 11, that he could no longer even consider this the Lord's Supper in their case because they had so abused it. And so we need to understand the

larger context of this passage as we come to it, okay? And let's just go through it quickly. Just a few things if you're keeping notes. First, this is a meal of communion. It's a meal of communion. Somebody asked me, I think it was Michaela asked me, are your points alliterated today? Well, not really, but they all end in ION. And so that may be helpful to you. It's a meal of communion. Look at chapter 10, verse 16. The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. Now, when we're talking about communion here, we're talking about a literal communion, a fellowship first vertically in our communion with God, and then horizontally in our communion with others. Now, in the larger context of chapter 10, what Paul is dealing with is not the Lord's Supper. What he's dealing with is idolatry.

And it was a particular practice that the Corinthians had fallen into. He was warning them about participating in pagan feasts, even though they were not directly worshiping false gods. So there was the temple in Corinth, and they would go and participate in these feasts that would take place there. As believers, they weren't worshiping the false gods, but they didn't mind being a part of this whole kind of celebration process thing that was taking place. And Paul is writing to them, and he's warning them about this, warning them about this idolatry. And his point is this, that these feasts are not merely physical meals, but they are, there are spiritual realities at work through them.

[ 29 : 07 ] And he goes on to say in chapter 10, these gods aren't real. It's not that they're real gods, but what is behind these false gods are real demons and a real demonic influence that is going to shape you in a spiritual way. It could be spiritually shaping for those who participated. And Paul used this spiritual reality of communion as a means of making this point. So just as the supper has a spiritual reality to it, so do these pagan feasts. So stay away from the pagan feasts. I don't want you to be a partaker with demons, Paul says. Why? Because you are a partaker with Christ. And that's his point here in verse 16. He uses this word participation. It's koinonia, which refers to fellowship and communion and sharing in something. You'll remember in our study of Philippians, Paul used this word actually quite a bit to talk about the way that the church had shared with him in the gospel and shared with him in ministry and shared with him even in suffering and in giving. And so he wasn't saying that the bread and the wine literally become the body and the blood of Jesus as the Roman Catholic church would teach. That's not what he's saying here. His point is that in observing the Lord's supper, we signify that we are participants in the benefits of the gospel that this ordinance represents.

That when you partake in this, you are communing as one who has shared in the benefits of Christ, that has shared in the benefits of the gospel. In other words, the Lord's supper is not merely a physical act. It is a spiritual act of worship. And in this spiritual act of worship, we commune with our Savior. It's not merely a ritual. It's a time of fellowship with God. That's what this moment is. There's a spiritual reality to it, not a mystical reality, but a very spiritual reality. It's not just the mechanical motions of a religious observance. That's not what this is. It's also to be a time of communion with the church. Look back at verse 17. He uses this word bread. Bread in verse 17 is symbolic of the gospel because, as he uses it there, reminds us that it is the gospel that brings us together in fellowship with one another. So the Lord's supper then is a visible reminder of our unity in Christ Jesus because every true believer partakes of the same bread. And what is this bread? Not the cracker. The bread is Jesus. He's the bread. And as we come together in fellowship with one another, we are being united by his gospel. Why? Because of the bread. That's what this signifies. And it's for this reason that we do several things. We follow, as a matter of prudence, various things in our partaking of this. It's for this reason that only those who have trusted Christ for salvation can participate.

An unbeliever cannot participate in this meal. It's not for them. It's also for this reason that we understand the Lord's supper to be an ordinance of the gathered church. It's not a time of personal private devotion. This is corporate worship as we partake in this. We don't take this at home. We don't take it with our families unless our family is our church. If that's all we have, then by all means. This is an ordinance of the church.

[ 32 : 54 ] church. Don't do this online. We do this when we gather. It's given to the church. It should be observed in the gathering of the church. Not at church camp.

Not in your missions conference at your Bible college as I had participated in. This is for the church. It matters for the church. So it's a meal of communion. Let's move quickly next. It's a meal of commemoration. It's a meal of commemoration. Now, not all of these are ending in T-I-O-N. They are all ending in I-O-N. So let's make that distinction. It's a meal of commemoration. Let's go to chapter 11 now and look with me at verse 23. Paul basically reflecting on what Luke wrote about, though Paul probably wrote this first, says, for I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you. He had already taught them about this, that the Lord Jesus on the night that he was betrayed took bread.

And when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, this is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way, also, he took the cup after supper saying, this is the cup of the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me. Now, we've already talked about this extensively. There's no reason for us to go much further here. But it is indeed a time of spiritual communion with God and one another. But it's also memorial meal at its foundation.

