

## **The Lord's Supper, 1 of 3, How important is it? – 19 november 2022.**

Hi all,

The Lord's Supper, or Communion, is one of only 2 rituals of the New Testament, the other being water baptism. All the other rituals of the Old Testament were swallowed up by the sacrifice of Jesus. Some may suggest the Baptism with the Holy Spirit is a third, but it is a spiritual infilling rather than an outward act like being immersed in water or having a meal, so it is not usually included as a ritual of the New Testament.

### **Is it a foundation of our faith the way many consider it today?**

When the author of Hebrews lists "the principles (foundation) of the doctrine of Christ", in 6: 1-2 they are: Repentance from dead works, faith towards God, baptisms (water and Holy Spirit), laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgement. (When have you heard any of those in a 'new believers' class, or in a sermon?)

The Lord's Supper is not included in the foundation. Teaching about the laying on of hands is foundational, but the Lord's Supper is not. That should speak loudly to us today concerning this question. If you consider the Lord's Supper as foundational doctrine, you need to change to what scripture actually says. That's how we renew our minds, to think as God thinks. Repentance IS a part of the foundation of our faith. The Lord's Supper is not.

Understand please that I am all for the Lord's Supper and celebrate it several times a year. But in terms of foundational teaching, scripture does not include it as foundational. That probably comes as a shock to some, but a good shock to start thinking as God thinks on the matter.

### **Consider...**

In Acts 2:38 when the gathered crowd heard Peter's explanation of Pentecost and asked what they must do to be saved, Peter said, "Repent..." In Acts 3: 19 when the lame man was healed and people were gathered to witness the miracle, Peter urged them to "repent and be converted". In Acts 8:22 when Simon the sorcerer wants the authority to lay hands on people for the baptism with the Holy Spirit, Peter told him to "repent and pray to God". In Acts 11: 18 when Peter tells the leaders how Cornelius' household were born again and received the Holy Spirit as they did, it says all of them "rejoiced that God gave the Gentiles repentance to life."

Paul is on Mars Hill in Athens and in Acts 17:30 he tells them "God...commands all men everywhere to repent..." In Acts 20:21 in his final goodbye to the leaders of Ephesus Paul says he was faithful; "to testify to the Jews and to the Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." In Acts 26:20 in his defense before Agrippa he says the same thing, adding that upon repentance they should do things that prove they repented.

So I wonder what would happen if we were more concerned about repentance and living right than how or when we should have the Lord's Supper. What would the body of Christ look like if we had the same priorities as God lists in His Word? What if in every Sunday morning Eucharist there was equal call for repentance? Or instead of celebrating the Lord's Supper each and every service it was replaced even half the time, by calls to repentance?

### **That was interesting food for thought. Now, back to the subject...**

Much has been written about the early church celebrating the Lord's Supper weekly, but many of those writings are built on incorrect assumptions by interpreting ancient phrases through modern eyes.

They interpret the phrase 'breaking bread' to mean the Lord's Supper, which is incorrect - it's just a common phrase of the first century meaning a meal with others, a common meal. They didn't have sliced bread, so they broke bread at each meal - sometimes it included the Lord's Supper, sometimes it was just a meal. Jesus broke the loaves and fish but no one claims that breaking of bread was the Lord's Supper - it was just a meal. (Mt 14:19, 15: 36, 26:26)

In Acts 2: 42 it says the disciples were steadfastly in the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer. The phrase 'breaking the bread' in the Greek, means a common meal - they gathered to eat together.

That said, because it says 'the bread' in v42 and not merely 'bread', it could be understood to include the Lord's Supper. But in v46 it leaves off 'the' and just says 'breaking bread', referring to a common meal. We would conclude then that the Lord's Supper was part of what they did, but not at every meal. The emphasis was the gathering together in fellowship, food, prayer, and teaching.

We see this in Acts 20:11 when the young man was raised from the dead by Paul after having fallen out a window to his death. Once brought back to life, they all broke bread and Paul talked all through the night to the break of day, then left. They didn't have the Lord's Supper, the text says they had a late meal together.

In Acts 27:35 the same practice of breaking bread is described as Paul, in a storm on a ship as one of 276 people, assured them an angel had told him they would be safe, proving it by taking bread, giving thanks to God, then broke it and ate.

