

## **The Lord's Supper in Biblical Perspective: A Meal of Thanksgiving**

**I Corinthians 11:17-34**

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*November 24, 2013 – Morning Sermon*

We are in that very familiar passage about the Lord's Supper in I Corinthians 11. I Corinthians 11:17–34 says

[17] But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. [18] For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, [19] for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. [20] When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. [21] For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. [22] What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not. [23] For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, [24] and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." [25] In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." [26] For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. [27] Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. [28] Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. [29] For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30] That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. [31] But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. [32] But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. [33] So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another— [34] if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

The grass withers, the flower fades, the Word of our God abides forever, and by His grace and mercy may His Word be preached for you.

We have come to the Lord's Supper, the New Covenant meal of thanksgiving, of celebration, of commemoration, of consecration. We have come to this meal and the Lord calls us to it. This idea of a meal is for God's people in the covenant to be renewed in the Lord and to grow. The passage said that you come together for the better, not for the worse. It's a means of grace to grow in the Lord. This idea of a covenant meal is not new to the New Testament.

On the contrary, in the Old Testament there are three meals, three major feasts and the primary feast of the three major feasts is the Passover. Those Old Covenant meals had five things attached to each one of them. Number one, is that there was an elaborate meal. Number two, it was done in a gathered assembly. It wasn't privately engaged but a gathered assembly of God's people to have the meal together under the leadership of God's covenant leaders, the elders of the tribes. Number three, there would be the reading and teaching of the Word. Number four, there would be the giving of thanks. Number five, there would be a sacrifice. For instance, in Yom Kippur which was the Day of Atonement, there would be a sacrifice that was given.

Now, we don't do those three meals, even the primary one of the Passover we don't do anymore. Why? It is because they are all fulfilled in Christ. Christ has fulfilled all three of those meals and now in the New Covenant He has given us a meal of renewal and growth. Four of the five elements are still here but even those four have been modified.

For instance, it is still a meal of God's gathered people. In the text for this study I tried to emphasize the phrase 'when you come together' to eat and to drink the Lord's Supper. The word translated for the phrase 'when you come together' is the verb form of the noun that we get the word church from. The word for 'church' in the New Testament is the word ecclesia, meaning the called together ones. The church is not a building for that is where we meet but the church is God's called together ones. So the verb form of that is what Paul uses when he talks about the Lord's Supper, 'when you come together.' In other words, the Lord's Supper isn't just a pick-me-up meal that we just kind of float around whenever you want to do it. It is under the leadership of God's covenant leaders, these elders and it is to be done in a worship service. There are some in our congregation by age or physical debilitation that aren't able to come together with us and we call those 'members who are shut in.' Our pastoral care pastor tries to make sure we identify such who are in that situation and then offer to them the opportunity to have communion. How do we do that? We bring a worship service to them. We will bring three to five people with us and have a communion service, a come together worship service with them, ordered and directed by our elders.

Secondly, it is not only still a gathered assembly, but it's a meal, but notice the modification. We have come to a New Covenant feast and there are two courses, the fruit of the vine and unleavened bread. This is an interesting feast, isn't it? The feast is not in how much is here. By the way, our forefathers when they as Christians gave thanks to the Lord it was no accident that they put it together as a worship service meal when it was first introduced, who thanked the Lord for His Providence.

My family for Thanksgiving will get together on Thursday and we'll meet in Charlotte, North Carolina around a table. There are a lot of us and we have to have two tables. The big problem is not a table that is big enough for all of us to sit around but it's the table that will hold the food. Will it be big enough for all the food? My mouth is already watering just thinking about my sister's macaroni and cheese. It's a sumptuous meal.

Here you are coming to a sumptuous meal but your feast is not the elements but what the elements are communicating by faith as you fix yourself upon your feast in Christ. This is My body. This is My blood whereby we spiritually feast upon our Redeemer. The elements don't change.

Thirdly, we have thanksgiving, for we give thanks. In a moment you'll get to do it personally and Lynn and I will lead you corporately to give thanks. When Jesus put the meal in place it says that He gave thanks and then gave the elements. It is a meal of simplicity, not elaboration. Fourthly this meal will have the Word of God. There is a reason I am opening up the Scriptures. It is because you feast as you partake of Christ by faith and faith comes from hearing the Word of God. So God's Word is read, taught and sung to bring us even as the Old Covenant meals.

The fifth element in the New Covenant is the one that is missing. There is no Yom Kippur. Did anyone bring a lamb to sacrifice? There is no sacrifice at this meal. All of those Old Covenant meals are done away with because they all pointed to Christ. Behold the Lamb, who takes away the sin of the world. We aren't sacrificing for we are remembering the Sacrifice, once and for all. It is our Savior who sets us free from our sins. Perhaps one of the ways to think about that as we come to the Table is to look at the language in the text. I tried to emphasize it. As a minister of the Gospel, in a few moments will follow the pattern of the Scripture as we partake of the Lord's Supper, where it says that Jesus took, gave thanks and then His disciples took and then they partook of that which they had taken. Notice the flow. Jesus took the bread, gave thanks, then gave the bread, and then they took the bread. He took the cup, gave thanks and then gave the cup and then they took the cup to focus upon Him, the One who would bear their sins and the One whose blood would pay for their sins.

We will follow that same pattern. We will take. We will give and those of you who know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will take and focus by faith upon Christ.

Why are you able to do that? It is because Jesus who took bread and said “This is My body,” the Son of God, two thousand plus years ago took a body to Himself. In that body He would bear our sins. The reason He is able to take bread and say “this is My body” that you can take by faith in Christ, is because He took a body.

In the Old Testament there were pre-figuring of those and we call those Christophanies, pre-incarnate appearances of Christ. However, those were not bodies, they were appearances. The pre-incarnate appearances were usually identified by the phrase “an angel of the Lord.” There was a pre-incarnate appearance with Gideon, with Moses, with Jacob when He wrestled with him, Daniel in the den of lions, and as He met Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace. They were not an incarnate appearance of Christ then but twenty one hundred years ago this Christ became flesh and took a body for the purpose of going to a cross. That body would bear our sins and give us a meal with no sacrifices because He is the Sacrifice. Then He will say to us “Take and eat for this is My body.”

He not only took a body but He took a cup and gave it. They took the cup of life to drink it. Why? It is because the same One that took a body to bear our sins when He went to the cross, took the cup of judgment and He drank the cup of the winepress of God’s wrath against all the sins of all of His people so that He could give you a cup to take which is the cup of Life. So come to this Savior. Take, eat for He took your sins in His body. Come to this Table. Take the cup of Life. He took the cup of death for you that you could have life. Remember your Savior and because He is your Savior your sins are remembered no more. Let’s pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for these moments that we can come to this Your Table. Come and minister to us dear, precious Jesus. We come to take bread and take a cup because we have taken Christ who took a body to take our sins away from us, who took the cup of judgment to take the wrath due to us that we could have life evermore. So we come with glorious celebration to Christ our Lord, remembering Him, the Sacrifice once and for all and because of the One we remember and through Him our sins are remembered no more. I pray this in Jesus’ Name, Amen.

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