That's what it is, practically speaking. We are remembering Christ in the gospel. And Jesus specifically said, do this in remembrance of me, not to receive something from me, but to remember what you have already received through me, specifically his death and resurrection.

So it means, it's a means of remembering salvation. Okay. One of the things that I would like to just note here before we move on is the emphasis on repetition in these verses. As often as you do it, remember me. It's something that's to be observed regularly. Now, what that means is going to look different in every church. What we're hoping to follow course beginning today is to take this once a month. And we could do this in a number of different ways. The point is not following a schedule. The point is that we do it often. And that we often come to the table. And that we often reflect on this.

[ 35 : 21 ] It's a meal of commemoration. Thirdly, it's a meal of proclamation. It's a meal of proclamation. Look at verse 26. For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do what? Proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Now, Paul's not talking about the sermon here. And we come together for worship.

We always have a sermon. That's not what he's referring to. He's not talking about the sermon. He's talking about the supper itself. In this ordinance, the congregation does the proclaiming, not the elder. The congregation does. As we take of this in just a moment, you proclaim the gospel. The event itself proclaims this gospel. Now, we called this a gospel ordinance at the beginning because it visibly demonstrates the gospel. I think it was Augustine that referred to the Lord's Supper as the words of Christ made visible. That's what's happening here. We are proclaiming this gospel truth. And the event itself, when interpreted by the scripture, proclaims this glorious truth. And there's three elements to this proclamation. The first is the death of Christ.

The very picture of the broken bread is his death. His spilt blood is his atonement. That's significant. It's what it's teaching. As you observe this in just a moment, remember, this represents his death, his atonement for us. But then it represents his resurrection.

Did you notice the second phrase? You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Well, until he comes assumes that he's no longer dead. Which means as we're proclaiming another coming, which is the third element of it, his return, we are first proclaiming that he's not still dead. He has risen. And it's because he's risen that there is an atonement. His death on the cross meant nothing if he didn't raise from the dead. And when we partake of this supper, we are visibly proclaiming as a congregation, Christ is dead. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. That's what this proclaims. It's amazing.

[ 37 : 33 ] It's an amazing gospel. And it's what it represents for us. It's what it represents for those who gather to us who have no business taking this supper, but may at least watch us proclaim it as we take it. It matters.

And so if you're an unbeliever here, this is not for you. This supper is not for you. But neither will you be dismissed from this service. We want you to see it.

We want you to watch it. We want you to understand its interpretation from the scripture so that the Lord through this meal will proclaim his gospel to you and you might come to believe.

And then finally, it's a meal of examination. Now, this is where I have often presented this poorly.

And so I want to try to recover some of that without being too lengthy on this. Okay, look with me at verse 27.

Whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself then and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

[ 38 : 54 ] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. And we're not going to read this, but you can mark verses 17 to 22, and maybe you'll read them later.

What it reveals to us is that the Corinthian church had wildly abused this ordinance. So much so that again, in verse 20, Paul says, what you're doing is not the Lord's Supper.

That's not at all what this is. It had become a meal in Corinth that reflected the division in the church rather than the unity of the gospel in the church. The wealthy were gorging themselves. We get the picture here that the wealthy were even showing up perhaps early and they were bringing all of this food with them.

There was a matter of status that would have been consistent with the culture in Corinth and they were finding their place and they were having their meal. And then the poor folks in the church were coming and they were having to go to another place. They weren't together and they had nothing to eat.

And they were gorging themselves on this meal. What was supposed to be a picture of unity and gathering around the table actually in Corinth became a picture of division because they had so perverted the supper. Some of them were even using it as an excess, as an excuse to feast extravagantly.

[ 40 : 16 ] It wasn't about reflecting on the gospel. It was about gorging themselves on food. And some of them, it seems in Paul's statements, were actually getting drunk in the process. Now, can you imagine coming to a Lord's Supper service and Jack over here just eats a little too much and he drinks a little too much in the process of that? Can you imagine somebody getting drunk at the Lord's Supper?

This is what was happening in Corinth. It was showing division. This was not the Lord's Supper that they were doing, but they were calling it that. And this is what led Paul to write this part.

Now, I want you to notice in verse 27, Paul says an unworthy manner, not an unworthy person. Do you notice that? Look at it with me. Verse 27, whoever therefore eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. It's not about whether a person deserves to come to the table, but whether an individual approaches it with indifference or an unrepentant heart, those who are guilty of observing the supper in an unworthy manner, as the Corinthians were doing, were guilty of dishonoring the Savior that the supper represented. Because they had so perverted the ordinance, they dishonored their Savior.

