



International Bible Lessons Commentary

Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series

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1 Corinthians 11:20-34 **New American Standard Bible** **November 26, 2017**

The [International Bible Lesson](#) (*Uniform Sunday School Lessons Series*) for **Sunday, November 26, 2017**, is from **1 Corinthians 11:20-34** (Some will only study 1 Corinthians 11:23-34). **Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further** follow the verse-by-verse *International Bible Lesson Commentary*. **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the [International Bible Lessons Commentary](#) website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Lesson Forum](#).

(1 Corinthians 11:20) Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,

Most of those in the Christian Church in Corinth were Gentiles who had formerly worshiped idols. They would have been most accustomed to eating feasts in the temples of their idols. These feasts, which often included immoral

practices, would not have had the decorum of the meals the Jews ate together (think of Jesus eating with the scribes and Pharisees or miraculously feeding 5,000 with prescribed order). The richest among them would have eaten feasts like King Belshazzar (see Daniel 5) or King Herod (see Matthew 14). Their irreverent behavior and selfish manners would have carried over to their agape (love) meals, which may or may not have accompanied the celebration of the Lord's Supper with all the solemnity of the Jewish Passover meal. As Jesus indicated, however, self-centered feasts were not limited only to the Gentiles (see Luke 14:8-11).

(1 Corinthians 11:21) for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

Unlike pot luck dinners in many churches today where everyone shares what they have brought with one another, it seems in Corinth that the wealthy would bring their own meals to eat privately and not share what they brought with others. Imagine poor Christians coming to a love feast (agape meal) expecting something to eat while the rich Christians consumed their private meals and got drunk on their wine. The wealthy Christians had not yet learned to share as they ought. The example set by the first Christians regarding sharing and eating together can be found in Acts 2:42-47.

(1 Corinthians 11:22) What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.

The root cause of the problem was sin, selfishness, and self-centeredness. At the very least, if these selfish rich Christians were not going to share their food with the poor, they should eat and drink at home and not humiliate their brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul wrote that by their sin and selfishness they were despising the Church, the Body of Christ, which included rich and poor Christians. Paul could not praise such selfishness among those who called themselves Christians. These rich Christians should have used their wealth to share with the needy, especially during a fellowship dinner.

(1 Corinthians 11:23) For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

Paul moved his discussion from agape and fellowship meals to the actual institution and remembrance of Jesus' death in the Lord's Supper, and he received this instruction directly from the Lord Jesus regarding the proper celebration of the Lord's Supper. He received many revelations or instructions directly from Jesus himself; Paul wrote in part, "*or because of these surpassingly great*

revelations. Therefore, in order to keep me from becoming conceited, I was given a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me” (2 Corinthians 12:7). The Lord Jesus gave this revelation to Paul to pass on to the churches he founded or visited. The Lord’s Supper could, as is most often practiced today, be celebrated separately from a fellowship meal. “The Lord” is a title of divinity, not merely a title of respect; such as, “Sir,” which was sometimes used to address Jesus when He taught as a rabbi on earth. As Jesus celebrated the Passover meal, and before He began to institute the Lord’s Supper, He announced that one of His disciples would betray Him (Matthew 26:21-25). While they were eating the Passover meal, Jesus took the bread: “While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body’” (Matthew 26:26).

(1 Corinthians 11:24) 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.”

On the very night Jesus was betrayed, knowing what He faced that night and next day (torture and death by crucifixion), Jesus “gave thanks.” Jesus gave thanks because He knew that He was fulfilling the will of God as God had foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures. He gave thanks and set an example for us as the Letter to the Hebrews described: “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he

endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2). Jesus broke the bread, as the bread is broken during a Passover meal and as His own body would be broken on the cross. His body was broken for all who would believe in Him for the forgiveness of sins. Christians were to celebrate the Lord’s Supper from that night forth to remember what Jesus had done for them; so, of course the celebration would be serious, with joyful hearts looking to the future.

(1 Corinthians 11:25) In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

The cup represented the blood of Jesus Christ. God in Jesus Christ made a new covenant as prophesied by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 31:31). When God makes a covenant for all His people, blood is shed (as in the old covenant with Abraham: Genesis 15:8-21). In making the new covenant, Jesus shed His own blood and became the way for us to come before God: “Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful” (Hebrews 10:19, 22,23). Whenever we drink from the cup, we remember all that

Jesus has done for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of God the Father. By His death, God can justly and mercifully forgive us for our sins, as Jesus said, “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). When we remember Jesus’ sacrifice, we also rededicate ourselves to loving and serving the One who loves us and gave himself for us.

(1 Corinthians 11:26) For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus closed the Lord’s Supper with these words: “I tell you, I will not drink from this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matthew 26:29). We proclaim the Lord’s death for us as a reminder of what Jesus did to forgive us for our sins. His death and our forgiveness were not the end of Jesus’ ministry. Jesus rose again, and He will come back again. He promised His disciples on the night He was betrayed that He would drink from the cup with them again someday (indicating He would rise from the dead; something they did not understand until He rose from the dead and gave them many proofs that He was alive and well). After He arose, “Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself” (Luke 24:27).

