**The Church at Corinth**

**A Church Facing Inner Problems – #15**

**Abuses at the Celebration of the Lord’s Supper**

**1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

*Note – Class will not meet next Wednesday, January 30.*

*George will resume class the following week, Wednesday, February 6. - bw*

**Passover and Communion**

Last week we discussed 1 Corinthians 5 and Christ as the Passover. This week we will continue with that theme by looking at Paul’s instructions to the Corinthians for the Lord’s Supper in Chapter 11.

***1 Corinthians 11:17 –*** *In giving the following instructions, I do not praise (you), because you hold your meetings not to your advantage, but to your disadvantage.* ***18*** *First of all, I hear that, when you meet as a church, there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.* ***19*** *No doubt there have to be factions among you, so that the tried and true among you may be recognized.* ***20*** *Although you hold your meetings in one place, it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.* ***21*** *For as you eat, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one goes hungry, while another gets drunk.* ***22*** *Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Are you not showing contempt for the church of God and making those who have nothing feel ashamed? What am I to say to you? Should I praise you? In this I offer no praise.*

***23*** *For I received from the Lord what I handed over to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over took bread,* ***24*** *and having given thanks, broke it, and said, “This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”* ***25*** *In the same way, the cup too, after the supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, whenever 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*** *Consequently, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily, will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord.* ***28*** *One should catch himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.* ***29*** *For anyone who eats and drinks without acknowledging the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.* ***30*** *For this reason many among you are weak and infirm, and a number are dying.* ***31*** *But if we were to evaluate ourselves correctly, we would not be subject to judgment.* ***32*** *Since we are being judged by [the] Lord, we are being chastened, that we may not be condemned along with the world.*

***33*** *Consequently, my brothers, when you meet together to eat, await the arrival of one another.* ***34*** *If anyone gets hungry, he should eat at home, that you may not meet together only to be condemned. As for the other matters I shall give directives when I come.*

**Commentary on the main topic**

Paul now turns to the abuse of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. This long section contains five parts:

1. (17–22), a description of the social conduct of the community. Paul has no praise. Although the members of the community come together for a common goal, their behavior is divisive; contrary to the aim of the celebration of the Lord’s Supper, and shows contempt for God’s church.
2. (23–25), Paul discusses the tradition that is handed over regarding the time and the manner of the institution of the Lord’s Supper.
3. (26–28), Paul’s teaching on the Lord’s Supper and that the recipients of the Supper must be worthy.

4. (29–32), Paul’s verdict on the prevailing situation and its relation to “judgment.”

5. (33–34), Paul’s concluding directives about “meeting together.”

**What was contrary to the celebration?**

1. When they come together as “church” to take a common meal, they neglect the meaning of the Lord’s Supper. Their schism directs their meeting. They, these schismatics, even may have abandoned the idea of receiving the Lord’s body and regarded the bread as ordinary food; their common meal was no longer a commemorative celebration of the Lord’s Supper, but just a meal.

1. It may be that the schismatics were Gnostics who has rejected the Incarnate Son of God. They wanted the “spiritual Christ” and were “opposing receiving the body and blood of Christ. The Lord’s Supper has at its center the crucified human body Jesus, and this is inconceivable for the Gnostics who hated the human body. If they participate in the Supper, this is done from the beginning not in order to observe the Lord’s Supper but to eat a meal. Their attitude toward the Lord’s Supper is no different in principle from that toward the sacrifices to the idols. For them neither meal had only one goal, that is, the gathering itself and the banquet. They may have been saying at their gathering Jesus is “accursed” (1 Cor 12:1-3). These “spiritual schismatics” divorced Jesus from Christ, that is, the earthly Jesus from the heavenly Christ, so their private profane meal stands in opposition to the common meal we know as the Lord’s Supper.
2. But there were also some rich or well-to-do worshippers at Corinth who ate a secular meal separate from the common Eucharistic banquet, and Paul was insisting that the Eucharist has to involve all believers. Those who regard the secular meal as more important are unworthy of the Eucharist.
3. Paul describes a social life that was not proper. This sinful behavior that took place before the celebration of the Lord’s Supper makes it impossible for them to participate worthily and properly in the body and blood of Christ. As we see in

