

# The Temple of God

## An Exposition of 1 Corinthians

<sup>23</sup>For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you<sup>a</sup>, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; <sup>24</sup>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<sup>b</sup>.” <sup>25</sup>In the same way *He took* 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<sup>c</sup>.” <sup>26</sup>For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes<sup>d</sup>.

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<sup>a</sup> 11:23 **For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you.** This is more than Paul’s description of the Spirit’s inspiration of Scripture. Not everything Jesus said is in the Bible. Paul had one-on-one discipleship for three years with King Jesus. The instruction on the Lord’s Supper in this chapter is a review of what Paul had already taught in Corinth.

<sup>b</sup> 11:23-24 **that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 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.”** The refers to the Passover meal Jesus shared with His disciples. There has been a great deal of controversy in history regarding the nature of the elements of communion. In the Reformation era a great number of books were written about this very subject. On one end of the spectrum the Church of Rome taught (and still teaches) that the wine and the bread transubstantiate into the actual body and blood of Christ during the ceremony. This kind of literalism cannot stand up to the simple reality that the Lord Jesus physically stood there holding the elements and called them “bread” and “fruit of the vine” while He spoke.

Alistair Begg (recorded sermon on this text on sermonaudio.com) points out that Paul could have used any number of descriptions to set that night apart from other nights, but he pointed to the betrayal. This may be his intent as we head toward the sin mentioned in verse 27.

<sup>c</sup> 11:25 **In the same way *He took* 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.”** More than system of morality, the New Covenant promised internal transformation for those who entered it. The prophet Jeremiah pointed to this hope for those living under the Old Covenant:

“Behold, days are coming,” declares the Lord, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the Lord. “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the Lord, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the Lord, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” Jeremiah 31:31-34

The extreme irony is that how, understanding the New Covenant as that which writes God’s law on the heart, a person could walk right out and betray the Lord of the Covenant. That is what Judas did. That is what people do who carelessly approach this table and continue to sin against those around them.

<sup>d</sup> 11:26 **For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.** Can this become a meaningless ritual? Yes. Who is responsible to keep that from happening? You are. What is happening when you eat the bread and drink the cup? Paul used a word that is used of preaching. This act is a proclamation, an acted-out gospel sermon. You should never preach a sermon without being engaged by your subject matter.

The Epistle of 1 Corinthians  
Steven Svendsen, Sr.

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<sup>27</sup>Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord<sup>e</sup>. <sup>28</sup>But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup<sup>f</sup>. <sup>29</sup>For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly<sup>g</sup>. <sup>30</sup>For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep<sup>h</sup>. <sup>31</sup>But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged<sup>i</sup>. <sup>32</sup>But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world<sup>l</sup>.

<sup>33</sup>So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another<sup>k</sup>. <sup>34</sup>If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment<sup>l</sup>. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come<sup>m, n</sup>.

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<sup>e</sup> 11:27 **Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.** The word translated “unworthy” is used only here in the New Testament, but it provides a good description of the way we should approach the table. This is not about becoming worthy ourselves, but about the condition of our hearts.

The “unworthy manner” must refer to the failure to see personal sin, as the next verse implies, but possibly even more. The introduction of this text with the betrayal is helpful in our interpretation. Just as Judas sinned against the body and blood of the Lord, so it is a betrayal of the Lord to go through the motions of this meal while harboring sinful attitudes toward your brothers and sisters.

<sup>f</sup> 11:28 **But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.** Paul pointed out in verse 31 that this examination is self-judgment. He uses the same word in his next inspired letter to the Corinthians to urge them to evaluate their hearts before God:

Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? 2 Corinthians 13:5

<sup>g</sup> 11:29 **For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.** This is more than a sterile memorial. In this meal we have more than the knowledge of the omnipresence of God. We can experience the special presence of the one whose body was crushed for us. How could we be flippant in our attitude at a time like that? An example of eating and drinking judgment to oneself is in the next verse.

<sup>h</sup> 11:30 **For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.** The fact that God has in history brought physical death or illness to His children as an act of discipline ought to alert those of us who have survived this far (see also Acts 5). Certainly Paul did not believe that all physical illness results from sin or faithlessness, but he knew in this instance that God’s discipline had come on those who disregarded the importance of the Lord’s Supper.

<sup>i</sup> 11:31 **But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.** This is a simple exercise, but not for the proud. When the Lord confronted the religious leaders after He healed a man born blind (John 9:40-41), He warned them that their refusal to judge themselves blinded them.

<sup>j</sup> 11:32 **But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.** Self-judgment sets believers apart from unbelievers. God does not let His children get away with living in sin. Their hearts condemn them.

<sup>k</sup> 11:33 **So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.** These words relate to Paul’s rebuke of the Corinthians for their shameful treatment of the poor in their midst. You go into this realizing that you are surrounded by others who stand in need of God’s forgiveness and the service you can give them.

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<sup>l</sup> 11:34 **If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment.** Note that Paul's answer for the mistreatment of the poor was not to bring them more food at the Lord's Supper. The focus was not the meal but the message.

<sup>m</sup> 11:34 **The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.** As we have seen, Paul taught the churches through letters and in personal visits. Even though this letter is part of inspired Scripture, it is clear that God used individual; circumstances and personalities to communicate His special revelation in Scripture.

<sup>n</sup> 11:23-34 Here is the extreme contrast that we should learn: How could anyone dare to celebrate our only deliverance from the bondage to sin while at the same time harboring or even rationalizing sin during the celebration? More important than urging the Corinthians to change the outward practice of communion, Paul called them to judge themselves. Here are some questions you should ask yourself as you prepare to come to the table:

1. What should I be thinking about Jesus?
2. What should I be thinking about myself?
3. What should I be thinking about my brother or sister?

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