

Communion, the Meal of the Kingdom of God

In the OT and NT we see that meals are mentioned. A few times we see that God explains things or even makes a covenant with them during mealtimes. For example, Moses was asked to climb the mountain with the 70 elders of the people. There God appeared to them and made a covenant with the people.

Ex 24:1,9-11

Abraham prepared a meal for the visitors, who later turned out to be angels of God. They had an important message for him.

Jesus told the disciples many principles about the Kingdom of God. During one of these meals Jesus explained why He had come and what would happen at the end of his life. During this meal Jesus introduced 'Communion' or the Lord's Supper.

Meal with God

It has always been God's intention to communicate with us. He longs for us to listen to Him, while He listens to us.

In our family we nearly always ate together in the morning and in the evening. Now that our children have left home and are married they regularly visit us. Often we eat together. During the many meals all sorts of things get discussed; funny, sad, good things but also difficult problems and deep questions. During the meal we talk about what is going on inside us and in our hearts. As a father, I find these moments among the most beautiful and intimate that I have with my wife and children.

God also longs to eat with us. He wants to make known His deepest desires to us. Whatever is going on in our hearts we can share with Him.

Communion. What happened to the disciples before this supper?

John 13:13-15,21-26,36-38

This is the first thing that happens during the communion that Jesus introduced. Whatever is in our hearts will be revealed. Without any judgement, Jesus shows us what is in our hearts.

John 21:15-17

A few days after Peter had denied Jesus three times, there is yet another meal with Jesus. This time it is early in the morning on the beach. Peter is not judged by Jesus and yet he is walking around with a great sense of guilt. Jesus had said after all that it would happen. Peter had not given his life for Jesus. On the contrary he denied Jesus! And yet Jesus restores Peter during this morning meal.

This is how God works in our hearts. First He shows us the state of our hearts, then He reveals His grace. It started with an evening meal and ended with a morning meal. The old has gone, a new day has dawned.

Eyes See that Which was First Not Seen

Luke 24:13-31

These two men are walking home. They have the news about Jesus' crucifixion but do not know that Jesus has since risen. On their way home, Jesus starts walking next to them. They do not see that it is Jesus. Only when Jesus gives them the bread do the men recognize Jesus.

It can be like that with us. If we commune with God, He opens our eyes for spiritual principles which we have not seen before.



Free From Slavery

Ex 12:21-28

In this well-known story we also find the meaning of Communion. Moses commands all Israelites and everyone who forms part of the covenant to celebrate a meal together. They have to slaughter a lamb and eat it. This lamb is to be spotless, without blemish. They also eat bitter herbs and unleavened bread. They are to take the blood of the slaughtered lamb and wipe it on the doorposts of their home.

This event is a wonderful example of what Jesus celebrated with His disciples. The lamb is symbolic of the sacrifice of Jesus. Once the blood had been spread on the doorpost the angel of death passed over that house. And that is how it is for us. If we believe that we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus then the angel of death passes us by. After this meal the Israelites are set free and leave Egypt after 400 years of slavery. If we celebrate communion it is just like it was back then. We remember that Jesus' sacrifice has been made and we are set free from every type of slavery.



EXERCISE:

Think about the story of Peter. He clearly was a disciple of Jesus. And yet after all those years, in the most difficult of situations, he was not able to confess that he was a disciple of Jesus. Can you understand that? Do you ever have moments in which it is difficult to tell others that you have chosen to follow Jesus? Receive His grace, just like Peter did.

In the coming days, take time to commune with God. Try to share your heart in prayer and try to find God's heart for you.

Celebrate communion together with your mentor and share your heart with God and each other.

Going deeper 2

Communion, a Covenant Meal

Luke 22:16-20

In the previous lesson we talked about the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. Egypt is a picture of us as people in bondage to sin and Satan.

God makes a covenant with Abraham and later with Israel. Whereby God says: "I will be your God and you will be my people". "Your enemy is my enemy."

God commits Himself to Abraham because this man continually trusted God, just as Moses did.

Jesus talks in this passage about the Kingdom of God and a new covenant. The prophet Isaiah declares that God will make a covenant with Jesus.

