

## The Lord's Supper, the Lord's Table.



The following only applies to those who have heard the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, repented, been baptised in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and received the gift of the Holy Spirit. Those who are known in the New Testament writings as the disciples of (those taught by) the Lord Jesus Christ. These are living stones, being built into a temple, fit for God's own dwelling place. All those called (appointed) to be saints (holy ones, separated to Christ) who call upon the name of Jesus Christ the Lord.

From the beginning, Jesus invited people to follow Him, to know Him and to be where He was. Jesus was building a community or assembly of His followers, those who recognised His authority. This continued through to His crucifixion, death, resurrection and after His ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high. John 1:35 Again the day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he said, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and said to them, what do you seek? They said to him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Teacher,) where are you dwelling? He said to them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. (And they continued abiding with Him.)

Mark 3:31 There came then his brethren and his mother, and, standing outside, sent to him, calling him. And the multitude sat about him, and they said to him, Behold, your mother and your brethren are outside looking for you. And he answered them, saying, who is my mother, or my brethren? And he looked round about on them which sat about him, and said, behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister, and mother.

Mat 23:8 But be not called Rabbi: for one is your Teacher, even Christ; and all you are brethren. And call no one your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

Luke 22:24 And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. And he said to them, The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But you shall not be so: but he that is greatest among you let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serves.

John 13:14 If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, the servant is not greater than his lord; neither is he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them.

Matthew 28:19 (New International Version) Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.

Acts 2:1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place.

Acts 2:41 Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added to them about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship (community), and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the assembly daily such as should be saved.

Here we see the new disciples, in community with the original 120, daily continuing house to house in prayer and breaking bread. Just as prayer became a part of their daily life, so did breaking bread house to house in remembrance of the Lord Jesus and taking the cup as the symbol of the new covenant in Christ's blood become part of daily shared meal times.

They would not think of eating together without giving thanks and 'doing this in remembrance of me'.

Luke 22:19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you.

1Co 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you declare the Lord's death till he come.

Acts 4:23 And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them.

Acts 4:32 And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that anything of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things in common. (Shared everything) And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made to every man according as he had need.

From here on in the book of Acts we should see the distinction between two separate areas of the life of the universal assembly. On one hand the public outreach work of the apostles and evangelists in making the message of repentance and forgiveness of sins known to the lost. With the apostles, prophets and evangelists going out to public places (Temple courts), house to house and other localities sharing the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus. At the same time the local company of disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, with local teachers and prophets, helping their brothers to continue in Him and to serve one another in community, sharing, building itself up in love. In time elders from among each community were overseeing the welfare of each local flock.

Acts 5:12 And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And of the rest dared no man join himself to them: but the people magnified them. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.)

Acts 6:7 And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great number of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Acts 8:25 And they, when they had testified and preached the word of the Lord, returned to Jerusalem, and preached the gospel in many villages of the Samaritans.

The following passages highlight service in the local assembly of the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 11:25 Then departed Barnabas to Tarsus, to seek Saul: And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. And it came to pass, that a whole year they assembled themselves with the company, and taught many people.

Acts 13:1 Now there were in the assembly that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.

Acts 14:26 And from thence sailed to Antioch, from whence they had been recommended to the grace of God for the work which they fulfilled. And when they were come, and had gathered the assembly together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. And there they abode long time with the disciples.

Here we have in Acts 20 a record of a weekly gathering of the assembly in Troas especially to have a meal together known as the Lord's Supper and for mutual edification by ministry gifts of the Spirit as later outlined by Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 11. While prayer would foremost be a daily, almost constant feature of the disciples' life, yet there would also be special times of corporate prayer as required. In the same way while breaking bread was a constant feature of shared meals house to house there was also a regular arranged gathering of the local saints for breaking bread and a shared meal referred to as the Lord's Supper.

Acts 20:6 And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came to them to Troas in five days; where we stayed seven days. And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came

together to break bread, Paul talked with them, ready to depart on the next day; and continued his talking until midnight. And there were many lights in the upper chamber, where they were gathered together. And there sat in a window a certain young man named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep: and as Paul was long talking, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third loft, and was taken up dead. And Paul went down, and fell on him, and embracing him said, Trouble not yourselves; for his life is in him. When he therefore was come up again, and had broken bread, and eaten, and talked a long while, even till break of day, so he departed. Note here the distinction between 'breaking bread' and 'eating'!

