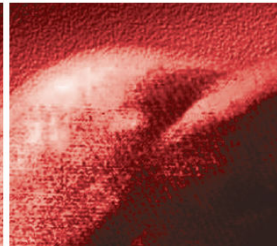
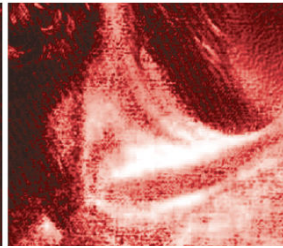
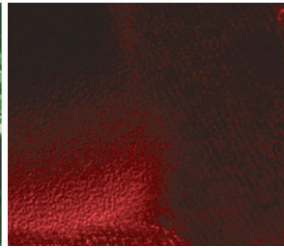
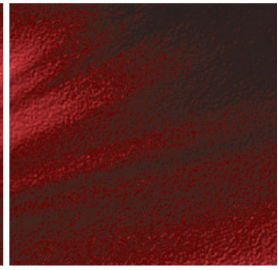
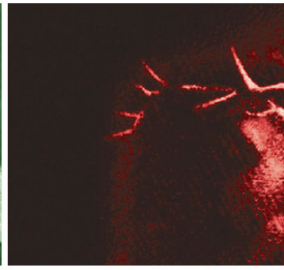
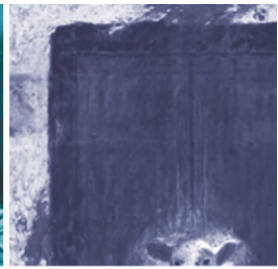


# THE LORD'S SUPPER



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Written by Peter Tobgui.

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# THE LORD'S SUPPER

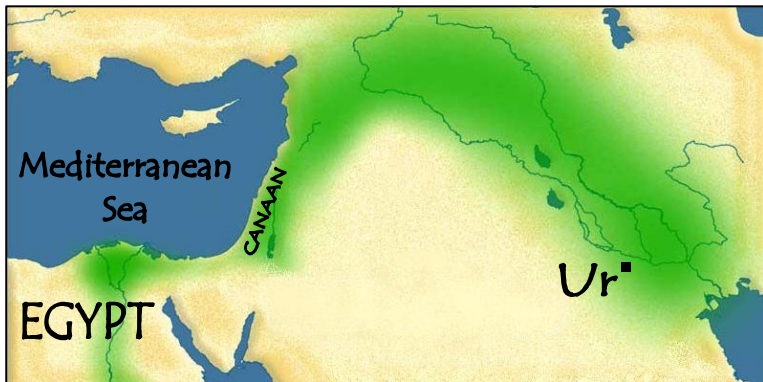
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# 1. THE PASSOVER

Jesus Christ shared the very first Lord's Supper with his disciples, just before his arrest and crucifixion, during the Passover meal. So it's important to understand what the Passover meal was all about and how it's linked to the Lord's Supper.

About 4000 years ago lived a man called Abraham who God chose and called to leave his homeland of Ur and go to the land of Canaan, where God then entered into a covenant (or agreement) with him. God promised him that he would be the father of a great multitude of people, whom God would use to bless others, and that they would inhabit the land of Canaan and surrounding areas (*Genesis 12:1-9; 15:1-21; Acts 7:1-8*).



Abraham's wife Sarah gave birth to Isaac (*Genesis 21:1-7*). Isaac's wife Rebekah gave birth to Jacob (*Genesis 25:19-26*) and God later changed Jacob's name to "Israel" (*Genesis 32:24-30; 35:9-15*). Jacob had 12 sons who would become the fathers of the 12 tribes of Israel. The 12 sons, in order of their birth, were Reuben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Dan, Naphthali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Joseph and Benjamin (*Genesis 29:31-35; 30:1-24; 35:16-21*). Through these 12 sons the nation of Israel was born.

Through a series of events, Joseph (the second youngest son), came to be hated by his brothers. They sold him to a group of traders who were on their way to Egypt – without their father's knowledge. Once in Egypt, the traders sold him to an Egyptian official.

Through an extraordinary series of events, over many years, God remained with Joseph and elevated him to the position of second-in-command of all of Egypt! Only Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, was above him in rank.

