

THE SECOND SERVING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

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Is it scriptural and right to offer the Lord's Supper more than once on Sunday? This has become a popular question throughout the brotherhood. Since it has to do with our worship to God, it is certainly worthy of our consideration and scriptural examination. As with all controversial matters, we must be careful to focus our attention on a "*thus saith the Lord*" and not allow the ideas and opinions of men to interfere with our conclusions.

Some Bible subjects and issues are *emotionally charged*. They have a greater tendency to elicit an emotional reaction in people. No doubt, the *personal* nature of the Lord's Supper makes it more susceptible to this emotional response. With all such issues, greater care must be taken to avoid emotionally based arguments and answers. Again, we must make our appeal to the authority of Christ as it is expressed in the Scriptures (Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Our own personal feelings do not constitute an acceptable standard of faith and practice (Jer. 10:23).

Some areas of this question have to do with applications on a *congregational* level. I have neither the desire, nor the inclination to assert and bind my conclusions on other churches. If a church decides to offer the Lord's Supper only once on Sunday, they may choose to do so (Acts 20:7). My concern, and my reason for writing this article, has to do with the question of whether or not the Bible teaches that it is *wrong* to offer the Lord's Supper more than one time, or in more than one assembly on the first day of the week. I will demonstrate from the Scriptures that this practice of offering the Lord's Supper in more than one first day of the week assembly *is not wrong*. Of course, some disagree. This leads us to the question...

Must We Divide Over This Issue?

What are we to do if some teach that it is *sinful* to offer or eat the Lord's Supper in more than one first day of the week assembly? I have been in churches that have members who disagreed on this subject, but remained united. How were they able to do this? The solution was simple. The Lord's Supper was offered in more than one first day of the week services. Those who missed the early service, and who were comfortable partaking of the Supper in a later service, did so in accordance with their conscience. Those who missed the early service, and were not comfortable partaking of the Supper in a later service, did not do so. They also

respected their consciences. I see no problem with this arrangement. The problem only comes when some people refuse to allow others the right to follow the dictates of their own conscience. Those who do not object to the second serving believe that as long as they have access to a first day of the week assembly, they have a scriptural format for eating the Lord's Supper and obeying the Lord's command in 1 Corinthians 11:24-25 ("*do this*"). What difference should this make to the objector? What right does he have to bind his own opinion on others?

The "Passover"

Luke recorded these words about the Last Supper:

14 And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him.

15 And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer:

16 For I say unto you, I will not any more eat thereof, until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

17 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

18 For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.

20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you (Lk. 22:14-20) (KJV).

Jesus and the 12 apostles were observing the **Jewish Passover**. Verses 14-18 describe that observance. They were eating the "unleavened bread" in accordance with the Law (Ex. 12:1-17). A transition occurs between verses 18 and 19, which separates the observance of the Passover from the institution of the Lord's Supper. Interestingly, Jesus used the same elements for the Lord's Supper that He had used for the Passover. He also used the same language for the Passover and the Lord's Supper, to describe the time of His next *eating* with the apostles. Of the Passover, Jesus said, "*I will not any more eat thereof until it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God*" (Lk.22:16). Jesus promised to eat the Passover with the disciples when the kingdom was established. Verse 18 says, "*For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.*" The language in this verse parallels Matthew 26:29, where Jesus was obviously speaking of the *Lord's Supper*. Thus Jesus promised to eat the Lord's Supper with the disciples *after* the establishment of His kingdom. We find references to the Lord's Supper in Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Corinthians 10:16; and 11:20-26. It is important to understand that

the Lord's Supper had its origin in the Jewish Passover. Notice the similarities between the two:

1. Both were divinely instituted and “ordained” (Ex. 12:14,17; Matt. 26:29). Concerning the Lord's Passover, Moses instructed the Jews to “*celebrate this day as a lasting ordinance for the generations to come*” (Ex. 12:17). Concerning the Lord's Supper, Jesus promised to eat it with the disciples after the establishment of the kingdom, and Paul said, “*For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes*” (Lk. 22:16; 1 Cor. 11:26).

