The Lord's Supper

I Corinthians 11:17-34

9-17-2023

Introduction:

*** How should we celebrate the Lord's Supper?**

We must realize 3 truths about the Lord's Supper:

The Lord's Supper is:

I. A Time of <u>REVERENCE</u> (v.17-22)
(Communion is a <u>SERIOUS</u> service,
not a greedy "all you can eat," "first come, first served" feast)

The Lord's Supper is:

II. A Time of <u>REMEMBRANCE</u> (v.23-26)
(Communion is a <u>MEMORIAL</u> service
of Christ's death for sinners)

The Lord's Supper is:

III. A Time of <u>REFLECTION</u> (v.27-32)
(Communion is a <u>SELF-EXAMINATION</u> service,
which should never be partaken of unworthily)

Conclusion: v.33-34

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Introduction:

The Lord's Supper is no light, insignificant matter. In it we show:

1) Our Faith in Him
2) Our Allegiance to Him
3) Our Dependence on Him
4) Our Reverence for Him

*** How should we celebrate the Lord's Supper?**

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The Lord's Supper is:

I. A Time of REVERENCE (v.17-22)

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V. 17

"I praise you not" - Most of the letter to the Corinthians is one of rebuke and correction.

"Ye come together not for the better, but for the worse" - The Corinthians' church gatherings did more harm than good.

Assembling with God's people, around God's Word, under the direction of God's Spirit, should result in the spiritual benefit (edification) of those who attend. (In many churches today, the same can be said as was said to Corinth: "Your gathering does more harm than good." When God's work is not done God's way, this will happen!)

V. 18

"When ye come together" - The tense of the participle shows that they had a habit of continually assembling (cp. Heb. 10:25). At least they had this right: They had not forsaken the assembly.

The problem was, when they gathered, they formed cliques, sects, or schisms.

These ***"divisions"*** were no doubt formed around economic status. Those who had wealth separated from those who did not.

V. 19

"Heresies" - Dissensions or divisions caused by people taking sides, choosing to side with a particular party or opinion.

"They which are approved" - When divisions occur, the result is a separation between those whom God approves of and those "big shots" whom men approve of.

V. 20

While their gathering was supposed to include the Lord's Supper, they in fact had what they called "the Lord's Supper," but it was not. Their supper may have been a "Pig-Out Supper" but it sure wasn't the Lord's.

You see, they had turned the Lord's Supper into a selfish, gluttonous, "first come first served," bread and wine feast.

It wasn't "passing the plate" of bread pieces; it was "grabbing the loaf" before anyone else did.

The Lord's Supper is the "Lord's Supper," not the church's supper or a denomination's supper. He instituted it and He resides at the table as we commune with Him.

V. 21

What was supposed to be *"the Lord's Supper"* (v. 20) had turned into one's ***"own supper"*** (v. 21). It was every man for himself.

"Taketh before another" - Rather than *"tarry"* (v. 33) or wait for the rest of the members to arrive, the disorderly, carnal Corinthians dug their claws and teeth into the bread before the others showed up.

Those who got to service early got well-fed, but the ones who showed up late left ***"hungry."***

"Drunken" - If people were getting *"drunken,"* it is evident that they even had messed up the elements of the Lord's Supper by bringing alcoholic beverages to church! The scene was carnal!

V. 22

Rather than celebrating the Lord's Supper as a "first come first served" banquet, Paul says: Don't you have houses for such consumption parties to occur in?

"Despise" - to look down upon, to belittle. For such greedy festivity to be occurring during what was supposed to be the Lord's Supper was to treat the church without dignity; it was to take a serious ordinance lightly.

Not to mention the humiliation ***("shame")*** endured by those in the church who didn't even get a sampling of the bread and wine.

The Lord's Supper was a serious worship ordinance, not a "gorge your gut" jubilee!

Christianity must never lose its reverence for the Lord or His work.