A severe, 7 year famine struck all countries and only Egypt had enough food for the people. God used Joseph to help Egypt through the famine by storing grain for 7 years before the famine occurred.

Joseph's family (his father, brothers etc.) were starving in the land that God promised would be inhabited by his people – the land of Canaan. The famine caused Joseph's family (which he hadn't seen for many years) to move to Egypt where they would be fed and cared for – at least 75 people (*Genesis 46:8-27; Acts 7:14*).

For the next few hundred years, the descendants of Jacob's 12 sons increased greatly in number and became many in the land of Egypt. It is estimated that the descendants of Jacob eventually numbered about 2-3 million people in Egypt (*Exodus 12:37*).

These events of how the Israelites came to settle in the land of Egypt can be read in much more detail in Genesis 37-50.

Now that the Israelites were many in number, Egypt's king (the Pharaoh) saw them as a threat and ordered that they be made slaves and work in hard labour. For many years the Israelites suffered greatly and cried out to God for help. God raised up a leader to take them out of Egypt to return to the promised land he had promised to their forefather Abraham – the land of Canaan. The leader who God raised up was called Moses (*Exodus 1-6*).

God used Moses and his brother Aaron to tell Pharaoh to free all the Israelites from slavery so they could leave Egypt. But Pharaoh refused. So God sent a total of 10 plagues on Egypt as punishment.

1. Quickly scan through Exodus chapters 7 to 12 to see what types of plagues God sent on Egypt as punishment for not releasing his people.

- Plague 1 (Exodus 7:14-25) \_\_\_\_\_
- Plague 2 (Exodus 8:1-15) \_\_\_\_\_
- Plague 3 (Exodus 8:16-19) \_\_\_\_\_
- Plague 4 (Exodus 8:20-32) \_\_\_\_\_
- Plague 5 (Exodus 9:1-7) \_\_\_\_\_
- Plague 6 (Exodus 9:8-12) \_\_\_\_\_
- Plague 7 (Exodus 9:13-35) \_\_\_\_\_
- Plague 8 (Exodus 10:1-20) \_\_\_\_\_
- Plague 9 (Exodus 10:21-29) \_\_\_\_\_
- Plague 10 (Exodus 11; 12:29-32) \_\_\_\_\_

The 10<sup>th</sup> plague was the final and most devastating of all the plagues – the death of the firstborn child and firstborn cattle. But the Israelites would be protected from this plague.

2. Read Exodus 12:1-14,21-28. What type of animal was to be used for the sacrifice of the Passover? (v.3-5,21)

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3. When the animal was killed, what did they have to do with its blood? (v.7,21-22)

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4. Why? (v.12-13,23)

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5. Why do you think it's called the "Passover" meal?

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6. How were they to eat the animal? (v.8-11)

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7. What else was eaten with the animal?

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8. How were they to be dressed when eating the meal? (v.11)

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*Leaven* is a substance, such as yeast, that ferments bread and causes it to rise when prepared and cooked. Leavened bread will rise and is soft. Unleavened bread will not rise and is thin and brittle.



Commonly, a piece of leavened dough from another day's batch of dough was mixed in with the new batch of dough. This new batch of dough was set aside and left standing until it was thoroughly leavened – it takes some time for the yeast to spread through the dough. Once the leavening process was complete the dough was used to make bread, cakes etc. It takes time to make leavened bread because you have to wait for the leaven to spread through all the dough before it's cooked. Since God knew that the Israelites would be sent out of Egypt very quickly after the 10<sup>th</sup> plague, there would be no time to prepare leavened bread, so he commanded them to only cook unleavened bread. This is also why they were to be dressed ready for a journey.

When the Israelites finally settled in the land of Canaan, the Passover sacrifice was eventually moved from homes to a central location – the Temple of God in Jerusalem (*Deuteronomy 16:1-8; 2 Chronicles 30; 35:1-19*). The priests would offer the sacrifices and distribute the food to the people to eat.

So the Passover sacrifice was to be remembered by God's people every year. It was to remind them of what God did for them by releasing them from slavery in Egypt to enter the Promised Land he had promised their forefather Abraham.

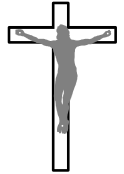
It was during the Passover feast that Jesus Christ showed his disciples what the Passover sacrifice was pointing to.

