

Comm(union)
Matthew 26:26-29

Whenever we gather around the Lord's Table, there are some important truths about our union with Christ and our unity as believers in Christ that are important to remember. Let me say right up front, that our union with Christ demands our unity in Christ. One of the foundational passages concerning that truth appears in **I Corinthians 12:12-13, 27**,

“The body [Paul is referring to the human body] is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ.¹³ For we [believers in Christ] were all baptized by one Spirit into one body [and because of this supernatural work of the Holy Spirit, Paul can say in verse 27] . . .²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.”

Our union with Christ is so profound that according to the Bible, we form Christ's Body on earth today. We are the hands and feet of Jesus. A sobering implication of this truth is that if any part of Christ's body is not properly functioning, it hurts the whole body. In other words, when Christians do not use their time, their spiritual gifts, and their finances to help make Christ known, it causes the Church [Christ's Body] to be weaker and less effective in representing Christ to our community. But if we all work together, we become a powerful presence of Christ in this world.

I confess to you that at one time in my Christian life I was perplexed by the ascension of the Lord Jesus to the Father's right. I understood from the Bible that Jesus had (1) lived a perfect life of obedience and (2) became our perfect sacrifice for sin and (3) what Christ accomplished on the cross

caused Satan to receive a head wound from which he can never recover. My question was this: Why didn't the resurrected Lord Jesus remain on the earth and personally sweep His Kingdom into power? The Biblical response is that Jesus Christ is still on earth – working through His Body the Church.

Do you remember what Jesus promised in John 14:12? He said that His followers will do even greater things than He did, precisely because He was going to the Father. Most Christians underestimate how much the Church, Christ's Body has accomplished over the last 2000 years. Listen to what Dr. Eugene Clingman, a member of the International Church Council Project, writes on this matter,

“From the tiny country of Israel in about AD 33, like an overflowing fountain, the message ran forth to cover the earth. In two millennia the Gospel has fairly effaced the old pagan world and created a new “civilized” culture. This message, the Gospel, the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, has changed the world!”

There is still much to be done, but we must not ignore how much has already been accomplished – as our Lord Jesus foretold in John 14:12.

Let me return to our union with Christ. We cannot stop with the truth that we have been placed into Christ by a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit. We must add to that truth – what Jesus tells us in **John 14:23**, “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

The Apostle Paul prays that Christians will deeply experience this truth in **Ephesians 3:16-17**,

“I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”

And so the Bible teaches that not only are we IN Christ, but Christ is also IN us. And so let me ask you: Is Jesus present in this world today? More so than ever.

Let’s keep that truth in mind as we look at an important statement Jesus made to His disciples when He established the ordinance we are about to observe. Because Jesus is the ultimate Passover Lamb, He established His Table during the last Passover meal He ate with the disciples – just before His death. I am reading Matthew 26:26-29,

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’²⁷ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you.’²⁸ This is my blood of the covenant [the New Covenant], which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

What did Jesus mean when He spoke about drinking of the fruit of the vine with His disciples again – in His Father’s kingdom sometime in the future? I have already told you that Christ’s death and resurrection was a great blow to Satan and a great advance for God’s kingdom. Even before Jesus went to the cross, He did things which demonstrated His ability to bind Satan and plunder his house. Listen to Matthew 12:22-29,

“Then they brought him a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute, and Jesus healed him, so that he could both talk and see.²³ All the people were astonished . . .²⁴ But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, ‘It is only by . . . the prince of demons [Satan], that this fellow drives out

demons.’²⁵ Jesus knew their thoughts and said to them, ‘Every kingdom divided against itself will be ruined, and every city or household divided against itself will not stand [neither will any church].²⁶ If Satan drives out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then can his kingdom stand? . . .²⁸ But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹ Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man’s house and carry off his possessions unless he first binds the strong man? Then he can rob his house.’”

Christ could cast out demons because His authority was greater than Satan’s. A much greater binding of Satan occurred at the cross. It was Christ’s death, resurrection and ascension to the Father’s right hand that opened the doors of God’s grace wider than ever before. Christ’s work at the cross – marked the time in world history when the Gentiles began to pour into God’s kingdom blessings.

And so one possible understanding as to what Christ meant by drinking of the fruit of the vine with His disciples in the Father’s kingdom – is that on several occasions Christ ate with his disciples after His resurrection. And because of what He accomplished at the cross, it meant that He ate with His disciples after a major victory for God’s kingdom had been won. However in the two passage that specifically speak of Christ eating with His disciples after His resurrection [Luke 24 and in John 21], there is no mention of Christ drinking from the fruit of the vine. And so we may be encouraged to look at another way to understand what Christ spoke about by considering His words in **Matthew 8:11**,

“I say to you that many will come from the east and the west [referring to Gentiles], and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.”

