

Body and blood - bread and wine: discussion

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Preacher: Philip Wells

[0 : 00] That's very funny, something's happened here. Right, this question is the particular one, when should we do communion and why?

! I think perhaps we answer that question right at the end and we think about these questions.! Who is communion for? How does accountability work and who decides?

Who should preside when we have communion? What actually should take place?

Inspector Morse says that you never need to use the word actually, but we use the word actually here. What should actually take place? And then there are practicalities.

I don't know whether you ever thought, why do we use little glasses in the Bible? It was one cup, wasn't it? Why don't we have wine when in the Bible it's wine?

[1 : 13] Why do we drink together and eat the little bits of bread all separately? What's the logic behind that?

Who invented that? And in the Bible it is part of a shared, apparently in Corinth they had a big bring and share meal.

Why don't we do that? And the question of what is helpful advice in coming to the table? Well that's a slightly different question.

Yesterday I managed to mess up my computer. I was using version two, which I'm not completely familiar with. And I want to get another page.

I think that might work. Yes, good. No, that's not what I wanted. Maybe it would be helpful if you and I could remember what was said this morning.

[2 : 20] So we looked at 1 Corinthians 11. And there was 1, 2, 3 and 1, 2, 3, 4.

Anybody remember? What were these first ones, the first three, about all together? They were past, present and future.

They were past, present and future. What were they all about together? They were all about something. Yeah, this is what Paul handed on. I don't know whether tradition is a very helpful word, but that's the one I used.

It's the thing that he handed on. And where did he get it from? From the Lord. Yes, I handed on to you. It was handed on to me by the Lord.

So I was trying to get at the very nitty-gritty basic minimum of what he was handing on. So there was past, present and future.

[3 : 24] So if we do it in that order, past, present and future. Can we together spell that out a little bit?

What did he say about any or all of those? Thank you very much. The past was a historic reality. And what historic reality might we be thinking of?

Passover. Passover, yes, it was. But it's not Passover in general. The historic reality is one particular Passover. Yeah, the last supper.

Which, I don't know, is it ever called that in the Bible? Let's assume that's something we call it that. It was a supper, wasn't it? It was a Passover meal. And what night did it take place?

Because it does not tell us on the night that Jesus was betrayed. Yes, it was that particular night.

[4 : 31] And that supper was referencing another historical reality. Quite close to it, but not exactly the same as it.

What was it referencing? Well, yeah, that's... This is a telepathy question. That wasn't the answer that I had in mind.

The crucifixion. The crucifixion, yes. And how do we know that he's referencing that? What does he say that is a reference to the crucifixion? His body, which is broken, and his blood, which is shed.

So it didn't take place at the meal, did it? It's referencing the cross. And I tried to make an application point of that.

Would anybody like to think of what application point is there of a historical reality like that? I think the way I tried to take it was that that historical reality is meant to be determinative for our Christian lives.

[5 : 44] We're supposed to be people who say, the thing that defines me as who I am is what Jesus did on the cross all those years ago.

So I'm not defined by my upbringing or even my present experience, so much as the fact that he did that for me. And that's the fundamental thing in my life.

That sort of thought, which I think is a proper Christian thought. Okay, so there was a past. And then there was a present. Anybody tell us anything that was present about Paul's tradition?

You weren't here, sir. Yes, it was the remembering. Remembering.

Right, okay, the remembering. Anybody got any comments about the power or effect of remembering? Anybody from Northern Ireland here?

[7 : 01] Do, so from what we might know of people in Northern Ireland, for example, do they ever remember things and does it ever have an effect on their culture?

If they have orange parades and the Protestant people will march around, I might be getting this wrong, but this is my impression of it. Correct me if I'm wrong. With marching around.

And they're celebrating such and such a battle in which the Protestants won. And, of course, this is completely obnoxious, I presume, to the Roman Catholic people who don't want to be reminded of this.

And it causes riots and disturbances and offence. It's just an illustration of the power of remembering something. And so in the supper, we are told to remember Jesus and to keep on remembering him.