## 2. THE PASSOVER AND JESUS CHRIST

Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-8. What is Jesus called?

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The Passover sacrifice described in the Old Testament was pointing towards the final and best Passover sacrifice of all time – the Passover sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Below we will look at some similarities between the Passover sacrifice of the Old Testament and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb.



1. The Old Testament Passover sacrifice had to be a lamb or a kid (*Exodus 12:1-5*). Read Isaiah 53:7 and John 1:29. What is Jesus called?  

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2. The Old Testament Passover sacrifice was not to have any diseases, wounds or blemishes – it had to be as perfect as possible (*Exodus 12:5; Deuteronomy 17:1*). Read Hebrews 9:13-14 and 1 Peter 1:18-19. How is Jesus Christ's sacrifice described?  

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3. The Old Testament Passover sacrifice was not to have any of its bones broken (*Exodus 12:46*). Read Psalm 34:20 and John 19:31-37. What was an important feature of Jesus' crucifixion?  

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4. The blood of the Old Testament Passover sacrifice had to be brushed onto the 2 doorposts and lintel above the door. This was a sign to God that the people in that house were to be protected from his wrath and judgment, so he would not kill their firstborn child (*Exodus 12:7, 12-13, 21-23*). Read Romans 5:8-10 and Colossians 1:19-20. What does the blood of Jesus Christ do for us?  

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5. The Old Testament Passover celebrates the freedom that God gave the Israelites by freeing them from slavery in Egypt to enter into the Promised Land (*Exodus 12:24-27; Deuteronomy 16:1-3*). Read John 8:34-36; Hebrews 2:14-15 and Revelation 1:5. What did Jesus' sacrifice do for us?

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6. God commanded the Israelites to commemorate the Passover sacrifice each year so that they would not forget what he did for them (*Exodus 12:14,24-27*). Read Luke 22:19 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. How often are we to take part in the Lord's Supper?

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Jesus Christ's sacrifice was the only sacrifice to completely free mankind from the power of sin and death. His sacrifice opened the way for a restored relationship between mankind and God by paying the penalty for mankind's sin. So important was the work of Jesus Christ's death, burial and resurrection that he began a new celebration for us to take part in - the Lord's Supper.

# 3. THE LORD'S SUPPER

The record of the very first Lord's Supper can be found in Matthew 26:17-30, Mark 14:12-26 and Luke 22:7-23.

## THE LORD'S SUPPER - A MEMORIAL OBSERVANCE

1. Read Matthew 26:17-30. What were the 2 things Jesus commanded his disciples to eat and drink?

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2. Why did Jesus command his disciples to do this? Read Luke 22:19.

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3. The Apostle Paul discusses the Lord's Supper in his letter to the Corinthians. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. According to Paul, what reason did Jesus give his disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup?



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4. According to the Apostle Paul, how long should we celebrate the Lord's Supper for?

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5. Why do we need a ceremony like the Lord's Supper to remember what Jesus Christ did for us?

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6. When taking the Lord's Supper, what should we remember about Jesus Christ's personal experience?

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7. Jesus Christ has done many things for us in the past, the present and will continue to do so in the future – these are all connected to his death and resurrection. Which of these things could you remember Jesus for as you take the Lord’s Supper? Think also about what he’s done for you personally.

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So we can see that Jesus wants us to remember what he went through as he experienced his arrest, crucifixion and resurrection. He never wants us to forget it. What he did for us is so important, that he set up the Lord’s Supper as a **memorial observance**. We do it in memory of Jesus Christ.

## THE LORD’S SUPPER - A SYMBOLIC OBSERVANCE

1. In Matthew’s record of the Lord’s Supper, what did Jesus do with the bread and what did he say it was like? (v.26)

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2. What did Jesus say the drink was like? (v.27-28)

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3. Why do you think Jesus called the bread his body and the drink his blood?

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4. Do you think Jesus literally meant that we would be physically eating his body and drinking his blood every time we took the Lord’s Supper? Read the following passages and write down the other expressions Jesus uses to describe himself.

