

Discerning the Lord's Body

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[0:00] I'm going to deviate a little bit from the normal plan on Sunday morning.

! I'm going to be not going to be in 1 Peter. Because of what we're going to do a little bit later in the worship service, I want to bring a message that will prepare our hearts for the Lord's Supper.

A message from 1 Corinthians chapter 11. And you're going to write off, I think, remember that it is one of several places in the Word of God where we have the Lord's Supper mentioned.

We have it, of course, in the Gospels. And then Paul references the Lord's Supper, even quotes the Lord Jesus, here in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, starting with verse 23.

So I'm going to go ahead and read, starting with verse 23, and we're going to read all the way to the end of the chapter, though really the focus is going to be on one small part of this text.

[1:19] Verse 23. Verse 23. 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.

[2:22] But let a man examine himself, and woman, by the way. So, and so, let him or her eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

For he who drinks and or eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

I want you to really pay attention to that phrase. Not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason, what reason?

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.

[3:26] 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. All right. Now, this morning, as you can see, right here in front of this stage and pulpit, we have the table, and it's all set, set there for us.

And the meal has been prepared, and it's right there, right here in front of us. And the guests have been invited. That's you. And many have come here this morning to, among other things, to eat of this supper.

But the question is, the big question is, the one that we need to contemplate very seriously on the front end before we take of this supper, the question is, have we invited Jesus to the table?

The table's here. The food is here. It's all set before us. And in a little bit, we're going to partake of it. But have we forgotten to invite Jesus here? I guess we might ask that question every time we come for worship, whether we're taking of the Lord's Supper or not.

In every part of our assembly here that we call the, quote, worship service, the question ought to be asked, have we invited Jesus here? Now, he is here in the sense that Jesus is omnipresent.

[4:58] He's everywhere present and nowhere absent. But in a manifest way, in a personal way, in a very deliberate way, have we come expecting to see Jesus here?

To experience Jesus here? Have you invited Jesus to this table? Are you expecting Jesus to be here? To join us as we partake of this meal?

And, you know, frankly, the Lord's Supper is something, I believe, greatly misunderstood by many who partake of it on some regular routine.

Misunderstood. Misunderstood. And I would even say abused by many. In fact, there are some, in some cases, and some people and some churches that, who, in the way that they observe the Lord's Supper, it borders on blasphemy.

And that apparently was the problem there at the Corinthian church. I mean, that is what we gather from this passage, as I read it a moment ago. Well, something very serious was going on here in their observance of this very holy ordinance because some were getting sick and some were even dying there because of the, apparently, the blasphemous manner in which they were taking of the Lord's Supper.

[6:24] And so it's a pretty serious thing, isn't it? And Paul issues an extremely strong rebuke against these people here, doesn't he? I mean, it's very strong. Well, he said to them, you, in the manner in which you're taking the Lord's Supper, in this unworthy manner, you are guilty of the body and blood of Jesus.

Now, folks, that's pretty serious. And as a result, he said, you are, in reality, you are eating and drinking judgment upon yourself.

In fact, the King James translates it, damnation. That's pretty serious, though. The word is *krema* in the Greek, and it means to pass sentence.

And so the matter in which they were taking of the Lord's Supper, and we've not kind of read the larger text, but you gather some of it from the latter part, latter verses of the chapter.

The way in which they were taking the Lord's Supper, God, on some of them, on many of them, God had passed a sentence upon them. And they were getting sick as a result.

[7:37] And some even dying. And we know from Scripture that the Corinthians had turned the Lord's Supper into a mockery. That's what they had done.

They had kind of transformed it into a feast of gluttony. And a kind of a thing of drunkenness, an opportunity for drunkenness, and self-centeredness, and selfishness.

And we gather that from the passage here. It's very serious. And Paul says the underlying problem, and this is what we need to understand here. It's very important.

The underlying problem here is not so much the way they were taking it, and the selfishness, and the gluttony, and the drunkenness. Those were all bad things.

And God had passed judgment upon them because of these things. But these were just simply the fruit or what was springing from the real problem.

