



Conducted by
Frank Worgan

“Would you please comment on the vexed question of giving or refusing the Lord’s supper emblems to those (who are) non-members of the church? e.g. those visiting from other denominations?”

Let me begin by saying that I am not comfortable with the questioner’s use of the term ‘*other denominations*’! I would like to believe that it is a ‘slip of the pen’, so to speak, and that he knows that the Church of which we read in the New Testament scriptures is not a denomination among the denominations.

THE PENTECOSTAL EXAMPLE

As for the question itself; the scriptures themselves, in Acts 2:41-42, make it very clear for whom the Lord’s Supper is intended, since the passage informs us who sat at the Lord’s Table when the Church was first established.

It tells us that, on the Day of Pentecost, after Peter’s presentation of the Gospel and after his answer to the question asked by those who were convicted by what they had heard, (v.37), those who believed and accepted his message were baptized (v.38) and, ***“they continued steadfastly (literally, ‘they kept going on’) in the apostles’ doctrine and the fellowship and the breaking of the bread and the prayers,”*** (v.42).

You will notice that I have placed the definite article before each of these four items, because that is where it belongs. We should read, ***‘the . . . doctrine, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, the prayers’*** because each item has its own

special significance and importance.

You will also notice *who 'kept going on'* in these acts of worship. "*They*" - that is, those who, having been convicted by the Gospel, and repenting, had been baptized and who, in this manner, had been '*added that day*' (v.41).

TO WHAT HAD THEY BEEN 'ADDED'?

Look at the last verse in the chapter, for there is the answer. The literal rendering of the latter part of v.47 reads, "*And the Lord added those who were being saved daily to the assembly.*"

The word which is rendered '*assembly*' is the word '*ekklesia*', which, as every Bible student knows, is the word describing the 'called out', and which, in our English translations, gives us the word 'Church'. So, this is what we find,

1. Those who received Peter's word and were baptized were added, by the Lord, (v.41), to the Church.
2. The Church is the '*house of God*' (1 Tim. 3:15).
3. And in '*the house of God*' is where the Lord placed what Paul describes as '*the Lord's Table*' (1 Cor. 10:21).

There were many devout, religious people present that day, when Peter preached the Gospel, but only those who responded to his message steadfastly continued in obedience to the Lord Himself in '*the breaking of the bread*'.

AN IMPORTANT DISTINCTION

It may be as well, at this point, to correct a fairly common misunderstanding.

That term, '*the breaking of the bread*' in v.42, must not be confused with '*breaking bread*' in v.46. The expression, '*the breaking of the bread*', in v.42 is used to refer to the Lord's Supper, whilst '*breaking bread*' in v.46, is a 'present participle' referring to the eating of the daily meal.

I point this out because sometimes an attempt is made to use v.46 as an argument in favour of the *daily* celebration of the Lord's Supper, and that is a mistaken use of the verse and is not what the passage teaches.

THE CORINTHIAN TEACHING

In 1 Cor. 11:23, Paul reveals that the instructions which he delivered to the Church at Corinth concerning the celebration of the Lord's Supper, were given to him by the Lord Himself, to be delivered to the Church and obeyed by the Corinthians who had already been '*baptized into the name of Christ*', (chap. 1:13). Note that in this verse Paul uses the word '*eis*' = '*into*', and not '*en*' = '*in*'.

That is to say that the Corinthians had, by their baptism, entered *into* a relationship with Christ. They had been '*baptized into the one body*' (chap. 12:13), which is the Church (Col. 1:18).

Remember that, according to 1 Cor. 10:16, the drinking of the cup and the breaking of the bread constitute a '*communion*' - a '*koinonia*' - a joint-participation or fellowship - in the body and blood of the Lord.

It follows, therefore, that, unless a person has confessed a personal faith in the Lord Jesus, with all that the confession of faith involves, and has died with Christ and been '*buried with Him in baptism into death*' rising to walk with Him '*in newness of life*', (Rom. 6:4-5), no matter how 'religious' or 'morally good' he might be, he cannot, with scriptural approval, take the bread or the fruit of the vine, which represent the blood of the perfect sacrifice offered for sin.

If one does not come, by faith, to the blood of Christ when being '*united with Him in a death like His*' (Rom. 6:5-6), I confess I do not know when we do come to it.

THE LORD'S COMMISSION

Notice, also, that in Acts 20:7, it was *'the disciples'* who came together on the Lord's Day to *'break the bread'*. These were people who had become 'disciples' according to the Lord's Commission, found in Matt. 28:19, "*Go, make disciples, baptizing them into the name . . .*" There it is again! - that word '*eis*' = 'into' - the preposition of movement, which indicates a change of position.

In this verse also, the word '*baptizing*' is a 'participle of manner', which tells how the thing commanded is to be accomplished. For example, we might say, '*Go, make soldiers, swearing them in*'. The phrase '*swearing them in*' indicates how men are to be made *soldiers*. It is a 'participle of manner'.

Similarly, '*Go, make disciples, baptizing them into the Name of . . .*' tells how believers become '*disciples*' in the true sense of the word.

