



A plea for the true Christian to start honoring the Lord Jesus Christ, and abandon tradition! (A look at the wrong practices in the Lord's Supper among Evangelicals) by Dr. Rex Duff, MA, MHA, JD, D. Min

Background:

In I Corinthians 11: 17-34 the Bible states, "Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on 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; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, 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 proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come.” (NKJV)

The Bible states in Acts 17:30, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,” (NKJV)

Introduction: The Corinthian church had many problems. One of their problems was taking the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. (I Corinthians 11:27). Could Evangelical churches today also be making a mockery of the Lord, in how they approach the Lord’s Supper?

This author, will attempt to break down the background of this ordinance, and ask a series of questions, that each reader must answer, and decide like Joshua who he will serve? The Bible states in Joshua 24:10, “And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,.....But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” (NKJV)

In I Corinthians 11:17-22, the Corinthian church was first celebrating a love feast before they celebrated the Lord’s Supper. In his commentary, Finis Dake makes these comments: “This refers to the social meals of the early church, the love feasts (2 Peter 2: 13; Jude 12), followed by the Lord’s Supper. According to the Greek custom each brought his own provisions. The rich would fare sumptuously while the poor had very little to eat (v21).” (Dake, 1991, p.184) The early church practiced this until the fourth century, when they became prohibited in churches (Dake, 1991, p.283).

A very unfortunate translation in the text (I Corinthians 11:21) is the Greek word methuo. It is translated drunken in almost all Bibles. A careful reading of this text will show that this passage has nothing to do with alcohol. If that were the case, than the Apostle Paul would have had to address another sin, which is not done here. Bible translators have often come to the Bible with their biases, which sadly is the case here!

To help those who do not understand Greek, a simple tool will be used. A look in the Strong’s Concordance shows that this Greek word is given the number 3184. This number can be used in many Greek Lexicons to show you all the possible meanings. This writer often goes to The Thayer’s Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament next.

While the normal meaning is to drink to intoxication, get drunk, another meaning is given, to drink well. (Zodhiates, S. 1991, p.46). While this is not a normal translation of the word, it fits the context well, not a theological biases. This same Greek word is found in John 2:10, where it is translated well drunk. If this word only refers to getting intoxicated, than the Lord Jesus approved of drunkenness. Can any Christian really believe this? What was happening here actually was that some Christians were gluttonous, while others went away hungry. The best translation seems to be full.

Notice some of the explanations by some famous Bible commentaries.

“Drunken (methuo) often described intoxication, but there is at least one instance (see John 2:10) when it describes fullness (satisfaction). There is some difficulty in determining the word's meaning in this verse. It is a present tense verb and it may simply form a contrast (i.e. some had their hunger satisfied and others were unsatisfied). If this interpretation is correct, drunken is a metonymy. "The one has more than is right, the other less" (Bengel, 1742, Vol. 2, p. 229).

“The result was that some began before others. One would be hungry and *another drunken*. This last phrase means that he had eaten and was satisfied." This distorted the very purpose of the fellowship meal. *Benson* writes: "They were called *love feasts* or suppers, because the richer Christians brought in a variety of provisions to feed the poor, the fatherless, the widows, and strangers, and ate with them to show their love to them." Due to conditions in the first century, the fellowship meal would be the only "square meal" many of the poor would have during the week!" (Ice, 1974).

“For in eating what ye call the Lord's supper, instead of all partaking of one bread, each person brings his own supper, and eats it without staying for the rest. And hereby the poor, who cannot provide for themselves, have nothing; while the rich eat and drink to the full just as the heathens use to do at the feasts on their sacrifices” (Wesley, 1765, 2003, p. 566).

“The inequality he describes hyperbolically, when he says, that some are *drunken* and others are *hungry*, for some had the means of stuffing themselves well, while others had slender fare. Thus the poor were exposed to the derision of the rich, or at least they were exposed to shame. It was, therefore, an unseemly spectacle, and not in accordance with the Lord's supper” (Calvin, 1546, 1999, pgs.370-371)

“I take our translation of this word, *meyuei*, to be very hard and uncharitable. Hard, because the word doth not necessarily so signify, only drinking beyond what is strictly necessary, and our translators themselves, John 2:10, render it *well drunk*. Uncharitable, because it certainly must be very uncharitably presumed of this church of Corinth, that they should suffer persons, at that time actually drunk, to come to the Lord's table” (Poole, 1685).

“On the word drunken, see note on John 2:10. The antithesis to hungry would suggest that the opposite word would mean *surfeited*” (saturated, overfeed, stuffed).

(Whedon, 1900).

“Every one taketh before the other; in connection with the Lord’s supper they had a collation, consisting of what each one brought from his own home. This ought to have been shared by the poor equally with the rich. But instead of this, the shameful abuse prevailed here censured by the apostle” (Edwards, 1851).

