

# **1 Corinthians 11 - Proper Order & Attitude for Worship; Role of Women; Instructions for Partaking in the Lord's Supper: Abuses & Judgment**

## III. Questions asked of Paul (1 Cor 7:1–16:24)

- (2) Food sacrificed to the idols (1 Cor 8:1–11:1)
  - (D) Marketplace food (10:23–11:1)
- (3) Worship (11:2–16)
  - (A) Argument from culture (11:2–6)
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## **1 Corinthians 11**

- (D) Marketplace food (10:23–11:1)
- 1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.
- 1 Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.
- 1 Imitate me, as I do the Messiah.
- 1 Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.
- This verse is should be included as part of the previous chapter...
- Paul recommends that his readers follow his example of exercising and limiting their Christian liberty, glorifying God, and giving no offense, as well as in other areas of their lives (Cf. 4:16)
  - In context, Paul is speaking specifically about knowledge and freedom, becoming all things to all men, and keeping in mind the weaker brother in non-moral matters, not using your Christian liberty as a bulldozer over those who are weaker spiritually or the unsaved

- His main point is to be aware that most people have scruples regarding various non-moral things. Be aware of this and try not to offend them in order to keep the door open for the gospel.
- On absolute (moral) issues, Christians cannot compromise. This will result in the Lord's discipline, and disqualify us from eternal reward.

### (3) Women in Worship (11:2-16)

In this passage Paul continues to discuss problems at Corinth arising from personal freedoms being exercised to the detriment of others. Proper behavior in the assembly (church) is necessary to promote God-centered worship, complementarity with focus on Christ, and love that edifies to the glory of God.

This section of this epistle is one of the most difficult and disputed. There are various interpretations, but the main point should not be lost in the details: Christians should take into account the effects of their actions on others in worship. Honoring God takes priority over personal freedom within the church.

#### (A) Argument from culture (11:2-6)

**2 Now** I praise you because you **remember me in everything** and **hold firmly to the traditions**, just as I handed them down to you.

**2** Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.

**2** I praise you for remembering everything I told you and for holding to the traditions that I passed on to you.

**2** Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you.

- This section deals primarily with things that were going on in the meetings of the church (Cf. v16)

- "Now" - Paul introduces a new subject, but does not use the phrase "Now concerning" (*peri de*) as he did earlier. These were additional subjects about which he wanted to give the Corinthians guidance, which they likely did not write to him about specifically.

- "...remember me in everything" - the Corinthians constantly kept Paul in mind, both in prayer and what he taught them while he was with them for 18 months

- "...hold firmly to the traditions" - *paradoses*, refers to the oral teachings given while the NT canon was in the process of being written (Cf. 2 Thess 3:6)

— Oral teachings (traditions) that the Holy Spirit saw fit to inspire were later captured in the canon of Scripture

3 **But** I want you to understand that Christ is the **head of everyman**, and the **man** is the head of a **woman**, and **God is the head of Christ**.

3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

3 Now I want you to realize that the Messiah is the head of every man, and man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of the Messiah.

3 But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

– "But" – indicates that although he commended them in v2, things were not quite as Paul thought they should be

— His first topic was a reminder about the administrative order, the order through which God has chosen to conduct His dealings with humans

— "...head" – *kephalē*, the NT uses this term to describe headship in two ways:

1. Source; origin

2. Authority; leader

— The latter is most often used in the context of human relationships. It is also the traditional interpretation of *kephalē* in this verse. This is also supported by the context (specifically v8,12), where the reference to source is a supporting argument for headship (authority).

— Liberal theologians will often go with the former definition (that "head" (*kephalē*) refers to "source" or "origin") because that fits their theology. However, going this they are appealing to the standard classical lexicon, not the standard NT and Hellenistic Greek lexicon). The latter lists no meaning of "source" or "origin" for *kephalē* for the NT period.

— Although some of the NT metaphorical uses of *kephalē* could be taken to mean "source," in no case is that the *required* meaning. And in every instance the notion of "headship" implying authority fits equally well or better. Lexicons are full of examples, from numerous ancient texts, in which *kephalē* means "authority."

— What Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand is that there is a rank and authority within the church, which comes from the rank and authority within the Trinity.

– "...every" – indicates all, without exception

– "...man" – *anēr*, genitive case, meaning every all males

– "...man" – *anēr*, nominative case, meaning every male married to a woman (female)

— Christ is the head of every man, but not every man is the head of a woman (because they are unmarried)

– "...woman" – *gynē*, female; very broad term, covering women of every age, virgins, married women, or widows

— Paul used this term earlier in this epistle to describe a "wife" (7:3-4,10-12,14,16). Here, it refers to any woman in a dependent relationship to a man, such as a wife to a husband or a

daughter to a father.

— This is not referring to every woman universally; for example, in the workplace a male may have a female supervisor or boss. Paul is not speaking against this type of relationship.

- "...God is the head of Christ" - just as there is headship/authority within the Godhead, Paul says there is headship/authority within the marriage relationship

— Rank does not indicate inferiority of the subordinate in the relationship. Christ is not inferior to God even though He is subordinate, and the woman is not inferior to a man even though she is subordinate.

