

THE LORD SUPPER ARGUMENT

by

William H. Bell, Jr.

Wayne Jackson believes that his argument on the Lord's supper is very powerful in refuting Jesus' return in A.D. 70. He argues that we are to proclaim Christ's death until he comes. He concludes that if Jesus has come, those who advocate that Christ returned in A.D. 70 are yet observing the Lord's Supper and are thus inconsistent in teaching and practice. See his book, the A.D. 70 Theory, p. 40.

The Lord's Supper argument has no real value in proving or disproving whether Jesus came or not. It is really about the practice of those regarding the Lord's Supper. In other words, if Christ has or has not come, how should we practice the teachings concerning his Supper? That is an altogether different issue. It side steps the main issue and is a red herring argument.

Apparently, Jackson is aware that he does not prove his case. Were his argument sound, the most that it would prove is that the "teaching and practice" of A.D. 70 advocates are inconsistent. That is not the same as proving that the teaching or the practice is wrong, or that both are.

For example, if one believes that baptism is an immersion in water but practices sprinkling for baptism, would the practice of sprinkling be a refutation of the doctrine of baptism by immersion? No it would not. It would only mean that the practice does not follow the teaching. The task is to prove or disprove the teaching, then one can know whether the practice is inconsistent.

The argument advanced by Jackson fails to prove that Christ did not return in A.D. 70. It is to the Corinthians, i.e. first century saints that Paul says they must proclaim the death of Christ. "For as often as "you" eat this bread and drink this cup, "you" proclaim the Lord's death till he comes." 1 Cor. 11:26. The passage teaches the very opposite of what Jackson tries to wrest from the text. It teaches that the Corinthians would proclaim the Lord's death till he came. That places the coming within the first century.

Those to whom Paul wrote 1 Cor. 11:26 were the same ones that he said would be confirmed by miracles until the end, coming short in no [miraculous] gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 1:7, 8). Is Jackson among those who have miraculous gifts? Can he speak in tongues, raise the dead, drink poison to no hurt, or heal the sick? He will not include himself in that number. Yet he seeks to do that very thing when he mentions the "till he comes" in 1 Cor. 11:26. It is the same church mentioned

in chapter 1, who has the miracles that Paul writes to in chapter 11. (See chapters 12-14)

The Corinthians brethren had issues. They practiced divisions and factions to the extent that they could not properly eat the Lord's Supper. Why? It is because Christ died for the "unity" of Jew and Gentile. The Jew-Gentile factions in the church threatened the unity of the body of Christ. This is why he told them to "proclaim the Lord's death." See Eph. 2:14-17; 3:6, where Christ's death forms the basis of Paul's appeal to Jew-Gentile unity. Further, there are other examples of the schism between Jews and Gentiles in 1 Corinthians. See chapters 8; 9:19-22; 10:32; 12:13; 15:12.

Thirdly, the statement 'you proclaim his death' is designed to keep their focus on the mission of the "unity of the faith" until that time arrived. The "unity of the faith" is the unity of Jew and Gentile in the one body, --the same body of Christ versus the twain or two bodies (Jew and Gentile) which existed prior to the cross. (See Eph. 2:14-17; 4:11-13).

Fourth, they were not to eat and drink till he comes. Eating and drinking the Lord's Supper was not to cease at the Lord's return. Jesus taught that when he returned, *then* he would eat and drink anew with the saints. "But I say to you, I will not drink of 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). Compare with Luke 22:16. In the latter passage Jesus explains what drinking new with the disciples means. It means that he would not drink anew until the Passover was fulfilled in the kingdom of God."

The Passover was not fulfilled until Israel was completely delivered from Egypt. This deliverance was not complete on the night they ate the Passover. It was 40 years later when they entered the promise land upon deliverance from bondage. "Then the Lord said to Joshua, 'This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you.'" (Joshua 5:9). Israel was yet bearing Egypt's reproach until they completed their wilderness journey and entered the promised land completely fulfilling God's promise of deliverance.

In like manner, New Testament Israel, the church, bore the reproach of spiritual Egypt, Judaism until they arrived at the heavenly Canaan at Christ's return. "Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach." (Hebrews 13:13). Some may object saying this is Christ's reproach, not that of the Jews. According to Romans Christ's reproach was God's reproach and God's reproach was that of the Jews. "For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You, fell on Me.'" (Romans 15:3; Psalms 69:9)

The reproach of Judaism was not removed from the church until the final day of separation when Judaism was destroyed. This is when the Passover was

fulfilled in the kingdom of God. This is “that day” when Jesus ate “new” with the disciples, when they were no longer under reproach. The historical account says that Israel “kept the Passover” when they entered their promised land after the reproach of Egypt was rolled away. (Joshua 5:10).

This is what Paul has in view when he says eat and drink till Christ comes. He was looking forward to the day when reproach would be removed. The church could then drink anew with Christ. All their divisions and factions ran counter to this purpose of God.

Finally on this Lord’s Supper argument, the grammatical rendering of the text would preclude Jackson’s conclusion. Consider two parallel statements.

For as often as you eat your meals, take two doses of medicine until relief from the pain comes.

What is this statement teaching? Does it teach that one is no longer to eat his meals after he is healed of his sickness? Or does it teach that he no longer is to take the medication once he is healed? Clearly it is the latter. Therefore, the eating of the meals continues beyond the taking of the medicine.

Now consider 1 Corinthians 11:26 in this light.

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup (eat the Lord’s Supper, i.e. the Christian meal) you proclaim the Lord’s death till he comes.

What is it that would cease at the Lord’s return? Is it the eating and drinking of the Lord’s Supper or is it the “proclaiming of His death? It is the latter. This proclamation does not refer to “preaching” the gospel. That is not what they were doing by eating the supper.

Once the Jew-Gentile unity was completed and confirmed in fulfillment, the “Corinthians” who had this problem would no longer have to be concerned about the attacks from the Judaizers who threatened this unity. The second letter of Corinthians shows more of this Jew-Gentile schism and should be studied if more help is needed.

Jackson concurs that “proclaiming the death” was only one among several purposes for eating the Lord’s Supper. Today it is impossible to eat the Lord’s Supper in anticipation of the Lord’s return and the unity of the faith. We can however eat in commemoration of that return unity. Thus we eat and drink anew in the kingdom of God.

Jackson is therefore inconsistent with the text in his teaching. As a result, he is inconsistent in practice.