In 1 Corinthians 11:23 we come to the heart of the passage on the Lord’s Supper. In I Corinthians the Apostle Paul states he received this teaching from the Lord from the first Lord’s Supper, which is given to the Corinthians in the same matter. One might conclude that as the Lord did the Lord’s Supper, we are to follow that exact pattern. Paul was not present at the first Lord’s Supper, so he explains this in Galatians 1:11-12 “But I make known to you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached by me is not according to man. For I neither received it from man, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (NKJV)

The element taken first is the bread. Because of the warning in I Corinthians 11:27, we might want to get it right? I Corinthians 11:27 states, “Therefore, whoever eats this bread **or** drinks this cup of the Lord in an **unworthy manner** (NOT unworthily) will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”

To understand the element of the bread we must go to Luke to see the context. In Luke 22:7-8 the Bible states, “Then came the Day of **Unleaven Bread**, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat.” Luke continues in 22:13-20, “So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover. When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, “With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God”. Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, “Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” Likelike He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.” (NKJV)

It might be impossible to dispute that our Lord took the elements from His last Passover, and instituted the Lord’s Supper. The bread for the Passover came from the feast of Unleavened bread which began at the same time. Did the kind of bread matter for the Lord’s Supper, the Passover, the Feast of Unleavened Bread? To answer this question we might go back to Exodus 12:15-20. The Bible states, “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall remove leaven from your houses. For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel. On the first day there shall be a holy convocation, and on the seventh day there shall be a holy convocation for you. No matter of work shall be done on them; but that which everyone must eat – that only may be prepared by you. So you shall observe the Feast of Unleavened Bread, for on this same day I will have brought your

armies out of the land of Egypt. Therefore you shall observe this day throughout your generations as an everlasting ordinance. In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month at evening, you shall eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening. For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.” (NKJV)

There are some clear conclusions that one can determine from this passage. This feast would continual on forever. That there is outlawed the eating of leaven. The penalty was death. (v15).

On page 16, in the Dake Annotated Reference Bible, there is a list of 42 death-penalty sins. Here is the list: “Murder, Failing to circumcise, **Eating leavened bread during the feast of unleavened bread.** Smiting parents, Kidnapping, Cursing parents, Negligence with animals that kill, witchcraft, bestiality, idolatry, making holy anointing oil, putting holy anointing oil on strangers, making the holy perfume, defiling the Sabbath, working on the Sabbath, eating the flesh of the peace offering in uncleanness, eating the fat of sacrifices, killing sacrifices other than at the door of the tabernacle, eating blood, incest, eating sacrifices at the wrong time, consecration of children to idols, spiritualism, adultery, sodomy, relationship with a menstruous woman, whoredom, sacrilege, refusing to fast on day of atonement, working on the day of atonement, blasphemy, failure to keep the Passover, presumptuous sins, gathering fire-wood on the Sabbath, failure to purify self before worship, false prophecy, leading men away from God, backsliding, stubbornness and rebellion, gluttony, drunkenness, and false dreams and visions” (Dake, 1991).

Exodus 13:3 states, “And Moses said to the people: Remember this day in which you went out of Egypt, out of the house of bondage; for by strength of hand the Lord brought you out of this place. No leaven bread shall be eaten.” (NKJV)

Exodus 23:15 states, “You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread (you shall eat unleavened bread seven days, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month of Abib, for in it you came out of Egypt; none shall appear before me empty),” (NKJV)

Exodus 34:18 states, “The Feast of Unleavened Bread you shall keep. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, in the appointed time of the month of Abib; for in the month of Abib you came out from Egypt.” (NKJV)

Leviticus 23:6 states, “And on the fifteenth day of the same month is the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord; seven days you must eat unleavened bread.” (NKJV)

Deuteronomy 16:6-8, teaches us that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread ran together. Deuteronomy 16:6-8 states, “but at the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight, at the going down of the sun, at the time you came out of Egypt. And you shall roast and eat it

in the place which the Lord your God chooses, and in the morning you shall turn and go to your tents. Six days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a sacred assembly to the Lord your God. You shall do no work on it.” (NKJV)

Number 9:2-3 states, “Let the children of Israel keep the Passover at its appointed time. On the fourteenth day of this month, at twilight, you shall keep it at its appointed time. According to all its rites and ceremonies you shall keep it.” (NKJV)

Why then was this important? Why is it important for today? The answer is the symbol of leaven.

The Bible declares in I Corinthians 5:6, “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?” (NKJV)

The Bible declares in I Corinthians 5:7-8, “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” (NKJV)

The Bible declares in Matthew 13:33, “Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened.” (NKJV)

“Leaven is almost always a symbol of evil in the Bible. In this parable the case would seem to be no different. The kingdom has evil hidden within which multiplies until it is found throughout the kingdom. The remarkable fact is that the kingdom still overcomes.” (Criswell, et al. 1991)

Leaven is simply a picture of sin. When Jesus stated in Mark 14:22, “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, “Take eat; this is my body,” the bread symbolized Christ perfect body. There could be no leavened bread, because that would symbolize a sinful Savior. There is little dispute Christ gave unleavened bread to His disciples as a picture of His sinless body. Christ was the perfect sacrifice. Hebrews 4:15 states, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (NKJV)

Should any Christian partake of leavened bread, as a picture of Christ body, is he challenging God for judgment?

