

Communion in Its Fullest - Part 1

by Derek Prince

Derek Prince explores the significance of communion, linking it to the priesthood of Melchizedek and emphasizing the importance of self-examination before partaking.

Duration: 36:02

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:21

Topics: "Communion With Christ", "Eternal Hope"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of recognition, participation, and sharing in our relationship with Christ. He highlights the significance of engaging multiple senses in order to have a greater impact on our understanding and retention of God's word. The speaker also expresses his personal conviction that the ultimate solution to the world's problems lies in the return of Jesus. He discusses the three aspects of communion in relation to Christ: proclamation, remembrance, and anticipation. Additionally, he mentions the importance of self-judgment and avoiding condemnation by the world.

Transcript

This is tape number 4089. Derek Prince speaks on the subject communion in its fullness. Tonight I'm going to speak to you about the table of the Lord.

I'm going to present some simple basic truths from the Bible about the table of the Lord. There are various different names used amongst Christians. The Eucharist, the Lord's Supper, the communion, the table of the Lord.

I think they're all beautiful names. I wouldn't want to give up any of them and no matter which one I may happen to use. I want you to understand that if in your tradition you use a different name we're still speaking about the same thing.

I want to begin by reading from Genesis chapter 14 Beginning at verse 17 reading through verse 24 This describes an encounter between Abraham whose name had not yet been changed to Abraham and one of the most exciting and mysterious characters of the Old Testament, Melchizedek. Let me say right now that the name Melchizedek or Melchizedek means King of Righteousness. And we're also told that he was king of Salem, which is the original name of Jerusalem.

The first part was added later and the word Salem is directly associated with the Hebrew word Shalom. How many of you know what Shalom means? Peace. So this man by his name was King of Righteousness.

By his location he was King of Peace. There's a good deal said about him in the epistle to the Hebrews and He still remains at the end of it all, a somewhat mysterious figure. Some believe that this was a Christophany.

That is a pre-incarnation manifestation of Jesus. Others believe differently. Somebody said once, some of my friends are for it and some are against it and I'm for my friends.

In other words, I'm not quite sure who's right. This passage in verse 18 contains the first use of the word priest in the Bible. The word priest, the concept of priesthood is one of the great themes that run through the whole Scripture.

And as a general principle The first time a concept is introduced in the Bible it's presented in a way which makes it the seed of all subsequent truth that will come out of that concept. And I believe this is particularly true of the first use here of the word priest. You might ask, well why are you introducing a communion service with this passage.

And I want to point out to you, in case you miss it. That in this encounter between Melchizedek and Abraham. Melchizedek presented to Abraham the very same emblems that our communion service will center around, the bread and the wine.

All right, now I'm going to read, beginning of verse 17 Then after Abraham's return from the defeat of Kedorah Laioma, and the kings who are with him. The king of Sodom went out to meet him, that's Abraham, at the valley of Shaveh, that is the king's valley. And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine.

Now he was a priest of God Most High. Want you to notice, that at this crucial moment of success. Abraham was met by two kings.

The king of Salem, Melchizedek, and the king of Sodom. Two cities with very different associations and very different destinies. And in some sense, we found that Abraham was confronted with a choice.

In a certain sense, he had to choose between these two kings. Going on from verse 18, Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. Now he was a priest of God Most High.

And he, Melchizedek, blessed him Abraham and said. Blessed be Abraham of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

And he, Abraham, gave him, Melchizedek, a tenth or a tithe of all. And the king of Sodom said to Abraham. Give the people to me and take the goods for yourself.

In other words, the king of Sodom was saying, you've rescued me and all my people and all my possessions. Obviously you want something for it. I'll be content if you just let me keep my people and I'll give you all the spoil that you've taken.

And Abraham said to the king of Sodom. I have sworn to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth. That I will not take a thread or a sandal thong or anything that is yours.

Lest you should say, I have made Abraham rich. I will take nothing except what the young men have eaten. And the share of the men who went with me, Enar, Eshcol and Mamre, let them take their share.

