

Fellowship  
I Corinthians 11:17-34

September 7, 2014

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<sup>A</sup> John 4:23-24

<sup>B</sup> Luke 22:17; Deuteronomy 16:3

<sup>C</sup> Jude 1:12; Acts 2:46

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<sup>D</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; John 6:53-55; Isaiah 53:5; Exodus 12:26-27

<sup>E</sup> Jeremiah 31:33; 1 John 1:3

<sup>F</sup> 1 John 4:20

<sup>G</sup> Galatians 3:28; Matthew 5:23-24

## A. Spectacle or Spiritual

### 1. The Form of Worship

- a. Lord willing, our brother Gord Struve will be sharing with us about the tabernacle at the end of this month. The tabernacle itself was an imposing spectacle; so was the service conducted in it. The dress of the priests and their conduct was very imposing to behold.
- b. Some church denominations have carried over some of that pageantry into their services – the clothing, the accompaniments, the entrance of the minister are all designed to attract the congregation’s attention
- c. such religious show is relatively easy to accomplish – the evangelical church is not without blame in this matter – it is easy to speak words, to follow a set procedure and to leave the Holy Spirit out of it all
- d. Jesus said, “**23 But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. 24 God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.**” (John 4:23-24)

### 2. The Lord’s Table

- a. can very easily become a mere religious ceremony
- b. all the right things are said; the bread and wine distributed without incident; the hymn sung; the familiar Scripture read
- c. but no thought given to the Lord whom we should be remembering
- d. or even doing it in a sinful manner: that is what the church of Corinth was doing – we have just read about this in 1 Corinthians 11

### 3. Connection to the Passover

- a. **Moshe Rosen, founder of “Jews for Jesus,” was converted to faith in Jesus Christ. He went to a Baptist church on communion Sunday and asked a member what communion was, since he had never taken it. They said it was much like Passover. Moshe got excited because Passover was a big deal. Lots of food, many courses.**
- b. **He was starved and waiting for a good time. At the very end of the service the deacons passed out chunks of bread. Very tiny chunks. Then a thimble filled with a little juice came around. Moshe’s stomach was growling, but no food was in sight. He was very disappointed.** -{3}.
- c. Carlos and Nicole used to present the Jewish celebration of Passover, the Seder, explaining its symbolism – it

is very elaborate, with at least four cups of wine; some rabbis say five – Luke 22:17 notes the sharing of another cup of wine before the breaking of the bread

- d. Jesus' last supper with His disciples was such a Passover meal – we read it over so quickly that we can easily miss the point that between the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the wine, they ate supper
- e. the Passover lamb was eaten with bitter herbs, along with unleavened bread– “You shall not eat leavened bread with it; seven days you shall eat with it unleavened bread, the bread of affliction (for you came out of the land of Egypt in haste), so that you may remember ... when you came out of the land of Egypt.” (Deuteronomy 16:3)
- f. God delivered them from the affliction and bitterness of Egypt and they went out in great haste – this was part of the old covenant
- g. Jesus associated those same foods with Himself and the new covenant
  - (A) the bread to tell of His body given on our behalf – in His earthly ministry and in being the object of punishment for our sin
  - (B) the cup to tell of His blood shed for us to wash away our sin
  - (C) of both of these we partake to remember our Lord's death for us

## B. The Corinthians' Problem

### 1. The Love Feast

- a. Jude 1:12 makes this reference, “These are the men who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, ...”
- b. communion in the early church was associated with these love feasts; perhaps a part of them, or a service following
- c. these took place whenever Christians assembled: “... breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart,” (Acts 2:46)

### 2. The Abuse

- a. some of the Corinthians Christians – it seems like many – brought their contribution to this pot-blessing meal but didn't share it
- b. “for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.” (1 Corinthians 11:21)
- c. some were filled to repletion, even drunk; others went home hungry
- d. the real issue of the communion supper was fellowship – the word means the having of things in common – be that material provisions or the working together in God's service

- e. preparing our hearts for this service is important, and consideration of our brothers and sisters in the Lord is a priority of that preparation
- f. their selfishness, (v 21), their division into cliques and parties, (vv 18-19), their "love feasts" with very little love, shows (v 20) that going through all the motions, in "breaking of bread" is not real communion
- g. their communion service was devoid of fellowship with God and man
- h. so Paul corrects them by pointing back to the ...

