

Shalom Ori!

It is great to hear how well your classes went. Next semester will be a tough one for you, I've had a couple of those classes and they can be demanding. As to your questions they are great. We LOVE to look at prophecy so I will probably do that one in a separate posting just to be able to give it the attention it deserves but let's look at the other two questions you ask.

**“Do Messianic Jews celebrate communion?”** That one is easy; NO...kind a...Here is the real answer. Most protestant “Lord’s Supper” services are the corollary to the Catholic Mass. The similarities, spiritually and physically, vary greatly between groups, so take that statement with a grain of salt. For example in the catholic rite the wine symbolically/literally, (you get different explanations from different sources depending on how intent they are on ecumenicalism), changes to the actual blood of Messiah, somewhere during the process of the communion. That is why it is called communion; you are actually becoming one with the Messiah in a real sense as you eat His “body” and drink His “blood”. (This is my understanding of the catholic teaching of “transubstantiation” but if you want know what Catholics believe in their own words you should ask a catholic.)

*(As a side bar some of the teachings on prophecy and the book of revelation tie into this Catholic concept. In their minds, the daily communion is the replacement for the daily sacrifice at the temple. If true the passage in Daniel 9 about the anti-Christ stopping the daily sacrifice would not require a temple in Jerusalem with Jewish priest/Cohanim because the “new” sacrifice is in Rome! Therefore the anti-Christ would take over the Roman church to fulfill that prophecy. I think it is obvious that I don’t agree with this but it is out there so you should be aware of it.)*

All of this comes from a very literal view of the following passage: **John 6:53-58 Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. NKJV** This is a very powerful and somewhat disturbing passage and I value literalness highly, so what do I do with this text? Well we know that in the Torah we are instructed not to eat food with blood in it: **(Lev. 3:17, 7:26-27, 17:10-14 deals with strangers too, not just Jews, Deut. 16 & 23, 15:23)**. A NT only person might say, “...we have freedom in Christ”. Freedom yes, but license no. **(Jude 4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord. NIV)** So, does the NT speak on eating or drinking blood? Yes it does. In Acts 15 and the letter to the Gentiles/Goyim the Holy Spirit writes through the Apostles four conditions to gentile fellowship. One condition deals with sexual morality and the other three deal with food. **Acts 15:29 29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. NKJV.** (Things offered to idols were eaten and it was thought that you were communing with the pagan god in that way.) So it looks like YHVH would be denying His own Torah if He were to “transubstantiate” the bread and wine into human blood and flesh. If Messiah Yeshua was telling the Jewish Apostles to break Torah you might expect that they would have had some kind of negative reaction to His statement. As you read through the passage you will see that there was a reaction, the disciples called it a hard teaching. It is hard for us today too, so it is not a surprise that it was also hard for them in their day. It wasn't until Yeshua said that; **John 6:65 no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father "NKJV,** that people turned away. The issue seems to be; did Messiah say that we are to break Torah as a requirement for fellowship? When the question is ask this way we have an easy answer from the sermon on the Mt found in **Mt 5:17-19**. Since Yeshua had previously stated that He was not here to change the Torah and that none of it would pass away as a result of Yeshua’s efforts until the prophecies are ALL fulfilled, we can be certain that He was not advocating a literal act of cannibalism.

So I have attacked another person's view of the meaning of the bible and torn it up with out giving another alternative. To me that is unacceptable. So, what does the passage mean? Just what it sounds like, it is figurative. That is the obvious meaning and is the one that takes the least amount of explaining to understand. Taking it as an allegory/metaphor fits with other verses in John such as **Jn 1:29** where Yeshua is referred to as the **"...lamb of God..."** What I did to find the flaws in the communion teaching was to use that little saying about the plain sense of a passage and used it in reverse. If the text obviously can't happen in a literal way then don't try to force it to be literal. I believe that is what has been done with this teaching on communion. **BUT...**there is a danger to what I just did by calling the passage figurative and that is, what looks obviously impossible to one generation, is obviously literal a generation or two later. Most of Christianity looks at references to a Jewish millennium reign as figurative because their prophetic views were formed hundreds of years ago when the Jewish people were a people without a home, and without strength. Since 1948 and the founding of the modern state of Israel that has all changed, what was once figurative is now possible to have a literal fulfillment. The advent of space flight, computers, weapons of mass destruction, have all opened up the possibility to new understandings to the old prophecies.