Acts 20:17 And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the assembly. And when they were come to him, he said to them, You know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, Serving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews: How I kept back nothing that was profitable but have showed you, and have taught you publicly, and from house to house.

Acts 20:28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after themselves. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all those which are sanctified. I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yes, you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered to my necessities, and to them that were with me. I have showed you in all things, how that so labouring you ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.

In Acts we see simultaneously the apostles and evangelists doing the work of evangelism on one hand; on the other hand the local companies of disciples continuing daily in the teaching of the apostles, in community with each other, sharing, breaking bread together house to house and prayer. As well as a weekly assembling as the church where they would break bread, share a meal and enjoy the ministry of spiritual gifts, edifying one another in love.

So we should note this passage is about the work of evangelism when we read;

Acts 19:8 And he went into the synagogue, and spoke boldly for the space of three months, disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God. But when some were hardened, and believed not, but spoke evil of the Way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they who dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks.

The above passage describes Paul's outreach work in preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ. For this he needed a hall where those interested could come and hear in peace.

The gatherings of the disciples for mutual edification, the body of Jesus Christ, building itself up in love, took place in a completely different way and on a different basis because it was to a different purpose. It was ad-hoc, spontaneous, locality based, house to house, not needing any special celebrity or class of disciple to control it. It was Holy Spirit dependant, Spirit managed and mutual love motivated. In the name of Jesus Christ only, not in the name of a denomination, fellowship or group.

Teaching on how the assembly needed to continue in order to build itself up in love was deliberate and a continuance of the teaching of Jesus to His original disciples when he was with them before Calvary. Paul similarly delivered teaching or customs that were good for the new local assemblies to follow. Essentially they were the same teachings as the apostles to the Jerusalem assembly. We can get a good indication of these in Paul's letter to the assembly at Corinth.

1Co 1:2 To the assembly of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

1Co 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Now I beseech you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and there be no divisions among you; but you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

1Co 3:10 According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds upon it. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

1Co 3:16 Don't you know that you all collectively are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you all? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which you are collectively.

1Co 4:16 Wherefore I beseech you, be followers of me. For this cause have I sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved son, and faithful in the Lord, who shall bring you into remembrance of my ways which be in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every assembly.

In the following passage Paul is concerned for the purity of the body of Christ as it assembles at the Lord's Supper, being the usual form of weekly meeting for the whole body of local disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1Co 10:1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that you should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; And did all eat the same spiritual meat; And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. Wherefore let him that thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above what you are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that you may be able to bear it. Wherefore, my dearly beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; judge what I say.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion (sharing) of the blood of Christ? The bread (loaf) which we break, is it not the communion (sharing) of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread (loaf), one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread (loaf). Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What say I then? That the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lord's Table, and of the table of devils. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

In the following Paul seeks to correct abuses taking place at the weekly gathering around the Lord's Supper and Table both in the sharing of the supper (meal) and in the subsequent time together. Note Paul didn't advise abandoning this form of weekly gathering in spite of their particular problems at the time.

1Co 11:17 Now in this that I declare to you I praise you not, that you come together (assemble) not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together in the assembly, I hear that there are divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also divisions among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When you come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating every one takes before the other his own supper (meal): and one is hungry, and another is drunk. What? Have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Or do you despise the assembly of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not. For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped (eaten the meal), saying, this cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he comes. Wherefore whoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily (irreverently - not giving due honour), shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily (irreverently - not giving due honour), eats and drinks damnation to himself, not discerning (discriminating - correctly evaluating) the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge (same word in Greek text as in previous sentence translated unworthily meaning to discriminate, correctly evaluate) ourselves, we should not be judged (assessed). But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we

should not be condemned with the world. Wherefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait one for another. And if any man hungers, let him eat at home; that you come not together unto condemnation.

This shows that this gathering of the company of disciples was to have a meal together; where they would start by breaking and sharing out one unleavened loaf in remembrance of the body of Jesus, eat the communal meal and then share out and drink the cup of the Lord in remembrance of the new covenant in His blood.

The following refers to the Lord's Table, the rest of the evening assembled together for mutual edification, the body building up itself in love, from that which every joint supplies.

On the King's table one would expect there to be a bountiful spread of good things to eat.