[8:42] The underlying problem. And it's the thing we need to get here this morning out of this text. Something we need to continue to remember every time we gather like this, assemble like this for, among other purposes, to take of this supper.

And what is the underlying problem? They were not discerning the Lord's body. They were not discerning the Lord's body.

And so, that bears some explanation, I know, but I would go ahead and ask you. Will you commit, when you understand it fully, and I think many of you do, will you commit right now, before we take of this supper, will you commit to discerning the Lord's body here this morning as we take of this supper?

Or to put it another way, will you, and I've already put it this way, will you personally invite Jesus to this table? Expecting Him to be present here at this table.

So that this is something more than just a ritual, which is what it has primarily become, even in the Baptist church.

[10:16] Become a thing we do, you know, on some kind of scheduled basis. And, you know, we as Baptists are pretty good at, you know, following the right procedures and orders, order of this thing.

And we were pretty good about that. You know, we follow when, you know, kind of when we ought to take the Lord's Supper. And what the elements specifically should be.

You know, the unfermented grape juice, and the unfermented bread. We're very, very keen on that, and very, very intent on making sure we follow that, do that properly.

And how the table ought to be set, you know. Of course, every church kind of sets it a little bit different, but this is basically the way, isn't it? How we ought to set it up. And we're pretty intent on making sure we do it just right, and who administers the supper. And what scriptures ought to be read. And the order of it, and the prayers, and are these things bad things?

[11:26] No, not at all. I mean, these are, I think, have their place of importance, and the observance of this ordinance. Those things are important. But when it's all said and done, have we failed to invite Jesus here?

Have we failed to discern the Lord's body in this supper? And so, here's my subject this morning as we prepare, and we look forward to partaking of this supper, the observance of the Lord's supper. And here it is. Here's the focus. Here's the subject. The subject is to discern the body of Christ is to experience the presence of Jesus Christ Himself at this supper, and to do so in three ways.

Let me say that again. This is the subject. To discern the body of Jesus Christ and to experience the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ at this supper, and we do that in three ways.

Number one, we discern His body, first of all, in the past tense. We discern His body in the past tense.

[12:56] That's how we do that here. First of all. In the past tense. That is, in our observance, our observance of this Lord's supper is, it's backward looking.

Or backward remembering, maybe would be the better way to put it. In fact, that's what Paul is doing here, isn't he? Starting with verse 23, he's referring back to an event. Something that had already taken place. Something that even Paul had not experienced himself. He was not present there in the upper room when Jesus instituted the Lord's supper. And so he's pointing to the past. And he, you know, he says there in verse 23, I received from the Lord that which I also deliver to you.

That the Lord Jesus, on the night in which He was betrayed, took bread. He's pointing back to an event. It's a past event. And this, of course, is what we're doing here this morning through the observance of this supper.

[14:05] What we're doing through the elements of the supper. And this is the part that, by the way, that Baptists, I think, get quite well. I mean, this is what we do well. This is what we understand so well about the Lord's supper that the bread that we're going to be eating here in a moment is the body.

It represents the body of the Lord Jesus Christ broken there at Calvary. And, of course, the cup with the juice in it, it represents the wine.

Or the wine, rather. It represents the blood of Jesus Christ that was shed for us at the cross. That's what I'm talking about when I talk about a backward remembering aspect of the Lord's supper. We discern the Lord's body in that sense. We're looking back to His actual body that lived and breathed and walked and ministered here on this planet and was then murdered, crucified. And so we look backward, don't we? And so in a very special way, Jesus is present in the elements of this supper. The bread and the wine but it's backward looking.

[15:17] Past tense. Which brings me to a very important point of theology. And I may be speaking to the choir, but Jesus' body is not here in the elements in the way that the Catholics teach and practice called transubstantiation.

You'll forget that word probably, but remember what it means. That somehow the body, the bread and the wine are literally transformed into the literal body and blood of Jesus.

transubstantiation. It's a metaphysical change that the elements go through called transubstantiation. Jesus is not here in that way.

