

The Assembly of the Saints
Lesson 3 – The Lord’s Supper
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Introduction: The Lord has given local churches a blueprint of His will.

- A. I hear many today say that we cannot know how local churches conducted their assemblies (worship).
 - 1. When I hear that I am inclined to ask them: “Have you ever read the New Testament?”
 - 2. We will find that God had a plan to save, equip and preserve a people that involved the local church. **(Eph 4:14-16)**
 - 3. Within God’s plan there is room for different way to do what He authorized in His word. The Bible speaks of that which is expedient or profitable. **(1 Cor 6:12; 10:23)**
- B. Let us look at the Lord’s Supper and see clearly how we can know what the Lord commands us!
 - 1. We will start with a historical narrative giving the account of Jesus instituting His supper with the apostles. **(Mt 26:26-29)**
 - 2. God expected us to handle this account as instruction on how to do this!
 - 3. While written in the form of an example, the since follower of the Lord will let this example limit him (bind) in the observance of the Lord’s Supper!

I. Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper before His death

- A. Jesus greatly desired to observe this Passover and implement the fulfillment of the Passover in giving the Lord’s Supper. **(Lk 22:14-16)**
 - 1. How could anyone who names the name of Christ not take this very seriously?
 - 2. Jesus connects the Lord’s Supper to the fulfillment of the Passover. It is not a fulfillment of the sacrifices involved with the Temple (Ex. burnt offering)
- B. Jesus named the elements and what they signified. **(Mt 26:26-28)**
 - 1. The cross of Christ is central to the mind of a Christian. **(Gal 6:14)**
 - 2. This was not the Passover but a memorial of Jesus’ death.
 - 3. Taking bread and thinking about Jesus’ body on the cross takes concentration and meditation. We can call this worship!
 - 4. The mention of the kingdom and a future partaking of this supper with His followers shows it would be observed by all of His followers. **(Mt 26:29)**

- 1. How can we know how local churches should conduct their assemblies?
- 2. What is meant when we say something is “expedient?”
- 3. Does the example of Jesus instituting the Lord’s Supper bind anything on Christians today?
- 4. How important is our observing the Lord’s Supper to Jesus? Explain!
- 5. Why do we need to know that the Lord’s Supper is a fulfillment of the Jewish Passover meal? What do we learn from this?
- 6. Make a list of things the Lord’s supper teaches us and reminds us of.

II. Paul delivered Jesus' instructions with additional detail

A. Those who would take only what Jesus did in His ministry without the additional instructions of the Apostles are fighting the Lord himself!

(Jn 16:12-13; Mt 18:18; 1 Cor 11:23; 14:37)

1. God's plan involved the full delivery of truth through the Apostles.
2. We will gain additional instructions as to how and where the Lord's Supper was to be observed. **(2 Pt 3:2; 2 Thess 3:6)**

B. The Lord's Supper was to be observed in an assembly of a local church.

1. The instructions to this local church is for all the members to be called together to observe the Lord's Supper. **(1 Cor 1:2; 11:18, 20, 33)**
2. We have an example of the church at Troas doing the same thing. **(Acts 20:7-8)**
3. The very purpose of the Lord's Supper involves communication with others. **(1 Cor 11:26)**

1. Why do we need additional detail from the ministry of Christ on how to observe the Lord's Supper?
2. What are the consequences when men either ignore the apostle's instructions or try to pit the teachings of the apostles against the teachings of Christ?
3. Should the Lord's Supper be observed by individuals or by the whole church assembled?
4. Why must the Lord's Supper involve others?
5. What do we learn from the example of the church at Troas when they partook of the Lord's Supper?

III. New efforts to change the nature of the Lord's Supper

A. LaGard Smith book "radical restoration" has found a receptive audience.

1. He claims the Bible demand that we change many practices.
 - a. That churches be small groups that meet in homes.
 - b. That there be no collections except for specific temporary needs.
 - c. We must abandon the uniform use of the name "church of Christ."
 - d. That the Lord's Supper be part of a common meal.
2. There are numerous churches that have divided over these doctrines.

B. There is only one example of Christians bringing a social meal into the work of the church. In this case it is not an approved example! **(1 Cor 11:17-34)**

1. They should have come together for the Lord's Supper. **(1 Cor 11:17, 20)**
2. By bring in an unauthorized action into the assemblies they in fact defeated the purposes of God! **(1 Cor 11:20-22)**

"The major argument that LaGard sets forth in this chapter is that we must observe the memorial Supper IN CONJUNCTION WITH "a normal, ordinary meal with the usual variety of food"(p.128). Somewhere in this normal meal of chicken, butterbeans, deviled-eggs, and camp stew, we are to pause with some unleavened bread and wine, and remember the offered body and blood of Jesus. He says that this is what the early Christians did, and he says that we "may" be abusing the Lord's Supper if we do not, and

he says that we have definitely NOT restored anything akin to the Lord's Supper if we do not combine the memorial with a common meal." – Terry Benton

3. Did Paul give instructions for the Lord's Supper or a common meal? **(1 Cor 11:33)**
"The ritual we now euphemistically call "communion"(not wholly unlike the Catholic's sacramental Eucharist) doesn't hold a candle to the dynamic koinonia communion of the first-century disciples in their sharing together of the Lord's Supper within the context of the fellowship meal." LaGard Smith, *Radical Restoration* (p.135).