There is a time for laughter, joking, comics, and entertainment. The church service is not the time (eternal issues are at stake here!)

There appears to be a growing tendency to trivialize sacred things today.

*Let us look out for two extremes:

1. High Church, dead orthodoxy, stuffy, ritualistic religion (where every move of the clergy and laity is a liturgical, regimented, formatted, somber, formal ceremony.

2. Party Time, "let's celebrate Jesus," chaotic, disorderly, comical, rolling in the aisles, "holy laughter," entertainment show.

We must rejoice and be glad in the Lord, but in the serious, holy, righteous manner which is fitting a holy, righteous God.

The Lord's Supper is:

II. A Time of REMEMBRANCE (v.23-26)

(Communion is a MEMORIAL service
of Christ's death for sinners)

V. 23

Although Paul verbally ***"delivered"*** the right message to them, it never sunk in. They never got it. Careful listening is just as important as careful teaching.

Perhaps the Lord allowed the Corinthians' debacle of the Lord's Supper so that the Church of Jesus Christ could have a permanent written record of how the Lord's Supper was supposed to be practiced.

"The same night" - This would have been the night of the Passover (on the 14th of Nisan, the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread - Exod. 12:3-10; Mt. 26:17ff).

Jesus was ending one memorial to begin another memorial.

For Christians, Christ is our Passover Lamb (I Cor. 5:7), and we remember the spiritual deliverance provided by Him rather than a mere physical deliverance from Egypt as the Israelites remembered by the Passover.

V. 24

"This is My Body" - A symbol of His undefiled body; Jesus was speaking by analogy, showing that the bread was a picture, representation, or a tangible illustration of His body.

We reject the Roman Catholic notion of transubstantiation, that the bread become the actual and literal body of Christ.

Several proofs that the bread cannot be in actuality the literal body of Christ:

1. It wasn't literal at the Passover Supper (Mt. 26:26-28; Mk. 14:22-24; Lk. 22:17-20). Jesus didn't take a knife and cut off a piece of His literal flesh to share with His disciples -- Such would be cannibalism.

2. Christ in a similar context (Jn. 6:56) taught that eating His flesh was not a literal but a spiritual matter. *"It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life"* (Jn. 6:63). Jesus was speaking in a spiritual sense.

3. Christ said to partake of the bread in *"remembrance of Me"* (a memorial service to recall, not to partake of, Christ's death).

4. Eating the bread and drinking the communion cup was to *"shew"* (declare or proclaim) the Lord's death, not to consume Christ Himself.

5. Transubstantiation, which involves the actual essence of bread being transformed in substance into Christ's literal body, is erroneous on several counts:

   a. It assumes that man (the priest) has the power to alter a material substance and turn it into a "god."

   b. It assumes that God is in the business of magically reproducing Himself into physical wafers and that He is consumed by eating.

   c. It assumes that salvation comes via a material substance rather than faith (Eph. 2:8).

   d. It distracts from the true meaning of Communion, namely: the Lord's substitutionary death on Calvary.

   e. It necessitates that salvation be dispense only through a particular church (RCC), through a particular service (the Mass), by a particular miracle (transubstantiation), by a particular person (the priest). This is cultic.

The Lord's Supper is not sacred because of the element itself; it is sacred because of what the element represents!

"Broken for you" - Christ gave His life personally "for you"

"For you" - We may not soon forget that Christ died, but we often forget the great price He paid in dying for us personally. And often we forget the infinite cost of the salvation He purchased for us. And we become so unthankful.

Paul's emphasis is on the twice-repeated word ***"remembrance***" (v. 24, 25). His point in context is that the Lord's Supper is not an "all you can eat" banquet -- it's a memorial service!

Christ does not ever want His people to lose sight of the most vital aspect os His coming to earth: that being His substitutionary death for sinners on the cross.

V. 25

"Testament" - A covenant or promise which cannot be broken (sealed with the blood of Christ, which confirmed the promise and provided the blessings of the covenant).