Is 42:6-9

The old covenant ends with the death and resurrection of Jesus and a new covenant comes into power. A covenant which God has made with Christ, and in Christ, also with us. Jesus is the complete fulfilment of all the promises (covenant) of God. (2 Cor 1:20, Rom 8:31-32).

Everything that God promised to Jesus is now available to us too.

(Eph 1:4, 1Pet 2:9, Rom 4:13-16, Gal 3:16-18).



Fulfilment in the Kingdom of God?

Luk 22:16,18

Jesus says that following this meal He will not eat or drink anything else until the Kingdom of God has come. Jesus was arrested after having made this statement, whipped and crucified. The bread and the wine are the symbolic signs of what happened on the cross. Jesus' body was "broken" and much blood was shed. This was the price Jesus paid to gain victory over sin and satan. Both held people captive and in slavery. Now that the price has been paid by Jesus the Kingdom can break forth on earth. People can now remain free from sin and the power of satan.

What is the new covenant?

Luk 22:20

Under the old covenant, Jews had to keep various laws. But unfortunately, that kept going wrong. New sacrifices had to be made continually. These were animal blood sacrifices which led to reconciliation.

Under the new covenant this is no longer necessary.

Heb 9:11-15

Jesus' sacrifice lasts forever. After His resurrection He is now seated at the right hand of God for ever!

That is why we can remember His sacrifice instead of continually having to bring sacrifices ourselves.

What do we celebrate with Communion?

1 Cor 11:23-25

John 6:50-56

In lesson 6 of part 2 there are 8 points of exchange. These occurred on the cross. Read these points through again. Eating the body and drinking the blood is of course not meant literally. Jesus acknowledges how important it is to hear and apply His words. So communion is not merely symbolic, but we are to believe everything which happened, for that will make us free.

The bread also has another meaning, namely the spiritual body of Jesus, His Church on earth. If you read the entire passage about communion you will see that it talks about being together, living in unity and paying attention to one another.

During a trip to Turkey something really unfortunate happened. One of my team members stepped out the car and dislocated her knee. It was awful to see. She was not able to stand and she was screaming with pain. You saw a big lump in the wrong place.

During communion someone was speaking about Jesus' suffering on the cross. He also said that some joints in the body were dislocated due to the way He was hanging on the cross. At the moment I had to think about the pain my team member had suffered.

In the same way it is said when people in the church of God hurt each other and even split up. Jesus died for this pain too. He wants to restore relationships and make them strong. If we are one as the church, then those who do not know Him can see Jesus and His Kingdom through us.

What are we thankful for during communion?

1 Cor 10:16

The Christian holidays include Good Friday on which we commemorate Jesus' death. At Easter, two days later, we remember His resurrection.

During communion we, just like Paul (see previous lesson 8, part1), think back to the sacrifice Jesus made and the fact that we are made free by this. This is followed by thankfulness that we are free, through His overcoming death and satan.

What do we wait for during communion?

1 Cor 11:26

In the second world war which was fought for five years, mainly in Europe, the Germans and their allies were lord and master. This continued until D-day (decision day). Thousands of vehicles and soldiers carried out an attack on Normandy. This was one of the German's greatest strongholds. On D-day a huge dent was made in the German's defence. It did however take almost a year before a complete surrender was signed on the 5th May 1945. This was known as V-day, Victory day. It was a day of overcoming.

This is what Paul also meant. The first victory over the enemy has been gained here on earth. Jesus overcame satan, sin and death on the cross. But there is still a battle here on earth for complete victory. This will come when Jesus returns.

During communion we take a moment to remember His death, but also the fact that Jesus will return. Then the enemy will be completely defeated.

A normal meal?

1 Cor 11:28,29

In the early church Paul had to sometimes set things straight. The church gathered together and enjoyed a meal together. Paul saw that eating together and communion were no longer separate. He emphasises that one was for our physical body but communion had a spiritual significance.



EXERCISE:

Let us celebrate communion and be completely consumed by the meaning of this and believe it with our whole hearts.

PRINCIPLE 30

The old covenant is ended by the death and resurrection of Jesus and a new covenant comes into effect. A covenant that God has made with Christ, and in Christ also with us. Jesus is the complete fulfillment of all promises (covenants) of God.

