Memorial Observance Opinions
Local Decisions Of Consequence

by David Lee Burris

SEQUENCE > FREQUENCY > PARTICIPATION

The Order of the Lord's Supper

DAVE MILLER, Ph.D.

ALLEGED DISCREPANCIESDOCTRINAL MATTERS LORD'S SUPPERWORSHIP

In Matthew (26:26-27) and Mark's (14:22-23) record of the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus blessed the bread first and then the cup. However, Luke seems to give the opposite order with the cup being mentioned first (22:17-19). Is this difference a discrepancy in which the inspired writers contradict each other?

It is certainly the case that Jesus only instituted the Lord's Supper **one time**. He either blessed the bread first or He blessed the cup first. He did not do it both ways. So, can we make sense of the text in such a way that the Bible is not discredited, recognizing that Jesus did not do it both ways? On that lone night so long ago, when He instituted the Lord's Supper, which way did He do it? Bread then cup, or cup then bread?

It is clearly the case that the Bible writers do not always claim to be representing a particular event in its chronological sequence. Luke could have easily been treating the Passover and Lord's Supper as an incident topically. In such a case, no contradiction would exist. However, in this instance, a different explanation presents itself.

Read carefully Luke's reporting of the event:

Then came the Day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover must be killed. And He sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat." ...When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God." Then He took the cup, and He gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say unto you, I will not drink the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in membrance of Me." **Likewise He also took the cup after supper**, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (22:7-20).

Observe carefully that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the tail end of the observance of the Jewish Passover. One must be careful to distinguish between the two, particularly since the same emblems were used for both, and the former typifies the latter. The killing of the Passover lamb under Judaism anticipated the death of Jesus, who, in turn, became "our Passover" (1 Corinthians 5:7). Luke, more than Matthew and Mark, demonstrates this close parallelism.

Luke actually has two allusions to "cup"—one is in verse 17 and the other in verse 20. The first "cup" was taken during the Passover and the second "cup" was part of the institution of the Supper. Hence, Luke does not differ from Matthew and Mark in specifying the same order for partaking of the Lord's Supper, i.e., first the bread and then the cup. Luke's use in verse 20 of "likewise" refers back to "He took bread," and "after supper" refers both to the bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper.

This fact is further supported by the Apostle Paul in his recounting of the occasion in 1 Corinthians 11:23-29. Observe the indications of sequence he portrays—

For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you. . . . that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed **took bread**; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in the remembrance of Me." **In the same manner He also took the cup after supper**, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you **eat this bread and drink this cup**, you proclaim the Lord's death til He comes. Therefore, whoever **eats this bread or drinks this cup** of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the **body and blood** of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him **eat of the bread and drink of the cup**. For he who **eats and drinks** unworthily **eats and drinks** judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

Observe that Paul goes out of his way to emphasize the order Jesus instigated—bread/cup and eat/drink. He even clarified that the cup that is part of the Lord's Supper was done "after supper," i.e., after the Passover meal. So, the "cup" of Luke 22:17 was the cup associated with the Passover meal—not the Lord's Supper cup which is noted in verse 20 **after** the Passover meal and **after** the bread of the Lord's Supper.

Another consideration pertains to the fact Luke 22:17-20 constitutes a textual variant. However, the Committee for the UBS Greek text concluded that the cup-bread-cup sequence is authentic based on "the overwhelming preponderance of external evidence." Further, Frederic Kenyon and S.C. Legg offer the only plausible explanation for the existence of variants by noting:

The first cup given to the disciples to divide among themselves should be taken in connection with the previous verse (verse 16) as referring to the eating of the Passover with them at the reunion in Heaven. This is followed by the institution of the Sacrament, to be repeated continually on earth in His memory. This gives intelligible meaning to the whole, while at the same time it is easy to see that it would occasion difficulties of interpretation, which would give rise to the attempts at revision that appear in forms of the shorter version.

Hence, the first allusion to "cup" in verse 17 links back with the eating and drinking of the Passover in verses 15-16, while the second allusion to "cup" refers to the Lord's Supper. Luke agrees with Matthew and Mark that, when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He first took the bread and then took the cup. **There is no contradiction.**

"As Often As" and the Lord's Supper

DAVE MILLER, Ph.D.

