

First Corinthians 11:17-34

In 1 Corinthians 10:17 Paul told the Corinthians they all eat of the one loaf and together they form the one body of Jesus.

Here Paul returns to this idea as foundational for properly celebrating the Lord's Supper.

Instead the Corinthians have divided themselves along social lines thus allowing the unity of the body of Christ to be destroyed by temporal social standing.

1 Corinthians 10:17 and 11:17-34 are the only places Paul discusses the Lord's Supper.

The problem in these verses is clearly between the church members who are wealthy separating from the church members who are considered poor or lower class.

Other ideas used to explain the problem that Paul is addressing here are:

1. The purpose of the Lord's Supper was being violated by allowing it to become a common, daily type of meal.
2. An early form of Gnostics who considered the physical world to be evil applied this doctrine to the Lord's Supper and rejected the concept of the bread representing Jesus' body.
3. The super spiritual believers who have been a problem in areas such as marriage, women in the church and spiritual gifts had super charged the bread and the cup into having spiritual or magical powers. This led these super spiritual believers to spend most of the meal in an individual state of spiritual isolation.
4. But, the best explanation of what is going on here is still the believers who have wealth are being inconsiderate and acting independently of those with less worldly wealth and standing.

The ancient world, including Corinth, was familiar with cult meals that honored a god.

It is likely that the Lord's Supper was to carry the meaning of the Last Supper in the Upper Room to each new church but was culturally similar to the cultic meals the people were accustomed to.

The Corinthians had continued to practice the meal but lost the meaning and purpose of the bread and the cup.

Our modern churches continue the bread and the cup but have lost the practice of the meal itself.

Breakdown of 11:17-34:

1. 17-22 the rich are abusing the poor
2. 23-26 the original words of Jesus with emphasis on "remembrance" of him are restated by Paul
3. 27-32 the Paul reminds them to remember Jesus and recognize the bread and cup.
4. 33-34 Paul returns to saying they should receive each other which is the recognition of the unity of the church, which is another form of the body of Christ along with the bread.

One of the themes of these sections is the abuse of the "body of Christ" which is abuse of Christ himself:

1. In 17-22 the church members themselves, which is the body of Christ, were being divided and neglected.
2. In 27-32 the "bread", which is used to remember the physical body of Christ, was not correctly being discerned.
3. Ultimately these verses are about the Corinthians abusing or incorrectly discerning Christ himself when they mistreat the church and the bread.

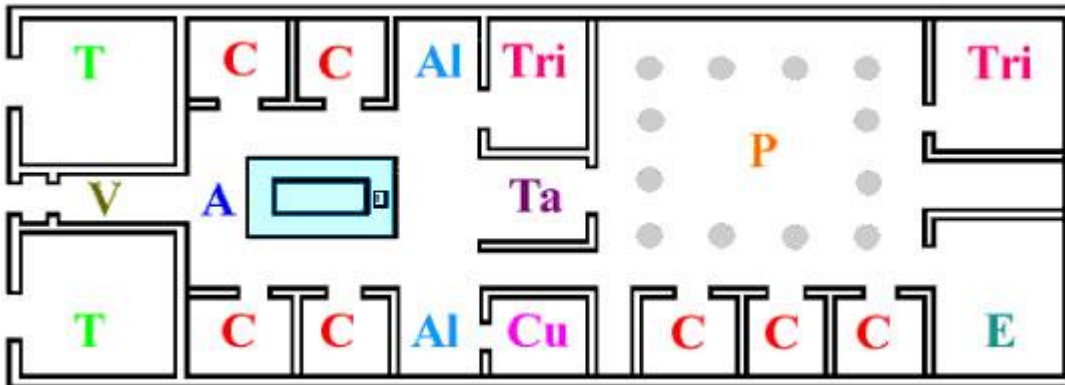
The purpose of the Lord's Supper was to eat together with other members of the body of Christ in unity while they focused on the historical work of Jesus on the cross in his body. The work of Christ has brought these believers life and the hope of his eschatological return.