What Paul is not saying here is anything to do with being unworthy to partake of it as a person. Because none of us are worthy of that. None of us are deserving of this gospel. None of us are deserving of this supper. What he means to say here is that we take it seriously and truthfully the meaning and practice of the ordinance itself.

[ 42 : 22 ] And I want to just encourage you, if you come to the Lord's table from time to time, and I want to say how sorry I am if I have insinuated that this is true in times past, but I just want you to know if you have sin in your life and you are battling that sin and you come to the table today, you need not come thinking God will not take me because I am unworthy, because every one of us are unworthy. And you need to be reminded that there is more forgiveness in Christ than there is sin in you.

This is not about you skipping out when the plate comes around because you messed up this morning on your way to church, or you really blew it this week. That's not what this is.

We don't come because we're worthy. We come because he is worthy. That's the point of the supper.

Stephen Um said this, one does not partake in the Lord's supper because he or she is considered worthy. The invitation is solely a gift of God's grace. His warning was not to those who were leading unworthy lives and longed for forgiveness, but to those who were making a mockery of that which should have been most sacred and solemn by their behavior at the meal. That's what Paul's talking about.

Now look at verse 29. He says that anyone who hasn't discerned the body is in danger of God's chastening judgment. And he goes on from there to describe that. Now he's talking to believers.

[ 43 : 56 ] He's talking about the chastening hand of the Lord against believers. He's not talking about eternal judgment for unbelievers. That's not what Paul's dealing with in chapter 11. He's referencing believers who have been saved. And he goes so far as to say, God takes this so seriously that some of you are sick and some of you have even died because you continue to take the supper in an unworthy way.

You dishonor the name of Christ. So it's serious. And he says, what, what, what is it that brings this judgment as well? When we come to the table without discerning the body? Well, what does that mean?

It's possible that by body, he meant the gathered church and that those who were sinning against other believers without repentance were in danger of this judgment. It's possible that that's what Paul means by that. And certainly we can make that, that application. I don't think that's exactly the primary purpose of what he's saying. Here's what I think it is. I think that it's actually referring to taking the Lord's supper without any regard to its truth and significance.

That those who treat the ordinance carelessly and dishonor the Lord will be disciplined, disciplined by the Lord for doing so. And so he says, therefore, let us all examine ourselves.

Verse 28, repent, and then joyfully share in the meal. Now it could go either way with discerning the body and neither one of those applications would be inconsistent with what we understand about the supper. But I think in this context, he's really emphasizing the fact that we think thoroughly and truthfully about what this supper is and that to take it lightly and therefore to distort it in a way that the Corinthians distorted it by getting drunk and showing division amongst themselves was actually inviting the judgment of the Lord. Now here's how I want to conclude.

[ 45 : 49 ] Again, if you're an unbeliever here today, this supper is not for you, but it can be. And that's the point. Because every one of us sitting in this room at one time, we're not allowed to come to this table.

But now we can. And what's the difference? That we've come to repent of our sin and follow Christ in faith. That's the difference. This can be a place for you at this table. It's open for anyone who will repent and turn to Christ. So trust him today. Believe him today. And be welcome to the table.

Remember, we've talked the last couple of weeks about John chapter six, as we've looked at the feeding of the 5,000 and so on. Remember what Jesus said, John 6, 51. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of this world is my flesh, he says. What is this a reference to? Well, it's eventually what the supper comes to symbolize. And then he says, for this is the will of my father, that everyone who looks on the son and believes in him should have eternal life. And I will raise him up on the last day.

Before you can come to this table in a physical sense, you must come to it in a spiritual sense by feasting on the gospel of Christ, by turning to him in faith. And he will welcome you to this table for eternity. And then believers, church. This is a time of corporate worship.

This is a time of worship that we joyfully celebrate. In just a moment, it's going to have a feeling of solemnity. And there's goodness in that. But remember, this is not about beating ourselves up over our sin. This is about rejoicing in the gospel. This is a feast. It doesn't look like much of a feast, but it's a feast. And what's the significance of that? We just take this little piece of bread and this little cup of juice, and it's just a foretaste of what we will feast on in eternity. At the marriage supper of the Lamb, when we commune with our Savior in perfection, perfect communion. So as we take this, we solemnly remember our sin, and then we joyfully celebrate the gospel that Jesus has forgiven our sin. And then we long for the day when we will have this meal with

[ 48 : 37 ] Him in His kingdom. That's what this meal is. So let's take it seriously, and let's take it joyfully, and let's take it regularly as a means of grace.