— Subordination within these relationships is one of role, not essence. The role of the head is to lead and the role of the other party is to follow.

— In the 1st century, a male would acknowledge his role by not wearing a head-covering and a woman would acknowledge her role by wearing a head-covering.

— If you read this and think Paul is in some way disrespecting women, remember that he puts women in the same place/rank as Jesus Christ, who is under the headship of God the Father. So clearly Paul is not disrespecting women here.

4 **Every man** who has **something on his head** while **praying or prophesying** disgraces his **head**.

4 Every man who has *something* on his head while praying or prophesying disgraces his head.

4 Every man who prays or prophesies with something on his head dishonors his head,

4 Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoureth his head.

- "Every man" - all inclusive; all males, including married men, widowers, single men, teenagers, and boys

- "...*something* on his head" - *kata kephalē*, to have something hanging down from the head; this is clearly referring to a man's physical head

— This does not refer to a man's hair as that is a completely different Greek word. This refers specifically to a material cloth placed over the head. Men were not to place this cloth on their head during prayer and prophesying because it disgraces his head, which is Christ (v3).

— Later (v7) Paul says that the reason for this is because man is the image and glory of God. His implied point is that God and Christ are to be central in the assembly of worship because they hold a higher rank (11:7). For a man to fail by wearing a head covering would distract attention away from God and Christ.

- "...praying or prophesying" - seems to limit Paul's instructions in the context of church at public worship (Cf. Acts 2:42)

- "...head" - *kephalē*, based on the context, Paul here is referring to the man's "spiritual head": Jesus Christ

5 But every **woman** who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying **disgraces** her **head**, for it is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.

5 But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying disgraces her head, for she is one and the same as the woman whose head is shaved.

5 and every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, which is the same as having her head shaved.

5 But every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonoureth her head: for that is even all one as if she were shaven.

- "...woman" - *gynē*, refers to a married woman or unmarried daughter

- "...disgraces" - *kataischynō*, to shame, dishonor

- "...head" - her husband, or in the case of an unmarried daughter, her father

- Evidently, due to their new-found freedom in Christ, some women in the assembly were removing their head covering, but Paul instructed them not to because it brought shame to her husband. It was also inappropriate because it distracted attention away from God and Christ and put attention on themselves. It also served as an indicator of singleness and availability, which was not proper.

— Paul here does not prescribe that women should pray or prophesy in the assembly.

Rather, he describes what women were doing in the assembly, which only had to be in conformity with his later comments (Cf. 14:34-35).

- A woman who shaved her head in Greco-Roman culture did so to look like a man, which resulted in the blurring of the relationship and differences between men and women

— Men typically wore their hair short, and women wore theirs longer. If a woman cut her hair short, it indicated she wanted to be regarded as a man. Basically, in that culture, a woman not wearing a head covering was the same as a woman shaving her head.

This was similar to what some modern Islamic women wear: a head covering (*hijab*) and a face-veil (*niqab*). In Paul's day, most women, Christians and non-Christians alike, wore such a covering whenever they went out in public.

The likely issue that Paul was addressing in the Corinthian church was that certain "wise," "spiritual," so-called "liberated" women stopped wearing a head covering in church meetings, in open disrespect to their husbands or fathers. It is likely that the Corinthian slogan "everything is permissible" was applied to church meetings, with the Corinthian women applying that by refraining to wear their distinguishing dress. This led to them rejecting the concept of subordination within the church (and perhaps society as well), and

with it any cultural symbol that may have been attached to it. According to Paul, this was not an act of liberation, but rather an act of degradation.

6 For if a woman does not cover her head, have her also cut her hair off; however, if it is **disgraceful** for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, have her cover her head.

6 For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.

6 So if a woman does not cover her head, she should cut off her hair. If it is a disgrace for a woman to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her own head.

6 For if the woman be not covered, let her also be shorn: but if it be a shame for a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be covered.

- Paul is address women who were not covering their head in church, so he tells them to go ahead and shave their heads

— But if it was disgraceful for them to shave their heads, which it was, then the woman should cover her head

— The women in Corinth were not covering their heads, but thought it was disgraceful to shave their heads. Paul equates the two and says that if you aren't going to cover your head in church, you may as well shave your head because it amounts to the same thing.

#### (B) Argument from creation (11:7-12)

7 For a man should not have his head covered, since he is the **image and glory of God**; but **the woman is the glory of man**.

7 For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.

7 A man should not cover his head, because he exists as God's image and glory. But the woman is man's glory.

7 For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.

- Now Paul gives several reasons for his correction regarding head coverings...

- "...image...of God" - Paul refers to Gen 1:26-28 and the order of creation (v8)

- "...glory of God" - man is the reflection of God's essence

- "...the woman is the glory of man" - the woman is the glory of man because she originated from him (v8)

— Paul is saying that the woman should cover her head so that her husband (or father) is not disgraced. If she remained uncovered, she would become the center of the worship service and draw attention away from God.

