

# What Communion is and Why we take it

## **WHAT Communion is**

What we now call Communion originated in Luke 22:14-20 during what has become known as the Last Supper. On the night Jesus was unjustly arrested (and ultimately crucified on the cross the next day), He gathered His 12 disciples together to have one final Passover Meal with them; which was part of the annual Jewish holiday called Passover (Exodus 12). By the 1<sup>st</sup> century, the Jewish people had been celebrating Passover every year for 1500 years to remember and praise God for how He delivered their ancestors from slavery in Egypt, and what the blood of lambs did within their sacrificial system. During the Passover Meal, there was a specified time they ate broken bread and drank poured wine to remember what God did for them through the body and blood of sacrificial lambs.

However, during the Last Supper as Jesus broke the bread and distributed the wine, He declared from that point forward to “*do this in remembrance of me*” (Luke 22:19); meaning, from that point forward the Passover bread was to represent His broken body given for them, and the Passover wine was to represent his shed blood to establish a New Covenant with them. Jesus was communicating to them that He was God’s final sacrificial lamb for the forgiveness of sin.

After Jesus’ resurrection and ascension, His Church (at that point was all Jewish people) started celebrating the annual Passover Meal in remembrance of Him, but when Gentiles (non-Jews) started putting their faith in Jesus, things began to change. Since they weren’t Jewish they had never celebrated Passover before; therefore, the annual Passover meal started being called “The Lord’s Supper” (or Communion). Outside of the four Gospels, the only reference in the New Testament to Communion is 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 and 11:17-34.

We don’t know how often the 1<sup>st</sup> century Church took Communion together. All we know is they celebrated a potluck style meal together in homes called the Lord’s Supper that resembled something like the Jewish Passover Meal. During the meal they gave thanks to God, broke bread to remember Jesus’ body broken for us, and drank wine to remember Jesus’ shed blood for the forgiveness (propitiation) of our sins and to establish His New Covenant with us.

When we take Communion, the bread represents Jesus’ broken (crucified) body, and the wine/juice represents Jesus’ shed blood. As Jesus’ followers, when we take communion, we share in fellowship (communion) with Jesus together, and declare our unity (communion) with one another because of our unity in Jesus.

## **WHY we take Communion**

**To REMEMBER:** Communion is a unique time to remember three things...

- (1) Jesus’ sacrificial death on the cross in our place to save us from the penalty and power of sin, forgive us for our sin, and restore our relationship with God
- (2) Jesus’ resurrection from the grave to prove He is our Savior and provide us with eternal life with God
- (3) Jesus’ promised return, when He will once and for all defeat the Enemy (Satan) and the presence of sin, and fully usher in God’s Kingdom

**To SELF-EXAMINE:** Communion is a unique time to self-examine in two ways...

- (1) Our relationship with Jesus; if there is any sin that is hurting our relationship with Him we need to repent of, or any next steps He is inviting us to take to follow Him
- (2) Our relationship with His Church; if there is any sin against one another we need to confess, anyone we need to forgive, or any relationship we need to reconcile

**To PRAISE:** Communion is a unique time to praise and glorify Jesus for who He is, what He has done through His death and resurrection, and what He has promised will do.