Let us remember I Corinthians 11:27, “Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.” (NKJV)

Notice what the Liberty Bible Commentary states,

“Coming to the table with the wrong attitude and the wrong approach may cause a man to eat and drink...judgment ... the judgments of God many times take the form of physical illness and even death” (Falwell, Hindson, & Kroll, 1983, p.2316)

Now that you have read this article so far, do you really think you can claim ignorance? The Bible states in Acts 17:30, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” (NKJV)

Once it is clear that the bread had to be unleavened, can anyone believe the cup could be leavened? Leaven is still a picture of sin? Having a leavened (Fermented) beverage as a symbol of the blood of Christ, would still state to all, that Christ blood was sinful, just like you and I! Either Christ was a sinless Savior, or we have no Savior at all.

I Corinthians 11:25 states, “In the same manner He also took the cup after the Supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” (NKJV)

“In remembrance of Me” (I Cor. 11:25). Jesus transformed the third cup of the Passover into the cup of remembrance of His offering (MacArthur, 1997, p.1746)

Jesus stated in Matthew 26:27-29, “Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (NKJV)

The Bible states in Isaiah 65:8, “Thus says the Lord: As the new wine is found in the cluster, And one says, Do not destroy it, For a blessing is in it, So will I do for My servants sake, That I may not destroy them all.” (NKJV)

An honest explanation must be that Christ drank unleavened (unfermented) grape juice, at the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Passover, and the Lord’s Supper. Most Christians are unaware that the word wine in the Bible simply means fruit of the vine. The context determines whether the wine was fermented (alcoholic) or not. All grape juice is wine!

“The Bible strongly condemns drunkenness (Proverbs 20:1; Proverbs 23:29-35; Ephesians 5:18). Yet the same Bible speaks of wine as one of God's blessings on the human family (Psalm 104:15; Isaiah 55:1; 1 Timothy 5:23). It is obvious there were different kinds of wine in the first century” (Ice, 1974).

This writer would like to close with a series of questions that the reader might ponder.

Question 1—

How often should a church partake of the Lord’s Supper?

The Bible states in Acts 20: 7, “Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.” (NKJV)

I Corinthians 11:25 states, “In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.” (NKJV)

From these two verses it is clear that the Lord does not require a Church to break bread every week. The Lord also does not require a Church to meet every week, does He? The reason this question is asked, is because the early Church meet to break bread. They did not meet to preach a sermon, have Sunday school, or take up an offering. A church that meets every week and does not break bread every week, might ask if they are Biblical by meeting without breaking bread every week?

Question 2 –

Why do Churches pass several cups of grape juice, instead of have everybody drink out of one cup, and spread illnesses do everyone? Secondly, the tradition of drinking out of a silver cup, to prevent the spreading germs, is simply false. Nowhere in the Bible is such a teaching taught. The answer is found in Luke 22:17 which reads as follows,” Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this and divide it among yourselves.” (NKJV). Even though this is probably the second cup of the Passover meal, the pattern for the third cup has already been established. The Lord understood health laws better than we, because he is the God of everything.

Question 3 –

Who can partake of the Lord’s Supper?

According to Acts 20:4-7, the Disciples altogether partook of the Lord’s Supper. Acts 20:4-7 states, “And Sopater of Berea accompanied him to Asia – also Aristarchus and Secundus of the Thessalonians, and Gaius of Derbe, and Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus of Asia. These men, going ahead, waited for us at Troas. But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days joined them at Troas, where we stayed seven days. Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight.”

Here, Paul and Luke meet the Disciples from several different Churches and had the Lord’s Supper. Clearly, the belief in closed communion is not taught here.

The Bible states in Acts 2:40-42, “ And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation”. Then those who gladly received his word were baptized: and that day about three thousand souls were added to them (the church). And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (NKJV)

From this passage of Scripture there seems to be two requirements to partake of the Lord’s Supper. These two requirements are to be saved, and Baptized. Some groups try to leave out Baptism, but this is not Scriptural. We might call this form of Communion, close communion, not closed communion. According to I Corinthians 5:11, a sinning Christian brother can also be barred from the breaking of bread. The Bible states in I Corinthians 5:11, “But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner – not even to eat with such a person.” (NKJV)

Question 4 –

What should a brother or sister do when the Lord’s Supper is passed, and the elements are wrong? When the elements do not bring glory to the Lord Jesus Christ?

The Bible states in James 4:17, “Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin.” (NKJV)

In conclusion, you state that my Church will kick me out if I don’t partake of their practice (Sin)? I wonder who you are serving, your tradition or the Savior who died for you? How can you expect God’s blessing when you partake that which you know is wrong? I am amazed of churches that speak against alcohol, yet serve it in their communion service because of tradition. They even serve it to children. Leavened bread is equally wrong! Change only happens when someone decides to stand up for Jesus. Will you be the one, like Martin Luther?

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