So Abraham, in a very firm way, said to the king of Sodom. I don't want anything from you at all. So he took what Melchizedek offered and refused what the king of Sodom offered.

This is a principle that I'm going to develop later. Now I am not going to turn to the seventh chapter of Hebrews tonight, because this is really not a Bible study. But if you're interested, you can turn there for yourself at leisure.

And you find that the greater part of the seventh chapter of Hebrews, expounds the nature of Melchizedek's priesthood. And affirms that Jesus is a priest, not after the order of Levi, but after the order of Melchizedek. And it draws a number of distinctions, points out a number of differences, between the priesthood of Melchizedek and the priesthood of Levi.

What I want to point out to you tonight, is that the priesthood of Melchizedek was the initial priesthood. The archetype of all priesthood. It was a superior priesthood.

The priesthood of Levi was introduced later under the law of Moses, was an inferior priesthood. Interestingly enough, if you study the regulations of the Levitical priesthood. You find that the Levitical priests never had anything to offer to God's people, which God's people had not first offered to them.

But Melchizedek offered to Abraham, that which Abraham had never offered to Melchizedek. And we find that there's a contrast in this sense, that the Levitical priests only continued for the human lifetime. And there were many of them, because they had to go on and on offering the same sacrifices, which never finally dealt with the issue of sin.

But then speaking about Jesus, as the high priest of the, after the order of Melchizedek. The writer of Hebrews says, this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sin forever, sat down at the right hand of the Most High. The Levitical priests always stood, they never sat.

Jesus, as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, after he had offered the sacrifice of himself on the cross, sat down. You see the contrast, they stood, he sat. What is the meaning, they stood because their task was never complete.

They had never offered the last sacrifice. He sat, because he'd offered one sacrifice for sin forever, he was never going to have to offer it again. So his is an eternal priesthood, theirs was a temporary priesthood.

They offered many sacrifices for sin, which never finally dealt with the sin issue. He offered one sacrifice for sin, which dealt with sin forever and never had to be repeated. They stood, he sat and he offered that, which they had never offered to him.

Now having said that, let's go on to Matthew the 26th chapter. The description of the Lord's Supper. And I hope in the light of what I've said, that something will immediately become obvious to you.

Matthew chapter 26, reading verses 26 through 29. This describes the scene at the Last Supper. In which Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the communion, the Lord's Supper, whatever you wish to call it.

And while they were eating, Jesus took some bread and after a blessing, or having blessed it, or having given thanks. He broke it and gave it to the disciples and said, take eat this is my body. And he took a cup

and gave thanks and gave it to them saying, drink from it all of you.

For this is my blood of the covenant, which is to be shed on behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on, until that day when I drink it new with you in my father's kingdom. What was the meaning of Jesus taking the bread and then the wine and offering them to his disciples.

What was he saying to them. He was saying in me you see the priesthood of Melchizedek reappearing. It has been in abeyance during the period when the law was the covenant.

Now in the new covenant, the priesthood of Melchizedek is being restored. Interestingly enough, as I've pointed out, Melchizedek was both king and priest. But under the law of Moses, kingship and priesthood were separated.

And they could not be united. Because the priests had to come from the tribe of Levi. The king was appointed to come from the tribe of Judah.

A king could never be a priest and a priest could never be a king. That's another indication of the inferiority of the Levitical priesthood. But when Jesus stood up at the Last Supper and brought forth the bread and the wine.

He was saying by that act, here is the priesthood of Melchizedek. Which has been, as it were, in abeyance during the period of the law of Moses. Reinstated in me.

I am a priest, not after the order of Levi. But after the order of Melchizedek. And through that act, he instituted the new covenant in his blood.

He said, this is my blood of the covenant. Which is to be shed on behalf of many, for the forgiveness of sins. So that's the background from Scripture of the Lord's Supper.

It's a reinstatement of the priesthood of Melchizedek. The highest priesthood, the original priesthood. And the emblems that he offered to his disciples.