- 8 For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;
- 8 For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;
- 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man;
- 8 For the man is not of the woman: but the woman of the man.
- As Adam glorified God by being the product of His creation; Eve glorified Adam because she came from him
  - The female gender did not produce the male gender, but the first woman came from the first man (Gen 2:21-23)
  - Paul's point is that the order and manner of creation has theological implications for headship and subordination
- 9 for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.
- 9 for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.
- 9 and man was not created for woman, but woman for man.
- 9 Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man.
- Further (from v7-8), woman is the glory of man because God created Eve to complete Adam
  - God did not create the man as a companion for the woman, but the woman for "the man's sake" (Gen 2:18,20)
  - Man, then, was God's authoritative representative who found in woman a divinely made ally in fulfilling this role (Gen 2:18-24). In this sense she as a wife is the glory of man, her husband.
  - When Adam saw Eve for the first time, he "gloried" in her (Gen 2:23)
  - The husband takes primary responsibility for his headship, with a non-reversible orientation of the woman towards the man as the reference point in her life (Cf. 1 Tim 2:13-14)

Neither of these verses (v8-9) refers to the *subordination* of woman under man, though many interpreters have read this into the text. Rather they refer to her *origin* as being from man.

**10 Therefore** the woman should have *a symbol of* authority on her head, **because of the angels.**

10 Therefore the woman ought to have *a symbol of* authority on her head, because of the angels.

10 This is why a woman should have authority over her own head: because of the angels.

10 For this cause ought the woman to have power on her head because of the angels.

- "Therefore" - tightly connects this verse to v7-9; it draws a conclusion; best interpreted as "because of this..."
- "...a symbol of" - italicized, thus not in the Greek text; but it is clear that the head covering was a sign of acceptance of the authority either of God, her husband, or both.
- This is the verse used (correctly) to argue that the interpretation of "head" (v3) refers to "rank" or "authority"
- "...because of the angels" - an obscure phrase for Paul to bring up in the context of headship and order of worship. We do know, however, that angels watch with great interest what is taking place among God's people as they worship (Cf. 4:9; Eph 3:10; 1 Tim 5:21).
- It is likely that Paul's point here is that because the angels are spectators of our worship services, that they may be offended by the lack of authority structure when they are so accustomed to authority and rank in their own sphere (Cf. Eph 3:10).
- Angels are the guardians of God's created order, they are submissive to God, and they also praise God. For others in the church to see Christian women unveiled was bad enough, because it was a sign of insubordination, but for angels to see it would be worse.

11 **However, in the Lord**, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.

11 However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.

11 In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man of woman.

11 Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord.

- "However" - indicates that Paul wants to provide further clarity to what he just said. This was likely because Paul knew of the Corinthians' proclivity for distorting his teaching or taking it beyond his intent.

- "...in the Lord" - describes believers who understand that both men and women are mutually dependent upon each other, and therefore share equality of essence even though they differ in role

— Even though God has given men and women different positions in the administrative order, this does not mean that they can get along without each other. Men and women are mutually dependent upon each other, and they complement one another, just like the Son and the Father.

— Paul's main point is that women are not independent of men, which is further evidence that he was countering an illegitimate spirit of independence among some Corinthian women

- In many religions, women are owned by their fathers and husbands, and treated as chattel or property

- Even in ancient Israel, a female was secondary to any male (in a line of an 18-petition prayer, a man renders thanks to God for making him neither a slave, a Gentile, or a woman)
- Women were not considered worthy of studying the Scriptures and were denied an education. They were not even counted in the number required for a synagogue (10).
- In the NT, there is frequent edifying and mention of women, and their equality is noted in many ways (Gal 3:28; Rom 16:1-15)

12 For as the woman *originated* from the man, so also the man *has his birth* through the woman; and all things *originate* from God.

12 For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man *has his birth* through the woman; and all things originate from God.

12 For as woman came from man, so man comes through woman. But everything comes from God.

12 For as the woman is of the man, even so is the man also by the woman; but all things of God.

- Even though God created Eve from Adam, since that time, every male comes from a female. Paul uses this fact to illustrate male/female interdependence (v11).

— Ultimately, all of this came from God and so He must be the central focus in worship. Keeping Him the central focus occurs by keeping His ordained order of worship.

- Attendance at, and participation in, a service dedicated to worshipping God requires proper decorum. Even the angels covered their faces in God's presence (Cf. Is 6:2-3).

— In Paul's day, women wore veils as marked distinction from men. God created a distinct difference between men and women and he desires that His people mark this dissimilarity with appropriate dress. Not abiding by these dress codes negates the differentiation which God has designed.

— Paul emphasized the authority that a woman has in her own right by virtue of creation. She must not leave her divinely appointed place in creation by seeking to function exactly as a man in church worship.

#### (C) Argument from nature (11:13-16)

13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God *with her head uncovered*?

13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God *with her head uncovered*?

13 Decide for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

**13** Judge in yourselves: is it comely that a woman pray unto God uncovered?

- The implied answer to Paul's first rhetorical question was No!

— Paul trusted that the Corinthians would conclude that it was improper because of what he just said: that it would not reflect God's order of rank and authority.