And that remembering is, again, supposed to be something that is part of who we are, our consciousness of what makes us who we are.

[8 : 15] And, okay, so remembering. And the future, is there a future reference? Till he come, yes. Yes. And in the, I will not drink of this cup again until I drink it new in my Father's kingdom.

So there's a future reference. And is that, was there any application point from that that you remember? No.

Yes, that's right. Yes, we're to be people who look forward to the future. That we're not basing ourselves in this world. That this world is, gives us the reason for what we do.

So we're not people of this world. We're people of the world to come. And that is one of the elements of, I'm just boiling it right down.

Okay, so that's the tradition. That's what he handed on. I've told you this in the past. This is where to remember in the present. That's until he comes. And you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes, which is part of this historic reality here.

[9 : 32] Now this, these four, I try to bring out things about how the supper is practiced. Does anybody remember any of those at all?

Assumed. Yeah, thank you. Number one was that it was assumed. So he doesn't argue to say, you ought to do this, you're not doing it.

It's assumed that they do do that. And sometimes the assumptions of scripture are very important. It's just assumed. You know, it's in the same way that it's assumed that Christians, if they have a choice in the matter, will choose to marry other Christians.

It's hardly ever specified, but it is an understanding that's all the way through. And occasionally it surfaces, you know, the widow can remarry only in the Lord and things like that. So that's assumed.

Can anybody remember any of the other things about the practice of the Lord's Supper?

Accountable. Yes. Now then, is a two-season accountable?

[10 : 41] Yes. Yes. And in my notes, although I didn't put it on the screen, I put there's a sort of a discipline aspect to it as well.

What things in the 1 Corinthians text point out the accountability? That's true.

What bits of it talk about being accountable? It does, doesn't it? It talks about eating and drinking judgment.

And there's also Paul's assessment of what they were doing. Do you remember what he said? No, let's leave that bit. The judgment bit will do it.

Can you remember in 1 Corinthians 10 what he said shouldn't happen? You cannot and... And demons.

[11:44] Yeah. You cannot eat at the table of the Lord and the table of demons. So there are things that you can't do. You're taking on an involvement.

You're taking a responsibility. And I think my example of it was if you drive away in a higher car, a wonderful higher car, you have to be mindful that if you scratch it, you're going to have to pay loads of money unless you're very fully insured.

So it's assumed it's accountable. Can anybody remember the third point? Together, yes. What was there in the text that emphasized or drew upon the thought of being together?

Do you want to look at 1 Corinthians 11 if you weren't here this morning? Sorry? Yeah, that's right. Yes, it said eat and drink all of you.

And anything else? So this is Maria's point. In 1 Corinthians 11, what were they doing?

[12:59] To go over here, yeah? Sorry, I said when you come together. Okay, yeah, when you come together. Is that what it says, when you come together? No, it does, doesn't it?

Verse 18, when you come together. Is it? 20. When you come together, thank you.

And verse? 23 as well. Oh, thank you, yeah. Great, good. So there was that.

There's the use of the word together. There's the command to drink all. And what was going wrong that he was criticizing? Going ahead and not waiting. Yeah. I tried to think of a word for that.

Anybody got a word to say? Is there a word that would encapsulate the idea of people? Some people sitting and going ahead. Other people being hungry and going home hungry, so we presume. Or perhaps coming hungry and then stuffing their faces without taking notice of anybody else.

[14:09] Chaotic? Yeah, chaotic is the thought. And... Gracious. Ooh. I'm not quite sure I know how to spell that, so I shall...

Chris was saying? Selfish. Oh, greedy is better. I can do that one. Greedy. Yeah. And that's a bit of a Corinthian thing about...

It starts off with... He was saying... People say, apparently, I belong to Paul, I belong to Peter. Do you remember that? Right at the beginning, and Paul says, this is the report. And I almost believe it, actually.

And what a terrible thing it is that you are in cliques and divisions. And you allow that to happen.