Were the same that Melchizedek had offered to Abraham. Now let's see in brief. What the New Testament teaches about the participation in this communion.

I want to point out to you, seven aspects of this communion. Three that speak of our relationship to Christ. Three that speak of our relationship to Christ's body.

And one that speaks of our relationship to the world. But before I do that, I want to read two passages from 1st Corinthians. Which will be the basis of what I'm going to say.

1st Corinthians chapter 10 and then chapter 11. 1st Corinthians chapter 10 beginning at verse 14. Bear in mind that the issue that Paul is here discussing.

Is whether the Christians at Corinth could permit themselves to eat food. Sold in the shambles which had initially been offered in sacrifice. To pagan idols, this is the issue.

And in connection with this issue. Paul brings out some lessons about the Lord's Supper. 1st Corinthians chapter 10 beginning at verse 14.

Therefore my beloved flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men, you judge what I say. Is not the cup of blessing which we bless.

A sharing in the blood of Christ. Is not the bread which we break, a sharing in the body of Christ. The word that's translated sharing is the Greek word koinonia.

Which is normally translated fellowship. In the King James it's translated communion. It means having something together in common.

So when we partake of the bread and the cup. We are affirming that we have this together. In common with all other believers.

Since, verse 17, since there is one bread. We who are many are one body. For we all partake of that one bread.

There's another aspect, we all partake. We all have a personal share in. We have a share in, we also share with.

Verse 18, look at the nation Israel. Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar. Paul is saying the people who fed upon the sacrifices.

Of the Israelites under the old covenant. Were the same priests who'd offered the sacrifices on the altar. So there's a direct connection between eating of the sacrifice.

And the altar on which it was sacrificed. What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything. Or that an idol is anything, no.

But I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrificed. They sacrificed to demons and not to God. In other words it was a form of demon worship.

They were demon idols. And I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.

See in a certain sense that's the same issue that confronted Abraham. When Melchizedek met him. He had to choose between Melchizedek and the king of Sodom.

But his conscience told him he couldn't partake from both. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of demons.

Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy. We are not stronger than he, are we. All right that's the first passage.

The second is in the next chapter. First Corinthians chapter 11 verse 23 and following. For I received from the Lord that which also I delivered to you.

That the Lord Jesus in the night in which 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 he took the cup also after supper saying. This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup. You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner.

Shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. The word that's translated guilty. I would prefer to translate responsible for or answerable for.

Once we have partaken of this communion service. We have made it very clear that we know. The teaching of the New Testament that Jesus on the cross died for our sins.

Shed his blood for our redemption. We are answerable from that moment onwards for what we know. Verse 28 but let a man examine himself.

And so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself. If he does not judge the body rightly.

The King James uses the word discern. The New International Version uses the word recognize. I prefer both of those to the word judge.

I want to read it again. For he who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself. If he does not discern or does not recognize the body rightly.

The same root word is used in the gift of discerning of spirits. As I understand it in its New Testament use. It means to see below the surface and see the inner spiritual reality.

Perhaps discern remains the best word. I'm going to read it again because it's an important verse. He who eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment to himself.

If he does not discern the body rightly. For this reason many among you are weak and sick and a number sleep. That means a number have died prematurely.

You realize that it is possible to die before your time. I think this shows us the seriousness, the sanctity and the solemnity of the Lord's table. That if we partake wrongly.

It can be a cause of sickness and even of premature death. By background I'm an Anglican. And in a certain sense some of the teaching of the Anglican Church.

Would almost make salvation hinge on the communion. But that's not the complete truth. It depends on how you partake of the communion.

So far from being the means of salvation. It can be the very opposite. It can be the means of judgment.

So we must be careful that we do not base. Our concept of our relationship with God. Merely on partaking of the communion.

It depends whether we partake of it rightly or wrongly. It's a very serious issue. Verse 31, but if we judged ourselves rightly we should not be judged.

But when we are judged. We are disciplined by the Lord. In order that we may not be condemned along with the world.