- In Paul's day, it was not proper for a woman to act as a spokesman for people with God by praying publicly, with her head uncovered. To do so would be the same as claiming the position of a man in God's order.
- Paul did not think it was wise for a Christian woman to exercise her liberty in a way that would go against socially accepted behavior, even if they were personally submissive. Today, socially accepted norms are different, but the woman's attitude is still crucial.
- Paul is advocating here something very similar to what he did in 8:1–11:1, namely, doing what is generally perceived as appropriate (as well as what is morally pure)

14 Does even **nature** itself not teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,  
 14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,  
 14 Nature itself teaches you neither that it is disgraceful for a man to have long hair  
 14 Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?

- The implied answer to Paul's second rhetorical question is Yes!
- Women's hair naturally grows longer than men's hair. Because of this, Paul reasoned that God intended for women to have more head covering than men. Paul regarded the reverse of what was natural as dishonorable: in the man's case, long hair; in the women's case, short hair.
- Paul is not forbidding men to have long hair, but rather having their hair styled in such a way that they look like a woman, that makes them look effeminate. Paul did not want women to look like men, and he did not want men to look like women.
- It's interesting that the gender confusion prevalent today is addressed in Scripture in this passage. Men should accept who God created them to be and should not try to look like women. This demonstrates a clear disdain for who God created them to be.
- Any degradation of who God created us to be is a degradation of God

*The unique beauty of a woman is gloriously manifest in the distinctive femininity portrayed by her hair and her attendance to feminine customs. [MacArthur]*

15 but if a woman has long hair, **it is a glory to her?** For her hair is given to her as a **covering.**

15 but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.

15 nor that hair is a woman's glory, since hair is given as a substitute for coverings.

15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.

- "...it is a glory to her" - in contrast to a man, if a woman has styled (coiffured) hair, it is fitting because she is enhancing her femininity, and it is a glory to her in that it reflects

God's beauty

- "...covering" - alludes to an article of clothing, such as a veil. Paul wants a woman to be distinctively feminine and thus fulfill the role that God has intended since creation.
- Some interpret this "covering" is the woman's hair and not a material of clothing, but that would contradict v5-6.
- Paul's point is a bit confusing here: he's saying that the woman's hair covers the shorn or shaved head that a woman would otherwise have, which is a disgrace. But because the woman's styled (coiffured) hair is her glory, it should not be the central focus in worship. Therefore, it must be covered by a material covering so that God is the central focus of worship.

16 But if anyone is inclined to be **contentious**, we have no such practice, nor have the churches of God.

16 But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God.

16 But if anyone wants to argue about this, we do not have any custom like this, nor do any of God's churches.

16 But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.

- If any of his Corinthian readers still did not feel inclined to accept Paul's reasoning, he told them that all of the other churches followed the guidelines he just explained. The Corinthians should fall in line with all other churches in this practice and not choose to be unique.

— This is one of four similar statements in this epistle in which Paul refers to "other churches," and informs the Corinthians that they were out of step with them in their conduct (Cf. 3:18; 8:2; 14:37)

- "...contentious" - *philoneikos*, a person who loves to argue; Paul does not have time for someone whose mind is set on debating an issue for the sake of argument

As with the issues of eating in idol temples and meat offered to idols, Paul dealt with a cultural practice when he dealt with head coverings. As should be clear from his argumentation, he did not feel that this was a major issue. He appealed to maintain a custom, not to obey God, and he used shame, propriety, and custom to urge the Corinthians to cooperate, not Scriptural imperatives or apostolic authority.

However, important issues lay behind the practices. In the case of head coverings, the issue is a woman's position in the life of the church, in particular their relationship to the men. In modern society, no item of clothing consistently identifies a woman's acceptance

or rejection of her role in God's administrative order. At least none does in western culture. It is usually her speech and her behavior that do. The important thing is her attitude toward her womanhood and how she expresses it, not whether she wears a particular item of clothing.

#### (4) Communion (11:17-34)

In Corinth, communion was held in conjunction with the love feast. However, it was not done in a very loving way. The rich ate before the poor arrived so that the latter went hungry; others were getting drunk. As a consequence, God's discipline came upon them resulting in some being sick and others slept. Paul urges the Corinthians to take the Lord's Supper in a manner that is worthy of Christ by remembering what He did for us on the cross.

##### (A) Abuses (11:17-26)

###### (a) Against the poor (11:17-22)

**17** Now in giving this *next* instruction **I do not praise you**, because you come together **not for the better, but for the worse**.

**17** But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.

**17** Now I am not praising you in giving you the following instructions. When you gather, it is not for the better but for the worse.

**17** Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

- "...I do not praise you" - there was nothing praiseworthy about the way the Corinthians were taking communion, as he did before he discussed the issue of head coverings and order in worship (v2)

- "...not for the better, but for the worse" - the Corinthians' behavior at the Lord's Supper was so bad that Paul said they were "worse" off for observing it as they did, rather than "better" off, given what they were doing (v18-22) and the tragic results (v30)

— In Paul's day, meals typically accompanied public worship. Early Christians observed the Lord's Supper as part of such a meal, often called a "love feast."

— Paul was concerned that the "love feast" had become an occasion for selfishness rather than a love for fellow believers

**18** For, **in the first place**, when you come together as a **church**, **I hear** that **divisions** exist among you; and **in part I believe it**.