It follows, therefore, that if a person has not been baptized:-

- a) '*in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ* - (*'en*' is the static participle, which here means '*by the authority of the Name of Jesus Christ*') and,
- b) '*into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit*', that person is not a 'Christian' in the scriptural sense, since, as we see in Acts 11:26, it was those who had become '*disciples*' who were called '*Christians*'.

WHAT ABOUT THE 'VISITORS'

If the 'visitors' to whom the question refers, have submitted to the Lord Jesus, by belief of, and obedience to the Gospel, they have the right to sit at the Lord's Table, because they are invited by the Lord Himself.

If they come as members of a religious body which does not acknowledge the Lord's Commission, or which denies the importance or necessity, of obedience to Him in baptism, we are compelled to say, with great regret, that the Lord's Table is not the place for them.

"HARD TO APPLY!"

I realize, of course, that whilst the *teaching* of the Word on this subject is so plain that it cannot be misunderstood, congregations do sometimes find difficulty in applying it when a visitor (stranger) enters the worship-meeting. This has meant that,

- 1) in some places, the situation has been dealt with, by conveniently turning a blind eye to his presence,
- 2) or by going to the other extreme and treating his presence in a manner which has given offence.
- 3) And it has also been known for a visitor to find the emblems actually being passed to him, so that he takes the Lord's Supper without anyone realizing at the time, that he is, in fact, not a 'baptized believer'.

1. In the first case; the presence of ANY visitor to the worship-meeting - whether baptized or unbaptized - should never be ignored. It is surely out of keeping with spirit of Christ for anyone to enter our services without being made to feel the warmth of a friendly welcome.

2. In the second case; if we have reason to think that the visitor is not a baptized believer, it is the responsibility of whoever is leading the Church in the celebration of the Feast, to point out, in a simple and dignified manner, for whom it is intended. A few well-chosen words are infinitely more appropriate than the irrelevant 'sermonettes' that are sometimes presented before the emblems are distributed.

3. To speak meaningfully about the Supper is not difficult, when we take the occasion seriously. When this is done, the visitor understands whether he should

partake or refrain, and it also serves to prevent the recurrence of the insensitive and hurtful behaviour of 'servers' which some of us have witnessed in the past, which contributes nothing to the solemnity and dignity of the Lord's Supper, when the bread and fruit of the vine have been unceremoniously snatched out of a visitor's hands.

4. Whilst I am absolutely convinced that the scriptures teach that an unbaptized person has no place at the Lord's Table, I am also sure that, if he *does* partake, his action is not powerful enough to *desecrate* the Supper, or harm those who rightfully sit at the Table. The harm that is done, is done to himself, just as it is in the case of a *baptized* person who '*eats and drinks unworthily.*' (1 Cor. 11:29).

I imagine that, if we were able today to put our question to Paul, he might reply, "*What! Is there not among you someone wise enough, discreet enough, and kind enough, to show to the visitor Acts 2:38, and verses 41 and 42, and to explain that this is how it was done when the Church began, and how we are seeking to do it today?*"

I suggest that, when we are truly convinced about the *principle* governing participation at the Supper, the *practice* becomes less of a problem.

In this connection, please read **1 John 5:3**.

(Questions for the "Question Box", to Frank Worgan, 5 Gryfebank Way, Houston, Renfrewshire PA6 7NZ. Scotland.)

SOLOMON'S MINES (OF WISDOM)

Someone has said that the book of Psalms teaches us how to get along with God, while the book of Proverbs teaches us how to get along with people.

The Psalms bring us into the "heavenliness" while **Proverbs** sets our feet in the grassroots of human life. If we take a look at these books of scripture in this light, a new insight into the word of God will be ours.

It is said that the Proverbs were mostly written by Solomon, 'the wisest man who ever lived'. He enjoyed great material wealth and a rich spiritual heritage, passed on to him from his father King David.

His advice on daily living is the solid practical advice of someone who has fathomed the problems, and solved all the enigmas of life. Solomon begins by listing **the benefits** of studying the same Book of Proverbs. "**The Proverbs of Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel: To know wisdom and instruction, to discern the sayings of understanding, to receive instruction in wise behaviour. Righteousness, justice and equity; to give prudence to the naive; to the youth, knowledge and discretion.**" (Prov. 1:1-4).

Few books can make this claim. A study of the Book can only make us better and much wiser, persons. One benefit is that we will "**know wisdom and instruction.**" Wisdom is looking at life from God's point of view. Too often we look at life from our own rather selfish point of view, and consequently fail miserably.

A second benefit, is that we will learn "**to discern, the sayings of understanding.**" If wisdom is looking at life from God's view-point, **understanding** is responding to life from God's view-point. As a benefit, we receive instruction in wise behaviour, righteousness, justice and equity. The term "receive" suggests action, or mobility, and clearly involves making some effort to get into the mind of Solomon.

Another benefit is that we will gain "**Prudence, knowledge and discretion**"; surely something we could all profit by. Solomon puts no age limit on the beneficiaries of his wisdom, albeit verse 4 is directed mainly at the young. But grey hairs do not