1 Corinthians 10:14-22 – ***14*** *“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.* ***15*** *I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.* ***16*** *The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?* ***17*** *Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.* ***18*** *Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?* ***19*** *What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?*

***20*** *No, I imply that what pagan’s sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.* ***22*** *You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.* ***23*** *Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?*

1. The whole community should have regarded the celebration of the Lord’s Supper as a sacred meal, but the meal has become private that “each one goes ahead with his own meal” (11:20-21) and does not wait for the others (11:33). Thus the celebration of the Lord’s Supper has become an occasion for social discrimination and divisive conduct. In doing this, they are eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord “*unworthily*” (verse 27). Such conduct only “*shows contempt for the church of God*” (verse 22). That is why Paul advises that they “*await the arrival of one another*” (verse 33) or eat at home, if they are hungry (verse 34).

**The Common Meal and the Lord’s Supper**

From verses 22 and 34, we can be sure that there was a meal attached to the Lord’s Supper. Eventually it was called Agape, and sometimes translated as “Love-Feast” (see the letter of Jude 11 -12: *“For they go the way of Cain, and abandon themselves to Balaam’s error for the sake of gain, and perish in Korah’s rebellion. These are blemishes on your love-feasts, while they feast with you without fear, feeding themselves …*” (Ignatius of Antioch, *Letter to Smyrna*, 8.2: and variant reading in some Greek MSS of 2 Pet 2:13). But how clearly can one distinguish in it details belonging to the Lord’s Supper and this Love Feast? Toward the end of the first century, the Didache (9.1, 5) uses the noun “Eucharistic” clearly as the name for the celebration of drinking the cup and breaking the bread. Moreover, in ca. 110 A.D., Pliny the Younger, in his letter to the emperor Trajan about Christians, speaks of them thus: “(they are) accustomed to assemble before dawn on a fixed day and chant alternately a hymn to Christ as to a god. When that is finished, they have the habit of departing and gathering together again to partake of ordinary, harmless food.” (Ep. 10.96.7)

This double meeting that Pliny reports is usually thought to be a reference first to the Eucharist and then to the Agape. By the time of Cyprian (d. c258), there was a clear distinction between the Eucharist, celebrated with fasting in the morning, and the Agape, taken in the evening (See, Fitzstephen Keating, *The Agape and the Eucharist in the Early Church*; studies in the history of the Christian love Feast).

**What is the Origin of the Lord’s Supper?**

There has been considerable discussion about the Last Supper and its origin. Paul and the Synoptic accounts of Jesus’ words (in Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are almost the same.

1. Paul (1 Corinthians 11) introduces Jesus’ words by appealing to an existing tradition, which he has already passed on to the Christians of Corinth when he first evangelized them. In Joachim Jeremias’ *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus* (pp 26–36) is discussed the pros and cons of origin and has shown that the background of the Last Supper or Eucharist is to be found in the Jewish Passover meal (ibid, pp 41-88). Jesus would not only have celebrated the Passover meal with his apostles, but reinterpreted elements of it so that they became the Christian Eucharist.

2. The Jewish Passover meal at a very early date celebrated Passover in a specifically Christian way by fasting in preparation for the crucifixion of Jesus at the season of Passover, and then feasting with both Agape and Eucharist. Such an observance of Passover in this Christian sense supplies, then, the best explanation for many of the details in the NT accounts of the Lord’s Supper.

3. Here in 1 Corinthians 11:17ff, these Pauline passages are the earliest verification of the way Jesus instituted the Supper. Paul supplies us with the words and the background from the night on which Jesus was given.

**Study notes of the verses**

**Misconduct**

**VERSE 17 –** “… *I do not praise (you), because you hold your meetings …*”

Christians were coming together, as we see in Acts 20:7, “*On the first day of the week, when we gathered to break bread…*”

**VERSE 18 –** *“First of all, I hear that, when you meet as a church, there are divisions among you.”*

Paul makes use of a well-known Greek expression for the gathering of an assembly, and that is the “church” (***ecclesia***), the “gathering in worship” assembly to celebrate the Lord’s Day and then the Supper. Paul says there is no real unity of assembly because of their “divisions.” The same generic use of Ekkelsia appears in 1 Corinthians 14:4, 5, 19, 28, 35). This is undoubtedly a house-church (cf. 16:19; Rom 16:5), since at this early period ***Ekklesia*** was not yet used in the sense of a separate building called “a church.” We have no evidence for a building before the fourth century, but Paul is stressing the ecclesial importance of the Lord’s Supper for he already mentioned in common participation in the blood and the body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16–17).