John 8:12 \_\_\_\_\_

John 10:9 \_\_\_\_\_

John 15:1 \_\_\_\_\_

Jesus spoke figuratively many times. He used common, everyday objects to describe himself or what he did. Speaking figuratively like this can make it easier for us to know and understand him and his ministry. So when Jesus calls himself

“the door” (or “gate”) it doesn’t mean that he’s swinging on a hinge. When he calls himself “the light” he doesn’t mean that he’s a burning candle or a light globe. These expressions have spiritual meaning behind them.

In the same way, when Jesus says that the bread is his body and the drink is the new covenant in his blood, he’s not saying that we will eat him and drink his blood each time we have the Lord’s Supper. There’s a spiritual meaning behind it.

5. Does it really matter if the bread and the drink are not literally his body and blood, but just symbols of them? Yes it does. If they were really his body and blood, then we would be sacrificing Jesus each and every time we had the Lord’s Supper. Read the following passages and write down what they say about how often Jesus Christ has been or should be sacrificed.

Romans 6:9-10

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Hebrews 9:25-28

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Therefore we can see that since Jesus cannot be sacrificed again, he was talking symbolically to his disciples when he said “this is my body” and “this is the new covenant in my blood”. Jesus is using the bread and the drink as symbols of his body and his blood.

- Bread, which is a solid object, is like his body which is also solid. Jesus broke the bread and gave his disciples to eat from it. That’s what Jesus literally did for us. Through his arrest, punishment and crucifixion, Jesus’ body was broken for us.
- The drink, which is from the fruit of the vine (grapes), would most likely be red in colour and is like his blood – it’s a liquid and it’s red. The blood is a symbol of the blood he shed for us. Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sin (*Hebrews 9:22*).

In all 3 accounts of the Lord’s Supper, including the Apostle Paul’s description of it, Jesus says that the cup “is the new covenant in my blood” (covenant means agreement or contract). By Jesus’ death, God did away with the Old Covenant which he made with the Israelites through Moses, and brought in the New Covenant. The Old Covenant had a system of daily sacrifices that had to be made for the sins of the people. But through the sacrifice of the perfect, sinless Jesus Christ, the Old Covenant was no longer needed. God

established a new and better covenant with humans (*Galatians 3; Hebrew 7:11-28; 8; 9 etc.*). This is why Jesus said that the cup “is the **new** covenant in my blood”.

The bread and the drink are great ways to symbolise Jesus Christ’s body and blood. The Lord’s Supper is a **symbolic observance**.

6. Since the bread is a symbol of Jesus’ body and the drink is a symbol of his blood, what are some things you could think about and reflect on as you take the Lord’s Supper?

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## THE LORD’S SUPPER - A SYMBOL OF UNITY

The bread of the Lord’s Supper represents Jesus’ body. During the Lord’s Supper this bread is broken into many pieces for each Christian to eat. The Apostle Paul says that since each person is eating from the **same** bread (which represents Jesus’ body), it shows that we are one body - it symbolises our unity together (*1 Corinthians 10:16-17*).



Also, by eating and drinking the Lord’s Supper together, we show others our common faith in the work of the Lord Jesus Christ and our faith in him.

Keeping in mind the 3 main reasons why we take the Lord’s Supper, do you think it should be a time for godly sorrow, joy or both? Explain your answer.

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So the Lord's Supper is a:

**1. Memorial Observance**

- We are to observe the Lord's Supper so that we don't forget what Jesus Christ did for us and will do for us. He was crucified, buried and resurrected so that our sins could be forgiven and our relationship with God restored, giving us eternal life. But we also remember other aspects of Jesus' ministry, which are all linked to his death and resurrection, like the fact that he is preparing a place for us in heaven, he is interceding for us, he will return for us etc.
- By regularly observing this ceremony, we ensure that the message of Jesus Christ is passed on from one generation to the next until he comes again.

**2. Symbolic Observance**

- The bread and drink symbolise his body and blood and help us picture what he did for us on the cross. It is a symbol of his sacrifice for us.

**3. Symbol of Unity**

- The Lord's Supper reminds us that the church (the body of Christ) is one body. It helps us focus on our common faith together.

## 4. PARTICIPATION IN THE LORD'S SUPPER

### THE PRACTICE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Read the following passages and write down how some Christians in the early church took the Lord's Supper.