- a. Many say that "crackers and grape juice" is a "snack and not a 'supper.'"
- b. Paul plainly told us that hunger was not be fulfilled at the Lord's Supper!

4. Where was the common meal to be eaten? **(1 Cor 11:34)**

B. Does authority for a "love feast" this authorize church fellowship halls? **(Jude 12)**
LOVE FEASTS: Feasting on Food? Or Feasting On Love? LaGard assumes that "love feasts" were common meals together. I would argue that the memorial associated with unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (per Jesus' instructions) is a feast of love, and it is a feast of the heart and not the stomach. It is feasting on Jesus, His kingdom and righteousness, that fills us with commonality and brotherhood, and a common meal is not itself a "love feast". It is the purpose of the Supper to provide us with united focus and concentration as we devote our attention together on what Jesus said for us to "remember". When we are casually eating chicken and butterbeans, we are not called to focus our thoughts on his body and blood. That is no more a love feast than a baseball game together is a "love game". We feast on Jesus' love, our love and admiration of Him, and share common salvation and faith, when we take that bread and cup of blessing in a worthy manner in memory of Him together. THAT is a feast of love. In the Lord's Supper we are advocating our faith and love, and we are communing with Him. – **Terry Benton**

C. What kind of food feeds the soul? It is not the food that perishes. **(Jn 6:27, 32-33)**
"Moses did not give the bread from heaven. The Father has given the "true bread" from heaven. That true bread is Jesus who gave His life to the world. The physical elements of the Lord's Supper do not, themselves, give life. It is the remembrance made of those elements that allows or guides our minds to feast on the "true bread". We feast on the "true bread" and remember that He gave His life for us. Truly, then, the supper is a special occasion when we unitedly focus our attention on the true bread and feed our souls together. That is a feast of love. That is the "love feast", not a common meal together, not a game together, not an earthly pleasure together, but a moment of singularity in our sharing the love of God together in memory of what He did for us on the cross." – Terry Benton

Questions

1. Did the early church at some time observe the Lord's Supper with a common meal? Should we do the same thing today?
2. What is the purpose of a common meal? Does the Lord's Supper have this same purpose?
3. Are there some things that are to be observed at home but not to be done in the assembly?
4. What are the three primary meanings of the word "church" in the N.T.?
5. May a Christian chose not to be a part of a local church and still please God? Explain your answer!

RADICAL RESTORATION

Bro. LaGard Smith has given us a book entitled, “Radical Restoration.” Rather than help elders and preachers navigate through stormy waters now before us, Bro. Smith’s approach to “restoration” would do irreparable harm to any church which chooses to follow his suggestions. He perhaps inadvertently predicts the fruit of his plan by saying, “The very nature of radical restoration is such that the act of demolition is as vital as the act of creation. Invariably, wrecking crews must raze the old structure before they can begin to build anew” (p. 39).

Smith would resurrect the “mutual ministry” practice of the late Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett. To see just how successful that approach to teaching and church building is, one need only consult Mac Lynn’s directory of “Churches of Christ in the United States.” Those who do will note that congregations identified by a “ME,” i.e., a mutual edification symbol, are few in number and often as few as 10 or 15 in membership. That is the result of 75 years of mutual ministry without “located preachers.”

He would confound the Lord’s Supper with a common fellowship meal. Paul addressed this question in I Cor. 11:20-23. He made it clear that the Lord’s Supper is not a meal where hungry appetites are satisfied. For those who wished to dine and commune together, he said, “In this I praise you not.” Coziness and intimacy are not ingredients of the Lord’s Supper.

He would have our congregations abandon their public meeting houses and resort to private homes. He and others who are enamored with house churches seem to overlook that literally hundreds of our congregations began in homes of members. As they grew they eventually secured their own public places of assembly. Generally we build because it is more economical in the long run than renting and provides facilities that are designed to meet congregation needs. Also, because it gives us permanency and presence in a community that a rented hall cannot provide. His recommendation would forever limit the church to small “home” sized congregations that would be endlessly dividing into more small groups.

He would have us consider the possibility of having one set of elders to supervise all the churches in a particular city. Even this concept has been floated before. It has flourished best in the diocesan concept of Catholicism with its citywide bishop, but it is not biblical. The apostles “appointed for them elders in every church” (Acts 14:23).

To further complicate our survival, he would have us to exist without specific identify in a world of competing and confusing religious organizations. Although he cannot fault the Bible name “church of Christ” he would have us discard it for other, less distinctive, names that would not help the most diligent searcher find in which private home we are meeting. Also he evidently would have us discontinue placing our addresses and phone numbers in the yellow pages of the phone directories lest we by so doing join the ranks of denominations.

He would have us operate without funds except those gathered for occasional emergency benevolent situations.

Granted, Bro. Smith is a learned man of the law and he is currently riding a crest of popularity on the campus scene. He would have been more convincing if he had first launched just such a congregation as he proposes and after ten years reported back to us with a progress report. But one need not have a PhD to perceive that his “Radical Restoration” will only result in radical decline and ultimate demise for those who follow his program. His suggestions are indeed radical but they have nothing to do with the restoration of New Testament Christianity. They might however eventuate in a new kind of church...one looking back to Smith as its originator. – John Waddy