#### **In house church,**

...when the Lord's Supper is celebrated it is often included as part of a meal. The frequency is determined by the group or the host(s). Sometimes just an informal gathering of Christians for a meal can include the Lord's Supper if they wish. Even by yourself or with one other - there are very few guidelines given in scripture other than making sure our hearts are right, and that part starts next week.

When we take off the religious glasses and go back in time to the 1st century, we understand the Lord's Supper as part of a larger meal during a gathering in the homes of the believers. It wasn't always during 'church'. It is a means to remember His death and sacrifice that is not limited to where, how, or how often it is celebrated.

#### **Another consideration is that in all the New Testament,**

...from the 30 years the book of Acts covers, to all that Paul, James, John, Peter, and Jude wrote, over the course of 70 years, the only time the Lord's Supper is taught or addressed is in I Corinthians 11. It was only brought up there because of strife with one another in their celebration of the Lord's Supper. Fortunately, it was put there for our instruction.

By contrast, messages about forgiving, making allowances for one another, prayer, repentance, baptisms, and such are mentioned or taught multiple times in the New Testament. What are we to conclude that the Lord's Supper is only mentioned once while other topics are covered multiple times in those same letters? That is was part of what they did but not the focus nor the whole point of their gatherings.

What were the issues that Paul was led to address the Corinthians with the proper way to receive the Lord's Supper? That's for next week, until then, blessings,

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## **The Lord's Supper 2 of 3, Attitudes – 26 november 2022.**

Hi all,

Did you know Paul wrote that taking part in the Lord's Supper incorrectly could result in 'weakness, frailty' or an early death? Amazing but true.

Consider that if water baptism is done 'wrong' someone may choke on the water a little, but they will be fine. If the laying on of hands is placed on an incorrect part of one's body embarrassment and correction could be the result, but they could recover their mistake.

But Paul told the Corinthians that because some of them did not have their hearts right when receiving the Lord's Supper: "...some are weak and sickly among you, and some have died early." Wow. This is serious!

### **The culture of Corinth vs the culture of the Kingdom of God**

Paul wrote his letter to the Romans from Corinth, which is proven in Romans 16:22-23: "I, Tertius, who wrote this letter greet you, and (Justus) Gaius my host greets you, Erastus the Treasurer of the city greets you, and Quartus, a brother."

In a 1929 archaeological dig, an engraved stone was uncovered in Corinth mentioning Erastus as Treasurer of Corinth. That proved Paul's letter to the Romans was written from Corinth.

This is important to us and our discussion of the Lord's Supper, because of the people mentioned in Corinth. They reflect part of the cultural and racial diversity in the body of Christ there. Acts 18:7-8 tells us the body of Christ included Jews, Greeks, and Romans, all gathering together in the home of Justus Gaius at the start.

### **The name 'Tertius' is the Roman numeral 3,**

...and the name 'Quartus' is the Roman numeral 4. Tertius received dictation from Paul, which is why he wrote: "I Tertius, who wrote this letter greet you..." Only a few letters did Paul write personally\*. The rest as far as we know, he dictated in whole or in part. \*Galatians 6:11, Philemon 1:19; then Colossians 4:18, the salutation only, II Thessalonians 3:17 same.

When making a person a slave to the Empire, Romans took away the person's name and gave them a number, tattooing it on their forehead or wrist. Thus slaves 3 (Tertius) and 4 (Quartus) worked with Paul, as well as the Treasurer of Corinth, then a city of roughly 200,000 people. Slaves were peoples Rome conquered, so 3 and 4 were not Romans, but from other nations, other races.

The body of Christ has long been multi-racial and multi-cultural, getting along fine with each other. An example is Acts 13:1 in Antioch of Syria 5 prophets and teachers are named: Barnabas (Cyprus, an island in the Mediterranean), Simon from Niger (ethnic Nigeria), Lucius of Cyrene (modern Libya in North Africa), Manean (Israel), and Saul of Tarsus (Syria).

It is no surprise then that slaves 3 & 4 are working with Paul and the Treasurer of the large city of Corinth. All are equal in Christ...amazing grace. But all was not well in Corinth. While Tertius, Quartus and Erastus may have had no issues with each other socio-economically or racially, others in Corinth did.

