

by David J. Rodabaugh
2760 Bitternut Circle
Simi Valley, CA 93065

Reasons men do not practice

Definition of Practice

First, we should state exactly what we mean when we talk about the practice of the Lord's supper. Turn in your Bible to 1 Co. 11:23-25, where we read,

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

What we mean when we talk of the practice of the Lord's Supper is the actual partaking of 'elements' such as bread and wine which are stated publicly to represent the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We will later show that this is the only way that these words can be interpreted in this context.

In addition, it should be remarked that this is the only interpretation ever based on just these few verses.

Dispensational Objections

One of the objections some dispensationalists give against the practice of the Lord's Supper is the allegation that it was intended only for Israel.

Those who argue this way begin the present dispensation at the end of the book of Acts (or later). It is sufficient in answering such folks to show that the present dispensation began before the end of the book of Acts.

There are several arguments that prove that the present dispensation began early in the ministry of the apostle Paul.

Gifts of God are unchangable

There are many whose teachings imply that God has at times saved men to one hope and later changed that hope. This is totally against the teachings of the scriptures. A very important passage is Romans 11:29 where we read (NASB), "for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable." This verse occurs in a context where Paul is arguing that Israel has not lost either hope or promises. He invokes this principle as proof that God does not change a person from that hope in which he was called.

Of course, this means that God did not change Paul's hope from that which he had before Acts 28 to that which he had after Acts 28. Indeed, whether Paul knew it or not, he had his present hope back when he was first saved.

The fact that God does not change a man's hope is strongly related to his attributes of immutability and faithfulness. As immutable, God never changes. This is a fundamental principle in any study of the nature and attributes of God. While he may at times 'appear' to change, he does not really change indeed, he cannot change.

The other fundamental attribute of God that is related is his faithfulness. God is absolutely faithful. What he promises, he must deliver. In fact, any certainty we have as to our future hope is based on this attribute. He would be unfaithful if he promised me one hope and gave me a different one even if that one were infinitely better!

Thus, by the nature of God, we see that those who were saved before Acts 28 could not have had their hope changed after Acts 28. (This argument also proves that the twelve couldn't have had a hope change either.)

Body of Christ Before Acts 28

Transitional Objections

We don't want to be bothered

It's only a meal

A recent objection to the above practice is the claim that the Lord's Supper is only a meal. To such people, the special mention of the elements is a disobedience to the scriptures.

Recently, we heard a presentation of this viewpoint. The presentation claimed that the breaking of bread was always associated with a meal. While it is clear that this term can refer to a meal, the claim that it is always must be so is unfounded.

The claim is even more preposterous if used to support the notion that it is wrong to call special attention to certain elements. This our Lord most certainly did.

Issues of 'Liturgy'

Definition of Liturgy

Liturgy is defined in Webster's New World Dictionary (1984) as "prescribed forms or ritual for public worship in any of various religions or churches." (There is an additional meaning for the Eastern Orthodox.)

It comes ultimately from the Greek word 'leitourgia' which has the primitive meaning of 'public service to the gods.' (the verb form is 'leitourgeo').

The verb occurs only in Acts 13:2; Ro 15:27; Heb 10:11.

The noun is found only in Lu 1:23; 2Co 9:12; Phi 2:17, 30; Heb 8:6; 9:21.

The adjective form is found only in Heb 1:14.

The noun for the one who does this Ro 13:6; 15:16; Phi 2:25; Heb 1:7; 8:2.

When such issues become creedal

This necessarily happens when two have mutually exclusive views

Example instruments in church services. Those who prohibit and those who feel we must use them can't worship together

Example the Plymouth Brethren 'worship meeting' versus a 'standard service' for AM

Example those who require a preaching vs. those who teach for Sunday AM

The issue of the Lord's Supper

Does 1 Cor contradict Gal 4 or Col 2?

1A. What does Paul say is a dietary law?

1B. Col 2:14-23

* note: if partaking elements is a dietary rule so is a religious meal.