(1 Corinthians 11:27) Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

After Paul reported what the Lord Jesus had told him, he applied Jesus' words to the Corinthians and our participation in the Lord's Supper. Repeatedly emphasized in many Lord's Supper services of celebration, thanksgiving, and remembrance today is the fact that no one is worthy in and of themselves to eat of the bread and drink of the cup, because all have sinned and have fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). We are unworthy, but Jesus died for the forgiveness of our sins and for this very reason we choose to partake of the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner: "For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3). Paul warned that we should not partake in "an unworthy manner." But what is "an unworthy manner"? There can be many "unworthy manners," but perhaps the most unworthy manners for the celebrant would include cherishing any sin in our hearts while participating in the Lord's Supper or thinking we can keep on sinning and it does not matter how we participate when taking communion. Earlier in his letter to them, Paul told the Corinthians that they were participating in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner: they were participating in a selfish and self-centered manner with no consideration regarding reverence for God or the needs of

others. An unworthy manner could include refusing to repent of unforgiveness or bitterness against someone while receiving the Lord's Supper, which emphasizes the forgiveness of sins. How can someone honestly serve or take the Lord's Supper while at the same time worshipping with someone they refuse to forgive? To sin against the body and blood of the Lord is to cherish an attitude in your heart that is the very opposite of why the Lord suffered and died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. A worthy manner would include confessing sin, turning from sin, asking God for help to live according to the Bible's teachings with the guidance and power of the loving Holy Spirit.

(1 Corinthians 11:28) But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Self-examination may not be emphasized enough when celebrating the Lord's Supper. Self-examination would include praying for the Holy Spirit to show us any sins that we need to confess and turn from (the Holy Spirit being our Helper). Self-examination would also include giving others and ourselves the assurance that Jesus Christ died for the forgiveness of sins; therefore, by taking the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner and with self-examination, the celebrant can receive the assurance of forgiveness and the Lord's help in the days ahead. Scriptural words of assurance can help all participants.

(1 Corinthians 11:29) For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly.

Jesus celebrated the Lord's Supper during a Passover meal. Among other truths, the Passover celebration reminded the Jews of how God freed them from slavery in Egypt. Discerning the body of Christ includes eating the bread and drinking of the cup while remembering that Jesus died to free us from slavery to sin and Satan as well as for the forgiveness of our sins. Eating and drinking in a worthy manner can help us grow in grace as we consecrate ourselves once again to selflessly serving our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Eating and drinking in an unworthy manner can bring judgment upon us because we are despising the One who lived and died to give us eternal life.

(1 Corinthians 11:30) For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.

Some results of God's judgment include weakness (physical and spiritual), sickness (physical and spiritual) and death, the meaning of "fallen asleep" (physical and spiritual). But not all physical weakness, physical sickness, and physical death is an indication of God's judgment; for this reason, many who are weak, sick, or near death rejoice when they receive the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner and through the Word of God Jesus gives them the assurance of forgiveness and God's grace in their lives.

(1 Corinthians 11:31) But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged.

During the celebration of the Lord's Supper, believers can ask and pray for the Holy Spirit to help them see themselves as God sees them. When sincerely asked and prayed for, the Holy Spirit will show us what we need to discern at that time so we can repent of any sins He shows us and ask Him for help to overcome our temptations to sin again. During this time, the Holy Spirit will not show us more than we can bear, or we would be totally crushed. Rather, the Holy Spirit will help us grow spiritually according to our needs, and by doing so we will not come under judgment but become more like Jesus.

(1 Corinthians 11:32) But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.

When we pray for the Lord Jesus to show us any sins that may be resulting in God's discipline (including weakness, sickness, and dying), He will show us the changes we need to make in our ways of living. When we change with total commitment to Him, with His help we will not be condemned along with the world that lives in rebellion against God.

(1 Corinthians 11:33) So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.

In some churches, those who celebrate the Lord's Supper hold the bread they receive until they can all eat together and hold the cup they receive until they can all drink together. Eating together can also include everyone eating and drinking with one heart and mind in love and loyalty to Jesus Christ and one another. Eating the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner can become an example of how all Christians and families should eat any and all meals when they are together: selfishness excluded and forgiveness included.

(1 Corinthians 11:34) If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you will not come together for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.

The Apostle Paul separated the Lord's Supper from agape feasts or fellowship meals to reduce the possibility of celebrating the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner (see 1 Corinthians 11:20-23). If Christians eat at home before they worship and celebrate the Lord's Supper, they can focus on the true meaning of Jesus' death for them and the forgiveness of sins (their forgiveness by God and their need to forgive others). Paul's further instructions could include finer details on the practice of the Lord's Supper, what we learn from reading 2 Corinthians, and other issues not in the Bible.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. When did Jesus celebrate the first Lord's Supper?
2. What does eating of the bread mean to you?
3. What does drinking of the cup mean to you?
4. What are one or two ways we can partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner? In a worthy manner?
5. Did you learn any new truths about the Lord's Supper from your study; if so, what did you learn?

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