And the fourth thing... So it was assumed accountable together.

And what... Anybody think of the fourth one? Yes. It was to do with praise and blame. Or if I put it... Praise really.

[15:08] It was... Yes. It was... I don't know whether... I think I did it something like that. Worthy. It was something that was good in its result.

It was meant to be something that was good in its result. You see, he criticizes and says, Your meetings do more harm than good. They're supposed to do good. And they end up resulting in judgment.

And it's not supposed to result in judgment. And I think by implication, we could say, It's meant to be edifying and uplifting and helpful and so on.

Does that make sense? Okay. So I think that we've got enough raw material there to go back to some of these questions.

Now, if only I knew how to operate this software. Oh, that's better. Oh, no. Oh, no. Oh, no. Oh, no.

[16:07] Oh, no. Right. Was it that one? No, then. I want a different arrow than that one. Oh, no. Oh, no.

Oh, no. Right. Was it that one? And then how does this accountability thing work?

Who decides? And who should preside? So presumably somebody stands at the front and says the words. Does it matter who does that?

Are there any constraints, anything that should result from that or not result from that? So if we had to look at those first three questions, what's the best way to do this?

Would you like to find two other people nearby, one or two other people? And I'm just wondering the best way to do this.

[17:07] Let's see how it works. If we just do that first one, because that's quite interesting. Who is communion for? Would you like to take three or four minutes with one or two other people?

Who is communion for? Who is communion for?

Okay. Okay. Let me cut you short and see how far we've got with this. So who had the answer? I think Mark had the answer. What was the answer, Mark? Believers. Believers. Okay. Okay. Okay. And your answer was? In the gathered church. Okay. Okay. Believers in the gathered church. Well, it's more than just when they are gathered, not just the gathered church.

[18:31] It's when they are gathered. Yes. Yeah. It is a little bit of a subtle point here, isn't it?

Because if you say it's for believers, then does that mean believers? So if we all did a sort of deliveroo version of the Lord's Supper, and we all put the bread and the wine in little microwavable proof containers and sent it out by bicycle, and we could say, this is a communion, we're all partaking of the communion, that's fine.

What it would miss is this bit of the assembly of believers. Yeah? Yeah? So there's an important point. It's the believers together functioning as church.

So, yeah. Could we please define what we mean by church? Is church the same thing as believers? Because we operate a church membership principle, and we would say there are some people who are members of the church, and others who are not.

[19:58] So which of these is communion for? Who is under the authority of Jesus Christ? Who is under the authority of Jesus Christ? The person who is under the authority of Jesus Christ?

To the church. To the church. How would we know that that's the case? So if...

So which church do you belong to? I belong to Holland Road. Right, so... I'm a member of Holland Road. Sorry? I'm a member of Holland Road.

You're a member of Holland Road Church. So if we were to say the assembly, the communion, if we were to say the communion is for Calvary Gathered Church, then that would be a different thing from saying it's for...

If you happen to be here, it's for yourself. I think this needs a little bit of thinking about. What else do we expect of church?

[21:06] What else do we expect of people who are in the church? Because we do. Belonging. We expect them to belong. And there is another expectation that we...

Well, there's other expectations. What would we expect of somebody in the church? Well, walking with the Lord. Walking with the Lord, yeah.

Walking with one another. Yep. So suppose there was somebody in the church who we knew was living in an adulterous relationship.

Would the communion be for them? No. Okay, so there's more than saying they have to be a believer. There's more than saying that they're in the church.

There's... They can't be living in the church. Okay. I thought the church did... Yeah. It's not the only thing, is it?

[22:18] I mean, is it in Galatians? It's clear that when the apostles came to a Galatians church, they were living together and then Paul complained at one point.

