

Failing To Discern The Body

by Hendrik Joubert

During a radio discussion between theologians of a prominent denomination in South Africa it was admitted that (“in all probability”) the first century church commemorated the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus by partaking of the Lord’s supper every first day of the week. It was then argued that this practice makes the occasion all too common, causing people to lose its true significance. For this reason churches change the regularity at which they break the bread.

There is something fundamentally wrong with sinners deciding what is important (essential) and what not. This is often done in the name of the love and the grace of God. (**John 14:15; 1 John 5:3; Titus 2:11**) There is more than one way to make oneself feel better about changing God’s word. (**2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jude 3**) *Interpretation* is a convenient concept to use when you find yourself at odds with the Scriptures. Instead of repenting and changing your behavior so that it will match what God said, you work on what the *Bible* says – what it *actually* means. Each denomination has its own *actual* meaning regarding a variety of issues, and the Lord’s church is not immune to this type of reasoning. (**2 Peter 3:15-16; 2 Timothy 4:3**)

What did God reveal through the Scriptures concerning the Lord’s supper? **1 Corinthians 11: 17-34** would be a good place to start. Notice the source: ***For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you...***(v23) Breaking the bread as an act of worship (**Acts 2:42**) is to be done as the Lord directed. When men change the rules, worship becomes vain. (**Matthew 15:9**)

The believer is to take special care to eat of the bread and drink of the cup in a **worthy** manner. (v27) One is to *judge*, or *discern* the body rightly to avoid *judgment to himself*. One may fail to discern the body in a variety of ways. Changing the regularity at which God directed the church to remember the sacrifice of His beloved Son is not a way to demonstrate a deep respect and appreciation for this selfless act. The problem with it becoming too common is not with the instruction from God, but with the heart of man. Showing respect and reverence is not done by changing what God says, but rather by changing the heart.

The regularity is suggested by the phrase “***For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup...***” (v25) The term *often* means many times, or frequently. We learn more specifically the frequency at which the church broke the bread under the direction of the apostles in **Acts 20:7**. The church assembled to remember and proclaim the death of Jesus on the first day of the week, the day upon which He was raised from the dead (**Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:2,9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1,19**) What an insult to suggest reducing the regularity at which we commemorate His death makes it special.

It obviously is not a common meal, and making it such takes away from the sanctity of the occasion. Common meals are to be enjoyed at home, not where the church assembles for the purpose of worshipping God. (**Ephesians 3:21**) The church has been saddled with many social responsibilities, as man sees fit. Through the apostle God says: ***...for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.*** (**Romans 14:17**) The work of the church is to save souls. Taking care of the needy among God’s people is a blessing those who searched the kingdom first enjoy. (**Matthew 6:33; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2**)

The common meal scenario introduces problems of its own. First of all it changes, or adds to the purpose for the meal, resulting in a failure to judge or discern the body properly. Nothing should distract from it. No distinction should be made between believers based upon their social status either. (**James 2:1-9**) When God adds to the number of *the called out body of Christ* (church), how could any man consider an individual inferior with regard to sharing in the church assembling to remember the source of their redemption? (v33)

The breaking of the bread and the drinking of the cup is in *remembrance* of Christ, and it is more – it is a *proclamation* of the Lord’s death until He comes again. (vs24-25) It is an *act of faith*, a *demonstration* that I believe that Jesus died for the sins of the world, and therefore *my* sins. How could a sinner make adjustments to this solemn declaration?

Each individual Christian has the responsibility to discern the body in a worthy manner to avoid eating and drinking judgment upon self. We may contribute to our judgment or to the judgment of others. Each of us should discern the body properly so that we may do it as the church of God as we proclaim His death until He returns again.