

The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians

The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

1. The Purpose in the Argument (vs.20-23)

Paul's reason for reminding the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper (v.20) is that the church was observing the ordinance in a way that denied the unity that they were supposed to be expressing when they ate it (cf. 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 12:13; Gal. 3:28). An immediate consequence of the way they practiced the Supper was that some of the people left the table hungry while others were more than satisfied (v.21; cf. Ja. 2:16; 1 Jn. 3:18), while a delayed consequence was that some members of the church had suffered illness and even death (v.30; cf. Heb. 10:6-7).

2. The Practice in the Church (vs.23-25)

The Lord's Supper, like baptism, is an ordinance that is intrinsically linked with the activity of the local church (Acts 2:38-42). This was only to be done when the church comes together (1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 20, 22, 33). The contents of the cup represents the blood of Jesus which inaugurated the New Covenant (Ex. 24:8; Mt. 26:28; cf. Heb. 9:18), and the bread represents the Person whose blood was shed. The bread and the cup are intended to symbolically represent the body and blood of Jesus in His death on the cross (Mk. 14:22-26; cf. Jn. 6:26-29, 47, 53-56).

3. The Promise in the Repetition (v.26)

Observing the Lord's Supper is a way to remember (v.24) and proclaim (v.26) what Christ has done, but it is not a mechanism through which salvation is dispensed. It is a time when the believer is to remember that it took the sacrificial death of the sinless Son of God to provide the ransom for people who deserve only condemnation from God (cf. 1 Cor. 15:21-22; 2 Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:12ff). It is also a time for the believer to remember that Christ Jesus is coming back to finish all His work (v.26; cf. Mt. 26:64; Jn. 14:3).