DOCTRINAL MATTERS BIBLE INTERPRETATIONDIFFICULT PASSAGESLORD'S SUPPERWORSHIP

Paul's allusion to the institution of the Lord's Supper by Jesus in his remarks to the Corinthians includes these words:

> In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, **as often as** you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For **as often as** you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes (1 Corinthians 11:25-26).

Some have alleged: "The phrase 'as often as' means that the Corinthians were permitted to partake of the Lord's Supper as often as they chose to do so—anytime they decided to without any limitations on the day or the frequency."

This viewpoint is characterized by two flaws: (1) it does not grasp the grammar and context of the passage and (2) it fails to consider everything God says about the matter elsewhere in the New Testament.

The Grammar/Context:

Several phrases/words in the context indicate the notion of **time**: "do this" (vss. 24,25), "as often as" (vss. 25,26), "until" (vs. 26), and "when" (vs. 33). However, none of these words provide any assistance in ascertaining **when** or **how often** the Lord's Supper is to be observed.

Frequency, repetition, and consistency are certainly inherent in the construction of such expressions, but they don't specify the precise parameters of frequency.

Paul's remarks in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 simply don't provide any assistance in ascertaining exact observance, although he indirectly clarifies the matter in chapter 16 where he links another act of worship with that of Sunday. J.W. McGarvey reflects this awareness in his commenting on verse 11:26 — "The constant observance of this feast through the centuries is one of the strongest of the external evidences of the truth of gospel history. By a **chain of weekly links** it will connect the first and second comings of our Lord; after which there will be no further need of symbols."

The contextual focus is on the perpetual nature of the Lord's Supper until the end of earth time. Hence, **when** it's observed, **every time** it is observed, it must be done for the purpose of remembering what Jesus did. God intended for the Supper to be an ongoing, repetitious proclamation to Christians and to outside observers of the reality of what Jesus did on the cross and the fact that He will come again. Findley in paraphrase: "Paul assumes the celebration will be frequent, for he directs, ***however frequent*, it be guided by the Lord's instruction, so as to keep the remembrance of Him unimpaired."**

The Greek word the Holy Spirit selected in both verse 25 and verse 26, rendered "as often as" in the NKJV, is *hosakis*. This relative adverb is used but three times in the New Testament with two of the three occurrences found in these two verses. According to respected Greek grammarian A.T. Robertson, the word is "only used with a notion of **indefinite** repetition."

In his discussion of general temporal clauses, he categorizes the term with other "Conjunctions Meaning 'When.'" Hence, the term provides no insight by which one can ascertain any specificity to the repetition. It most certainly provides no indication that the reader is free to select his own frequency; nor does it exclude a stipulation of frequency that might be indicated elsewhere in the New Testament. Lexicographers provide the following synonymous meanings: **"whenever," "as often as," "so many times as," "how many time" Observe that all these expressions are simply referring to the event occurring without specifying frequency.**

English translations demonstrate that *hosakis* doesn't convey the idea that the Lord's Supper may be taken anytime one chooses or that Sunday is not the singular day God intended. Consider the following chart that summarizes English usage:

Translation	1 Cor. 11:25	1 Cor. 11:26
CEB	Every time you drink	Every time you eat
CEV	Drink this	When you eat
ERV	When you drink	Every time you eat
EXB	When you drink	Every time you eat
GW	Every time you drink	Every time you eat
GNT	Whenever you drink	Every time you eat
ICB	When you drink	Every time you eat
PHILLIPS	Whenever you drink	Whenever you eat
JUB	Each time that ye drink	Each time that you eat
NOG	Every time you drink	Every time you eat
NCB	Whenever you drink	Whenever you eat
NCV	When you drink	Every time you eat
NET	Every time you drink	Every time you eat
NIRV	Every time you drink	When you do this
NIV	Whenever you drink	Whenever you eat

Translation	1 Cor. 11:25	1 Cor. 11:26
NTE	Whenever you drink	Whenever you eat
VOICE	Whenever you drink	Every time you taste
WE	Every time you drink	Every time you eat

Observe that "every time," "when," "whenever," and "each time" are equivalent expressions. They convey repetition without specifying the day or time of observance. The text doesn't intend to imply that therefore Christians are free to pick and choose their own days. Rather, language selected by the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 11:25-26 provides no assistance in determining whether God intends for the Lord's Supper to be observed on a particular day or at a particular time. *If He so specified, the New Testament would have to so indicate elsewhere.*

Summary

Neither the Greek nor the English convey the idea that we are free to select our own times in partaking of the Lord's Supper. The reader must read that idea into the text. *If the New Testament gave no further directives regarding the frequency or of the day of the Lord's Supper, each reader would be free to select his observance occasions, deciding which day of the week and how often it would be observed.* But the Lord gave us additional instructions on the matter!

