



**The Supper  
of the Lord  
at the Table  
of the Lord**

# **The Supper of the Lord at the Table of the Lord**

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## **Abbreviations of the Names of the Books of the Bible**

### **Old Testament**

Gen – Genesis

Exo – Exodus

Lev – Leviticus

Num – Numbers

Deu – Deuteronomy

Jos – Joshua

Jdg – Judges

Rth – Ruth

1Sam – First Samuel

2Sam – Second Samuel

1Kgs – First Kings

2Kgs – Second Kings

1Chr – First Chronicles

2Chr – Second Chronicles

Ezra – Ezra

Neh – Nehemiah

Est – Esther

Job – Job

Psa – Psalms

Pro – Proverbs

Ecc – Ecclesiastes

Song – Song of Songs

Isa – Isaiah

Jer – Jeremiah

Lam – Lamentations

Eze – Ezekiel

Dan – Daniel

Hos – Hosea

Joel – Joel

Amos – Amos

Oba – Obadiah

Jona – Jonah

Mic – Micah

Nah – Nahum

Hab – Habakkuk

Zep – Zephaniah

Hag – Haggai

Zec – Zechariah

Mal – Malachi

## **New Testament**

Mt – Gospel of Matthew

Mk – Gospel of Mark

Lk – Gospel of Luke

Jn – Gospel of John

Acts – Acts of the Apostles

Rom – Epistle to the Romans

1Cor – First Epistle to the Corinthians

2Cor – Second Epistle to the Corinthians

Gal – Epistle to the Galatians

Eph – Epistle to the Ephesians

Phil – Epistle to the Philippians

Col – Epistle to the Colossians

1Thes – First Epistle to the Thessalonians

2Thes – Second Epistle to the Thessalonians

1Tim – First Epistle to Timothy

2Tim – Second Epistle to Timothy

Tit – Epistle of Titus

Phlm – Epistle to Philemon

Heb – Epistle to the Hebrews

Jam – Epistle of James

1Pet – First Epistle of Peter

2Pet – Second Epistle of Peter

1Jn – First Epistle of John

2Jn – Second Epistle of John

3Jn – Third Epistle of John

Jude – Epistle of Jude

Rev – Revelation

# The Supper of the Lord at the Table of the Lord

## 1. Introduction

By means of this writing we would like to pass on some basic principles that we have found in God's Word on the Table of the Lord and who can take part. We would like to note that the Supper of the Lord is a component of several aspects of functioning as a local church which are all important. For example, we read that the believers, when the church recently had been formed on earth, "*continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers*" (Acts 2:42). All these aspects are still of great importance.

However, we will restrict ourselves to the Lord's Supper at the Lord's Table, as it is on this aspect that often questions are put. These questions raised in us the desire to help believers, who have questions in this matter. That we would like to do by means of this writing.

We emphasize that we speak about *principles*. Its application by the local church will have to be done in dependence on the Lord Jesus. It is *His* church.

## 2. A child of God, sealed with the Holy Spirit

The Lord Jesus would like His own to remember Him by taking part in His Supper at His Table.

*23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the [same] night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke [it] and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner [He] also [took] the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink [it], in remembrance of Me." (1Cor 11:23-25)*

His own are all those who with repentance and confession of their sins went to God, and by the faith in the Lord Jesus have peace with God (Rom 5:1). All those who have believed the gospel of their salvation (1Cor 15:1-4) are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (Ef 1:13). They have received the spirit, that is the spirit of sonship, as a result of which they know and speak to God as their Father (Rom 8:14-16). Someone who has not the spirit of Christ, does not belong to His own (Rom 8:9).

*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have[a] peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Rom 5:1)*

*Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you — unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. (1Cor 15:1-4)*

14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God. (Rom 8:14-16)

Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (Rom 8:9b)

### **3. All believers form the church of God**

All believers together make up the church of the living God. By the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, about which we read in Acts 2:1-4, are all they who believe in the name of the Lord Jesus, baptized into one body.

1 When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord[a] in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and [one] sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. (Acts 2:1-4)

Since that time believers are members of the body of Christ. Together they form the church of God:

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also [is] Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. (1Cor 12:12-13)

It is here the unity of the body that all believers on Earth. Paul, who are not themselves in Corinth was present there, is to speak of "we ... all".