**VERSE 19 –** *“No doubt there have to be factions among you, so that the tried and true among you may be recognized.”*

What Paul called “schismata” in verse 18 he now calls heresies, with little intended difference in meaning between them. (He is not using either word in the later sense of schism and heresy of church history). Paul thinks that splits of this sort are almost inevitable, even in the Christian community that he has founded, but he hopes that because of them those who are “genuinely” Christian will come to be known; for those who conduct themselves in a truly Christian manner will stand apart.

**VERSE 20 –** *“Although you hold your meetings in one place (or “your coming together in one place), …”*

The same phrase appears also in Acts 1:15; 2:1, 44. The purpose of their assembly is to share a meal together and to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

**Cont.**  *“… it is not to eat the Lord’s Supper.”*

I.e., you may have come together for a meal, but you cannot call it the supper of “the Lord,” because your divisive and factious conduct negates that meal’s purpose, which is unity. If the Lord’s Supper is not rightly celebrated, then it is not celebrated at all.

**A Note from Philemon**

“We divide what can’t be divided; that is, the Lord who came to abolish all forms of division. But by dividing, we have all of us [*missed the point of*] the undivided Christ. As each one of us partakes of the same bread that is the body of the Lord who is the Bread of Life, we become united by taking and eating the same and receiving the Lord into our life.”

**VERSE 21** – *“For as you eat, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one goes hungry, while another gets drunk.”*

The phrase “you eat” refers to what was intended to be a common meal, but is not taken together with others. Instead of eating in a common group and sharing the food, each partakes of what he or she has brought and does not “*wait for one another*” (11:33). One such diner makes one “hungry” and another “drunk” stands in contrast to “*those who have nothing*”

**VERSE 22 –** *“Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?”*

Paul introduces his question expecting a negative answer. His fuller answer to such divisive conduct is given only in verses 33–34: *Are you not showing contempt for the church of God and making those who have nothing to eat feel ashamed? What am I to say to you? Should I praise you? In this I offer no praise.”* Then Paul directly appeals to the early tradition about the Lord’s Supper. Jesus gave the Supper to the whole company

**VERSE 23 –** “*For I received from the Lord what I have handed down on to you.*”

Here the Evangelical readers must learn that these words are the technical language of tradition, “to receive,” and “hand down or, pass on.” This technical language appears again in 1 Corinthians 15:3. Paul appeals to tradition that has already taken shape in the first generation of the church after Christ’s resurrection and before Paul joined the church. It is a traditional formula that he has not only received himself, but has already passed on to Corinthian Christians when he evangelized them.

As in 1 Corinthians 7:10 where Paul is discussing marriage, we must notice here that Paul describes an early tradition with words derived ultimately from Jesus and now quoted by Paul. Paul traces these words back to “the Lord,” not in the sense that Paul has had a direct communication from the risen Christ about this supper, but that what he has received as tradition he now entrusts with the authority of the risen Christ, the one who was given up to death but is now the Exalted One.