Further Instructions from God

To be fair and honest with Scripture, one must gather everything the Bible has to say on a subject and reason correctly to arrive at the totality of God's will.

Specifically, one must examine the New Testament to ascertain God's will regarding observance of the Lord's Supper. **As it pertains to frequency of observance, the following verses clarify, providing a complete picture: Acts 2:42,46; Acts 20:7; Acts 20:11; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.**

Implications

Consider these implications of the foregoing. If God did not specify His intentions regarding frequency in the observing of the Lord's Supper, a person could partake one time after conversion and fulfill God's expectations. If the Christian lives a very long time, he would please God by the single observance.

Further, could the Jews have celebrated the Sabbath on days other than Saturday? According to Deuteronomy 5:12-15, the Sabbath commemorated the Exodus — the deliverance of the Jews from Egyptian bondage. Could they not have reasoned—like those today who dislodge the Lord's Supper from Sunday — that the perpetual commemoration of the Exodus could also be achieved on days other than Saturday? The Jews could not have known **when** to commemorate the Exodus unless God had so stipulated. If God had not given any indication of the day, the Jews would have been free to observe it on **any** day and their observance would not necessarily have to have even been **weekly**. But by associating commemoration of the Exodus with Saturday, the Jews were under obligation to conform to God's directive and to do otherwise would have been sinful.

The fact is that the bulk of Christendom—though generally associating observance of the Lord's Supper with Sunday—has felt free to alter God's instructions on a variety of matters over the centuries, including tampering with the scriptural directive regarding Sunday. Yet His declarations offer somber warning to those who would presume to alter His directives:

- **"You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 4:2).**
- **"Therefore, you shall be careful to do as the Lord your God has commanded you; you shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left" (Deut. 5:32).**
- **"Whatever I command you, be careful to observe; you shall not add to it nor take away from it" (Deuteronomy 12:32).**
- **"Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar" (Proverbs 30:6).**
- **"Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ doesn't have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son" (2 John 9).**
- **"He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day (John 12:48).**

Local Differences: Frequency & Participation

The Frequency of Observing the Lord's Supper

The "when" of partaking the Lord's supper is found by example of what the early church did. "Now on the first day of the week, when disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight" (Acts 20:7). There is no other example of the early church partaking of the Lord's supper on any other day of the week. Those who claim they can do so need to cite their authority from Scripture. Divine silence eliminates every day but the first day of the week.

We see also the Lord's Supper is a congregational function, rather than an individual one. It is something done "when disciples came together." I believe this eliminates carrying the communion to shut-ins in hospitals, and private or in nursing homes. If one can't assemble, then they are excused from partaking. We can do many things individually; we can sing and pray; study and teach others. But the Lord's supper (and giving) is a congregational function or activity. Let us be dedicated to observe the Lord's supper with the other disciples, upon the first day of the week. *- Truth Magazine*

"Up until the time of World War II, most congregations only held one service on Sunday. Because of the war effort, many people found themselves forced to work odd shifts, even on Sunday. To accommodate the need, congregations shifted to the holding of two services on Sunday, one in the morning and the other in the evening."

Rivermont Church of Christ

Frequently Asked Questions

Can the Lords Supper be offered a second time at Sunday night service?

Let's look at a verse, which we find an example for when we are to take the Lord's Supper.

Acts 20:7 ¶ And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

This example for when to partake of the Lord's Supper says on the first day of the week. It does not say what time of day to partake, although given the definition for Supper it would seem more appropriate to partake in the evening. So how do we determine when to take the Lord's Supper? What commandment do we have? Sense the first day of the week lasts for 24 hours must we meet for the entire 24 hours? What is needed here is an expedient. An expedient is an aid used to help fulfill a command.