See the Lord's doing everything he can for us in this situation. First of all he says if you will, if you will judge yourself. And so partake in a worthy manner.

I won't have to discipline you. If you fail to judge yourself. Then I'll have to discipline you.

But even if I discipline you. That's better than being judged with the world. That's the ultimate disaster that we need to avoid.

All right having read those passages. Let me now try to bring out briefly. What I see as seven main aspects of the communion.

And I'm going to take them in this order. In relation to Christ. In relation to Christ's body.

And in relation to the world. In relation to Christ. I see that for us partaking of the communion.

Has three aspects. First proclamation. Second remembrance.

And third anticipation. Let's look at the first aspect. Proclamation.

First Corinthians 11 26. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup. You proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

So in partaking of the communion. We are proclaiming the death of the Lord. We're proclaiming it not merely to our fellow believers.

In fact I think that's not the most important aspect. We're proclaiming it to the world. And I think even more important.

We're proclaiming it to the whole unseen world. We're proclaiming to angels, both good and evil. To spirits, good and evil.

We're proclaiming to the whole universe. The death of Jesus Christ. It's an act of proclamation.

You may not be a preacher by ministry or calling. But when you partake of these emblems. You're making a proclamation of tremendous significance.

You're proclaiming to the whole universe. That Jesus Christ the Son of God died and shed his blood on your behalf. To redeem you.

You're proclaiming your faith in him as Savior. You're proclaiming your faith in his atoning death on your behalf. It's primarily an act of proclamation.

As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup. You proclaim the Lord's death. That's the first aspect, proclamation.

The second aspect is remembrance. We look back to his death. Jesus himself said.

And this is found in 1st Corinthians 11 25. This cup is the new covenant my blood. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.

There are things in the Christian life. Which are called sacraments or ordinances. Depending what your particular denomination or background is.

In essence a sacrament or an ordinance. Is a presentation of the most important truths of the gospel. So important that God has in his sovereign wisdom arranged.

That we do not merely present them in words. But we present them in symbolical acts. For five years of my life.

I was a trainer of teachers for schools in East Africa. And one of the things that we used to inculcate. In our trainee teachers was this principle.

And you can change the percentages. But basically we said children remember 40% of what they hear. 60% of what they hear and see.

80% of what they hear, see and do. In other words, if you want to make the maximum impact on the child's mind. Don't let the child merely hear it.

Let the child hear it and see it and do it. Let the child translate what it learns into an action. That the child itself performs.

Now as I understand sacraments or ordinances. The same principle is there. The great basic truths of the New Testament.

Are so important that God has ordained. That we not merely hear them. We not merely hear and see them.

But we hear them, see them and do them. The first of these as I understand is baptism. The initiatory sacrament or ordinance.

By which we become publicly identified with Christ and his body. It's an act and no matter what way it may be carried out. Whether by sprinkling or by immersion.

The basic teaching of all main churches is the same. It's a public act of identification with the Lord Jesus Christ. In his death, burial and resurrection.

And as I understand it without that act of identification. A believer has no right to claim a place in the body of Christ. There is no instance in the New Testament.

Of anybody who claims salvation without being baptized. You cannot find one. Jesus said whosoever believeth and is baptized.

Shall be saved. And this is of such importance. Our identification with Jesus in death, burial and resurrection.

That God ordained that every time a person is admitted to the body of Christ. He shall perform this in action. And not merely that.

But all the others who see him perform it. Are reminded of it themselves. There are another ordinance which I understand or a sacrament.

Is the anointing of the sick with oil. This truth is so important that God doesn't let us merely hear it. Or hear it and see it.

But he enables us to act it out. What is the significance of anointing the sick with oil. The oil as always throughout the scripture typifies the Holy Spirit.

So when we anoint the sick with oil. We are declaring to the whole universe. That we believe the Holy Spirit will do what the scripture says he will do.

He will quicken. He will give life. He will restore health to the body of the sick believer.

The third sacrament or ordinance. Is the ordinance of the communion, the Eucharist or the Lord's Supper. And here we are showing forth.