The Meal in Corinth

1. The church would gather in a home. This home would most likely be the home of a wealthy person since it would provide the space and the provisions.
2. The dining room, called the triclinium, averaged to be about 36 square feet or about 18 feet x 18 feet. If they reclined around the three sided table called a triclinium there would be room for about 9-12 people in this room.

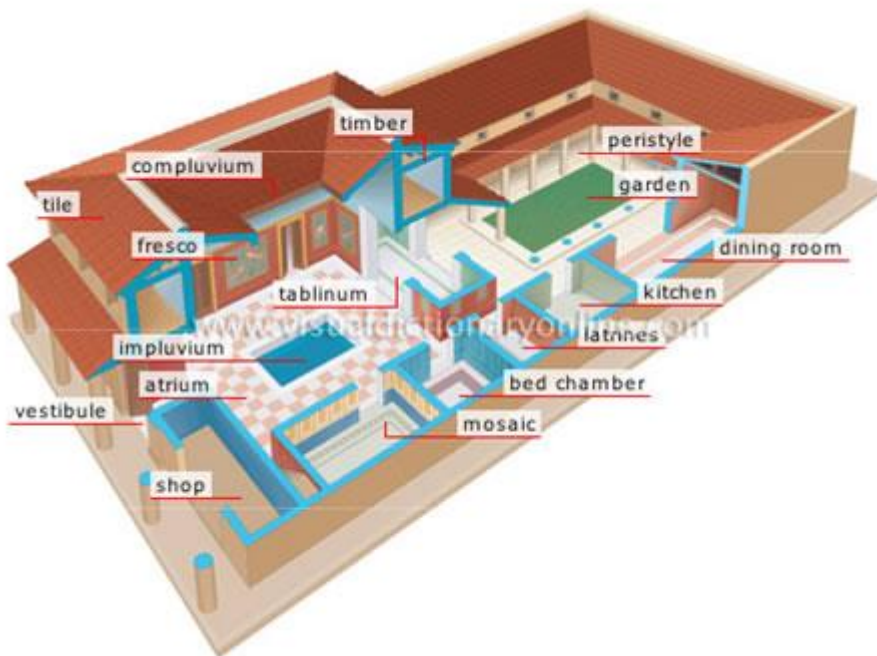
3. Another room that would have been used in a situation called the atrium. The Atrium was a larger room similar to a courtyard in the house and was used as an entry way. This usually held about 30-50 people.

Look at samples of each room at this site:
<http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/corinthians/house.stm>