**18** For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part I believe it.

18 For in the first place, I hear that when you gather as a church there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it.

18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

– "...in the first place" - the Corinthians first issue (v18-34) was between believers within the church; perhaps the second reason Paul did not praise them is understood in 1 Cor 12-14

– "...church" - *ekklesia*, a local church gathering

— If there were several home churches in Corinth at the time, probably all of them were guilty of this abuse

— When Paul later wrote his epistle to the Romans, from Corinth, the Corinthian church was meeting in the home of Gaius (Rom 16:23)

– "...I hear" - this was a topic that they had not asked Paul about specifically, but that Paul heard about

– "...divisions" - *schismata*, in this context, are social divisions rather than earlier divisions over leaders (Cf. 1:10-12; 3:4)

– "...in part I believe it" - Paul had enough information about what was happening, and coupled with him knowing the church, the immoral community in which it was located, and this information, he believed much of what he had heard

19 For there also have to be **factions** among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.

19 For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you.

19 Of course, there must be factions among you to show which of you are genuine!

19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

– "...factions" - *haireseis*, sects with distinct opinions on matters. In this context, the sects differed on their view of social distinctions within the church.

— Here, these "factions" are portrayed positively because they served the purpose of manifesting those who are "approved" (those who pass the test, Cf. 9:27)

— They clarify whom God approves as faithful and trustworthy, those "approved" and those who are not (Cf. Matt 10:34-37; 18:7; 24:9-13)

20 Therefore when you come together it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,

20 Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,

20 When you gather in the same place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

- Paul had heard that when the church met together, it was not to partake in communion
- At that time, it was common to eat a meal when a church gathered for public worship. The Lord's Supper was incorporated as part of this meal, which was called a "love feast" (Cf. Acts 2:42,46; 20:7).
- While they did technically take communion during these feasts, they were missing the whole point of the ordinance. It had become an occasion for selfishness, not love.

21 for when you eat, each one takes his own supper first; and one goes hungry while another gets drunk.

21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

21 For as you eat, each of you rushes to eat his own supper, and one person goes hungry while another gets drunk.

21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

- Instead of those in Corinth sharing their food and drinks potluck style, each family brought its own and ate what they brought

— In addition, the rich arrived to the feast earlier, finished the best (if not all) of the food, often satiated and drunk, leaving little or nothing remaining for the slaves and laborers who arrived later

— The result was that the rich had plenty, but the poor went hungry, and suffered embarrassment; this was hardly a picture of Christian love and unity

22 **What!** Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or **do you despise** the church of God and **shame** those who have nothing? What am I to say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I do not praise you.

22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

22 You have homes in which to eat and drink, don't you? Or do you despise God's church and humiliate those who have nothing? What should I say to you? Should I praise you? I will not praise you for this!

22 What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? what shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

- "What!" - today this might be translated as "really?" or "seriously?" Paul is flabbergasted that the Corinthians has drifted so far from what communion and these "love feasts" were originally.

- He tells them that they could eat their own food and drink in their own homes. What was the purpose of them bringing their own food, and eating all of it at the love feast?
- "...do you despise" - *kataphroneō*, to disdain; to think little or nothing of
- By selfishly eating their own food and not sharing with the poorer members (or slaves), they were "thinking nothing of" the church of God, which Christ purchased with His own blood (Cf. 10:16)
- "...shame" - *kataischynō*, to dishonor or disgrace; to make ashamed; to humiliate
- They were also humiliating the poor in the congregation by being selfish and not showing them the love of Christ

The early Church was the one place in all the ancient world where the barriers which divided the world were down (Cf. Gal 3:28; Eph 3:10). The ancient world was very rigidly divided; there were the free men and the slaves; there were the Greeks and the barbarians (people who did not speak Greek); there were the Jews and the Gentiles; there were the Roman citizens and the lesser breeds without the law; there were the cultured and the ignorant. The Church was the one place where all men could and did come together, where these societal barriers were erased. A Church where social and class distinctions exist is no true Church at all. A real Church is a body of men and women united to each other because all are united to Christ.

(b) Against the Lord (11:23-26)

**Passover is Celebrated; Communion Instituted (Cf. Matt 26:20-30; Mark 14:17-26; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor 11:23-26)**

**23** For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus, **on the night when He was betrayed**, took **bread**;

**23** For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

**23** For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you—how the Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took a loaf of bread,

**23** For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus the same night in which [while] he was betrayed took bread:

- Paul now explains the proper manner in which to take communion. What Paul will describe here is what He received from the Lord Himself, either directly by revelation or by transmission from someone else.