2. Both were “memorials” (Ex.12:14,24-28; Lk. 22:19). Moses said the Passover would be for the Jews “*a memorial,*” and concerning the Lord's Supper, Jesus said, “*This do in remembrance of me.*”

3. Both used the same elements or emblems. Remember, Jesus was observing the “*Passover*” (Lk. 22:15). He had both “*unleavened bread*” and “*fruit of the vine*” (Matt. 26:17, 29). Moses commanded “*unleavened bread*” (Ex. 12:8,18), and “*wine*” (often freshly squeezed grape juice - Gen. 40:11; Jer. 40:12) was commonly used at meals (Deut. 33:28; 2 Kgs. 18:32). The simple fact that Jesus was observing the Jewish Passover using “*fruit of the vine*” with the unleavened bread proves that this was the commonly accepted practice under the law.

4. Both involve a “Passover Lamb.” Jews were told to select a perfect, year old male from the sheep or goats (Ex. 12:5). Today, *Christ is our Passover*, and the Lord's Supper is a “*communion*” of the blood and body of Christ (1 Cor. 5:7; 10:16).

5. Both were commanded to be observed by God's people. Concerning the Passover, Moses said, “*The whole community of Israel must celebrate it*” and “*obey these instructions*” (Ex. 12:47,24). “*If a man who is ceremonially clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover, that person must be cut off from his people*” (Num. 9:13). Concerning the Lord's Supper, Paul said to the saints at Corinth, “*For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you... Jesus said, this do*” (1 Cor. 11:23-25; Lk. 22:19).

Provisions For A Second Service - Numbers 9:10-11

We have considered some of the key similarities between the Old Testament Passover and the New Testament Lord's Supper. However, the parallel may extend even further. Moses described certain conditions that would allow a **second**

opportunity for the observance of the Passover memorial. Those who were “*unclean because of a dead body, or away on a journey*” (Num. 9:10) were to observe the Passover on the fourteenth day of the *second month* (Num. 9:11). It should be noted that this second observance provision was still in effect at the very time Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. The law had not yet been abolished (Col. 2:14). Had any of the Jews, including those Jewish disciples of Christ, been *unclean or out of town* at the time of that Passover, they would have observed the Passover one month later, on the 14th day of the 2nd month, per Numbers 9:10-11. Though this does not constitute explicit authority for a second serving of the Lord's Supper today, it does establish a clear principle that in memorial observances of the past, God has made provisions allowing people to observe a memorial at a later time. The only restrictions were that the memorial still had to be observed respecting God's *authorized* time and way. This provision could serve as an example and shadow for us today (Rom. 15:4; Heb. 8:5).

The Lord's Supper: Both Collective and Individual

Scriptural observance of the Lord's Supper requires an *assembly*, yet the actual observance is extremely *personal*. Paul said, “*Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup*” (1 Cor. 11:28). Basically, the Lord's Supper is an individual act of worship that is observed in the assembly. Disciples at Corinth and Troas ate the Lord's Supper after they “*came together*” (1 Cor. 11:20,33; Acts 20:7). However, the emphasis of the word “*together*” is not on the *manner* and *time* of eating. The word is a logistical term emphasizing the gathering of saints in one place. 1 Corinthians 14:23 says, “*Therefore if the whole church comes together in one place...*” This is the idea suggested by the word *together*.

The Bible also strongly emphasizes the fact that the Lord's Supper is very personal and individual. Some believe the Lord's Supper is a communion of the saints, one with another. The Bible says it is a “*communion with the blood and body of Christ*” (1 Cor. 10:16). Scriptural observance of the Lord's Supper does not depend upon what is in the minds of one's fellow Christians. We will be judged, not on the basis of their thoughts, but on the basis of our own thoughts. God is looking to see whether or not we properly associate the bread with the Lord's body, and the fruit of the vine with the Lord's blood. Paul said, “*But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body*” (1 Cor. 11:28-29). Thus, even though the Lord's

Supper is observed in a first day of the week *public* assembly, it is still very personal and *private* in its nature.