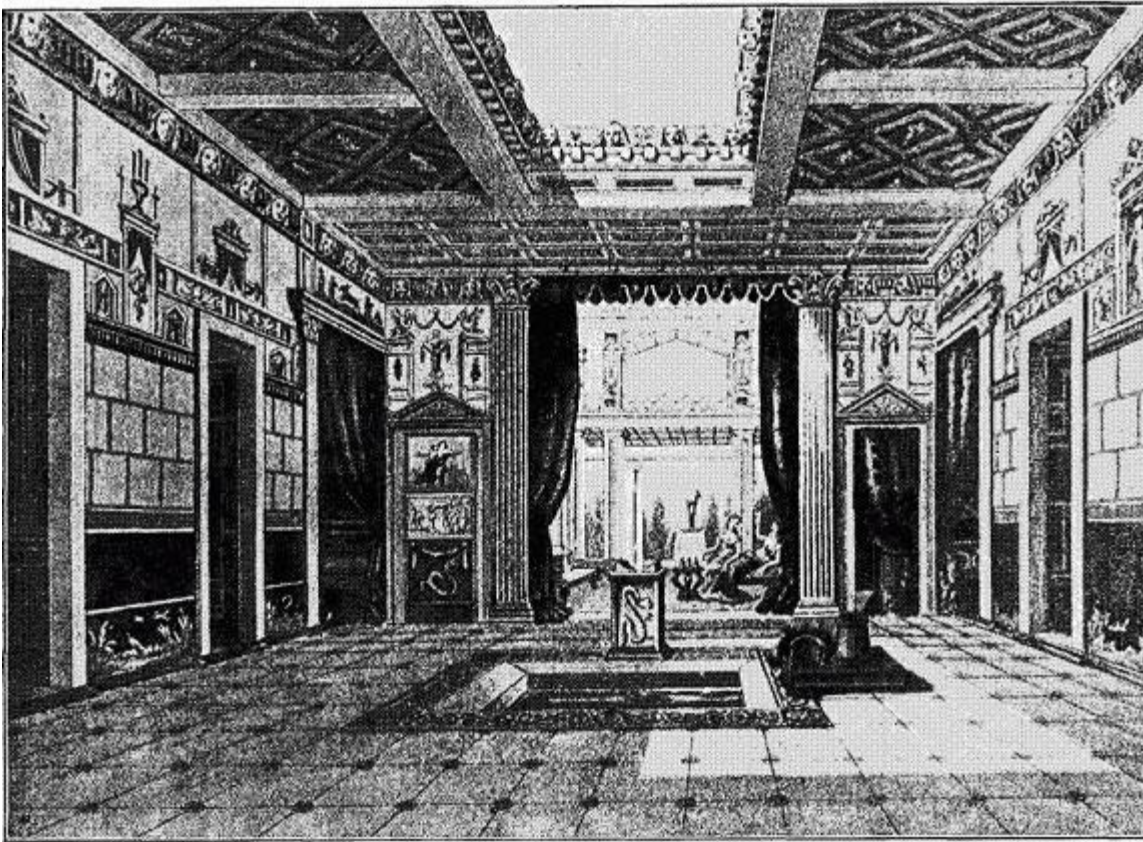


Sample Plan of a Roman House plan of Domus

A	atrium	formal entrance hall
Al	ala	"wings" opening from atrium
C	cubiculum	small room; bedroom
Cu	culina	kitchen
E	exedra	garden room
P	peristylum	colonnaded garden
T	taberna	shop
Ta	tablinum	office; study
Tri	triclinium	dining room
V	vestibulum	entrance hall



<http://visual.merriam-webster.com/arts-architecture/architecture/roman-house.php>



INTERIOR OF AN ANCIENT ROMAN HOUSE.

Said to have been that of Sallust.

PERIOD: B.C. 20 TO A.D. 20.

Collection of Floor Plans and Houses of Romans

<https://oncourse.iu.edu/access/content/user/leach/www/c414/houses.html>

The Romans were a society based on social class. It would not be expected in other gatherings to mix the social classes together, but instead to gather, sit and eat in your appropriate social class. This practice continued into the Corinthian's celebration of the Lord's Supper. Their problem was they continued to recognize social classes from the temporal world but failed to recognize the Body of Christ, the church, as the eschatological people. This was the new order for the new age.

It is important to note here that Paul does not reject the social classes nor does he tell the people to do away with social classes. Paul does not expect the rich to give their possessions to the poor so that the rich themselves are poor or so that all may be equal. Paul does expect the rich and the poor to be mature enough to recognize that they belong to the body of Christ and are a people of the next age.

First Corinthians 11:22-34

11:22

“Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!”

Why Paul will not praise them or except what they are doing is found in the next verse.

11:23

The reason Paul will not accept their behavior is they know what the tradition of the Lord’s Supper means and they know how they should behave.

“received” (παρελαβον) (parelabon)– it means “to receive.” This is the word that translates the Hebrew word “quibble” which means to receive tradition which has been passed on.”

“passed on” (παρεδωχα) (paredox)– It means “teaching”. It is used in 1 Cor. 11:2. This is another technical term in Judaism for the oral transmission or religious instruction. It is being used to refer to traditions that Paul received and passed down orally. Paul did not receive this information by reading.

“from” (απο) - means “from”. This word indicates that Paul did not receive this information directly from the Lord.

In this verse Paul would be saying “I received a tradition that goes back to the Lord that I passed on to you.”

Jesus did not tell or reveal this to Paul but someone, probably one or more of the other apostles, told it to Paul. The apostles had received it from the Lord on the night of the Last Supper.

The phrase **“on the night he was betrayed”** are probably part of the oral tradition that helps put the following words in context. They were probably not something Paul added but something that came along.