### **4. The local church**

It is impossible to bring all believers on earth together at one location to bring into practice the unity of the body. What is possible, is that the believers in a particular place to show forth the characteristics of the church as a body:

To the church of God which is ... with all who in every place ... (1Cor 1:2)

"Every place" is there, where the believers would like to function in dependence on the Head of the body, Christ. So Paul says to the Corinthians:

Now you are Christ's body, and members individually. (1Cor 12:27)

He does not say that they are *the* body of Christ, because that would mean that the body of Christ, the church, only was in Corinth and that outside the believers in Corinth there would be no members of the body. No, the believers in Corinth show forth locally the body of Christ that is currently on earth. And this holds true for "every place" where believers come together as a church.

### **5. One body**

As a symbol of the unity of the church as body of Christ the Bible uses a loaf of bread. If believers come together as a church to break bread at the Table of the Lord, they show what they are:

*For we, [though] many, are one loaf, one body; for we all partake of that one bread. (1Cor 10:17)*

Who take part of that one bread? All those who are members of the body. It takes place locally, but in the one bread the many, that all the members, are seen. Paul again speaks of "we". The bread was broken in Corinth, but he was one with them, he also was a member of the body and was therefore seen in the one bread.

We can say that in the breaking of the bread in a particular place *all* believers are seen. The Lord wants each believer to show that by taking part in the breaking of the bread.

## **6. Divisions**

Then a question that next needs to be answered is: why do not all believers do what the Lord wishes? There are a number of reasons. One reason is the division among the believers:

*10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and [that] there be no divisions among you, but [that] you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's [household], that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." (1Cor 1:10-12)*

What was already present in Corinth, we see developing in the course of church history in a multitude of churches and groups, each with their favorite persons or doctrines by which they separate from others. In such cases, it often turns out that it is not enough to be a member of the body of Christ. To belong to that church or group you have to become a member of it. To this separation between believers there is nothing to say in advance. Paul exhorts the Corinthians about this division. Here the unity of the church is not made visible.

## **7. Hindrances for communion**

Another reason why believers do not (or cannot) comply with the wish of the Lord, has to do with discipline. As a believer lives in iniquity or has an evil doctrine, he is not allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper. This leads to a further important consideration and that has to do with the *fellowship* which all partakers have if they break bread, as it is written:

*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (1Cor 10:16)*

The blood of Christ is the foundation of communion; the communion of the body of Christ is the result of it. By the blood of Christ the sins of all those who believe on His Name are forgiven:

*26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke [it], and gave [it] to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." 27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave [it] to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you." (Mt 26:27-28)*

Sin cannot go hand in hand with the breaking of the bread, in which is expressed the communion of the body of Christ. Believers who participate in the breaking of the bread, will do so after examining themselves whether the conscience is free before God and people.

*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. (1Cor 11:28)*

If there is a sin to confess, it must first be done. Sin must always be confessed to God, and if someone else is involved, it also had to be confessed to the other one. Only then there can be sacrificed to God:

*23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. (Mt 5:23-24)*

## **8. Discipline by the local church**

However, if there are no self-judgment and confession of sin by himself, while it has to happen, than the church has to judge the sin. That is, of course, just in case it is a public sin, a sin which is seen by others. Then the following applies:

*Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person." (1Cor 5:13b)*

This always will be the case only if everything is tried that someone realizes his sin and bring him to the confession of his sin:

*15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' 17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell [it] to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. 18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. 19 "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. 20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Mt 18:15-20)*

The main thing is that sin not set foot ashore into the local church that wants to be 'body of Christ'. Every sin can – unfortunately – happen in a local church. The question is how is dealt with it.

## 9. Depart

If a local church refuses to judge the sin, it must be stated that it bears no longer the characteristic of 'body of Christ'. It requires of the believer who is there that he personally departs from that local church:

*Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity. (2Tim 2:19b)*

The picture that is used here, is not that of a body, but of a house:

*20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work. 22 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. (2Tim 2:20–22)*

From this section, it appears that if a believer had to depart somewhere the Lord then asks that he with others calls upon Him out of a pure heart. It is not according to God's mind that a believer goes his own way, without communion with fellow believers.

