

THE LORD'S TABLE AND THE TABLE OF DEVILS

TEXT: I CORINTHIANS 10:14-22

INTRODUCTION:

1. "Flee idolatry" (10:14). Corinth was an idolatrous city. Exodus 20:4 (second commandment) says, "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image."
2. Our Lord said to the woman at the well, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24).
3. Jesus told her that the proper approach to God is spiritual, not physical. We do not need pictures or statues or idols or icons to assist us in our worship of God. These idols do not bring us closer to God (just the opposite).
4. The nature of God is spiritual, not material. Therefore material representation of God is wrong and cannot help us in our worship. Worshipping idols proves that the idolater neither knows nor understands God.
5. This is the main difference between a Baptist church and a Roman Catholic church. I have been told many times that Roman Catholics worship the same God we do.
6. While that may be technically true, one can worship the true God in the wrong way. For example, when Moses was up on Mount Sinai, the children of Israel made a golden calf and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exodus 32:8).
7. In verse 15, the apostle Paul says, "I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say." Albert Barnes says this means, "I speak to men qualified to understand the subject."
8. This is what "wise men" should know: Those who worship idols are, wittingly or unwittingly, being misled by demons, and in fact, could actually be worshipping demons.
9. Deuteronomy 32:17 says, "They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not."
10. Leviticus 17:7 says, "And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto devils, after whom they have gone a whoring."
11. Psalm 106:36, 37 says, "And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils."
12. There is a contrast in I Corinthians 10:21 – the Lord's table, and the table of devils.

I. THE LORD'S TABLE IS ONLY FOR BELIEVERS

1. The Lord's Supper is "the cup of blessing" (10:16) for believers. But it is not for unbelievers.
2. The cup (10:16, 21) represents our Lord's shed blood. Those who reject His blood atonement should not participate.
3. First Corinthians 11:29 says, "For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."
4. If an unsaved person or a backslidden Christian takes the Lord's Supper, judgment will surely follow, and this could include sickness and death (11:30).
5. H.A. Ironside said, "No one has part nor lot in this ordinance, no one ought ever to participate in it, who does not put his or her trust in the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. I cannot understand how anyone who denies the atoning efficacy of the blood of Jesus could even desire to take part in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and yet I am told that in places where Christ's atoning death is scouted, in places where men ridicule the thought of salvation by His precious blood, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is still observed in a formal way. It seems to me that is an insult to God, it is an insult to the blessed Savior whose death is commemorated in this service. Christ died for sinners, poured out His blood to redeem us to God, therefore from time to time we come together to remember Him in the drinking of the cup" (*I Corinthians*).
6. "The bread which we break" (10:16) represents our Lord's broken body (cf. 11:23, 24).
7. "Communion" (10:16) means "fellowship" or "partnership" (cf. 10:17). We break bread at the Lord's table because we have all been saved through our Lord's substitutionary death on the cross.

II. THE LORD'S TABLE SIGNIFIES FELLOWSHIP WITH CHRIST

1. The word "fellowship" is usually used in reference to Christian fellowship, but the emphasis should be on our fellowship with Christ (cf. I Cor. 1:9; I John 1:3-7). This is the basis for Christian fellowship.
2. Philippians 2:1 refers to the "fellowship of the Spirit."
3. The communion table reminds us of our oneness in Christ (10:17).

The communion table reminds us of our need to be separated from worldly things that displease the Lord. We are to "have no fellowship with the

unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Ephesians 5:11).

“Behold Israel...” (10:18). The Jews who partook of the same sacrifices of the altar were regarded as being one people, and as worshipping one God. And, if they partook of the sacrifices offered to idols, they would be regarded as being fellow-worshippers of the idols that were worshipped.

When Paul says, “after the flesh” (10:18), he is referring to Jews who were the natural descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Paul uses the same term in Romans 4:1. “What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?”

They were all “partakers of the altar” (10:18). They all worshipped the same God. They are all united in their worship, and Paul points out that in like manner, if people participate in the sacrifices offered to idols, and join with their worshippers in their temples, they will be “justly regarded as united with them in their worship, and partaking with them in their abominations” (*Barnes’ Notes*).