That Jesus Christ the Son of God died and shed his blood on the cross for us. And every time we do it, we do it in remembrance of him. God never wants us to forget the fact that Jesus died for us as sinners.

I'm convinced a lot of Christians go through much spiritual trouble. Because their minds are not focused on the death of Jesus. They say, I wonder if God loves me, has God forgotten me.

You couldn't talk like that if you remembered the cross. The cross is the ultimate demonstration of God's love for each of us. Romans 8 32, he that spared not his own son but delivered him up for us all.

How shall he not also with him freely give us all things. This is the guarantee that the total inheritance is ours. God says it's so important.

Especially in the hours of darkness and testing and pressure. That I've set in my body this sacrament, this ordinance. By which you will continually remember this fact.

I never want you to forget it. I want you to be continually reminded of it. The old King James Version it says, do this as often as you do it.

And some critics of some sections of the Protestant Church have said. We've changed that to as seldom as you do it. I have become a convinced believer in regularly remembering the Lord's death.

And because some of the churches I associate with don't do it often enough. This may either shock you or bless you. But basically Ruth and I take the Lord's Supper together every morning.

I don't want to forget it. Said of Smith Wigglesworth, who probably you heard of. One of the great pioneer evangelists of the Pentecostal movement.

He wanted to take communion wherever he could get it. He went around looking for any church where they were having communion. And he went in and shared it.

I believe really many of our problems. Spiritual, emotional, psychological. Are due to the fact we don't remember the Lord's death often enough.

And then the third aspect very closely connected is anticipation. Going back to 1st Corinthians 11 26. For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup.

You proclaim the Lord's death. But not forever, until he comes. So not merely do we look back to his death.

But what do we look forward to, his coming. And every time we go through this ordinance together. We are reminding ourselves.

First of all that Jesus died on the cross for our sins. And second, praise God that he's coming again. Now if you could really live in the consciousness.

That Jesus died for you in the past. And he's coming for you in the future. A lot of your fits of depression.

And your ugly moods would never arise. I heard this beautifully expressed in a book. That I read by an old saint of the past generation.

He said when we partake of the communion. Everything else drops out of sight. But for a time being, we focus only on the things that really matter.

And he said it this way, no past but the cross. No future but the coming. How good it is, when we let all the other incidental minor things.

That trouble us and perplex us and confuse us. Just fade out of sight for a little while. And we look back to the cross.

And then we look forward to the coming. There have been periods in the Pentecostal and the charismatic movement. When Christians have been very, very conscious of the coming of the Lord.

And they've kind of talked and acted as if the Lord was coming within the next five years. And then he didn't come. And there's been some kind of a reaction.

Well it's foolish to talk about the Lord's coming. As far as I'm concerned, it is not foolish to talk about the Lord's coming. I believe the Lord is coming.

I believe he's coming quickly. I believe he's coming suddenly. And I find that the New Testament ends with a prayer.

Even so Lord Jesus come quickly. And I think there's something wrong with your spiritual condition. If you can't pray that prayer.

That was written about 19 centuries ago. Was it silly to pray that then ? Not as far as I'm concerned. I am personally convinced.

That no matter what we do as the body of Christ. And we have great responsibilities on earth. Which we have not discharged.

I'm nevertheless personally convinced. The only ultimate solution to earth's problems. Is the personal return of Jesus.

If he doesn't come back. We're in a mess. We'll never get out of.

Let me just repeat those three aspects. In our relationship to Christ. First, proclamation.

Second, remembrance. Looking back to the past. Third, anticipation.

Looking forward to the future. Let me say those words that I've just uttered once. And then I'd like you to say them with me the second time.

No past but the cross. No future but the coming. Can you remember that ? Now let's say it together.

No past but the cross. No future but the coming. Now, I want to point out to you.

Three aspects of this communion. In relationship to Christ's body. And the three words that I have chosen to sum them up.

Are recognition, participation and sharing. Please stop your machine at this point. And turn the tape over.

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