- "...received...delivered unto you" - technical terms for the transmission of religious instruction

— His immediate concern was to establish that the tradition of the Supper, that he was about to talk about, came to him from Jesus Himself

- Jesus communicated to Paul directly on a number of occasions: on the road to Damascus, in Arabia, three years in Tarsus before Barnabas had him come to Antioch (Acts 18:9f; 22:18; 23:11; 27:23-25; 2 Cor 12:7; Gal 1:12; 2:2).
- "...also" - the fact that Paul "also" delivered this message to the Corinthians argues that the manner of communion Paul received was via transmission rather than direct revelation from Jesus
- "...on the night when He was betrayed" - Paul recollects the timing of when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper/Communion, which was the night He was betrayed by Judas, arrested, and tried. He was crucified the next morning.
- This shows Jesus' great love for His own, in that He was graciously providing for His disciples while one of them was plotting to do away with Him
- "...bread" - *artos*, masculine gender in Greek; see note on v24 for the importance of this

### **Communion** Communion

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.**"

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.**"

24 gave thanks for it, and broke it in pieces, saying, "**This is my body that is for you. Keep doing this in memory of me.**"

24 And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, **Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me.**

- The accounts of Jesus instituting the Lord's Supper/Communion in Matt 26:26; Mark 14:22, and Luke 22:19 are essentially the same
- "...when He had given thanks" - *eucharisteō*, as was His pattern (Matt 14:19; Mark 6:41; Luke 9:16; John 6:11). The Greek word *eucharisteō* accounts for another name for the Lord's Supper, the "Eucharist."
- "...This" - *houtos*, neuter gender in Greek, thus it cannot refer to the bread (v23). If Jesus (and Paul) had intended to communicate that the bread was indeed Jesus' body, they would have used the masculine gender.
- There are four primary views of this phrase (below). The first three view Communion as a sacrament, which means they maintain that grace is conveyed through partaking of the bread and wine. The last view sees Communion as an ordinance, which means as a rite to be observed.

1. Transubstantiation: dogma in the Roman Catholic and some Christian churches; the view that the bread and wine miraculously change in substance (though not in appearance) into Jesus' body and blood when the priest consecrates the elements. In this view, when we partake of the elements we are actually partaking of Him by eating and drinking His physical body and physical blood. This is the view of the Roman Catholic Church.
  - Some think this is the most literal view, but nowhere else is there a description of the bread and wine becoming elements becoming the body and blood of Christ.
  - In addition, the Lord Himself was present in flesh and blood when He initiated Communion, and the disciples did not eat His physical body or drink His blood, even though the Jews seemed to understand Him this way (Cf. John 6:51ff; Acts 15:20-21).
  - It was first called transubstantiation in the 12th century; elaborated by theologians from the 13th-15th century, and incorporated in documents at the Council of Trent (1545-63).
2. Consubstantiation: a variant view in which Christ's body and blood substantially co-exist with the consecrated bread and wine. They see the body of Christ as present "in, with, and under" the elements. Christ is "really" present, though not physically present. This is the Lutheran view.
3. Spiritual Presence View: the spiritual presence of Christ is in the elements and, as in the former views, God ministers grace to the participant in a concrete way. This view is held by Presbyterians and Calvinists, who point to 10:16 for support.
4. Memorial View: advocates believe that Jesus meant that the bread "represents" His body, understanding His statements as metaphorical. They view the elements (bread and wine) as emblems of the body and blood of Christ, and do not see Christ present in any special sense in the elements themselves.
  - Jesus invited His disciples to take the bread that *represented* His body, and thus gave them a share of His body, and invited them to participate in the meaning and benefits of His death.
  - His body was "for" them in a double sense: it was what secured atonement on their behalf (Cf. 15:3; Rom 5:6,8), and it was a body offered in their place (Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21).
  - See [Communion](#) for a refutation of both the transubstantiation and consubstantiation views.
    - "...remembrance" - in biblical terminology, this does not mean only calling to memory. It includes realizing what the event remembered involved (Cf. Ex 13:3; 20:8; Deut 5:15; 7:18).
    - The Lord's Supper is not just something Christians do to bring the memory of Jesus back into fresh view, though it does that too. It is a memorial of the salvation that He

accomplished by His death and resurrection.

— It is impossible to be an obedient Christian without observing the Lord's Supper

25 **In the same way** *He also took the cup* after supper, saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."**

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."**

25 He did the same with the cup after the supper, saying, **"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. As often as you drink from it, keep doing this in memory of me."**

25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, **this cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.**

— "In the same way" - in the same way Jesus took the bread and gave thanks for it, He also took the cup and gave thanks for it (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20)

— "...the cup" - the third cup of wine in the Passover; this is the "cup of blessing" (10:17), also known as the "cup of redemption"

— "...new covenant" - when Jesus shed His blood on Calvary, that blood ratified (gave authoritative approval of) the New Covenant (Jer 31:31-34; Ex 24:8). The New Covenant replaced the Mosaic Covenant (Heb 8:8-13; 9:18-28).

— How the New Covenant, given to Israel in Jer 31:31-34, affects the Church today is a confusing issue. There are four major viewpoints:

1. The Two New Covenants View - this view states that there is a New Covenant for Israel and a New Covenant for the church. This view was developed to try to keep Israel and the church completely separate. It is unlikely this view is correct because two New Covenants are never juxtaposed in the same context and it is unconvincing to argue that two new covenants have the same name.
2. The Partial Fulfillment View - this view states that the New Covenant was partially fulfilled beginning on the day of Pentecost with the Messiah giving the Spirit as a theocratic function that advanced the kingdom of God. It is unlikely this view is correct since the parties of the New Covenant are Israel and Judah, not the Church. Further, it is never stated that the New Covenant is literally fulfilled in any sense.