**Tradition**

**VERSE 23 (cont) –** “*The Lord Jesus, on the night he was handed over, took bread*.”

Paul again uses ***paradidomi*** to refer to the arrest (“handing over”) of Jesus following the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, well known from the passion narratives of the Gospels (Matt 26:15; Mk 14:10, 21; Luke 22:4, 21; John 13:2), where Jesus was handed over by God or “Jesus was handing himself over.” This expression along with the verbs that follow (e.g. ***paredideto*,** “betrayed”) are derived from an early liturgical tradition, which not only has retained the chronological reference, “*on the night he was handed over*” (cf. Mk 14:30: which also adds, “*while they were eating*” the Passover meal 14:22), but has also invested the words “*the Lord Jesus*,” who is the same one whose presence will be experienced in the sharing of his “*cup*” and his “table” (10:21), or the “*Lord’s supper*” (11:20). It is Jesus who “*Took bread,*” which is the same expression as that in Mark 14:22; Matthew 26:26; and Luke 22:19). The Greek ***arton*** referred to “leavened bread,” and some have concluded that, therefore, the Last Supper could not have been a Passover meal but that interpretation was duly questioned because the same Greek word used in the LXX can mean “unleavened bread” (LXX Exod 29:2), where ***artous azymous*** (“unleavened bread”) translates the Hebrew ***lechem massôt***; (cf. Lev 2:4; 8:26; Num 6:19; and even Philo, De spec. leg. 2.28 §158; Josephus, Ant. 3.6.6 §142). The bread of the Presence in the Temple is called ***artous dodeka azymous***, or “the 12 unleavened loaves” (3.10.7 §255; J. Jeremias, Eucharistic Words, 62-65.)

**To Thank also means To Bless**

**VERSE 24 –** “*And having given thanks…*”

To express *“given thanks”* Paul writes ***eucharistesas***, as does Luke 22:19, whereas Mark and Matthew have rather ***eulogesas***, “having blessed” or “having given praise.” In the LXX, ***eulogein*** regularly translates Hebrew ***brk*** or “bless.” From the use of the word ***eucharistesas*** in Paul and Luke comes the common name “Eucharist” for the Christian Supper, which carries out the directive preserved in verses 24 and 25. The “thanksgiving” connotes God’s blessing on what is broken.

The earliest thanksgiving outside the NT was recorded by a book that was known as the “Teaching of the Apostles” or by just one word, the “Didache” (DID-uh-kee). In its “*Instruction regarding the Eucharist” (Ch 9:1)* it says:

“But as touching the Eucharistic thanksgiving give you thanks thus. First, as regards the cup: We give You thanks, O our Father, for the holy vine of Your son David, which You made known to us through Your Son Jesus; Yours is the glory for ever and ever.”

Then as regards the broken bread:

“We give You thanks, O our Father, for the life and knowledge which You did make known to us through Your Son Jesus; The glory is Yours for ever and ever. 9:8 As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains and being gathered together became one, so may Your Church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into Your kingdom; For Yours is the glory and the power through Jesus Christ for ever and ever. But let no one eat or drink of this Eucharistic thanksgiving, except those who have been baptized into the name of the Lord; For concerning this also the Lord has said: Give not that which is holy to the dogs.”

**Breaking Bread**

**VERSE 24 (cont) –** *“Jesus broke it”*

The loaf is not cut, but divided in pieces in order to be shared or distributed. The verb “break” (***eklasen***) occurs in the NT only in the context of breaking bread at a meal (Luke 24:20; Acts 2:46; 27:35; Mk 8:6, 19; 14:22; Matt 14:19; 15:36; 26:26; cf. LXX Jer 16:7; Lam 4:4), and “to break bread” was an ordinary way in Biblical terms of saying, “to eat a meal.” From it Luke derives his special name of the Lord’s Supper, “the breaking of the bread” (24:35; Acts 2:42; 20:7, 11; cf. Did. 9.2–3). Despite what is claimed at times, “*the breaking of bread*” was not the earliest title for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper.

The breaking of bread, however, often is used in a metaphorical sense for the “breaking” of Jesus’ body (in his passion or death); that is not so because the Supper is not only about the death of Jesus but also about Jesus giving his life to the community.

**This is my body**

**VERSE 24 (cont) –** “*This is my body.”*

The sentence is basically the same in Mark 14:22 and the other Synoptic Gospels.

The bread, however, is that over which Jesus has given thanks and actually refers to Jesus’ action of giving the bread as his body.

In the ancient Passover Seder, the paterfamilias recited an Aramaic formula that explained the unleavened bread with a reference to Exodus 13:6-8 and Deuteronomy 26:511: “*This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt*” (see Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 54). Jesus, however, while imitating that formula, interprets the bread of the new Passover (recall 5:7) by identifying it with his own body. He gives his followers not only bread to eat, but also a crucial part of himself, the part of himself that will suffer, “*the body of Christ*” (Rom 7:4). The body and the blood have to be linked together. They are correlative terms and are not to be understood independently of each other.