What About The Term "Together?"

Paul said, "*Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another*" (1 Cor. 11:33). Some brethren make two mistakes from this verse. They mistakenly conclude that the word "together" emphasizes the concurrency of action among partakers. And they interpret the word "tarry" in a way that requires all members of a local church to partake of the Lord's Supper in the *same assembly*. Does the fact that the disciples were to be "together," and that they were to "wait" for one another, necessarily mean that their partaking was *at the same time* and *in the same assembly*? Do these words require that the eating of the bread and the drinking of the fruit of the vine are "concurrent" or "simultaneous?" Is Paul suggesting an "all together now" styled partaking of the emblems? Such manner of observance would require us to have a "bread leader" and a "cup leader" in much the same way that we have song and prayer leaders! The arguments made by some would require the assembly to carefully watch these men and coordinate their arm and mouth movements with the leaders. Yes, I realize that this sounds silly, but by taking the position to its logical conclusion I hope show its fallacy. Those who believe the word "together" describes the *manner and time* of observance of the Lord's Supper are forced to this conclusion whether they like it or not.

"Together" In 1 Corinthians 14:26

Paul said, "*How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying.*" Notice that "together" in this passage does not mean doing things *at the same time*. In fact, Paul makes it clear that they were *not* to speak at the same time but "one at a time" (vv. 27,31). They were "together" when they carried out these items, but they did not act *concurrently*. The word "together" simply points out that this was done **in an assembly**. I know of no church where the members partake of the emblems simultaneously. There is always some amount of time between the first person's eating and the last person's eating. The length of time will vary from church size to church size. Is it okay for that time differential to be 15 minutes but wrong for it to be 5 or 6 hours? The early Jerusalem church had several thousand members (Acts 2:41,47, 4:4; 5:14; 6:1,7). What if there had been a few hours between the first person's taking and the last person's taking? What would be the difference between

that practice and the practice of a second serving a few hours later, as practiced by many churches do today?

What Does It Mean To "Tarry One For Another?"

In 1 Corinthians 11:33, Paul told the Corinthians to “tarry” or “wait” one for another. **It is important for us to note that the Corinthians were not condemned because they provided late comers with an opportunity to also observe the supper, and they were not condemned for offering the Lord's Supper more than once.** They *were* condemned for observing the supper as a *common meal* and for a practice which excluded and prevented some saints from being able to partake (1 Cor. 11:21,22,34). Should we adopt a similar practice as the one condemned at Corinth? No, we should “*tarry one for another.*” In other words, we should be *considerate* of our brethren. The Corinthians believed that “the early bird gets the worm.” Their practice allowed the ones who got there first to “gobble up” the emblems, leaving none for those who may have been hindered from attending earlier (1 Cor. 11:20-21). This should not be our practice. Rather, we should be willing to patiently “wait” while those so hindered are allowed “eat and drink.”

Does "Tarry" Mean "Wait Until All Can Be Together?"

If this is the meaning of the term “tarry,” then most churches would never be able to take the Lord's Supper. Sickness, travel, conflicting work schedules, and other factors frequently keep the whole church from being able to *all come together* in one assembly on Sundays. In the church where I preach, Christians have conflicting work schedules that prevent all of the members from coming together at one time on Sundays. That is no problem, for we can have as many first day of the week services as we deem necessary in order to accommodate conscientious, hard-working members, who want to worship their Lord on His day. In our situation the practice of splitting the services works extremely well. That is *our* particular situation, and as I said before, I have no desire or right to question the individual decisions, judgments, and policies of other local churches regarding the number of their services. There are 24 hours within the first day of the week. Each church, under her leadership, has the right to choose *which hour or hours* within that day to worship and *how many services* to have. We don't know the hour when the Troas services started, but we do know that they “*continued until midnight*” (Acts 20:7). The Bible was not just written to twenty first century Christians living in North America! Cars and telephones might make it a little easier for us to keep up with one another's plans and circumstances. However,

think about life in the first century; no phones or cars, only messengers who traveled on foot or animals. Can you imagine the difficulty the early Jerusalem church would have trying to get all of their thousands of members to eat the Lord's Supper at the same time? As I said before, the significance of the word "tarry" is in the consideration we have for our brethren, not in the "concurrency" of the "partaking" action.