The Bible speaks of a great bodily resurrection that will take place when Christ returns to earth in His glorified body. At that time all of God's people – including Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – will celebrate a feast together in our glorified bodies. I want to pause here and make an observation. There are indications in the Bible that our resurrection bodies will be suitable and capable of enjoying feasts. Our glorified bodies are not going to be ghostly or immaterial. Some people have gotten that idea from what the Apostle Paul wrote in **I Corinthians 15:35-53**,

“But someone may ask, ‘How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?’ [Paul’s response is] . . . ⁴² The [mortal] body that is sown [put into the ground] is perishable [it returns to the dust], it is raised imperishable;⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural [mortal] body, it is raised a spiritual body [is Paul saying that our resurrection bodies are going to be see throughish? No. Paul speaks of spiritual bodies in the sense that our spirit is presently the **enduring** part of us that continues to live after we die. In the same way, our resurrection bodies will have that same kind of lasting, enduring quality] . . . ⁴⁷ The first man [Adam] was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven [in eternity past, God the Son was spirit. But He became fully man at His incarnation and when He ascended back into heaven He had a glorified body that will never die] . . . ⁴⁹ And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven [we too will have glorified bodies that never die]. ⁵⁰ I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood [the kind of bodies we have now] cannot inherit the kingdom of God [Paul is referring to the ultimate expression of God’s Kingdom – which is the Eternal State. The only people in the Eternal State will be people in glorified bodies], nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”

The Bible teaches that death is when our spirit separates from our body. And for Christians, to be absent from the body is to be present with the

Lord. But the Bible does not teach that we are going to be spirit's without bodies for all eternity. We will one day have glorified bodies that will be perfectly suited to live in the very presence of God – on a glorified earth.

Listen to **Revelation 21:1-4**,

“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea [Isaiah 57:20 says, “But the wicked are like the tossing sea, which cannot rest” I believe John is saying there will be no unbelievers in the Eternal State].² I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God [this is referring to the saints of God throughout all the ages who have died and their spirits have been dwelling with God in heaven. But at the time Christ comes to earth to raise the dead, all these saints will join Him], prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband [this is when they will receive their glorified bodies, which will be the final condition of all God's people. And friends, Jesus is not coming to raise the dead and usher in the Eternal State, until His Bride is completed].³ And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them [on a glorified earth]. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God.’⁴ He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.”

I think there are going to be many banquets enjoyed by saints in glorified bodies, living on a glorified earth with the Triune God. And never again will there be any pain or sorrow to mar the joy.

I want to close by reminding you that while eating with the Lord Jesus in glorified bodies is still in our future – there is also a present way in which Jesus shares in the fruit of the vine with His disciples. Let me take you to **I Corinthians 11:17-34**. The Apostle Paul is speaking to a very divided Church at Corinth and he is greatly concerned about them,

“In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.¹⁸ In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you [and look what resulted from those divisions] . . .²⁰ When you come together, it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat,²¹ for as you eat [probably referring to a love feast eaten before Communion], each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk.²² Don’t you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? [it would seem that the wealthy Corinthians were able to come to the love feast early, with lots of food and wine, which they consumed before the poor got off work. Which is why the wealthy were getting drunk, while the poor had nothing]. What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,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.’ [I believe there is a picture in Communion of union with Christ. We are in Him and He is in us].²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me’ [question: how well did the drunk Corinthians do at honoring Christ, who died to make all believers His Body, His Bride, His Temple?] . . .²⁷ Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord . . .²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord, eats and drinks judgment upon himself [I believe Paul’s point is that the poor were just as much a part of Christ’s Body as were the wealthy – but they were being judged and treated as unimportant].³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep [died] . . .³³ So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other . . .³⁴ so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.”

When we look at Christians today, we are looking at new creations in Christ. People who have been placed by the Holy Spirit into Christ, and who have Christ living in them. In **Matthew 25:40** Jesus says, “I tell you

the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.” Why? Because all believers are in Christ and He is in us. And do you remember when Saul of Tarsus was persecuting Christians? The ascended Lord Jesus knocked him off his horse outside of Damascus and said to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?” A believer’s union with Christ is of such a nature that for someone to mistreat Christians is to mistreat Christ. And I think it is especially odious to God when Christians mistreat their fellow Christians.

But when Christians walk in step in together, using our gifts on behalf of each other, it builds up the Body of Christ, which makes us a powerful representation of Jesus in this world today. Let’s pray.