The “body,” can mean also “self” or “life,” a sense said to be found elsewhere in the NT (1 Cor 9:27; 13:3; Rom 12:1; Phil 1:20) but not without the physical living body (see R. Gundry, *Soma in Biblical Theology: With Emphasis on Pauline Anthropology*, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series, 12-13, 36-37, and esp. 25).

Paul’s emphasis is on the Incarnate Son Jesus who has his living “body.” For Paul and all the NT writers, Jesus is not a spirit but is totally human. So giving his body is sharing his being and his life with us.

The words and the actions of Jesus were not just symbolic. If Jesus were using Aramaic or even Hebrew at the Last Supper, no verb would have been used, he just said “this my body” there is no juxtaposition of the subject and predicate in a nominal sentence. (See, Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, 233). Jeremias insists that the words over the bread do not mean, “My person means for you so much as eating and drinking,” This is very abstract and not a Semitic way of thinking.

**Sharing**

Paul’s interpretive word in verses 26–29, “participation” in the body and blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16), became the basis for the early Christian understanding of the sharing of Jesus’ life. Now, those who come to the Supper are in fact “participants” in the new covenant that the giving of his body and blood connotes (verse 25).

That physical sense of a physical body was not questioned until the Middle Ages (by Ratramnus of Corbie, 9th century, and Berengar of Tours, 11th century) which resulted in the unfortunate use of the term “Transubstantiation” that was reaffirmed by the Roman Church tradition by many theologians, popes, and especially the Council of Trent (in 1651), in its effort to curb the solely symbolic interpretation of some Reformers, especially Zwingli.

**VERSE 24 (cont) –** “*Which is for you*”

Literally, “that for you,” i.e., (my body is) for you (plural) who participate in this meal. The use of “given” or “broken” is to be understood in a sacrificial sense; and this sense is the Lord himself. Paul does not know the dualism that divides the Person of the Lord from his work. When Paul writes about Jesus, Paul does not divide the Lord to a historical Jesus and the Lord of Glory (see, 1:18, 23; 2:2 and in Rom 7:4). He will refer to the body and call it “the body of Christ.”

**The Greek sense of the word body**

1. Was not known to Paul who as a Jew could not divide the human into two entities, body and spirit.
2. The body is the person alive and present.
3. The redeeming action of Jesus is located in this proposition “for”. Jesus’ handed over his body in death for others. This vicarious sense of “for” can be found in (1 Cor 15:3, 29; 2 Cor 5:14; Rom 5:6; 8:32. See also Sir 29:15; 2 Macc 7:9; 8:21) “for the sake of so many I shall readily give my life”).

**VERSE 24 (cont) – “***Do this in remembrance of me.”*

Or even more literally, “*Keep doing this …*” i.e., keep performing the same action over bread as I am doing, and do it in memory of me. This directive is found in neither the Marcan [Mark] nor the Matthean [Matthew] parallel, but appears verbatim in Luke 22:19). In a slightly different form, it is repeated in verse 25. Since it does not occur in the Marcan and Matthean parallels, it may represent a secondary feature in the early tradition; but because both Luke and Paul have it, without any evidence known to us of a Lucan [Luke] borrowing from Paul, it must mean that they both have inherited these words from an earlier liturgical tradition. Paul includes it twice in his reconstruction.

The phrase “in remembrance of me,” is a modification of an OT phrase (Lev 24:7) “for a remembrance,” used for the frankincense and salt put on the Bread of the Presence (Ps 38:1; 70:1; Wis 16:6). The modification is the added “my” or “of me,” i.e., a remembrance of Jesus and his actions at the Last Supper, but also “in remembrance of” the crucified one, who gave up his body for his own.