The Lord's Supper Is A Command

The Lord said, "Take eat" and "this do" (1 Cor. 11:24,25). Saints are commanded to observe this memorial supper upon the first day of the week. *Opportunity* coupled with *ability* result in *responsibility*. If one has been hindered on Sunday morning, but has the ability and opportunity to attend on Sunday night, shouldn't they do what the Lord told them to do? Giving is also commanded upon the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). If I am kept from the worship service in which people took the Lord's Supper, should I therefore refuse to give of my means in a different service? What about other acts of worship like singing, praying, and studying? If the Lord's Supper is scriptural in only one of the Sunday services, upon what basis do we authorize singing, praying, giving, and studying in other services. This position will necessarily lead to allowing only one service on Sundays. Of course, some have already done this in order to eliminate the disputes over a second offering of the Lord's Supper. What will happen when someone objects to offering the Lord's Supper in *any assembly*? Will we quit meeting entirely? Better to determine the truth on the matter than to eliminate opportunities for conscientious saints to worship their God. Let us not throw the proverbial "baby out with the bathwater!"

The "Main Reason" Theory

"And upon the first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread..." (Acts 20:7). Some believe that Luke's words prove that the Lord's Supper was "the main reason" for Christian assemblies on the first day of the week. This is a dangerous view because it puts a premium on *some* of God's laws. It makes one command or law more important than others. Paul commanded the Corinthians to "give" upon the first day of the week so that there would "*be no gatherings*" when he came (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Money was "gathered" by people assembling. Would it be correct for us to argue from this passage, that giving was the *main reason* for the assembly? How could *giving* be the main reason for the assembly if the Lord's Supper is the main reason? Paul also said, "*When you come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue..*" (1 Cor.

14:26). Is Paul now saying that singing and teaching are the main reasons for the assembly “coming together?” I am confused. The Lord's Supper isn't even mentioned in these passages! Does this fact mean that the Lord's Supper is *unimportant* or *less important* than these other items of worship? No, it means that all of God's commands are equally binding. Since God's word cannot contradict itself (Jn. 10:35; Rom. 3:4), we must conclude that all of God's commands are equal. The inspired writer James made this point in James 2:9-11. “*But if ye have respect of persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.*” James argues that “respect of persons” is just as wrong as murder and adultery! The law principle that he invokes simply means that God's laws are equal. Haven't we been trying for years to get denominationalists and others to consider *everything* God says on a given subject before they reach their conclusions? We should practice what we preach (Rom. 2:21). By combining God's instructions on the subject, we learn that there are five acts of worship: teaching, giving, prayer, the Lord's supper, and singing (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 14:15,26; 16:1-2). There is no “main” act of worship, just as there is no “main” commandment. Someone might argue that Jesus spoke of the “greatest” commandment, and that is true (Matt. 22:37-40). Jesus spoke of two commands that *encompassed* and *embodied* “*all the law and the prophets.*” He did not say that some commands are *more important* than others. He said that some commands are *included* in others. Let us remember that James and Jesus could not have contradicted each other (Jn. 10:35).

Conclusion

It bothers me to see fellow Christians "troubled with words" and "shaken in mind" (Acts 15:24; 2 Thess. 2:2) over matters like these. In many places, honest Christians are worrying about their old practice of offering the Lord's Supper two or more times on Sunday. As long as there is an assembly, on the first day of the week, with the proper elements, and people with proper attitudes and purpose, a local church may scripturally offer and eat the Lord's Supper as many times as they deem appropriate. The Bible most certainly authorizes the second serving of the Lord's Supper, and so we may practice (or continue to practice) such today.

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