1Co 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

1Co 10:23 All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not.

These verses gives us authority to use an expedient, but it must be lawful first, this means not to add or remove from the command, it must edify, and it can't be bound or turned into law.

So, let us use an expedient to solve our problem. Will set a time of 11:00 AM for the disciples to come together. Now we have solved our problem of when we are to meet. We created an expedient to help us fulfill the command to come together. Let's check our expedient to see if it fits the entire requirements to be scriptural. The first day of the week for our time keeping starts at midnight Saturday night until midnight Sunday night. Anytime during this 24 hour period would be the first day of the week. Anytime during this 24 hour period would be lawful to meet to take the Lord's Supper. We have set our time to come together at Sunday 11:00 AM. (Note: Jews & Romans counted the day different. - DLB) This is a lawful time for us to come together. What other requirements do we have for partaking the Lord's Supper, which our expedient may affect?

1) Disciples must come together.

Acts 20:7¶ And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.

This fits within our expedient.

2) We must tarry one for another or schedule it to be taken together.

1 Co 11:33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

This fits within our expedient.

3) The individual must take it in a worthy manner, which means to remember Christ's death.

1Co 11:27 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.

This fits within our expedient.

4) There must be a prayer before each item is served.

Mt. 26:26 ¶ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. 27) And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;

This fits within our expedient.

So, no law is to be broken by our expedient. All the requirements to take the Lord's Supper can be met.

Now how many expedients can we have? Are we limited to a number? No, we have song leaders, songbooks, microphones, overheads and on and on. As long as it is lawful, edifying, and not bound, we can have as many expedients as we want.

Now we have another problem. The time we set to come together hinders some of the member from coming together. Another expedient is needed to accommodate the other disciples. Here is where the problem starts. Some want to bind the expedient to just 11:00 am. Our expedient has now bound a time, which is not lawful. An expedient cannot be bound.

1Co 6:12 All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

There must be a certain time set in order to tarry one for another, but the number of times is not breaking any laws. It would not be expedient to come together many times, but it is not possibly to get all members together at one time. No matter what time you decide on it just will not work. Because of the time we live in we do not have perfect working hours. We may have a sick child or an elderly parent living with us that cannot be left alone. . .

Some would say "well God would understand if you miss" and I agree with that. But, sense the time, which we partake, is an expectant, why can't we just allow for another expedient and meet in the evening.

Would it be lawful? Yes.

Is it on the first day of the week? Yes.

Are the disciples coming together to break bread?

Yes.

Are we tarrying one for another or schedule it to be taken together?

Yes, just as the morning service is scheduled so is the evening.

The individual must still take it in a worthy manner. There's no reason why they can't do this. Is there a prayer before each item is served?

Yes.

<u>It edifies to have an opportunity to partake in both the morning and in the evening. Every requirement for the expedient to take place in the morning is just as lawful to take place in the evening. When I go to meet in the evening it is to do all of the apostle doctrine, including taking the Lord's Supper if I missed morning service.</u>

Whether or not I've taken the Lord's Supper in the morning, I come together in the evening for this reason as well as doing the other apostles doctrine. I do not take the Lord's Supper twice. I do think on Christ's death while others are partaking. I come a second time on the first day of the week, for the continuation of an expedient to allow everyone an opportunity to fulfill his or her obligation.

That obligation is not limited to just some of the apostle's doctrine, but all of them. We cannot come together on the first day of the week and then call it a class and leave. If you are going to come together a second time on the first day of the week you can't cut out the giving of our means or the partaking of the Lord's Supper. This would be unscriptural.

Can we say the reason for coming together is for partaking the Lord's Supper? Is this the reason for coming together? Most people would say yes it is the reason we come together.

1Co 16:2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Now wait, isn't this telling me to give on the first day of the week. Is this verse telling us to do this at a different time than when we come together or is it inferred this could be done anytime on the first day?

If I'm working an unusual schedule and have to miss 2 or 3 weeks in the morning, but can make it in the evening does that mean I do not have to give? Does this mean the preacher will have to take a reduction because half the people at church work a rotation?

Now I said all that to say this. What if when I was able to give, say at the evening service, and it was then rejected? I was told no you missed your chance. Does anyone have the authority to reject me from fulfilling a command that is between God and me? If the example given is the first day of the week and when disciples come together to break bread whether one disciple or many, who has the authority to deny a person to fulfill that command.