### **Prejudice in the church**

In I Corinthians 11:17-34, Paul deals with a group of people who don't want to eat a meal nor the Lord's Supper with the others. They chose to meet separately for their meal, even to the point of drunkenness, before joining them, if at all.

Corinth was a sea port, thus a melting pot of ships and crews, owners and merchants of all walks of life. The motto of the city was 'Knowledge and liberty' which meant 'anything goes'. When some of these people became born again through faith in Christ, they all began meeting in the Roman Justus', home\*. But that doesn't mean they were all instantly set free from their prejudices and bias. \*Acts 18:7-8

### **Something else to know about Corinth**

Greek women had great freedom, Roman women had varying degrees of freedoms, and Jewish women were separated from their husbands in the gatherings ('synagogue' is Hebrew for 'gathering').

The oral law (tradition/commentary) made them be quiet during meetings though nothing was said in the Mosaic law about wives being quiet in meetings - in part because of that, the degree of separation varied widely around the Roman Empire.

Greek wives often didn't wear veils. Roman wives usually did, a light 'see through' veil. Jewish wives as far as we know from history, usually wore a veil, but customs varied by region of the Roman Empire.

### **The ancient wedding ring**

Veils were the custom to signify a woman was married. Veils were in their day what a wedding ring is in ours. The wives were finding their freedom in Christ and removing their veils when they entered a home for a (church) meeting. They were among friends and family in Christ, and they would remove them in their own home, so why not in someone else's home among family in Christ? That makes sense theologically, but not for the local customs.

Imagine going to someone's home today and removing your wedding ring as you enter the door. A wife could argue she is free in Christ to do so - and she would be right. But it would be dishonoring to her husband and to the Lord.

Everyone would wonder why you are dishonoring yourself, your husband, all in attendance, socially and culturally? Why dishonor the holiness of marriage by flaunting your freedom in Christ, thus dishonoring the One who binds your marriage together by the Holy Spirit?

And as Paul brought up, even the angels in charge of their family were dishonored by the flaunting of their freedom. He told them they may be free in Christ, but balance that by honoring your marriage and family by putting the veils on. He asked them 2x to look at the local custom and tradition, telling them to put the veils on accordingly.

(There used to be some in what was called 'hyper-grace' who said there was no sin, no accountability, for they were free in Christ. They didn't realize freedom in Christ is provided to empower us to holy lives, not to excuse sinful or improper behavior. As Jude v4 says, the ungodly turn the grace of God into an excuse for sensuality which denies and dishonors the Lord Jesus Christ.)

Now that the stage is set. The Corinthians were a racially and socially diverse group of people who all had different religious backgrounds before coming to the Lord. Next week we will get into the consequences to being a prejudiced person when receiving the Lord's Supper. Until then, blessings,

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### **The Lord's Supper 3 of 3, early death if done wrong – 3 december 2022.**

Hi all,  
We closed last week listing some issues in Corinth.

#### **After all those, THEN Paul had to deal with their prejudices against race, status, and cultural differences.**

There was a group who refused to eat with the others, as covered in 11:17-34. In verse 22 Paul asks:

"Don't you have your own homes to eat and drink in? Do you despise the body of Christ?" The word translated 'despise' means to despise, scorn, insult. It is from kata (bad, negative) and phroneo, to think with your emotions. In short, an attitude. But their attitude against someone different from them was also an attitude against Christ.

#### **They felt they were better than the others.**

They didn't like x people so they justified themselves because they felt that way. Their emotions told them how to make decisions and what attitude to have. Scripture teaches telling our emotions how to think, and to come under control of our will.

Maybe their mama hated x group, that's how they were raised, so they hate them too. Being in Christ and loving those different was a challenge for them.

In that that large international sea port of Corinth, ship and shop owners did not usually mix with those who worked on the docks or ships in the same way Jews never ate with Gentiles\*. Yet all 3 sets of people now met in the Roman Justus' house in Acts 18:7-8 to celebrate Jesus. \*Galatians 2:12-14

They had to learn to focus on Who they had in common, not on their differences. They had to learn to 'perceive the grace' in each other and 'extend the hand of fellowship', as Peter did to Paul in Galatians 2:9.

In v23-27 Paul writes the often repeated words of Jesus during His Last Supper, and then says this: "Whoever eats this bread and drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Therefore let everyone first examine himself before he eats..."