The purpose of the remembrance:

1. It is a reminder for humans to do it; it is not for God.
2. It is a time for celebration.
3. It mimissPalestinian Jewish prayer formulas, “that God may remember me,” i.e., the Messiah (Jeremias, Eucharistic Words, 252)
4. Remember the “Covenant,” and God’s wondrous redemptive deeds in such passages as Nehemiah 9:17 and LXX Psalm 77:12; 78:42 (see, G. D [Kilpatrick](http://www.amazon.com/s/ref=ntt_athr_dp_sr_1?_encoding=UTF8&field-author=G.%20D.%20Kilpatrick&ie=UTF8&search-alias=books&sort=relevancerank), [*The Eucharist in Bible and Liturgy*](http://www.amazon.com/The-Eucharist-Bible-Liturgy-Kilpatrick/dp/0521097207/ref=lh_ni_t?ie=UTF8&psc=1), 14–16).
5. It is like the Passover meal itself: “*That you may remember the day of your departure from the land of Egypt all the days of your life*” (Deut 16:3d; cf. Exod 12:14) and “*This day will be for you a memorial*” (LXX: Deut 13:3), so also the Lord’s Supper is a remembrance of Jesus himself.

The later rabbinic tradition also regarded the Passover celebration as a feast of remembrance par excellence: “In every generation a man must so regard himself as if he came forth himself out of Egypt, for it is written, ‘*And thou shalt tell thy son in that day saying, It is because of that which the Lord did for me when I came forth from Egypt’*” (Exod 13:8).

**The Cup and the New Covenant**

**VERSE 25 –** *“In the same way, the cup too, after the supper, saying …”*

I.e., “the cup of blessing” (10:16), the cup over which a blessing is pronounced Luke 22:20 has the same words in a slightly different order. The “cup” referred originally to one of the various cups of wine drunk at the Passover meal, but it is not possible today to say for certain to which one it might refer, except that it followed the consumption of the Passover lamb. It is often thought to have been the third cup (but see, Gordon J Bahr, *The Seder of Passover and the Eucharistic* Words *Novum Testamentum. 1970,p 201.*

“The cup too, after the supper,” means after the eating of the distributed Eucharistic bread. Whether these words tell us anything about the order of the elements of the Corinthian meal and its Eucharist is a matter of much debate today, but really a question of very little significance.

Let’s examine Paul’s phrase, “in the same way, the cup too after the supper.” This is a different word order from Luke 22:20.

1. “The cup after the supper.” Some assumed that it is the third cup at the end of the Passover meal. However, this understanding of the words is philologically “impossible,” because the article (the cup) is no just a cup. *[Note: Philology is the study of language used in historical documents.- ed.]*
2. “This cup is the new covenant in my blood.” i.e., the new covenant is concluded or ratified with my blood or by means of my blood. Luke (22:20) has the same formula. Both the Pauline and the Lucan formulas identify the cup (and its contents) with the new covenant, whereas Mark 14:24 identifies the cup (and its contents) with the blood itself: “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many.” The Marcan formula is closer to Exodus 24:8, more than that found in Matthew 26:28, “*for the forgiveness of sins*.” The Pauline phrase “*in my blood*,” expresses the mode in which the covenant is ratified. This phrase hardly presupposes the idea of expiation (of sins, Isaiah 53:12), because the alleged allusion in it to the Suffering Servant (Isa 53) is farfetched.
3. “The new covenant” refers to a pact understood as already known. It is, in fact, an allusion to Jeremiah 31:31–34 (LXX 38:31–34), the promise made by Yahweh of a pact that he would make with “the house of Israel and the house of Judah,” not like that “*made with their fathers, I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people*.” The promise of a new covenant now finds fulfillment in Jesus expressed by the words Jesus uttered over the cup, as he refers to the blood that he will shed in his death on the cross as the means by which the new pact is established now between God and His people. (Cf. Heb 9:20; 10:16-18). This “covenant” is like the “old covenant” (2 Cor 3:14) in one aspect only: that it is made by Yahweh. While the old was between Yahweh and the people of Israel on the mountain (Sinai), when Moses took the blood of twelve sacrificed oxen and sprinkled it, half on the people and half on the twelve stones of the altar in token of the pact, “*Look, the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you!*” (Exod 24:8). In this new form, the covenant is established “in my blood,” i.e., the shedding of Jesus’ own blood now functions in the “sacrifice of salvation that is for kingdom.
4. “Covenant,” in the LXX, i.e., the pact that God made with Israel, was thought to be different from the parity treaty of old that is common to the old world, especially “a pact between equals.” But here in the Bible, the “covenant” was closer in form to a treaty, a pact between a feudal overlord and a vassal, for Yahweh and Israel resembled more the overlord and vassal, yet it was a pact of mercy and election. The Greek NT used ***diatheke***, a word that in the Hellenistic world eventually also meant “last will,” “testament” (Gal 3:15), i.e., a legal means of disposing of property to an heir, usually with promise and obligation to hand over the inheritance at the due time. From that double nuance comes the meaning of ***diatheke*** as both “covenant” and “testament”
5. The function of the blood or rather the life offering of Jesus. In the OT the connotation of “blood” has to be considered, since Jesus’ words over the cup imply, as did those over the bread, that his “life” is involved. According to Leviticus 17:14, “the life (***nephesh***) of all flesh is its blood. Jesus life is offered under the old name “blood.”