Some say well you see it says the disciples come together to "break bread". How can we do anything if we don't come together? Don't you come together to sing, pray, give your offering. In the same verse, Act 20:7 Paul preached. <u>How can you come together on the first day of the week and sing, pray, teach or preach, take up an offering but no we can't offer the Lord Supper because we aren't "all" coming together to do this.</u>

<u>You cannot pick one verse out of the bible for any final say without harmonizing it with other scripture. The disciples where following the apostles doctrine. Act 2:42 classifies fellowship, breaking bread, and prayer all as being required.</u>

Acts 2:42 ¶ And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and <u>fellowship,</u> and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Can we put more importance on one item of worship than another? If we are going to meet a second time should we do all of the apostle's doctrines or should we leave some out.

If the disciples are not coming together to do all of the apostle's doctrine, including break bread, than they have no need to come together.

Can you call it a class?

Not if "the disciples are coming together on the first day of the week. We're told what to do when we come together on the first day of the week period. Coming together is coming together. The evening is the first day just like the morning is the first day. All items of worship are supposed to be done on the first day of the week.

If all the things we are supposed to do on the first day of the week are done except the Lord's Supper, it's just an uncompleted service.

When someone is traveling on a business trip and then stops in for the evening service, they will expect to be served the Lord's Supper. To then not serve the Lord's Supper when every other requirement has been fulfilled would make the Lord Supper a congregational act only.

Withholding the opportunity to partake on the first day when the disciples are gathered would be taking away from what's written. If there is a split understanding in the church, the evening meeting should be suspended until everyone can come to an agreement. If everyone agrees on not serving the Lords Supper, than there should not be an evening gathering. We are to be like-minded. Having half the members get up and excuse themselves before the Lords Supper is served is not like-minded, not to mention rude. Definitely not loving one another. Some make their members who desire to partake the Lord Supper, go into a classroom separate from the others. Is this tarrying one for another?

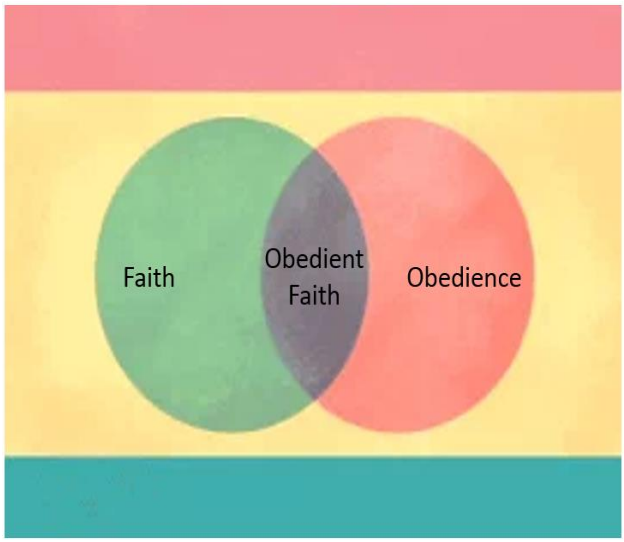
Oh, that right, we are told to tarry for one another! This simple means to set a time in which we are all aware of, so we can partake in a orderly manner. This doesn't mean we partake one time only and not again.

What if someone is baptized at the end of the lesson after the Lord's Supper has been given. Do you not offer the Lord' Supper to that person? *(Debatable)*

It is a commandment. If you believe tarry one for another means to wait until "everyone" is together than you would never be able to partake.

Bottom line, there are many expedients done today that were not done in the early church. If they are lawful, edifying and not bound or made into law, than they are authorized by God.

CONSEQUENCES OF NON-ACCOMMODATION

Five Steps For Saving:

- **HEARING:**
- **Romans 10: 17; Matthew 7: 24 - 27**
- **BELIEVING:**
- **Hebrews 11: 6; Mark 16: 15, 16**
- **REPENTING:**
- **Acts 2: 38; 17: 30; Luke 13: 3**
- **CONFESSING:**
- **Matthew 10: 32, 33; Acts 8: 36, 37**
- **BAPTISM:**
- **Romans 6: 3 – 5; Acts 8: 36 – 38**