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# BIBLE TALK

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This week the question is: **Should non-members eat the communion when they visit the church worship services?**

In answering this question, let me first say that members of the Lord's church are always thankful when non-members of the church attend the services of the church. If you were to attend our services you would soon discover that we have communion every single Sunday. The reason we do this is because this is what the NT scriptures teach.

## **Acts 20:7**

<sup>7</sup> Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.

This passage indicates a weekly communion service. Had these Christians of the first century only communed once a month, the scripture would have said, "On the first day of the month when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them." Or, if they communed only once a year, the scripture would have said, "On the first day of the year when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them." But the scripture says none of these things. It says instead, "On the first day of the week the disciples came together to break bread." This implies a weekly communion. There is no escaping this conclusion, and history as well confirms the fact that the early Christians had a weekly communion. Therefore, any church claiming to be the Lord's true church will likewise have a weekly communion service.

Now, suppose a non-member of the church comes on the first day of the week to the services of the church. They sing with the congregation and they pray with the congregation and they listen to the sermon delivered by the preacher. When the communion is being served, should this non-member partake of the communion when it is handed to him, or should he pass it on to the next person on the bench without partaking himself? What does the Bible have to say about this?

## **THE PASSOVER SUPPER**

The communion service of the NT is a type of the OT passover supper. The passover meal of the OT was a foreshadow, or prefigure of the NT communion service. Listen carefully to the instructions given concerning the passover supper:

### **Exodus 12:43-45**

<sup>43</sup> And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: No foreigner shall eat it.

<sup>44</sup> "But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it.

<sup>45</sup> "A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it.

In other words, this passover meal was only for God's people. If someone outside of God's people wanted to eat the supper, and thus received the benefits that come with the supper, they would have to become one of God's people.

## **THE NT COMMUNION**

In the same way, the NT communion service is designed for God's people. If a non-member of the church wishes to partake of the communion, and thus receive the benefits that come with it, then they must take the necessary steps to become a member of the church.

### **1 Corinthians 10:16-17**

<sup>16</sup> The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

<sup>17</sup> For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

Notice carefully from this passage that the people blessing and partaking of the cup and those blessing and partaking of the loaf are members together of the "one body." The "one body" (Eph. 4:4) is the one church of Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22-23). In other words, the ones who should partake of this communion meal are the members of the Lord's church and no one else.

Again, notice:

### **1 Corinthians 11:27-32**

<sup>27</sup> Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

<sup>28</sup> But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

<sup>29</sup> For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

<sup>30</sup> For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

<sup>31</sup> For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

<sup>32</sup> But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

This passage is discussing how to correctly eat the communion. Notice verse 32 again, "When **we** are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with **the world.**" There is a clear distinction being made in this passage between the members of the church who partake of the communion and "the world." The "world" are those who are non-members. Non-members are already condemned (Jn. 3:18). Members of the church are those who are saved (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:23). If non-members wish to receive the benefits of salvation and the privilege of eating the communion, they must become members of the church -- they must become part of God's chosen people.

## **HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER**

To become a member of God's chosen people in the OT and thus receive the privilege of eating the passover supper, all non-members had to become circumcised and then keep the laws of God (Ex. 12:43-45).

Likewise, to become a member of God's chosen people today, the church, non-members must receive a type of circumcision which is spiritual rather than literal, physical circumcision. This spiritual circumcision is called **baptism**. Listen carefully to this scripture:

### **Colossians 2:11-13**

<sup>11</sup> In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ,

<sup>12</sup> buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

<sup>13</sup> And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses,

Literal, physical circumcision is cutting off part of the flesh. Spiritual circumcision is a cutting off of sin. God, without hands, "cuts off" our sins and makes us part of His special chosen people when we are baptized in water.

So, in summary, you are very welcome to visit the services of the Lord's church. You would be our honored guest. You will be invited then to become a part of God's chosen people by being baptized in water for the remission of sins. But until you decide for your own self to take this important step, the communion service is not for you. If the communion should be offered to you, remember that it is for the members of God's church and you should merely pass it on to the next person. If you wish to receive the blessings and privileges that come with partaking of the communion, then you need to obey the gospel and become part of God's people. However, you cannot receive these wonderful blessings and privileges without obeying the gospel and being baptized in water for the remission of sins.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

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