We're not gathered here. We're not cannibalizing the body of Jesus. Jesus is not here in the elements also in the way that some Lutherans believe, by the way.

transubstantiation. What does that mean? Well, it means that there's kind of a dual physical change that takes place here.

[16:48] That the bread really is still bread and when you eat it it's bread, it's just bread, but alongside of it somehow is the actual body of Jesus and blood of Jesus.

Now, we're not even going to go that far. Jesus is not present in that way. But now, you know, having said that, listen to me, dear people.

Jesus is here. He is here in that the bread and the wine symbolize and memorialize His broken body and His poured out blood there at Calvary for us.

He is here. But it is backward remembering. Backward looking. The Lord Himself said when He instituted the supper and Paul quotes it here.

Jesus said, do this in remembrance of me. In remembrance of me. And so, this supper discerns the Lord's body in the past tense.

[17:59] It is a memorial and I believe this is the scriptural way to understand it. And so, when we eat the bread of this supper that we'll be passing out here in just a moment, our thoughts should go back 2,000 years to the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as we see Him there, scourged and beaten and abused and spat upon and ultimately crucified upon a cruel cross as a sacrifice for us.

And when we drink this cup, our thoughts ought to take us back to Calvary, to the cross where Jesus was nailed there and in our minds and in our hearts we actually see the blood flowing from His hands and feet that were nailed there on that cross and from His brow where that thorny crown was placed and pressed upon His head and from His side we see the blood flowing from His side where that Roman guard inserted that spear and the blood flowed.

And so when we eat the bread we think of His body crucified for us and the blood the wine we think of His blood that was shed for us and then we remember that's what it means to discern the Lord's body then we remember fresh and anew and it ought always be fresh to us that we were not redeemed with corruptible things such as gold and silver but with the precious blood the precious blood of the Lamb without spot and without blemish the Lord Jesus.

So discern the Lord's body this morning as you remember the past the past accomplishment the Lord's accomplishment in the past for you at Calvary.

[20:01] Also number two we discern His body in the present tense we discern His body in the present tense in observance of this supper it's not only backward remembering but it is a present communing with the Lord Jesus Christ present tense and it's right to think of the Lord's supper as symbolic we ought to think of it as that we define it in that sense but really more than symbolic in fact symbolic is so weak it really is to be defined with the word memorial it's good to think of the Lord's supper in that sense it's a memorial of Christ's death but we must know that this supper this morning is much more than just a memorial much more than that with the focus just being on the past we must discern discern the body his body in the present tense as well because Jesus is present here in this supper he is present he's present here right now right here with us he's present there's an amazing illustration of this in the Bible in Luke chapter 24

I'm not going to have you turn to it it's a familiar story or ought to be it's a story of Jesus meeting with those two guys on the road to Emmaus do you remember this story Luke chapter 24 and you know it's after Jesus death after his resurrection and Jesus before his ascension back into heaven Jesus appeared to many of his disciples and we know that don't we and one such appearance was to a couple of guys a couple of disciples who were walking home from Jerusalem walking home on the Emmaus road and they were walking there and they you know had been in Jerusalem and they had witnessed you know the brutal murder of their master the Lord Jesus Christ and they were very sad about that and discouraged they'd been following this guy they they had been they were convinced he was the Messiah and now he's dead and so they were discouraged and added to that they were confused what's all this mean and as they're walking along you know they're joined by another traveler a stranger because they did not recognize him but he was not a stranger somehow there his identity was veiled to their eyes and I don't know if that was a supernatural thing or maybe they just didn't see him because they were so wrapped up in their grief and confusion and discouragement