#### **The Greek reads like this:**

"He who eats and drinks without discerning the Body (i.e., the Church) in that assembly, eats and drinks a judgment to himself; for if we would discern ourselves we should not be judged."

"Discern ourselves" means an honest assessment of our hearts. This is not a heaven or hell judgement, but a judgement carried out on the earth because they know the sacrifice the Lord made to forgive them, yet in their hypocrisy they won't forgive others.

#### **Remember, the first level of judgment is to judge ourselves.**

When you made Jesus your Lord you judged yourself so you won't suffer a worse judgment. When we admit our sin to the Lord, we judge ourselves. When we apologize to those we wronged, we judge ourselves. Those things we've already judged ourselves on won't be remembered on the day we stand before the Lord.

If we don't, the next level of judgement is to suffer the consequences of our actions. If we don't learn our lesson, we will face the same issue later. God is just, and if we say we know

Him, but don't do right, it is right He allows us to experience the consequences of our actions.

In this context, those who held onto their prejudices and refused to judge themselves, remove themselves from the benefits of the Lord's sacrifice. So they open themselves to endure the consequences of prejudice which is a form of unforgiveness. Paul wrote in effect that unforgiveness/prejudice opens ourselves to illnesses and frailty:

"For this reason many are weak and sickly among you, and many have died (early). If we judge (discern) ourselves, we won't be judged. But if we are judged, it is of the Lord so we won't be condemned with the world." v29-31

### **Immune system compromised?**

Both words translated 'weak' and 'sickly' mean frail, weak, fragile health, infirmed. Paul directly links their prejudice to their weakened 'immune system', or a general tendency to be sick. He said it is because when you receive the Lord's Supper with prejudice in your heart, you become guilty by refusing to forgive as Christ forgave you, so your life is in your own hands. In short, you are judged because you refused to judge yourself.

It's that simple. People want a 'warm and fuzzy' Jesus, but the reality is as taught throughout the letters in the New Testament, that the Lord renders to man what is right. It isn't a game. I've found people who forgive quickly or who don't even hold onto offense, rarely even get colds. (All things being equal - if you've got kids, they are notorious for contaminating each other so a cold doesn't mean someone has issues of the heart - just using Corinth as an example).

### **What happens if we carry those prejudices with us to our grave?**

Paul had described it earlier to them, in I Corinthians 3:1-15. He addressed their strifes and divisions, saying it was wood, hay, and stubble that if carried into death, would be burned away when they stood before the Lord. But they would be saved he said, but as someone who had come through a fire whose possession had all been burned up.

He advised them to repent, make it right, lay aside divisions and strifes, and thereby gaining the victory over their immaturity and emotional reasoning. Those victories would be as gold, silver, and precious stones before the Lord.

### **Receive healing when receiving the Lord's Supper**

We aren't expected to examine our whole life for any tiny little thing wrong in our heart, for the issues with the Corinthians were public knowledge and known to the whole body of Christ there. In I John 3:20 he wrote that if our heart 'condemns' us, God is greater than our heart. The Greek word condemn is made of 'kata', which is 'against', and 'gnosis' which means 'to know'. In other words, you don't go searching for something you think God may be 'mad at you' about, if He wants you to deal with something, He will let you know - you'll know it without digging your memory and life experiences to find something.

For those who get their heart right, to make sure they hold no unforgiveness, remembering the Lord's sacrifice for them and for all around them, they can receive healing while receiving the Lord's Supper. We properly discern the Lord's body as in the body of Christ, and we discern 'by His stripes we are healed' as well.

About 1980 I first heard a minister mention healing when receiving the Lord's Supper, and so later when I had a cold I tested it - ah, the folly of youth! (I was about 22 at the time and had only known the Lord about 6 years). It was perfect timing. I had gotten a cold complete with sniffles and light cough, and remembered what that minister said. After making sure I held no

unforgiveness, attitudes or prejudices, I then remembered 'by His stripes I was healed', and received the Lord's Supper. By that afternoon my cold was gone. Yippee!

This isn't a formula, but to me it proved the passage we've been studying. That receiving the Lord's Supper is a serious act on our part. It causes us to lay aside the distractions of life, the baggage of life, the burden of the past week, to refocus on His sacrifice and therefore our love for those around us who also walk with Him.

Books and books have been written about the subject, but I hope this has been a blessing. New subject next week. until then, blessings,

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