11:24

“This is my body”

1. The use of this phrase is in the context of Semitic imagery. It is completely out of context for the disciples at the Last Supper to have thought that the bread Jesus passed around the table had turned into his flesh. They could not have understood that when he said “This is my body” that somehow the bread had replaced Jesus’ body or had miraculously somehow become an extension of his body. Other examples are:
 - a. 1 Cor. 10:4 – “the rock was Christ”
 - b. Gal. 4:25 – “Hagar is Mount Sinai”
2. The focus was that his physical body was going to be handed over to death as a sacrificial offering both:
 - a. for them
 - b. instead of them (**Isaiah 53:12**)

“Which is for you” is found in Luke’s account and is used by Paul.

There are two forms of this tradition that have been handed down to us:

1. Mark (Mark 14:22) and Matthew (Matt. 26:26)
 - a. Matthew adds “eat” as imperative or the voice of command
 - b. Matthew adds “for the forgiveness of sins.”
2. Luke (Luke 22:19) and Paul (1 Cor. 11:23)

- a. Luke and Paul use the verb “give thanks” instead of “bless”
- b. Eating the bread is not imperative
- c. “which is for you; this do in my remembrance” is added to the bread
- d. have the phrase “after supper”
- e. Do not have the blessing of the cup
- f. Does not mention them all drinking from the cup
- g. The cup saying is different: “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” or “This is my blood of the covenant.”

Paul quotes Jesus as saying “do this in remembrance of me”. This refers to remembering what his body was for. It was a sacrifice for sins.

Hebrews 10:19-21 – “living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body.”

11:25

The bread and cup sayings are separated by the meal. One was at the beginning of the meal and the other at the end.

- “This cup is the new covenant, in my blood” 1 Cor. 11:25
- “This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you.” Luke 22:20
- “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.” Matt.26:27
- “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many” Mark 14:24

11:26

“**For**” returns us to Paul’s words to the Corinthians.

Paul now gives his reason for quoting the tradition he handed down to the Corinthians.

The Corinthians remember the words and they still have the Supper.

The Corinthians have forgotten the meaning and the purpose for having the remembrance meal.

What is the purpose? What is the meaning? Paul answers that in 1 Cor. 11:26:

“Proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”

The focus of the meal is the Lord’s death since “death” is in the emphatic position.

It literally says: “the **death** of the Lord you proclaim until he comes.”

The Corinthians new spiritual condition or their lack of maturity have prevented them from recognizing the two features of the Lords’ Supper:

1. The Death of the Lord (first coming)
2. The Return of the Lord (second coming)

Why are these two things important? Many reasons, but one is we are living our lives between these two events.

The Greek is the word “proclaim” is “καταγγελλετε” (kataggellete) it means “proclaim” and is used with the idea of making a solemn announcement by word of mouth.

1. The verb is indicative not imperative.
2. The Lord’s Supper is a visual sermon or an object lesson that proclaims the message.

11:27

Partaking of the meal in an unworthy manner is now the theme.

“Unworthy” is “ἀναξίως” (anazios) and it means “unworthily or not in accordance with their value.” An example of eating the meal in an “unworthy” (or “not in accordance with the value” or purpose of the meal) manner would be:

1. to eat for selfish reasons
2. to use the meal as social entertainment
3. to simply fail to recognize the Lord’s death
4. to fail to remember his coming return
5. to have sin in your heart such as lack of love towards others, etc.

“Guilty” is a technical legal term to express liability. In its construction here it can mean to the person sinned against or the crime itself. It can mean:

1. Guilty of sinning against the Lord . . . desecrating the Lord’s Table. This puts some sacred nature on the elements and the meal itself. Paul was not concerned with the actual bread and cup but with how they were treating each other.
2. Held liable for the Lord’s death. Paul would then be saying that the purpose of the meal was to proclaim the Lord’s death and return. By losing this meaning the Corinthians are facing the same guilt as those responsible for his death (body and blood) the first time. To be “guilty of his body and blood” means they are “liable for his death”

ενοχος	σται	του	σωματος	και	του	αιματος	το	κυριου
Guilty	will be	of the	body	and	of the	blood	of the	Lord.