### C. Elements of the Lord's Supper

#### 1. Betrayal

- a. it took place in the very night in which Jesus was betrayed by a friend
- b. there were 13 friends, but one was a secret – he thought – adversary
- c. a warning: when we gather for the Lord's Table, and our fellowship is broken then we place ourselves in the same shoes as Judas

#### 2. Bread

- a. typical of the Jewish meal a blessing – i.e. thanks – was given
- b. "16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread." (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)
- c. one bread meant a single loaf – it was unsliced bread – so of necessity it was broken and distributed
- d. "This is my body ..." – very early the overly literal western mind took this as meaning that Christ was in the bread
- e. which lead to the idea that there was spiritual power in the food itself, that the mere partaking of it could bring or sustain one's salvation
- f. but it is rather to be understood as Jewish symbolism; accepting Christ's Person and work for our salvation, "53 ... Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink." (John 6:53-55)
- g. "which is for you" – reminds us of the fact that His death was sacrificial in nature: "But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; ..." (Isaiah 53:5)
- h. "do it in remembrance" – echoes Exodus 12:26-27 telling the Jews to use the Passover meal to remind their children of their deliverance

### 3. Cup

- a. "new covenant in my blood" – the great transition from old to new
- b. Jesus Christ is the fulfilment of God's design for salvation
- c. from Egypt, salvation was physical; from sin, salvation spiritual
- d. the blood of bulls and goats could never deliver from sin (Heb 10:4)
- e. and sin separates; man from fellowship with God; man from fellowship with man – that is what God's new covenant deals with: "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." (Jeremiah 31:33) – one people in fellowship with God (1 John 1:3)

### 4. Proclamation

- a. "You proclaim the Lord's death until ..."
- b. this is the gospel message
- c. it is the message of our only hope; that of Christ's return

## D. The Lessons to Be Learned

### 1. Eating Unworthily

- a. Verse 27, "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord." – has been applied a number of ways
- b. as applying to an unbeliever partaking of the Lord's table – but this is really a hold-over from the idea that Jesus takes up residence in that piece of bread, the cup of juice – that rather than being a memorial, it has intrinsic spiritual power by the mere eating and drinking
- c. as being guilty of unrepented sin – this is closer to the context, but wrongly presumes that we have the ability to enter a sinless state for a period of time, free from all sin: from pride, from anger, from lust
- d. the context shows, however, that the unworthy manner is living in such a way as to break fellowship with our fellow Christians
  - (A) as 1 John 4:20 says, "If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen."
  - (B) we could ask, 'How can a man say He is having fellowship with God at the table of the Lord, while at the same time living out of fellowship with his fellow Christians?'

## 2. Examine Oneself

- a. Verse 28, 'Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat ...'
- b. it is certainly appropriate to apply this to inner spiritual examination
- c. but verse 29 explains it, 'recognizing the body of the Lord' (NIV)
- d. does this mean looking at the bread and seeing Jesus' body? No!
- e. His body that needs our examination is the Church – because the way that we treat the Church – our fellows believers – is how we treat Him
- f. the self-examination for which Paul calls is examining how we carry out our fellowship responsibilities in the Church of Jesus Christ
- g. for as verse 29-32 warn, failure to correct ourselves in this matter will bring, in one form or another, correction from the Lord

## 3. Communion Is a Group Experience.

- a. it is not something to be done alone, but with fellow believers
- b. it is not something done in secret, but to proclaim Jesus Christ
- c. in 10:16 we read that it is a sharing together of the body and the blood – in symbolic form – of Jesus Christ
- d. in 10:16-17 we see there was one cup, one loaf – symbols of unity
- e. some years ago churches were "opting for multi-cultural services" – this is not an option, but an innate part of the character of Christ's church – "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28) – fellowship knows no borders
- f. the communion service – table of the Lord – is a reminder to us to be open and sensitive to those who differ from us in various ways
- g. and reconciliation is of the highest priority: Jesus said, "23 Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering." (Matthew 5:23-24 NAS95) – if that was the case under the old covenant it is certainly so under the new
- h. we come together to participate in the Lord's Table in order that we may draw near to God ... let nothing interfere with that purpose

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2. This message is heavily based on the message, ‘Real Communion,’ by the Rev’d David Holwick as found in Kerux sermons #928.
3. ‘*Communion Is Not Exactly Like Passover,*’ by Moshe Rosen, Kerux illustrations #1244