Psalm 23:5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies: you anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over.

Psalm 78:19 Yes, they spoke against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?

2Samuel 9:7 And David said to him, Fear not: for I will surely show you kindness for Jonathan your father's sake, and will restore you all the land of Saul thy father; and you shall eat bread at my table continually.

At the Lord's Table our King provides spiritual food in the form of gifts of the Spirit which each one present may bring for the edifying and building up of those gathered there.

Eph 2:19 Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together grows unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom you also are built together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

Acts 2:17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy:

1Co 12:1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you be ignorant. You know that you were Gentiles, carried away to these dumb idols, even as you were led. Wherefore I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed: and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these works that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink of one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now God has set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of you: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. No, much more those members of the body, which seem to be the more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has set some in the assembly, first apostles, secondarily prophets,

thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet I show to you a more excellent way. (Love)

1Co 14:39 Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order.

Both Peter and Jude in their letters mention the danger of false teachers being present at the collective meal or 'feast'. They bring poison to the Table.

Jude 1:12 These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withers, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots;

This helps illustrate the point that the times together round the meal table after breaking bread were occasions at which teaching, encouragement, and the other gifts would have been expected to be used. This is still meant to be the norm for the assembly of disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ today.

Php 4:9 Those things, which you have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

At the weekly gathering around the Lord's Supper and the Lord's Table, just as each would bring a material portion to share (food and drink), so each had a spiritual portion to share according to the gifting of the Spirit, and all was to be done in love, decently and in order, to the building up and encouraging of one another. Just as no one individual owned the food, so no individual could claim ownership of the spiritual ministry. All was provided from Christ through the members of the gathered assembly and the meal was 'in common' or shared; the true meaning of communion.

It is not just the bread and wine but the companionship around the meal, combined with daily house to house fellowship/community that have implications for the nature of the local assembly. That it is relational and organic, each member dependent on the life that comes from the Head, without room for dead institution. All have opportunity and are actively encouraged to participate as the Lord gives to share. It's a place for children to learn important truths and to see the gifts of the Spirit in operation.

Jesus did not institute the Lord's Supper casually. Paul and the other apostles did not pass on this teaching as an option. It wasn't just a suggestion. It is life and health to those who participate according to the way He has ordained. It is the Lord's means of feeding His flock. If we observe the things that he has commanded us in this matter of regular meeting together it will be life and health to us. If we do not assemble together house to house as commanded to correctly share in breaking bread and mutual ministry then 'many shall be weak and sick among us, and some will sleep'. 1 Corinthians 11:30.

The Lord's Table is the gathering of those born of the Spirit around Jesus. No one who is not born of the Spirit could be expected to serve in spiritual gifts. The Lord's Supper is a gathering to 'eat' Jesus. He gives us Himself at this feast through the Spirit!

Why is it that this is not the normal pattern of assembling today?

The problem could be that those concerned with evangelism, apostles and evangelists, are so focused on creating a meeting that will attract as many people as possible to one venue at one time. Of having everyone sit audience style in rows while they and other 'staff' address them from a platform. The better the surroundings, the more inspirational the music and singing, the more charismatic the speaker, the better. All this is fine for evangelism and some other special occasions but it is not suitable to meeting the needs of the local assembly of disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ in building itself up in love, each member supplying its own special service to the whole body.

It is like applying an 'ox cart of the Philistines' method to transport the Ark of the Covenant instead of obeying God's instructions as delivered to Moses regarding the Levites carrying it on their shoulders. See 1 Samuel 6. It is copying the manipulative methods of institutional religion instead of going back to the original commands of the Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching of the apostles as clearly shown in the scriptures.

Consequently in the theatre style meetings the 'ordinary members' learn how to be a good audience, while the evangelist has to be a Jack of all trades, preaching the gospel, encouraging the saints at the same time. The only place to go from being in the audience is to get onto the platform. Also evangelistic work can benefit from some organisation, as Paul with his team including other apostles and those who assisted them. When this is applied to the local assembly it becomes something of a top – down organisation rather than the community of Christ's disciples.

Let us prevail upon the Lord Jesus Christ to send apostles to preach the good news and to establish the correct foundations both in each individual and in the local assembly. All of the above I submit for your prayerful consideration. Except the Lord build the House, they labour in vain who build it.

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