"New testament" - "new" implies that the "old" was insufficient and now invalidated and replaced (Heb. 8:6-13; 9:15-28). [We are no longer under the conditional covenant of the Mosaic Law.]

The old covenant meant temporal, material blessings for Israel under the condition of obedience (Deut. 28 - 29).

The new covenant means permanent, spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3) for all people under the condition of belief.

V. 26

"As often as" - Never does the New Testament require a set daily or weekly schedule for the Lord's Supper (each local church has the liberty to decide for itself).

"Till He come" - When Jesus returns, we will not need to remember by faith, for we will see Him by sight. (the picture of Christ in the elements will be replaced by the presence of Christ in person).

Until we experience the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19), we will partake of the simple yet sacred Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is:

III. A Time of REFLECTION (v.27-32)

(Communion is a SELF-EXAMINATION service,
which should never be partaken of unworthily)

V. 27

The Lord's Supper--being a sobering, serious ordinance--requires introspection, self-analysis, or soul-searching (Note Paul's emphasis: *"Let a man examine himself"* [v. 28]; *"Judge ourselves"* [v. 31]).

Since the Lord's Supper is portraying such a vital truth, namely His *"death"* (v. 26), it should never be indulged in in an unworthy manner.

***"Unworthily"* =** an unworthy manner, as the Corinthians were in context (v. 17-22; 33-34). The style or character of the ordinance ought to equal or match the character of Christ and His finished work.

To consume the elements in a trivial, party-time manner is to do so in an unworthy fashion and it is to shame that which those elements represent: namely, Christ's body and blood. EX: "To trample our country's flag is not to dishonor a piece of cloth but to dishonor the country it represents" (MacArthur, p. 274) (same with the Lord's Supper).

V. 28

"Examine himself" - To see if he is approved to eat (each person should have the liberty to examine his own worthiness to partake; we do not believer in "closed communion").

"Examine" for what? --Unconfessed, unforsaken sinful attitudes or actions.

No one comes to the Lord's table perfectly but we should come honestly (DeHaan, p. 134).

V. 29

We are all unworthy in ourselves, but are made worthy by the blood of Christ shed on Calvary.

"Damnation" - (*krima*) = judgment (temporal judgment by God as revealed in v. 30, 32).

Failure to realize the seriousness of what the communion elements represent, namely ***"the Lord's body"*** (which is glorified in Heaven) is to invite God's judgment on yourself.

V. 30

***"Weak"* =** without strength

***"Sickly"* =** powerless, feeble

***"Sleep"* =** a euphemism for death (EX: Ananias and Saphira)

A physical curse falls upon the life of Christians who take lightly Christ and His right to deep reverence.

Not all physical illness is due to personal sin (EX: Job, Paul's thorn - II Cor. 12), but much physical illness is due to sinful attitudes and actions (James 5:15, 16).

(EX: David - Ps. 32:3-4 - *"When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah."*)

A sincere dose of soul-searching coupled with genuine confession (I Jn. 1:9) and repentance is the Christian's best medicine.

V. 31

If you judge yourself, God won't have to!

It's easy to judge others and to see the spiritual needs of others; it goes against our hideous pride and sinful nature (Jer. 17:9) to see our own faults and to do something about them.

When was the last time you took a sincere, long, and deep look at yourself? We avoid such self-inspections because we are afraid of what we may find or unwilling to change what we find.

We are careful to leave no stone unturned when it comes to many things in life. Are we as equally concerned about uncovering bad attitudes, motives, and behavior that lies hidden in our hearts and lives?

V. 32

God, in love, spanks His kids (Heb. 12:7 - *"If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?"*)

He does so to correct and train us so as to spare us the dreadful wages of an unrepentant heart.

Conclusion: v.33-34

It is time to get serious with God.

No more careless Christianity. It's time to stop playing games with Christ and His cause.