I don't know but they did not recognize him and so he walks along with them they didn't discern Jesus and so Jesus asks them basically why are you so sad I mean what are you talking about here you two because he walks up to them as they're conversing and they're distraught and he says why are you sad and so they began to describe the events of the past few days you know as if Jesus didn't know about it and they started telling relating to this stranger because they didn't discern him they started relating to him about the prophet mighty in word and deed and how the Jewish Jewish leadership the rulers had condemned him and had him crucified and they and they also told him about how on the third day after his crucifixion some of his disciples discovered that the tomb was empty and they related that to him and also related to him that there were also rumors going around

that not only was the body gone from the tomb but indeed

Jesus was alive and so they related all this to Jesus and they continued on in their journey and Jesus still undiscerned by the disciples and I keep emphasizing that word discern and Jesus just takes the scriptures from memory and he begins to preach to them and he starts with Moses starts at the beginning of the Old Testament it goes all the way through kind of kind of on a fast track to go all the way through the Old Testament scriptures and he relates to them all of those scriptures concerning himself that's what the Bible says and yet it's amazing they still did not recognize it you know as a preacher I've thought about that many times and I I can kind of relate to that you know how often times I can stand and preach and I'm just sure that some people just don't get it are getting it they don't discern the Lord and that's what was happening with these disciples and eventually of course you know they arrived to their at their village and Jesus was going to go on but they invite him to come into the home and have a meal with them so he does and then comes the most amazing thing as they sat down to eat

Jesus the Bible says Jesus took the bread and he blessed it and he broke it kind of sounds familiar doesn't kind of a familiar kind of procedural formula he took it blessed it broke it and he gave it to them and suddenly the Bible says their eyes were open and they knew him they discerned him and that quick he was gone vanished now you see this was essentially the Lord's supper taking place here I really believe that the words that were used the way it's related Jesus is performing that same task that he that he performed there back there before his death when the Lord's supper was instituted he took the bread and blessed it and broke it and gave it to them and he did that with these two disciples he in essence had the

[27 : 28] Lord's supper with them and it was in that supper that their eyes were open and they discerned the Lord you see now listen they discerned the Lord's body right then not in the elements of the supper that point to the past they discerned the Lord's body in the person of Jesus present with them right then right there and that's the point we need to get this is what the Corinthian church was missing they had I'm convinced they had the past significance of the Lord's supper down just like most of us Baptists do and maybe we're so afraid of ascribing or attaching significance to the very elements themselves we're so worried about that that we don't really want to think about

Jesus being present in the supper that we would somehow connect that with some false doctrines that are out there so we don't think of Jesus here in the present it's all past or backward remembering and not present communing and that's what was happening with these two disciples there in their village now they were traveling to Emmaus and that when Jesus broke the bread and gave it to them they experienced they experienced his body in the present a present communion and I say that we too should discern his body here this morning in the present because he is here he is here in our hearts he is here in our worship he is here in our our communion and we make a mistake when we don't invite

Jesus to the table and it opens our ourselves up we open ourselves up to wrong thinking and wrong acting and eventually taking this supper in an unworthy manner the apostle Paul though in his account of the Lord's supper adds something the gospel accounts do not did you know that it's rather interesting and it really points us to another way a third and and final significant way to discern the Lord's body in the supper an aspect of that that I doubt we really considered in verse 26 in fact look at it he says for as often as you eat this bread he's kind of paraphrasing

Jesus did say these things and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death and that is what the Lord's supper! does right? It proclaims the Lord's death his body broken blood shed for us but then he adds these words till he comes now certainly that you know defines the parameter the time period the season in which we partake of this Lord's supper but I think it also should point us to something else that is there ought to be kind of this expectation when we take the Lord's supper that one of these days he's coming and we're doing this until he does and one day he's coming he's coming here that points us to this that we discern his body in the future tense our communion this morning is not just backward remembering and present communing but it is also future hoping future hoping as we look to the glorious appearing of our

Lord and Savior the Lord Jesus Christ when he will come and he we who are his will be caught up together with him in the clouds where we shall ever be with the Lord and that day is coming!

[32 : 54] I just ask you to be honest have you ever taken this supper with that kind of forward hoping focus have you wouldn't it be glorious if Jesus were to come before before we take this supper!

And instead of having the Lord's supper together here we sit down together with the Lord at the marriage supper of the Lamb and feast with him that could happen who's to say he's not going to come before I bless and serve this bread have you ever thought of the Lord's supper in those terms and maybe this will be the last time Thank you.