As a closing remark on Catholic teaching, they don't literally teach "divine cannibalism", but it is a tricky teaching that I think is clearly unbiblical. If you want to be critical of them you should have an actual Catholic explain their beliefs to you so that you have a better understanding of what you are evaluating.

So far I have dealt with the Catholic view of communion, as I understand it, and haven't said why Messianics don't do any kind of communion! We still need to look at Protestant practice before I get to our position.

Protestants vary from being very close to the Catholic view, Anglicans, to being miles apart as are Baptist, Assemblies of God, Churches of Christ, etc, with the most evangelical generally being the furthest from Catholics. Let me outline the Baptist position as I understand it, as a general framework for what is common in the evangelical world. (I'm sure you know most of this but humor me.)

For Baptist the "Lord's Supper", (LS), is an ordinance not a rite or ceremony. This is an important distinction because to them an ordinance is commanded and desirable as an act of fellowship and obedience but has no power in and of itself. The juice/wine stays juice/wine and the bread stays bread. The principle passage used in the service is: **1 Cor. 11:23-26 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. NKJV.** Because the passage says that as often as you do this it's in remembrance of me, (Yeshua), there is license for the individual to decide how often to give the LS. Most groups do it every 3 months but are okay if they are off a week or two and are equally able to do an, "extra" LS for a special service. As a Messianic I have no problem with the LS being an ordinance and I agree that it has no particular power in itself. My issue is that the concept from this passage is not historically or textually accurate. The protestant LS seems to be left over from the days when the Catholic Church was more of a universal organization. Protestant forms seem to have sanitized the Catholic practice without looking to see if it is actually a biblical practice. Let's unpack these verses and see what is actually being referenced. Believe it or not this won't take long.

The Apostle Paul is writing to the assembled believers in Corinth and he is quoting Yeshua's comments at the so called, "Last Supper". We know, explicitly from the text, that the last supper was a Passover Seder. (A Seder is the name of the meal eaten on the first night of the Feast of Matza, to commemorate the freedom of Israel from Egypt 3500 years ago.) Since Passover/Pesach only happens once a year we can deduce that when Yeshua said; **"...as often as you do this..."** He knew that they only did it once a year. It wasn't daily, weekly, or quarterly

as is done in churches with communion or the LS. He wasn't teaching that the wine and bread changed, he was teaching Pesach. The lesson that should have been learned was that we should keep Pesach in remembrance of what Messiah has done for us, and what He is going to do. (This lesson was learned, since scholars agree that the early church did keep the biblical festivals for several centuries before different teachings overwhelmed the biblical instructions.) The references to the 2 cups before and after the meal are another indication of the Seder because there are 4 ceremonial cups of wine used as part of the evening. Yeshua was instilling another remembrance to the remembrance of the escape from Egypt, that is, our redemption from sin.

All of that ink to get to the short answer to your question: Do Messianic Jews do Communion? No we don't do communion because we see it as a none biblical practice. We don't do the LS supper because it seems to be just a cleaned-up version of the same thing. **We do** keep the actual meal observed by Messiah and reference by Paul, the Pesach Seder. On a personal note I don't see any harm in the Protestant LS, as I outlined it, other than it mask the real celebration that we are told by the Holy Spirit through Paul to keep. The communion idea I do find distasteful. When I am in an environment where it is offered I and my immediate family politely refuse, even if it offends someone else. I am offended by what it represents. This is a difficult stance since I have much loved, close family members, who are very fervent believers in the efficacy of communion.

Well I wanted to get to one of your other questions but that will need to wait for another post as this one is to long already.

Shalom lechah, Gary Gardner