Galatians or Colossians? that they withdrew from eating which suggests that believers from other churches when they visited the church you need to expect them to eat and show fellowship interesting point yes yes yep thank you I'm wondering about baptism because we would we're a Baptist church and although we don't insist that every that every church member is baptized if in their conscience they feel they have obeyed that in a different way to what as a church we do things would we not expect somebody in the church to be baptized in some recognizable way would we I think we would wouldn't we and would you not say that there was a logic to saying if somebody expects to take an outward sign of the covenant in the Lord's Supper that it would at least be consistent for that person to have taken the outward sign of the covenant in baptism in baptism baptism is entering the covenant in the New Testament terms and and and communion is continuing in the covenant would you well that's that's correct and it does but I think this is the point at which we have to at least ask this question because the definition of church putting it very very broadly is that group of people who are baptized because that's what baptism does isn't it you leave the world and join the church through baptism and that's what happens in Acts isn't it that on the that Peter says beginning of Acts repent no not that bit um

Acts 2 40 with many other words he warned them and he pleaded with them save yourselves from this corrupt generation those who accepted his message were baptized and about 3,000 were added to their number that day so if you were to think of a sort of boundary between those outside the church and those inside the church the sort of recognizable boundary of that is baptism and

they were baptized on that day when Peter preached yep well that's yep um yes they were and so my my question is who is communion for and we said just saying believers is not actually quite on the ball because it's the assembly it's the church and then I'm saying what do we mean by church and we started to say it's people who belong and it's people who are walking with the Lord and people who are loving one another and people who are not openly in sin and people who are not under discipline and I'm saying that the the outward mark of the church um you know putting it in its simplest um terms is that these are the people who are credibly baptized so I'm uh I'm not giving you the answer I'm raising the question who is communion for because the rest of the the rest of it all follows from this um is it for church is it for the church people so quite strictly for that is it for um is it for believers at what point would we say to a believer um you're coming to the table but isn't it a bit inconsistent if you're publicly putting up your hand that you belong to Christ at the table but you haven't publicly put up your hand to belong to Christ in the way that he says which is baptism now I'm not a strict Baptist but this is the logic of being a strict Baptist and I think before we say oh we're not like them I think we ought to realize it is a very logical position and um you know if we're not going to take that logical position then we ought to think why we don't [27 : 17] I mean I can give you one answer why we don't which is my dear good friend Frank Ornstein who was the pastor of the French Protestant Reformed Church anybody know Frank Ornstein um dear and lovely man and he went to preach peace to um Montpelier I think back in the day and so he was the preacher and yet because he was an infant Baptist he couldn't come round the communion table which seems to me to be a somewhat illogical position to come to so that's why I would I think if one is rigorously strict Baptist you end up with anomalies like that which I think fail the larger logic of people that we know belong to the Lord and you know we would trust to preach to us and so on and so on so when we say who is communion for

I'm sorry I don't mean to sort of intimidate everybody by talking this way I'm just saying we need to think about it a little bit yes yes yes yeah so that's that's getting towards our definition of church membership it's people who are committed to following the Lord you could argue the other way because you could say that the if we're Protestants we agree that the body and blood are perceived by faith and therefore the definition of the church from that point of view would be those who have that faith in the Lord and the body and blood of Christ so you're not necessarily pushed into a straightback disposition

I think I agree with you it's not an entirely neat thing and it never will be but I still think it's worth thinking about thank you yes so that's looking that's defining the church from the point of view of those who have faith those who are spiritually united to Jesus Christ and the table is the place for those people yeah thank you that's true and that's helpful I suppose what we would say is that there's a certain logic to say well those people are baptized people because if they're following the Lord they will have followed him in baptism

I hope so yes I'm definitely I'm just saying let's try and understand what we're doing and this is going to come through to the accountability and it's also going to come through to the presiding because okay well let's think about the accountability if no we won't think about the accountability because it's one minute to half past and I said we'd stop at half past so well I don't we've got next week and I don't think we will wrap everything up but let's sort of open it up as a question we can think about it next week this whole thing of accountability because that's why I was that's why I was careful to say no the other way the table is an accountable table can we just spell out again there are a number of account abilities in

Corinthians so itemizing those the bit in 1 Corinthians 11 what's the accountability thing going on in 11 yeah there's a sense in which Paul says you should be looking into your own hearts on this so there's a self examination and I was also careful to mention the 1 Corinthians 5 verse 11 and 12 who does the accountability in 1 Corinthians 5 verses 11 and 12 if you would like to have a look I'll read it to you 1

[33 : 06] Corinthians 5 verse 11 I'm writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy an idolater a slanderer a drunkard or a swindler with such a man do not even eat what business is it of mine to judge those outside the church are you not to judge those inside God will judge those outside expel the wicked man from among!