3. The Single Covenant Israel-Only View - this view states there is one New Covenant for Israel that has no relationship to the Church. This view says that Paul did not say the cup "is for you" as he did with the bread. Thus, the church partakes of Christ's blood but not His New Covenant blood. This is a form of dividing the blood. In this view, the Church is said to take the cup in order to remember that Israel's New Covenant will be fulfilled in the future. This view is unlikely because the church takes both the bread and the cup (v24-25). Further, the Corinthian church was held accountable for not taking the bread and the cup correctly (v27), implying both were for them.  
Additionally, Paul is quite clear that we share in the blood of Christ (10:16) and this is the blood of the New Covenant (11:25).
4. The Partaker of Spiritual Blessings View - this view states there is one New Covenant for Israel and that the Church partakes of some of the spiritual blessings. This view says that the fulfillment of the New Covenant is for Israel only, but that Christ ratified the New Covenant on the cross and some of the spiritual provisions immediately went into effect: the believer's reception of the indwelling Spirit (2 Cor 3:6ff; Rom 8:9), forgiveness of sins (Heb 10:15-18), and intimate personal relationship with God (John 14:23) are all based on the New Covenant. This view makes the most sense of Jesus's statements about the New Covenant in the Last Passover (Matt 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20). Believers are sharers in the blood of Christ (1 Cor 10:16), and this blood is the blood of the New Covenant (1 Cor 11:25). The New Covenant is the new and better covenant that was ratified on the cross (Heb 7:18-22; 8:6-13; 9:15-28; 10:11-18,19-25). The New Covenant replaces the Mosaic Covenant as shown by their juxtaposition (2 Cor 3:5-18). Yet the New Covenant will not be fulfilled to Israel and Judah until the Second Coming (Rom 11:26-27).

— See **The New Covenant and the Church** in [Covenant, New](#). Also see: [Woods-What is the Relationship of the Church to the New Covenant?](#)

**26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.**

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

**26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.**

- "For" - *gar* (causal), the reason we take the Lord's Supper

- "...proclaim the Lord's death" - the reason: to provide a dramatization of the gospel, with an audio and visual presentation of the death of Christ and its significance

- "...until He comes" - Christians are to observe the ordinance of Communion until the Lord comes for us at the Rapture
- When we return to earth with Him at the Second Coming, we will drink the fruit of the vine with Him in the kingdom (Matt 26:29)
- The Lord's Supper is not only a memorial celebration looking back to Jesus' first advent; it is also an anticipatory celebration looking forward to His second advent
- When the Lord returns to set up His kingdom, He will establish a new form of worship that will include the offering of certain animal sacrifices (Ezek 40-46)
- These will be similar to the animal sacrifices the Jews offered under the Old Covenant, but since Jesus has already made the final sacrifice, these animal offerings will evidently be for memorial purposes, and entirely for worship, not for the expiation of sin

*The Communion is not supposed to be a time of spiritual autopsy and grief, even though confession of sin is important. It should be a time of thanksgiving and joyful anticipation of seeing the Lord! [Wiersbe]*

*It is interesting that nowhere are we commanded to remember the Lord's birthday [though it is not wrong to do so], but we are requested and commanded that those who are His own should remember His deathday. [J.V. McGee]*

(B) Corrections (11:27-34)

- (a) Do not partake in an unworthy manner (11:27-32)

**27 Therefore** whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord **inanunworthyway**, shall be **guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord**.

**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.

**27** Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks from the cup in an unworthy manner will be held responsible for the Lord's body and blood.

**27** Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

- "Therefore" - Paul now draws a logical conclusion from the theological truths he just provided (v17-26)

- "...in an unworthy way" - *anaxiōs*, a careless manner; any manner that is not consistent with the significance of Christ's death; everyone who partakes should do so appropriately, in view of the significance of the Lord's death.

— The divisions that existed in their church (v18), plus their selfish behavior (v21), constituted the unworthiness of the manner which the Corinthians were observing the Lord's Supper

- The careless manner is described in v20-24 where the rich believers were separating from the poor believers by eating their own food while the poor went hungry. Others were drunk. This is why Paul says that it would be better if they did not even have these "love feasts" or partake of the Lord's Supper at all (v17). They had taken something sacred and turned it into something profane.
- "...guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord" - guilty of putting the Son of God to open shame and treating Him with insolence (Cf. Acts 7:52; Heb 6:6; 10:29)

28 But a person must **examinehimself**, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

28 But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

28 A person must examine himself and then eat the bread and drink from the cup,

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

- "...examine himself" - *dokimazō*, test themselves to make sure they are taking the Lord's Supper in a manner which did not slight or humiliate other believers, but rather recognized the importance and equality of all believers in Christ

— The purpose for examining oneself is to determine if we are partaking in a worthy manner or an unworthy manner; in context, this refers to whether we are appreciative of the significance of the Lord's body and blood

— Either we examine ourselves, or the Lord will have to examine and judge us for failing to participate worthily (v31)

— The Corinthians neglected examining themselves and were instead experts at examining everyone else

An unusually sensitive Christian might hesitate to participate, after thoughtful reflection, feeling overwhelmed by their personal unworthiness. However, *no one* is worthy to partake. If someone thinks he is, he is not. We are only worthy because Christ has made us worthy. We ought to partake *feeling unworthy* to do so. This attitude is part of what it means to partake in a worthy manner.

