

## What Does 1 Cor 10:15-22 Teach About The Lord's Supper (Part I)?

### I. The Question.

#### A. Why am I raising the question?

1. Today I want to consider the question "What does 1 Cor 10:15-22 teach about the Lord's Supper?"
2. Understandably you might wonder why I should even raise the issue! The answer is that the Lord's Supper seems to be the current topic of conversation and various points are being made concerning what this passage teaches about it.

#### B. Some examples.

1. It is a demonstration of unity or as it is sometimes expressed "oneness" between the brethren.
  - a. "Unity is such a high priority for Jesus, and it must be for us as well. Perhaps the greatest opportunity we have to show we share the Divine priority for unity is in how we observe the Lord's Supper. The apostle Paul explains, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread' (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).  
The Holy Spirit's message to the assembled congregation is to share one loaf when observing the Lord's Supper. Lamentably, many appear not to hear" (Brett Hickey; 10).
  - b. "It is also that the nature and means of our unity are symbolized in the bread we eat. Because there is one loaf', Paul wrote, 'we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf' (1 Corinthians 10:17). In order to retain this vivid symbolism, real bread should be used rather than wafers. Each communicant then receives a fragment from the same loaf, because each is a member of the same body, the body of Christ, the church" (Hickey, p. 15).
2. It teaches that we should use one loaf when partaking.
  - a. This concept has already been introduced in the last quotation but here it is more forcefully expressed. "'Two loaves on the Lord's table are out of place and have no divine sanction. One loaf is safe, two are doubtful, to say the least. It is always safe to be on the safe side' (Dorris, 1955, 328-329). The point Dorris makes is validated by Paul's writing on the subject in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread'" (Hickey, p. 13)
  - b. "PROP. III. - On the Lord's Table there is of necessity but one loaf. The necessity is not that of a positive law enjoining one loaf and only one, as the ritual of Moses enjoined twelve loaves. But it is a necessity arising from the meaning of the institution as explained by the apostles. As there is but one literal body, and but one mystical or figurative body having many members; so there must be but one loaf. The apostle insists upon this, 'Because there is one loaf, we, the many, are one body; for we are all partakers of that one loaf'..." (Breaking the Loaf, Alexander Campbell).

#### C. The pre-cursor.

1. Now let's refocus on the thread of this lesson.
2. I asked, "What does 1 Cor ...?" I have indicated by these quotations what some assert. How can we establish whether these points are correct? Before we can determine what the passage teaches us today we must first determine what Paul was teaching the Corinthians back in the first century! During the last two weeks I have seen three different studies which have made no attempt to determine this and so let us do so now then we will be better placed to answer the original question.

## II. What Was Paul Teaching The Corinthians?

### A. The context.

#### 1. The general setting.

a. Chapter 10 completes a discussion which began in chapter 8.

1) It is given the general heading, "things offered to idols" (8:1).

2) The more specific title is, "the eating of things offered to idols" (8:4) and particularly the eating of meat offered to idols (13).

b. Some Corinthian Christians, knowing that an idol was nothing (4), felt it was harmless to go into an idol's temple and eat (10). In this chapter he addressed the trap that this behaviour might present to the weak brother who did not have this understanding. They might become emboldened to eat something against their conscience (8-12). Therefore for this reason the knowledgeable one should desist. Chapter 10 comes at it from a different direction, that eating meat in an idol's temple was something that was wrong in itself.

c. With this background we can better appreciate 10:1-14. It was a warning against apostasy but particularly a warning against apostasy in these circumstances where the temptation was to eat meat in these pagan places of worship. These Israelites who had received comparable blessings to the Corinthians had fallen in the wilderness. Idolatry was a serious matter and so they must distance themselves from it as much as possible (14).

#### 2. The lesson being taught in 10:15-22.

a. 10:15-22 presents the other consideration – that eating meat in an idol's temple was inherently wrong. It wasn't necessarily sinful to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols in other situations (10:23-11:1) but to participate in an idol's festival was sinful in itself.

b. The climax of this argumentation is reached in vs. 21-22. It is incompatible to eat from the Lord's Table and the table of demons. Verses 15-20 must therefore be interpreted with Paul's objective in mind.

### B. Outline.

#### 1. Arguments for wise men (15-18).

a. The appeal of his reasoning (15).

b. That based upon the significance of the Lord's Supper (16-17).

c. That based upon the sacrificial feast around the altar of Israel (18).

#### 2. His position clarified in relation to previous statements (19-20; cf. 8:4).

#### 3. The impossibility of partaking of the Lord's Table and that of the devil (21-22).

### C. Comments on verses.

#### 1. Verses 15-17.

a. He spoke presenting arguments that would commend themselves to wise men (15).

b. It was a cup of blessing because it had been blessed.

1) To bless or give thanks are used interchangeably (Mt 26:26-27; Mk 14:22-23).

2) By thanksgiving the cup and the bread are given a special meaning and set apart from everyday eating and drinking.

c. Notice the meaning of communion (vinekoinonia) and the emphasis that is placed upon it in these verses – mentioned twice.

1) "A having in common (koinos), partnership, fellowship" (Vine).

- 2) "Fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation, intercourse." Further defined as "the share which one has in anything, participation; intercourse, fellowship, intimacy" (Thayer).
  - d. When we drink that cup of blessing is it not a sharing in the benefits of the blood of Christ? Is it not an acknowledgement of the fact that we have a share in the benefits of His death? And the bread, is it not a sharing in the body which was nailed to the cross and the blessings that are made available by His suffering?
  - e. A problem with the translation of v. 17 in some versions.
    - 1) "For we, though many, are one bread and one body" makes it sound like Christians are the bread as well as the body which is not true since the bread is a figurative representation of Jesus. Better "seeing that there is one bread, we, who are many, are one body (ASV marg.)".
    - 2) Then he shows why having one bread makes us one body - because we all partake of that one bread, Jesus. In this way we have a fellowship in the death of Jesus through the Lord's Supper but the sharing being discussed is one that all Christians have- all saints universally. We all become one body because we all partake of that one bread. We become a body of people that have this in common - we all share of this one thing. The oneness being discussed is in relation to the universal church and not the local church. When the Corinthians ate in an idol's temple a similar sharing took place with all those who were involved in worshipping that idol in whichever city they were located.
2. Verse 18.
- a. Those who ate of the animal sacrifices shared in the blessings that were associated with the altar.
  - b. This provided a second illustration of what was happening when the Corinthians ate meat in those surroundings. As the principle applied in the one circumstance so it would in the other.
3. Verses 19-20.
- a. V. 19 is to be understood as clarification of 8:4. He was not contradicting himself and now arguing that idols existed.
  - b. Rather that when sacrificing to idols they were sacrificing to demons (20; cf. Dt 32:16-17).
    - 1) He was not saying that there was nothing there - demons were there in the background.
    - 2) The best explanation of demons is that they are fallen angels (Mt 9:34; 25:41; 2 Pe 2:4).
4. Verses 21-22.
- a. "The great principle behind Paul's remarks here is the truth that partaking of a religious table, whether Christian, Jewish or heathen, involves fellowship with the being to whom it is directed..." (Coffman).
  - b. 2 Cor 6:14-16 elaborates upon the gulf between these two.
  - c. "Ye cannot... It is not morally possible to share in both. If a Christian tries to share in both then the result will be to arouse the Lord to jealousy (22).