It's the church isn't it the expel the wicked man is addressed to the church isn't it it doesn't let everybody examine themselves and if they feel that they're a slanderer a swindler they make up

their own mind on that what it's saying is that you as a church through whatever church structure you have have the authority to say to brother so and so brother so and so sister so and so you're an idolater and until you repent we're not going to eat with you and you are not on the inside of us you are expelled so the who does the accountability there the church does doesn't it so I'll put that one in there there's a church disciplinary thing here is it correct to say that in verse 18 and it talks about division that is it correct to say that to keep unity we need to be under the authority so to keep the wicked man away from the being sorry which verse are we in verse 18 yes yes yes he he he wants he wants the church as it should be to be together and he wants the people who are not meant to be part of that to be outside so there's it's not a fragmentary movement it's a bringing people together movement and a expel the wicked man from among you so there's two there's two movements there but I think my point is that if you look at the whole thing it's not just a you make up your own mind if you're right to come to the Lord

I mean there is that but that's not all there is there is an aspect of saying under some circumstances and it's a bit of a nuclear option but under some circumstances the church would say to somebody no matter what you think we're saying you don't have a place around this table until you repent and quite likely the other person will say well yes I do and the church would have to be rather hard-nosed and say no you don't it would be a terrible thing to happen and mercifully it only happens rarely but that is it's part of this isn't it I don't think we can think about this without realising that that's part of this whole thing does that make sense so yes yes well in the practicality of it I don't think that there would be time to say to everybody else well you just hold on while I sit down for half an hour and work out why this person feels that they can't take the supper there could be a number of reasons why somebody says that some of them right some of them wrong so they could be walking in sin and needing to repent and that's what they should do I think it would be more likely that somebody would be saying I'm such a sinner I'm unworthy to come to the table and what would need to be explained is that the table's for sinners yeah which that people think they're unworthy to come yeah and that's why the gospel ought to be proclaimed at the table to say this is not for perfect people it's for people who know they've sinned and they need the salvation of Jesus Christ they need his grace and that's what it's about yeah what it actually says in 1 Corinthians 11 28 it says one ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup it doesn't say examine yourself and exclude and therefore exclude yourself it says examine yourself if there's some reason put it right before you eat and drink so you can't it's not right to say that I'm continuing my sin this week so I won't take communion the command is to repent and then take the bread there isn't some scripture that says leave your offering somewhere and sort it out yes yes yes yes yes yes I mean I could imagine somebody I could imagine somebody saying I've got a real drink problem I've come along today but I haven't beaten this I really need help and I don't feel that I I can come to the Lord's table I'm just sort of making that up as a hypothetical situation in which I don't think it would be possible to say well just repent here and now and then come to the table I think it would be probably more deep seated than that I'm just saying that that might be the case but I think more often it's the case that people need the encouragement because it's a table for sinners I've gone on beyond what I said do you where are we have I gone the wrong way well it's difficult to leave this isn't it on an uplifting note but

[39 : 54] I think we do as a church want to think these things through because they're quite I mean they are to do with the communion and this whole thing of who decides is going to affect who presides doesn't it if there's a sense in which the church is saying or might say to somebody you are not to be taking this at this table then presumably the person who presides ought to be somebody that the church trusts to say that that makes sense so I'm sorry I don't mean to make this depressingly complicated but I do need to think about it shall we stop there and take it up next week let's sing something shall we shall we go