**The Blood**

**VERSE 25 (cont) –** “Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

This is a repetition of verse 24, now applied to the drinking of the cup, as often as one partakes of it.

**VERSE 26 –** “*For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death …* ”

The active sharing of the bread and cup is a way not only of expressing one’s belief in the presence of Christ in the Supper, but also of accepting what the death of Jesus has achieved. The act of sharing is not only memory and recollection, but above all proclamation, just like the old Passover event, “*For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed*” (1 Cor 5:7). Kilpatrick, *The Eucharist in the Bible* (14-16), point to this double aspect of the Supper as the remembrance and proclamation. Neither can be neglected. Even if remembrance itself does not mean “proclamation,” the verb ***katangello*** denotes the proclamation of events in sacred festivals (TDNT, Vol 1:p 70). There is no worship without remembering, and there is no liturgical remembering without a proclamation narrative. In Galatians 2:20, Paul explains, *“I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me; and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me*.” (Compare, 2 Cor 4:10–11). The proclamation contains a confession of praise of what has been revealed.

**VERSE 25 (cont) –** “*… until he comes.*”

The sharing in the Lord’s Supper not only looks back with anamnesis *[reminiscence]* to the death of Jesus on Calvary and proclaims it at present, but it also looks forward to his “coming,” to the ***Parousia*** *[second coming]* of the risen and exalted Christ, of which Paul will speak again, praying in Aramaic, “***Marana tha***” (1 Cor 16:22).

**The Unworthy and the Guilty**

**VERSE 27 –** *“Consequently, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord.”*

Literally “will be caught in (obligation to) the body and blood.” Paul regards as a serious matter the unworthy reception of the Lord’s Supper, and he formulates it with a threat of judgment. “*Whoever eats,*” and Paul undoubtedly intends to make his view of unworthy reception apply to any mode of such reception. Bread and cup, body and blood of the Lord correspond to each other in an unmistakable way, and their implication should not be missed; they have become for Paul the real “spiritual food” and “spiritual drink” (1 Cor 10:3-4). His words thus affirm the presence of the Lord in eating and drinking food and drink, as he will again in verse 29. So, to deny the presence of the Lord or that Jesus gives his body and blood makes such denial a judgment on the Person, for thinking that it is just a meal unrelated to Jesus the Lord, suggests that person, “*will be caught in (obligation to) the body and blood*,”

**Self-examinatuion**

**VERSE 28 –** *“One should take stock of himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”*

Literally “let a human being examine himself,” i.e., let each one scrutinize whether he rightly understands what remembrance of the Lord, his Supper, and his death actually mean, and whether one is disposed to proclaim them by such Eucharistic reception.

**VERSE 29 –** *“For anyone who eats and drinks without acknowledging the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.”*

Literally “the one eating and drinking and not discerning the body,” i.e., not recognizing how “the body” is now different. Paul is merely simplifying his mode of speech; body and blood are meant. What, however, is meant by “acknowledging the body”? Different answers have been given:

1. Acknowledging the body of the Lord in the bread, i.e., distinguishing it from ordinary bread or profane food (so many medieval interpreters; and some modern).
2. Acknowledging the body of Christ in the church, as in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17; 12:27-28), i.e., the Lord’s presence among his people.
3. In light of verses 24 and 27, acknowledging the body would mean taking stock of oneself in order to eat the bread and drink of the cup worthily as “the body and blood of the Lord” have the right faith.

