

A Piece of the Loaf

A Biblical Model of the Assembly



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Part I. When you come together

The Last Supper. The very mentioning of this term puts images in our hearts and minds that may or may not match what actually happened in Scripture. So, what exactly happened? Let's dive into Scripture and ask that question. What we find might surprise, amaze, or even offend. But in order to be faithful to God's revelation in his Word, we really must ask, must we not?

- Chapter 1, “*Proclaim the Lord's death until he comes*” — simply reconstructs in outline form exactly what happened that first night Jesus met with his disciples, and asks a crucial question: “If Jesus invited us to do this in remembrance of him and Paul adds that by doing this we proclaim our Lord's death until he comes, is there any good reason not to do just that?”.

— explains...

1. “Proclaim the Lord's death until he comes”

“Do this in remembrance of me.” For every time you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.

--From 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

“Do this in remembrance of me.”

What did Jesus want us to do in remembrance of him? What are the implications of this for our understanding of the Body of Christ? In order to really understand this, we must first look at exactly what Jesus and the disciples did that last supper. Then we need to ask, “What did the early disciples understand Jesus to mean?”

The following outline describes what happened, and was produced simply by harmonizing what all of the Gospels and 1 Corinthians say about the Last Supper.

1.1. A harmony of the Last Supper

- Start of the meal (Mk 14:17; Matt 26:20; Luke 22:14)
 - Jesus predicts his betrayal (Mk 14:18; Matt 26:21)
 - Jesus says, "I have earnestly desired to eat this meal with you..." (Luke 22:14)
 - “Fruit of the Vine” shared: "I will not drink of the fruit of the vine again until the Kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:17-18)
- During the meal (Mk 14:22-24; Matt 26:26; 1Cor 11:23)
 - Jesus washes disciples' feet (John 13:1-17).
 - Bread broken; "This is my body which is broken for you" (Mk 14:22-24; Matt 26:26-29; Luke 22:17-18; 1 Cor 11:23-24); Jesus says: "Do this in remembrance of me" (Luke 22:19, 1 Cor 11:23-24)
- After the meal:
 - “Fruit of the Vine” shared AGAIN. "The cup that is poured out is the new covenant in my blood" (Matt 14:24-25; Mk 26:27-28; Lk 22:20; 1 Cor 11:24)
 - "Do this in remembrance of me" (1 Cor 11:23-24)
- Next: Jesus leads a time of teaching and prayer:
 - Jesus predicts his betrayal again! (Luke 22:21-38, Jn 13:18-30)
 - Disciples argue about who is greater (Luke 22:21-38)
 - Jesus predicts Peter's denial (Luke 22:21-38, John 13:31-38)

- Vine/branches discourse (John 15 1-17)
- The World's hatred / promise of the Holy Spirit (John 15:18-16:18)
- Jesus tells about how he reveals the Father; overcomes the world (John 16:19-33)
- High priestly prayer (John 17)
- Jesus tells them to get money bag, traveling bag, cloak, swords (Luke 22:21-38)
- Conclusion of meeting:
 - Sang a hymn (Mk 14:26; Matt 26:30)
 - Depart for Mount of Olives (the mountain of the Holy Spirit—where olives are grown to be crushed.)

1.2. The Last Supper — A family meal

As we look at the outline above, a few things should immediately strike us:

- Broadly speaking, what we have is a picture or a description of a *family meal*, followed by a time of teaching by the *head of the house*.
- This happened on the occasion of a Passover meal, yet, none of the details of a Passover meal itself are described. The meal description itself is generic.
- From the perspective of the disciples, the time of teaching was *unplanned* and *spontaneous*.

When we look at this sequence of events a bit more closely, a few other things might strike us:

- At the beginning of the meal, Jesus invited the disciples to share the “fruit of the vine”, or in their culture, the wine.
- At the end of the meal, Jesus shared “fruit of the vine” *again*, immediately before he began the time of teaching.

Since wine is the sort of beverage that one sips, rather than guzzling down a glass all at once, the reasonable expectation is that Jesus had them share the wine at the beginning of the meal, they sipped it throughout, and then he offered them a refill, as it were, to begin the time of teaching.

But Jesus didn't stop there, the second time he divided the wine, Jesus did two things:

- He identified the wine with the new covenant in his own blood.
- Just as he had with the bread, he commanded the disciples to “Do this in remembrance of me.”

What did Jesus want the believers to do in remembrance of him? The wine had been shared throughout a full meal. Was that the context that Jesus intended or was he simply referring to the elements of the bread and the wine when he told us to “Do this in remembrance of me”?

The easiest way to answer this question is to ask how the disciples themselves understood Jesus. We are separated from him by around 2000 years, by language, by culture, etc. But the disciples and early apostles had none of these

impediments.

1.3. Comparison to Paul's description of a church meeting

In Paul's epistle to the Corinthians,