* denial of certain foods v. 21 and context

* 'element(al spirit)s in both Col 2 and Gal 4

2B. 1 Tim 4:2, 3 forbidding certain foods

3B. At 15:29 forbidding certain foods (Can we eat blood?)

2A. The Corinthians clearly blessed the elements 1 Co 10:16

3A. Conclusion: This in no way contradicts the commands of Col 2 or Gal 4

Did Christ command/suggest observance to kingdom saints?

1A. Matt 26:26-28

1B. no such command/suggestion given

2B. v. 29 may imply that this wasn't done at all before the ascension

3B. comments about bread broken while they were eating

2A. Mk 14:22-24

1B. no such command/suggestion given

2B. v. 25 may imply that this wasn't done at all before the ascension

3B. comments about bread broken while they were eating

3A. Luke 22:17-20

1B. no uncontested testimony that such command/suggestion given

1C. vs. 19b-20 are contested

2C. vs. 18 is before the ceremony here and after in Matt., Mk.

2B. vv. 17-18 may imply that this wasn't done at all before the ascension

1C. comments about bread broken while they were eating

2C. comments about wine were after the supper

3B. Should we expect special kingdom commands in Luke

1C. Luke apparently in the Body

* apparently not of the circumcision Col 4:10,11(cp. 5:14)

* not an eyewitness of our Lord Lk 1:2

* Apparently joined Paul in Acts 16:10, 11 (shift 'they' to 'we')

(note: 'we' disappears after 17:1 and returns in 20:6)

- 2C. Theophilus apparently a gentile of high rank (most excellent)
- 3C. To base a doctrine on the allegation that the Lord's Supper was commanded to Israel requires more than a disputed passage in Lk.

Paul specially delivers this to the saints

1. 1Co 11:23-26
does record the only clear record of command/suggestion of the Lord to practice
comments about wine were after the supper
"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you"
* 'paralambano' (received) in Paul in 1Co 11:23; 15:1,3; Gal 1:9, 12; Phi 4:9; Co 2:6; 4:17; 1Th 2:13; 4:1
* Of these only 1 Co 11:23; 15:3 have 'paradidomi' (delivered)
(note Ro 6:17 seems like a related type of passage)
2. 1Co 10:14-22
Displays the practice commanded.
vv. 16-17 Lord's Supper/Lord's Table (v. 21) is something the Body does
* to do so means sharing in the body and blood of Christ
* blessing the elements is necessary it is the point
vv. 18 For Israel, eating sacrificial meat implied sharing in the sacrifice
vv. 19-20 To be at a pagan feast means sharing in the idolatry

The context does contain reference to a 'love feast'

At Corinth, the Lord's Supper (special blessing of the bread and wine) was done 'during' the love feast. In 1 Cor 11, we see the clear separation of these two items. The one was subject to excesses; the other was not. This in no way negates the command to call special attention to the elements of the Lord's supper.

Can it be ignored and never done?

Argument from the Greek word used

1Co 1:25, 26 both say as often as from the Greek 'hosakis ean'. The word 'hosakis' occurs only here and in Rev 11:6 where the word 'ean' also occurs. In Rev 11:6, we have a description of the two witnesses (Moses and Elijah (?)) and we read, "These have power to shut heaven, that it rain not in the days of their prophecy: and have power over waters to turn them to blood, and to smite the earth with all plagues, as often as they will."

Note that in the Revelation passage, there are the additional words 'as they will' and yet there is not thought of their never doing the item. Rather there is the implication of frequency.

Argument from the meaning of the passage

The passage states that

1. Each time the Lord's death is shown.
2. Each time the Lord is remembered.

It is contrary to any logic that such important items could be ignored for long in the life of a proper assembly.

The consequence is that, if the Lord's Supper requires a meal (pot luck it certainly could not take place at a restaurant), then any assembly which does not plan these events regularly is in violation on a creedal issue.

Similarly, if the Lord's Supper requires a reading (or paraphrase) of 1Co 11:23-26, then any assembly which does not plan these events regularly is in violation on a creedal issue.