

The LORD's Day, The LORD's Church, The LORD's Supper

The statement of the apostle Paul in 1st Corinthians 11:26 says, *"For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the LORD's death till He comes."* It sounds simple and to the point, and it is. But, if we don't rightly divide it in context, we will miss the mark. And, if we miss the mark and don't proclaim His death in the proper manner, we *"will be guilty of the body and blood of the LORD"* (v27)!

There are instructions and restrictions in the context of New Testament scriptures that expound and define what Paul is really saying to the church at Corinth, and thus to us. And, even though many brethren and churches have chosen to ignore the context, we must decide whether we will follow the local traditions of men, or follow GOD.

Some brethren observe the LORD's Supper at home, or somewhere else, even with no one else present. Some observe it in their hospital bed when someone brings it to them. Some go through a drive-in window at a church building where it is passed out to them. Some observe it if they have at least one other Christian present... in a motel room, a roadside park, or on a bus traveling down the road. Some observe it after services in a classroom in the church building with someone serving them. Some observe it in an assembly of the church where only one or two have come to partake... the others watch while one serves the partakers. Some observe the LORD's Supper in the church assembly with all Christians partaking with one another.

Paul puts it squarely on the shoulders of each and every member to properly observe the manner of partaking the LORD's Supper. *"But, let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself..."* (1Cor. 11:28-29). He is not talking about the condition of a person's heart here, but the *"manner"* of partaking—the action. It matters about how we partake!

The New Testament teaches that the LORD's Supper must be observed on the LORD's day—the first day of the week—by all the Christians who have assembled together as a church in a given location (Mat. 26:29, *"that day,"* and Acts 20:7, *"the first day of the week,"* and 1Cor. 11:18 & 33, *"when you come together as a church ... to eat, wait for one another,"* and Mat. 26:27, *"drink from it, all of you"*).

So, *"as often as"* we assemble together as a church to do this with *"one another"* (a mutual and reciprocal involvement) on the first day of the week, we remember our LORD's death till He comes again. There is no instruction (command, statement, necessary conclusion or example) given that tells us to take of it on one particular time on the first day of the week. The time and frequency is generic, except that it must be done on the first day of the week.

Therefore, the example of the church meeting in Acts 20:7 to partake of the

LORD's Supper in the evening (and, in an upper room) is just a time that particular church chose to observe it on the first day of the week, and also just a place (the upper room) they chose to meet.

Since there are no directions for churches concerning the time of day, or the location, then a church has the choice of when and where on the first day of the week to come together for the purpose of eating the LORD's Supper (Acts 20:7 and 1Cor. 11:17-34). "Supper" does not fix a time, but merely portrays it as an eating and drinking event. There would have to be specific time directions to demand a morning, noon or night time partaking. But, there are none! Therefore, a church decides how to carryout the generic order.

Note, also, that a New Testament church is not a convenient "two or more" who partake of these emblems in their home, their motel room, their automobile, on a roadside table or wherever. The New Testament church is an organized and overseen (Acts 20:28) body of Christians in a certain locality who have the intent to be there in work and service (fellowship) until the LORD returns again. The LORD's church is not a temporary thing for convenience... here today and gone tomorrow!

The New Testament church of Christ must also have the intent to set in order those things lacking, and to appoint elders and deacons (Titus 1:5-9), and to maintain a treasury (1Cor. 16:1-3) for doing the LORD's work, and to be the *"house of GOD, the church of the living GOD, the pillar and ground of the truth"* (1Tim. 3:15) in that community.

The New Testament church is that church that Jesus built (Mat. 16:18) and that He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). That church will meet continually, especially on the LORD's Day (the first day of the week), to build up and equip its members for the work of service and worship (Eph 4:11-16). It's a mutual and reciprocal obligation and privilege that we have with one another.

There are times, places and reasons that two or more Christians, even members of the same local church, will come together doing the LORD's will, and they are NOT the church. The LORD taught us in dealing with an erring brother, two or more will come together and go to that brother. *"But, if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church"* (Mat. 18:17). So, just having two or more Christians together, even doing the LORD's will, does not necessarily constitute a coming together of a church.

Two or more Christians are indeed instructed in the scriptures to participate together in social activities, such as having meals together and enjoying one another's company... being hospitable. Paul certainly teaches these things in Romans 12. And, Luke tells us it was the way the early Christians were doing together outside of meeting together as a church: *"... from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising GOD and having favor with all the people"* (Acts 2:46-47).

Paul commanded that we separate these social activities from the work, service

and worship of the church: *"But, if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home. lest you come together for judgment"* (1Cor. 11:34). He instructed the LORD's Supper to be eaten in an assembly of a church by all Christians present: *"Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another"* (1Cor. 11:33).

Observe the context of 1st Corinthians 11:17-34...

"... you come together not for the better but for the worse ... when you come together as a church ... Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ... What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God... Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come."

And, observe the example of a New Testament church (the church at Troas) in Acts 20:7...

"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."

The apostle Paul directed the church at Corinth to set these things in order (v34). He directed the evangelist, Titus, to set things in order in all the churches in Crete and appoint elders (Titus 1:5). Paul commanded churches to have order and do things in the proper manner (1Cor. 14:40).

Therefore, we must set these things in order, also! The manner of partaking the LORD's Supper is given in these scriptures... by *"one another"* in the assembly of a New Testament church. Not one just sitting and watching while another partakes, but a mutual and reciprocal proclaiming... eating and drinking together... *"one another."* Not just two or more Christians in another setting, but two or more Christians coming together as a church that will set things in order and appoint elders and deacons.

There are no directions for a "temporary" church in the gospel of Christ, nor are there directions for any other manner of partaking the LORD's Supper. On the LORD's day, the LORD's church comes together for the purpose of remembering our LORD's death... and the LORD's people proclaim it to one another by partaking of the LORD's Supper. I hope and pray that we do so in the proper and GOD given manner.