## 10. The altar

To find out how this works out in the practice, a indication of Paul in *1 Corinthians 10:18* is a help. He refers to the service in the Old Testament:

*Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?*

The altar which was in the tabernacle, is in the Old Testament also called "table of the Lord" (*Mal 1:7*).

*Yet you say, 'In what way have we despised Your name?' "You offer defiled food on My altar, But say, 'In what way have we defiled You?' By saying, 'The table of the Lord is contemptible.' (Mal 1:6b-7)*

The remainder of *1 Corinthians 10* treats of the Table of the Lord. A table is a picture of communion. By eating the offerings that were sacrificed on the altar the people of God had communion with the altar. The altar is a symbol of the whole service that was held, including the daily life of all those who took part. In the same way every and each one who takes part in the breaking of the bread at the Table of the Lord has communion with the whole of the service which is held and with the everyday life of all those who participate.

It is important that, before we partake somewhere at the Table of the Lord, we know how they deal with discipline. This we can examine by checking up who they accept and who they refuse. Some of the features we have already laid down: only believers may take part, who are certain of the forgiveness of their sins, and do not live in sin, have no false doctrine and do not have fellowship in a church where is no discipline in relation to the things just mentioned. But there are still some questions that must

be answered.

## 11. Sin prevents communion

Sin strikes at the roots of the communion of believers. That communion is, of course, based on the blood of Christ that had to be shed to forgive sin, because "*without blood-shedding there is no remission*" (Heb 9:22). The continued existence of sin is a refutation of the necessity and value of His work. That is why the sin has to be removed from the church, either by self-judgment, or by removing the wicked one. It will be clear that someone who lives in sin, could not be received. We see that sins always affect the Person and the work of Christ and the authority of Scripture. There are all God's children agree. There may not be difference of understanding among God's children about these things. Scripture speaks emphatically about the fact that sin makes it impossible to have communion and gives a number of specific cases, without giving a complete list. The question is the character of sin:

- a. sins that happen in practice and are maintained or are explained away. The question is not to *fall* into sin, but to *live* in sin.

In *1 Corinthians 5:11* some examples are given, without saying that this is an exhaustive enumeration:

*But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person. (1Cor 5:11)*

Some current examples are: acceptance of cohabitation of unmarried partners, homosexual relationships and sex before marriage.

Where it is found that sin is an integral part in the life of someone who claims to be a believer, this is a refutation of the work of Christ. Christ died, after all, under the judgment of God for that sin. It is unacceptable that that sin, and what other sin as well, ever shall have a place in the life of a believer.

- b. sins that affect the person of Christ:

*9 Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; 11 for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds. (John 2:9-11)*

The doctrine of Christ concerns the glory of his Person. Every error that drags down His glory, for example, denying His eternal Sonship, or His true Humanity, is a sin with which each communion has to be broken.

We also see here that who greets someone who preaches a false Christ, that is to say with the Christian greeting and grants him accommodation, has communion with that preacher. Such a person associates himself to the false doctrine (although he personally may have other thoughts about Christ) and is put on the same place as the

false preacher. The same applies to God's Word. It is impossible to have Christ and at the same time to deny or to doubt the perfect, faultless inspired Word of God or the full authority of it in all areas of life.

*18 For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and [from] the things which are written in this book. (Rev 22:18-19)*

*As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed. (Gal 1:9)*

## **12. Ecclesiastical differences**

The foregoing considerations give the limits of communion. All who love the Lord Jesus and God's Word will agree with them. In practice, however, we have to do with *difference of intelligence or understanding* on the church form.

There are believers in all kinds of churches and communities who are in agreement with the foregoing. In their church, sin will not be tolerated. There is discipline in moral and doctrinal matters. However this does not mean that of the church or community where they are it can be said that there is 'the altar' that is to say, the Table of the Lord. It is also important to reckon with the body of Christ as a unity which *is controlled by Him as the Head*. In many groups and churches, that is not the case. That appears from, for example, that in some cases, members of the body are refused because they are not linked as members with the concerned church.