Partaking of the meal in an unworthy manner then is equal to sharing the guilt of those who put him to death.

Dishonoring the symbol of the king (example: burning the flag) is an act of dishonoring the one the symbol represents.

“η” (“a”) “or” instead of “και” (“kai”) “and” Since the bread and cup were passed at different times during the meal you could drink or eat one in an unworthy manner without eating or drinking the other in an unworthy manner.

“cup of the Lord” is the cup of fellowship with the Lord. Consider 1 Cor. 10:21 – “cup of demons” which indicates you are fellowshiping and drinking in the presence of demons.

11:28

To avoid dishonoring the symbol a man should make sure he is who he should be. Are you in the right state of mind and are you acting in an acceptable manner that is worthy of claiming to be in right standing with the king?

“Examine” is δοκιμαζω (dokimazo). It means to examine and to approve after examination. This word refers to testing metals of a coin to see if they are genuine.

In this case when δοκιμαζω or is applied to the believer in Jesus Christ that believer should examine himself to see if he is what he says he is. Are you a Christian? Then examine yourself to see if you really are a Christian.

After “dokimazo” there are two appropriate responses:

1. Yes, you are approved in your thoughts and actions.
2. No, you are not but you have made corrections before you eat and drink.

Notice the reference to “eats the bread” and not to “eats the body.” Another verse that undermines the concept of transubstantiation.

11:29

“Recognizing the body” means not to recognize his death.
“Recognizing” is the word “dokimazo” again.

This is not a reference to the bread but to what the bread represents – the death of the Lord.

This verse is warning against:

1. Turning the supper into a normal, common meal
2. Eating and drinking without “dokimazo” (eating without examining yourself would be eating unworthily.)
3. Not judging yourself correctly.

11:30

Spiritual problems do lead to physical problems in many cases (Not all though.) Because of their poor spiritual condition and failure to develop spiritual understanding the Corinthians had suffered illnesses and death.

Even in a church such as Corinth that had the gift of healings (12:9, 28) the members were still sick and dying. In this case because of their failure to recognize the Lord’s body and his death.

11:31 – We can judge ourselves

“If” is “εἰ” with the indicative. This form is used for a contrary to fact conditional clause. Or, the second class condition “if and it is not true.”

“judged ourselves” has the verb “judged” in imperfect tense which means we should make judging ourselves a continuous practice. This refers back to 11:28 where it is said “a man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup.” So the judging of ourselves is the “δοκιμοζω” of examining of ourselves to see if we are what we should be.

If we habitually tested ourselves and came to a correct conclusion we would not need to be judged by the Lord.

Notice Paul says “if we judged ourselves”. Paul does not say “if you Corinthians judged yourselves”

11:32 – God can judge us

Even judgment by the Lord is an act of love and grace for he is disciplining us so we will not be condemned with the world.

Hebrews 12:4-13 – endure hardship as discipline

11:33

“So then” is “'οστε” (hoste) and introduces the logical conclusion of Paul’s criticism of the Corinthian’s failure to practice the Lord’s Supper correctly.

This verse indicates what the main problem was that was violating the Lord's Supper in Corinth:

1. There is no love or fellowship taking place among the believers.
2. This would indicate there is no love or fellowship between the individual believers and the Lord.

"wait for each other" is the correct translation and the usual meaning of the Greek verb. (Heb. 10:13; 11:10; James 5:7)

Notice:

1. It does not say wait for the ordained priest or wait for the consecration by the pastor.
2. No one seems to be receiving special bread from a church hierarchy or church officer.

11:34

If you are hungry eat at home.

The purpose of the Lord's Supper is not to fill you up but to remember the Lord's death until he returns. It is important we evaluate our purpose, motive and focus at the Lord's Supper.

There are other items of doctrine and practice concerning the Lord's Supper that Paul will explain and elaborate on when he arrives in Corinth.

The Lord's Supper was at this time similar to a cultic meal or Passover meal. Paul here seems to direct it more towards a ceremony.