**“Judgment upon himself”**

The “judgment” of which Paul speaks is somewhat explained in the verses that follow (30-34). “Judge,” with different nuances, is not easy to capture exactly in an English translation. Note the sequence of

* ***krima***, “judgment,” and
* ***diakrinon,*** “not acknowledging” (verse 29);
* ***diekrinomen***, “we were to evaluate,” and
* ***ekrinometha***, “we would be subject to judgment” (verse 31);
* ***krinomenoi***, “being judged,” and
* ***katakrithomen,*** “We may be condemned” (verse 32);
* ***eis krima***, “to judgment” (v. 34).

Paul means that the participant in the Lord’s Supper exposes himself or herself to judgment, not only in the sense that all human beings must appear before the divine tribunal (Rom 2:5–6; 14:10c; 2 Cor 5:10), but in the special sense called for in verse 27. Hence the proper scrutiny of “the body” would demand of Corinthian Christians a change in the way they treat others in their coming together to celebrate the Lord’s Supper.

**VERSE 30 –** “*For this reason many among you are weak and infirm, and a number are dying.”*

Dying means suffering death (1 Cor 7:39). This statement means “judgment” mentioned in verse 29. Some Corinthian Christians have been afflicted with sickness and death. The “weak” are hardly the same as those “weak” in conscience (1 Cor 8:10), because here it means “infirm” and makes it clear that they are physically weak; and that is supported by the following words about the dying. Hence these terms are scarcely to be understood only in a spiritual sense, as “weak in faith,” “spiritually ill,” or “spiritually asleep,” as some have tried to round the statement.

The OT has some events where sickness was visited as a divine punishment for sinful conduct and transgressions (reflected in Exod 4:11; Deut 32:39; Sir 27:27-29; 38:9-10; 2 Macc 4:38; 9:5-6; also in Mark 2:1-12; John 9:2). In any case, Paul does supply us with later attitudes that the worthy reception of the Eucharist protects from sickness or death; nor does he regard the breaking of bread as ***pharmakon athanasias***, “the medicine of immortality,” the antidote of not dying, as did Ignatius of Antioch (about 110, see his letter to Eph. 20.2).

**Not judged with the world**

**VERSE 31 –** *“But if we were to evaluate ourselves correctly, we would not be subject to judgment.”*

That is “we would not be judged.” Christians were in the habit of scrutinizing themselves and their actions rightly in reference to the bread and cup of the Lord in which they would share, they would not find themselves “being judged” or suffering such things as weakness, illness, and death.

**VERSE 32 –** *“Since we are being judged by [the] Lord, we are being chastened, that we may not be condemned along with the world.”*

Afflictions such as sickness and death may reveal to us the Lord’s judgment, but his judgment is chastisement. The use of **kosmos**, “world,” carries the negative connotation of the “world of human beings who oppose God,” as in 1:27-28; 6:2; 2 Cor 1:12; 5:19; Rom 3:6; cf. 1 Pet 4:17.) The way that Paul has spoken of judgment in verses 27-32) helps one to understand properly that the Lord’s Supper points also to the Day of Judgment, and here we can understand what Paul means by the words, “*until he comes*.”

**Wait for the community**

**VERSE 33 –** *“Consequently, my brothers, when you meet together to eat, await the arrival of one another.”*

This is how meetings should be conducted in the house-churches of Corinth. If they are going to meet in order to share a common meal and at that gathering celebrate the Lord’s Supper, they should do it in an orderly manner, awaiting the arrival of all members. Waiting was also used in 1 Corinthians 16:11 for the same sense. To “wait for” is a gesture of “acknowledging the body” of the Lord, that is, the community. Paul introduces the proper sense of fellowship and sharing that should characterize their gatherings. This would prevent the greedy from “going ahead” with their own meals as in verse 21.

**VERSE 34 –** “*If anyone gets hungry, he should eat at home.”*

If hunger really becomes a problem, there is another way of handling it, apart from eating at the common gathering ahead of others. Eating at home would eliminate solitary or private eating in a common setting.

**VERSE 34 (cont) –** “As for the other matters I shall give directives when I come.”

This may have been a private matter.

***Pope’s Notes***

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