

The Lord's Table

Bud Morris

The Lord Jesus instituted His supper at a borrowed table in a guest room. He dictated the character of the place where it was to be eaten when He directed His disciples to go and prepare the Passover. He expressed an intense desire to eat that feast with the apostles before He suffered. He initiated the Breaking of Bread with the loaf and cup of the Passover feast that had long anticipated His death. He presided over the table as His own.

The term, "**The Lord's table**," occurs only once in the Scriptures:

*Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. I speak as to wise men; you judge what I say. Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. Look at the nation Israel; are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers in the altar? What do I mean, then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything? No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; **you cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.** Or do we provoke the lord to jealousy?*

I Corinthians 10:14-22

This passage reasons that Christians partaking of the emblems of the Lord's supper together are sharing in the body and blood of Christ. They express their unity as one body by all partaking of the same loaf. Just as partaking of Jewish sacrifices identified the participants with the entire Old Testament system, the eating of things sacrificed to idols identified those who ate them as idolatrous sacrifices with the demonic systems represented by those idols. It would be contradictory to partake of both the Lord's table and the idolatrous tables of demons. Anything that would share the preeminence of Christ with the unholy claims of demons would indeed provoke the Lord to jealousy. Christianity and idolatry are mutually exclusive of each other.

Although I Corinthians 10:21 refers to the Lord's table, it does not define it. It implies that the church at Corinth partook of the Lord's supper at the Lord's table; but does not directly imply any official capacity in either term. It contrasts the Lord's table with the table of demons, where things sacrificed to idols were eaten. The logical deduction from the passage is that the Lord's table is wherever the Lord's supper is eaten.

Even though this is the only reference to the Lord's table in the Word of God, a tremendous amount of assumptive doctrine has been developed on the subject. Certain assumptions may be innocuously inferred from Scriptures like the Lord's instructions that His supper be prepared in a large furnished upper room, because they are consistent with the rest of the Scriptures:

The **large** room could easily imply that there is plenty of room for each one of the Lord's people at His table:

Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

Romans 15:7

The **upper** room could imply that those who sit at the Lord's table are to live on a moral plane above that of the world:

Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.

I Corinthians 5:13

Whether or not the large upper room attributes these features to Lord's table, the supporting Scriptures stand on their own merit. Either way, both of these principles of Christian gathering should be conceded, although legitimate disagreement may arise to whatever extent that they might conflict with each other.

I am personally comfortable in going a step further:

The already **furnished** room implies to me that any earnest group of Christians may lay claim the Lord's table without procuring the authorization of any other group that may presume to hold a "Franchise" on it:

Where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst. Matthew 18:20

But I cannot absolutely prove this postulate from the Scriptures. I believe that Matthew 18:20 supports this view because I interpret the "Where" in the sense of "Wherever." Those who presume an exclusive claim on the Lord's table assume that the "Where" designates the specific ecclesiastical position they hold as furnished by the Lord Himself. And both viewpoints assume a reasonable correlation between Matthew 18:20 and the Lord's table that cannot be positively asserted from the context!

It may be argued that those not conducting the Lord's supper in reasonable accord with New Testament principles cannot possibly be doing so at the Lord's Table. Schism, selfishness, and drunkenness so prevailed at the Breaking of Bread at Corinth that they had to be told, "*When you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's supper.*" (*I Corinthians 11:20*). Yet the Corinthian assembly was acknowledged as such by God (*I Corinthians 1:2*), and is the only church specifically linked to the Lord's table. We do well, then, to partake of the Lord's supper according to the Scriptural pattern, leaving the judgment of places we disagree with to the Lord. We do not have to participate in their error.

Much of the doctrine circulated about the Lord's table is totally assumptive, and involves conflicting claims on it by squabbling factions within the body of Christ. The very feast explicitly said to express the unity of the body is made a divisive element between brethren who differ on little else than who holds the title to the Lord's table. The only Book of the Bible that refers to the Lord's table strongly condemns schism among His people, be they rallied around a gifted leader, an Apostle, or even the Lord's name. Let us be sure, then, that the assumptive doctrines we ascribe to the Lord's table do not contribute to an unscriptural schism in the body of Christ. If our doctrines deny any of the Lord's children **who are not excluded by the Scriptures** a seat with us at His table, we've made some wrong assumptions!