Acts 2:42,46

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Acts 20:7

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The early church was obedient to Jesus' command of taking the Lord's Supper. All Christians should obey Jesus and take the Lord's Supper as a sign of our love for him (*John 14:15,21*).

### HOW OFTEN DO WE TAKE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

The Bible gives no specific instructions about how often we should take the Lord's Supper. Jesus simply tells us to do it in remembrance of him (*Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26*) and Paul tells us that we should continue taking the Lord's Supper until the second coming of Jesus Christ (*1 Corinthians 11:26*).

Some churches take the Lord's Supper weekly, monthly and even yearly. It should be observed often enough to give us opportunities to reflect upon the important message it represents, but not too often when it may become routine and meaningless and we don't give much thought to it.

### ORDERLY PARTICIPATION

Jesus instituted the very first Lord's Supper during the Passover meal. Some Christians in the early church also had the Lord's Supper as part of a meal called the agape-meal (love-meal). This meal expressed the sense of family, love and unity the Christians had for one another (eating together is a wonderful form of fellowship). The agape-meal is mentioned in Jude 12 and implied in Acts 2:46 and 1 Corinthians 11:20-34.

**Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.**

1. Keeping in mind that the Corinthian Christians were eating a love-meal together, prior to taking the Lord's Supper, what was Paul rebuking them for? (v.20-22)

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2. What are you guilty of if you participate in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner? (v.27-28)

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3. What does Paul mean by an "unworthy manner"?

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4. How may God punish us if we participate in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner? (v.28-31)

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5. Paul tells us that it's actually a good thing that God judges us this way. Why is this? (v.32)

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6. In order to avoid these judgments from God, what should we do before we take part in the Lord's Supper? (v.28-34)

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7. The Christians in Corinth were getting drunk and not providing food for others during the love-meal. They were not showing love for God or one another. They were being hypocritical when taking the Lord's Supper. In what areas could you examine yourself before taking the Lord's Supper?

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It makes sense that only a Christian should participate in the Lord's Supper, since only a Christian believes in Jesus Christ. It makes no sense for a non-Christian to take the Lord's Supper since they do not believe in Jesus Christ – their sins are not forgiven. Jesus commanded us to take it in remembrance of him until he returns. A non-Christian has little or no understanding of this and could probably fall under the judgment of God for taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner.

The Lord's Supper is a very important ceremony – it reminds us of what Jesus Christ did for us. The price that he paid for us was huge! We should recognise this and not take it lightly. Every person taking the Lord's Supper should concentrate on what it means, why they're taking it, thank and glorify Jesus for all that he's done and ensure that their spiritual condition is right before God – whether they are adults or children.

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The Lord's Supper will inspire your faith and love as you reflect upon the wonder and magnificence of the Lord's death and resurrection, and the fact that those who believe in him will live forever!



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

There are a few other questions you may have about the Lord's Supper. Below are some of these with answers we hope will be of help.

## **1. Should the drink of the Lord's Supper be grape juice or wine?**

When Jesus referred to the contents of the cup he described it as the "fruit of the vine" (*Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18*). The "fruit of the vine" refers to the product of the grapes that come from the grape vine. Grapes can be used to make grape juice or the juice can be fermented to make wine. We are never told in the gospel accounts of the Lord's Supper (or anywhere else in the Bible) if Jesus used grape juice or wine – he just simply called it the "fruit of the vine". We know that God allows us to drink fermented beverages like wine (*Deuteronomy 14:24-26; John 2:1-12; Romans 14:17-21; 1 Timothy 5:23*), but he does not want us to get drunk (*Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Ephesians 5:18*). Therefore it doesn't matter if the drink used in the Lord's Supper is grape juice or wine. Some churches will use grape juice, while others will use wine.

## **2. Should the bread of the Lord's Supper be unleavened bread or leavened bread?**

In the Old Testament Passover meal God commanded his people to only eat unleavened bread (*Exodus 12:8,15-20*). They were to do this because the Egyptians were going to quickly expel them from Egypt after God sent the 10<sup>th</sup> plague on the land of Egypt (preparing and cooking unleavened bread is quicker than preparing and cooking leavened bread). There was no time to wait to prepare and cook leavened bread. This is why God commanded them to be dressed for a journey when they ate the Passover meal (*Exodus 12:11,33-39; Deuteronomy 16:3-4*).