It also appears from the fact that the rights of the Lord are neglected, for example, in cases where all kinds of structures are made, functions are allotted by taking a vote, and the opening-up of certain activities for women.

These are situations that can be called 'ecclesiastical errors'. Someone once this described this as follows:

*'We are not entitled to equalize the church with Christ or to put ecclesiastical error along with against Christ's person. If we do that, we glorify the church, as Rome does. And that is not faith, but fanaticism.'*

In cases of 'ecclesiastical errors', we often see on the one hand, genuine recognition of the authority of God's Word, while on the other hand, we see a practice that is contrary to God's Word. We see a one man service, a programmed worship, a public service of women in the meetings of the church. We cannot agree with it and be linked with such a church. If, however, sincere believers from that church, who in sincerity are convinced 'to be church' in the way they do is on the basis of God's Word, just for this reason, are refused to take part in the breaking of bread, we sin against the Lord.

In order to celebrate the Lord's Supper with a believer from such a church or denomination, it is important to know that he or she meets the Scriptural conditions, in respect of the truths about the Person of Christ and His work. If such a believer who wants to take part, the personal testimony of that believer is not enough. No one can be received solely on the basis of what he himself says. This did not happen even with Saul who energetically was brought unto repentance by the Lord Jesus and whom He made to the apostle Paul (*Acts 9:26-27*). Even the Lord Jesus says that His testimony is not true if He bore witness concerning Himself (*Jn 5:31*), that is to say that it cannot be accepted. This is how He Himself has recorded it in the law (*Deu 19:15*). A witness can only be accepted if there are witnesses who are able to confirm the case.

*26 And when Saul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. 27 But Barnabas took him and brought [him] to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. (Acts 9:26-27)*

*If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true. (Jn 5:31)*

*One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established. (Deu 19:15)*

If there is a to all unknown believer comes in a local church, he or she can be commended by a letter by believers who know him and are known to the church he visits:

*And when he desired to cross to Achaia, the brethren wrote, exhorting the disciples to receive him; and when he arrived, he greatly helped those who had believed through grace. (Acts 18:27)*

In other cases, two or three brothers of the local church will speak with an unknown believer. If they do so in praying dependence of the Lord, He will, by His Spirit and Word clarify whether they have to do with a true child of God or that there are Biblical obstacles for communion. They can report to the church, after which the local church will decide before God. The whole of the local church is responsible for acceptance or exclusion:

*Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. (Mt 18:18)*

The word "you" is in plural. With "you" the Lord Jesus not addresses Peter, but the whole of those who form the local church. An important text, if it comes to exclude sin, is what is said to the Corinthians in a case of fornication among them. They also get the instruction as local church as a whole:

*Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person." (1Cor 5:13).*

### 13. Local churches are related one to another

The quoted text (*Mt 18:18*) shows also another thing. Local churches will accept decisions, taken in the Name of the Head of the church and on the basis of God's Word, from each other. Of a circle of local churches that impose a dictation on other churches, the Scripture says nothing. It concerns the actions of a local church in dependency on the Head and on the basis of the Scriptures. That will be recognized by any other local church that wants to act in dependency on the Head and according to the Scriptures.

In his teachings to the church in Corinth Paul points out several times on the mutual relation between local assemblies:

*For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church. (1Cor. 4:17)*

*But as God has distributed to each one, as the Lord has called each one, so let him walk. And so I ordain in all the churches. (1 Cor. 7:17)*

That mutual bond does not consist of a formal record of it. Nowhere in the Scriptures, we have any indication for such a record. It is not possible to be added to or removed from such a bond by men. That bond is made visible if the local churches are listening to what Paul teaches. Each local church who is acting in dependency on the Head on the basis of the Word of God, is part of that bond, and each church which judges the being an church in this way will recognize it.

The claim laid by those people by saying they are acting in the Name of the Lord, while there is no basis in Scripture, must be rejected. What counts is to "*hear what the Spirit says to the churches*" (*Rev 2:11,17,29; 3:6,13,22*) and to recognize that. To recognize that, we have the Word of God. What the Spirit says to the churches, is always in accordance with God's Word. That is why God's Word is the touchstone to judge all things, including the receiving of believers to the Supper of the Lord at the Table of the Lord.

If you want to comment, you can do so to:

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