The frequent observance of the Lord's Supper—in a way that takes us back to the Cross—is one of the most powerful and effective motivators for living the Christian life.

29 For the one who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not **properly recognizethebody**.

29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.

29 because whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

- Partaking in communion in a careless manner results in divine judgment

- "...properly recognize" - *diakrinō*, judgment is inevitable at communion: either we judge ourselves (*diakrinō*) before we partake, and participate in a worthy manner; otherwise, God will judge (*krina*) us (Cf. Ps 15:1)

- "...the body" - double sense: the Lord's physical body on the Cross and the body of Christ, the Church

— We must properly recognize "the body" of Christ offered on the cross, understanding the significance of Christ's death. At the same time, we must recognize "the body" of Christ portrayed metaphorically as the Church.

— The main issue in Corinth was that the richer members did not view the poorer members as equal members of the body of Christ, purchased by Christ on the cross

30 **For this reason** many among you **are weak** and sick, and a number are **asleep**.

30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

30 That's why so many of you are weak and sick and a considerable number are dying.

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

- "For this reason" - see v27; it was for these reasons that Jesus had moved into the Corinthian church with maximum divine discipline and brought some of these believers to the point of death

-- The consequences (judgment) for taking the Lord's Supper in a careless manner were already at work in Corinth

-- God had the same problem with Belshazzar in Dan 5, who used the holy vessels from the temple in Jerusalem in a profane manner

- "...weak" - *asthenēs*, impotent, feeble, without strength

- "...asleep" - *koimaō*, refers to physical death. The fact that some believers in the Corinthian church died because they took communion in a profane manner demonstrates that not all believers finish their lives on a high note. Elsewhere this is described as "a sin unto death" (Acts 5:5,10; 1 John 5:16).

-- These believers received maximum divine discipline from God, but Paul never says they lost their salvation or were never really saved to begin with because God unleashed maximum divine discipline upon them. These believers are in heaven.

- God was judging "many" in Corinth with weakness, sickness, and even premature death for their drunk and disorderly conduct at the Lord's Table. They were not judging

(examining) themselves (v28) for their sin of selfish living (v21) and careless participation in the communion service, so He was doing it for them.

— The Lord moved in this congregation with “maximum divine discipline.” This verse makes it clear that sometimes sin can lead to physical sickness, disease, or even death, depending on how God sovereignly decides to mete out His temporal judgment.

- How can Calvinism's doctrine of perseverance of the saints explain this passage? These are clearly believers, who were under God's maximum divine discipline because they were taking communion in a profane manner. They didn't "finish well" or "persevere" in good works, yet Paul never says they weren't truly saved or lost their salvation.

31 But if **wejudged** ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

31 But if we judged ourselves correctly, we would not be judged.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

- “...we judged” - *diakrinō* distinguishing between what we are and what we ought to be, so that we should not be judged

— We must self-examine ourselves (v28), not become a self-appointed judge of others.

Failure to do so could result in God's judgment of physical illness—or even, in extreme cases, premature physical death.

32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

32 Now, while we are being judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so we won't be condemned along with the world.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

- We should regard this type of punishment by God as discipline (*paideia*, child training, Cf. Heb 12:5-11)

— This “punishment” is not eternal condemnation, but rather premature death and/or the Lord's disapproval at the Judgment Seat of Christ (3:15; 5:5)

— If we examined/judged (*diakrinō*) ourselves, we would not come under divine judgment (*krino*); when God judges us (*krino*), it is to correct us so we “should not be condemned” (*katakrino*) “with the world”

(b) Wait for others (11:33-34)

**33 So then**, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, **wait for one another**.

33 So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

33 Therefore, my brothers, when you gather to eat, wait for each other.

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

- "So then" - draws an application from the instruction in this passage

- "...wait for one another" - the key application; the rich were arriving to the love feast early and eating their own food before the poor arrived. Simply waiting for them would demonstrate respect, humility, equality, and unity.

34 If anyone is hungry, have him eat at home, so that you do not come together for judgment. As to **the remaining matters**, I will give instructions when I come.

34 If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

34 If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you gather it may not bring judgment on you. And when I come I will give instructions concerning the other matters.

34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

- If they were too hungry to wait before eating, they should "pre-eat" something at home before they came to the service; otherwise, their unloving selfishness may result in God's judgment

— It is very important to the Lord that we put the needs of others before our own needs (Cf. 9:22; 10:33; Mark 10:45; Rom 15:2; Gal 1:10; Phil 2:3)

- "...the remaining matters" - there appear to be other matters of how the Corinthians were behaving that Paul chose not to comment on in this letter; he planned to address these issues when he visited Corinth again (Cf. 4:18-21; 16:2-3,5-7)