Since Jesus held the very first Lord's Supper during the Passover meal, he may have used unleavened bread. However, since Jesus was instituting a new observance, he may in fact have used leavened bread since unleavened bread has no symbolic meaning for the Lord's Supper. As described above, unleavened bread has meaning for the Old Testament Passover, but there is no symbolic reason given in the Bible to use it in the Lord's Supper. We are not directly commanded to use leavened or unleavened bread. We participate in the Lord's Supper not to remember the Passover, but to remember what Jesus Christ did for us – his death, burial and resurrection for the forgiveness of our sins and for eternal life. There is no reason why unleavened bread has to be used in the Lord's Supper. We can use leavened or unleavened bread.

### 3. Does John 6:22-71 refer to the Lord's Supper?

Denominations such as the Roman Catholic and Orthodox churches believe that John 6:22-71 refers to the Lord's Supper. They teach that this passage proves that participation in the Lord's Supper is necessary for forgiveness of sin and salvation, particularly by quoting verses 48-58. These denominations teach that since Jesus says here we must eat his flesh and drink his blood to have eternal life, then he must have been talking about the Lord's Supper, because during the Lord's Supper Jesus calls the bread "his flesh" and the drink the "new covenant in his blood".

So is this passage describing the Lord's Supper? No. What is Jesus talking about in this chapter? It's a good idea to read through the entire passage first so you can understand what Jesus means in verses 48-58.

Jesus had just miraculously fed at least 5000 people with only 5 loaves and 2 fish the day before (*John 6:1-14*). The next day the crowds tracked Jesus down, not because they wanted spiritual blessings but because they wanted to get more food from him! Jesus told them not to be pre-occupied with getting food that spoils or rots away, but to get food that lasts forever (*John 6:25-27*). So Jesus moves the conversation from physical food (loaves and fish) to spiritual food. He then explains that the spiritual food is himself – "the bread of God" and "the bread of life" (*v.32-35,48*).

Jesus says that whoever believes in him (i.e. a Christian) will never go hungry or be thirsty (*v.35*). He is obviously talking about spiritual hunger and thirst, not physical hunger and thirst, since all Christians still get physically hungry and thirsty! Jesus is saying that when we believe in him, our spiritual hunger and thirst will be satisfied. He also talks about this satisfaction of spiritual hunger and thirst in other areas – Matthew 5:6; John 4:7-15; 7:37-39.

Jesus makes it clear that to have eternal life you must believe in him (*John 6:40,47*). This is stated many times all over the New Testament (*John 1:12-13; 3:16; 5:24 etc.*). Good works (such as taking the Lord's Supper) don't forgive your sins or provide you with salvation (*Romans 3:20; Ephesians 2:8-9 etc.*), but belief or faith in Jesus Christ does. So when Jesus says in John 6:48-58 that we must "eat his flesh" and "drink his blood" to have eternal life, he is simply saying that when we believe in him it is like we are eating his body and drinking his blood. We are not physically eating and drinking him, we are spiritually doing it. What saves us is our belief in Jesus Christ – and Jesus calls this "eating his flesh" and "drinking his blood". It is not referring to the Lord's Supper but to belief and faith in him.

Also, Jesus makes it clear that he's talking spiritually and not about physically eating and drinking him (or anything else) when in verse 63 he says,

"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is of no avail.  
The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life."

So we can see that:

- Eating *physical bread and drinking real water* give us physical life. We are physically satisfied.
  - If we don't eat and drink we will physically die.
  
- Eating *spiritual bread and drinking spiritual blood* (i.e. believing in Jesus) give us spiritual life (eternal life). We are spiritually satisfied.
  - If we don't spiritually eat and drink (i.e. we don't believe in Jesus) we will spiritually die (separated from God now and forever in Hell).

So Jesus is not talking about literally eating his body and drinking his blood during the Lord's Supper. He is not referring to the Lord's Supper at all. He is talking about having our spiritual hunger and thirst satisfied when we have faith in him. Eating and drinking Jesus Christ are metaphors for coming to Jesus and believing in him.