8. Back in I Corinthians 8:4, Paul has already said, “we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is none other God but one.” But though idols are nothing but pieces of stone or wood, the devils behind them are very real (10:19-21).

III. THE TABLE OF DEVILS

1. In some strange, mysterious way, idolatry attracts demons, and idolatry is a form of demon-worship (10:19-21).
2. “Or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is any thing?” (10:19b). The meat which is offered to idols does not differ from meat which is not offered, and the mere act of offering it to an idol does not change anything.
3. Nevertheless, there is a good reason why Christians should not partake of these sacrifices, because they have been really offered to devils (10:20).
4. Barnes has a lengthy explanation regarding the pagan demon-worship: “They sacrifice to devils (demons)” (10:20). The heathens used the word “demon” either in a good or a bad sense. They applied it commonly to spirits that were supposed to be inferior to the supreme God: genies; attending spirits; or, as they called them, divinities, or gods. A part were in their view good, and a part evil. Socrates supposed that such a *demon* or genie attended him, who suggested good thoughts to him, and who was his protector. As these beings

were good and well disposed, it was not supposed to be necessary to offer any sacrifices in order to appease them. But a large portion of those genies were supposed to be evil and wicked, and hence the necessity of attempting to appease their wrath by sacrifices and bloody-offerings. It was therefore true, as the apostle says, that the sacrifices of the heathen were made, usually at least, to devils or to evil spirits. Many of these spirits were supposed to be the souls of departed men, who were entitled to worship after death, having been enrolled among the gods. The word "demons," among the Jews, was employed only to designate evil beings...In the New Testament the word is uniformly used also to denote evil spirits, and those usually which had taken possession of men in the time of the Saviour (Matthew 7:22; 9:33, 34; 10:8; 11:18; Mark 1:34, 39).

5. "I would not that ye should have fellowship with devils" (10:20b). Barnes said, "I would not that you should have communion with demons. I would not have you...join in worship to them; or partake of the spirit by which they are supposed to be actuated -- a spirit that would be promoted by attendance on their worship. I would not have you, therefore, join in a mode of worship where such beings are acknowledged. You are solemnly dedicated to Christ; and the homage due to him should not be divided with homage offered to devils, or to imaginary beings."
6. "Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils (demons)" (10:21) and still be a good Christian. It was not fit; it was not right; it was not decent.
7. "Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?" (10:22).
8. This is the only time we see this expression in the New Testament but it is found often in the Old Testament. Deuteronomy 32:21 says, "They have moved me to jealousy with that which is not God; they have provoked me to anger with their vanities."
9. First Kings 14:22 says, "And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed."
10. First Kings 16:26 says Israel provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities.
11. First Kings 16:33 says King Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him.
12. Second Kings 17:11 says the children of Israel wrought wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger.
13. Second Kings 23:19 says the idolatry of the kings of Israel provoked the LORD to anger.
14. Ezekiel 8:3 refers to "the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy."
15. Psalm 78:58 says, "For they provoked him to anger with their high places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images."

16. All of these Scriptures refer to the second commandment, which forbids idolatry. Exodus 20:5 says, “for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God.”
17. “Are we stronger than he?” (10:22b). Barnes says, “This is given as a reason why we should not provoke His displeasure. We cannot contend successfully with Him; and it is therefore madness and folly to contend with God, or to expose ourselves to the effects of His indignation.”

CONCLUSION:

1. Let me summarize by saying that this passage does not contain any detailed information regarding the Lord’s Supper. Detailed instructions are given in chapter 11.
2. Here in this passage, the apostle Paul is using the Lord’s Supper as an illustration. When a Christian partakes of the cup and the bread at the Lord’s table, he is, in a spiritual way, having fellowship with the body and blood of Christ.
3. This is the idea behind the word “communion” (10:16). The word means, “fellowship, association, joint participation.”
4. Therefore, it is inappropriate to partake of the devil’s food at the same time (10:21). “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (II Corinthians 6:14).
6. This provokes the Lord to jealousy (10:22).