

## **What are you Expecting to Happen at the Lord's Supper?**

### Class II

#### Review

1. Last time, we noted the observance of the Lord's Supper was very important in the ancient church.
2. Part of the reason was that the appearance of the bread and the cup on the Table was a token (visible expression) of the fact that the flesh and blood Son of God had come among us and died for our sins.
3. On the Table is bread and a cup. They are pledges and guarantees of the presence of Christ with us.
4. We discussed at some length the concept of what it means for Christ to be present at the Table.
5. We stated that in the recital of the story of Jesus' deeds and death somehow the material food transcended and spiritually we receive the benefits -- spiritual renewal -- forgiveness of sins -- of his sacrificial life.
6. We finished by giving a brief overview about the observance of the Lord's Supper in the ancient church. It seems to be connected with a wider meal. Recent discussion has sought to highlight the implications of this!
7. One issue that emerged in class created some interest that we may pursue. Scripture teaches that the Supper is an expectation of the Messianic meal in God's New World; an event of joy, but it is also a solemn event as we remember the depths of Christ's sacrifice. What then is the appropriate attitude that we should develop as we come to the Table? Solemnity or joy? Or can they both be accommodated?
8. So it may be that the issue of Christ's presence through remembrance may be an appropriate place to move on in our study.

#### I Cor 11:17-34

1. The earliest account in point of time about the founding of the Lord's Supper comes in 1 Cor 11:23b-26. Here Paul is already narrating the account as a tradition as originally coming from the Lord (i.e. the narrative of the founding account of Jesus' last meal recorded in the Gospels.)
2. Before we look at this account and speak specifically about 'remembrance' and 'presence' we need to note the wider context of this unit.

3. The believers at Corinth gathered on Sunday evening for a main meal. They had a form of potluck dinner where the host provided a room and the guests brought their own food.
4. At this meal the host would commence with a prayer for the bread. There would be eating and the meal would end with a cup preceded by another prayer. Then there may be other conversation about spiritual things.
5. Apparently at Corinth things were getting out of hand. The wealthy were taking their places around the main table and others were treated like the servants and generally shamed.
6. Paul is writing to say that this is the wrong way to remember the Lord who gave himself for others (27-29).
7. If we are shaming someone -- being out of sorts against our brother or sister -- we had better listen to verses 27-29.
8. So I have advocated that before we come to the Table we read Matt 5:21-26 or say the Lord's Prayer.

Question: How do we handle the issue of being worthy?

#### Do This in Remembrance of Me (23b-26)

1. I would suggest that Paul is narrating this account from tradition and has in mind these things:
  - a. The presider at the Table, just like Jesus, takes bread, gives thanks (now in retrospect briefly reciting what God has done in Christ); breaks the bread, and recites the words of bestowal.
  - b. That brings us to "Do This in Remembrance of Me," 24-25.
  - c. The "doing this" is not keeping the whole Greco-Roman meal at Corinth; but Paul is referring to the total action of taking and distributing the bread and cup (including the prayers) and participation by believers.
  - d. In perceiving this as a vivid enactment of the founding meal -- just like the Jewish Passover -- we, by remembrance, are there -- at the founding event, like it is the first time.
  - e. And it is there now in his presence that we reintegrate our shattered lives into the reality of the divine story.
  - f. It is in this sense Christ is present reconciling us to him.

### Later Developments

1. Tragically today this beautiful event has served as a major division in the church.
2. My view is regarded as deviant by major denominational bodies.
3. The issue is over what some call “the real presence.”
4. Later developments -- the idea came that in one Eucharistic prayer for the bread and the cup ‘the real presence’ of Christ is invoked.
5. And when Christ comes upon appropriate invocation he is present as a result of an actual transformation of the bread and wine.
6. Many of these developments extend beyond what can plausibly be drawn from the biblical accounts.
7. Spiritually we appropriate the benefits of Christ’s life. But these are perceived spiritually, not materially.