Are We Authorized
To Eat The Lord’s Supper
And Take Up A Collection?
Introduction: Once a year I like to take my Sunday morning sermon and make it a prelude to the partaking of the communion...last year it was a short series of lessons titled: Views Of The Cross...this time it is just this one basic, elementary study this morning. -- Because man has been known through the centuries to add things to the religion of Christ, and the book of Colossians, as well as other inspired epistles, instructs us that to do so is to risk our eternal reward and put in peril our soul, then it is good from time to time to re-examine even those things we assume are authorized of the Lord...so as to be certain we are walking in the way of truth delivered to the saints in the beginning. The NT urges all followers of God to search the Scriptures to see what is so and test all things and hold to that which is true. And that we wish to do this morning regarding the Lord’s Supper.

1. Are we authorized to eat the Lord’s Supper?

The quick answer might be, “yes, because Jesus said to do this in remembrance of me.” The verse you are referencing is Luke 22:19 and you are correct in that the apostles were told to eat of it in memory of Him. But, that is the apostles...not necessarily you and me today. The apostles were 12 special men selected and commissioned to do some things that were not for everyone back then and certainly not for you and me today. For instance, they were given power to lay hands on people and impart through that a gift of the Holy Spirit. On one occasion (recorded in Acts 8) a man offered money to purchase that power...to which Peter replied, you have neither part, nor portion in this matter. So, you see, we cannot automatically conclude everything said to the apostles is for every Christian or every age. -- But, Matthew 28:20 says that the apostles were to make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit teaching them to observe all the things He had commanded them. Was one of them the Lord’s Supper?
Let’s go to I Cor. 11:23, where we read...I received of the Lord that which I delivered to you...and then the apostle goes on to relate how the Lord’s Supper, first begun by the Lord, was now being passed on to them as a church assembly activity. -- But, maybe that is just the church in Corinth? Good question. Just as I said about the apostles, so some NT instructions to first century congregations, who were the original recipients of the letters, may not have had broader application to all others of all ages. But, as we see in chapter 10:16-17, Paul says this practice of the Lord’s Table included him and he was not there at Corinth...in other words, Paul ate the Lord’s Supper elsewhere. One such place we have recorded is with the Troas congregation...Acts 20:7 shows them doing it. And all the way back to the first church, in Jerusalem (Acts 2:42) they regularly broke bread also. So it was not restricted to one place or group.

But, someone might say that all the examples you give are back then...not now. Let me respond to that with a broad sweeping statement...if examples do not teach us anything, then none of the NT teaches us anything....for all of it, including the teachings and examples of Jesus, Himself...the entire NT...are examples of things said to people 20 centuries ago. Luke, for instance, is a treatise written to a man named Theophilus. But, that is God’s method of imparting the truth of who Christ was and is to the whole Christian age...using a letter or treatise written to some real person or persons and we are expected to read their mail and make application where the situations are similar. Now, just as we will need to exercise our mental facilities, in our handling of these holy writings, to discern good and evil in all sorts of things, so in this, we will need to discern the will of God from these examples. We are authorized by God to eat the Lord’s Supper today.

Who? The example we find in every place where it is mentioned is all Christians are expected to eat of it...of both bread and wine...it is a one body of Christ communion of the members of the body of Christ with Jesus and with one another. And that brings me to the next question...

Where? It is to be done with one another. It is depicted in Acts 20 and I Cor. 11 as being done together in a gathering...something that they came together in one place to do. It is pictured as a fellowship activity...a way of demonstrating acceptance of all others...and a oneness with all the others of like faith.

What? The two items mentioned, both originally by the Lord, and later reiterated by Paul in I Cor. are bread and fruit of the vine. There were other items at the last passover meal of Jesus, from which the Lord’s Supper came...such as there was some kind of sauce that He dipped into and signified Judas as the betrayer (remember that?) but He used only two for His new covenant purposes and Paul commands two also to the Corinthians, and so then out of respect for silence and so as to not add to what God has said, we here place no other food with it nor any topping on the bread...no condiments or sauces, etc. -- I might mention before leaving this point, that we use unleavened bread because we conclude that is what the Lord would have used based on OT knowledge of the passover meal and also a statement made in Luke 22:1 that this was during the feast of unleavened bread. And so, as mentioned just a moment ago, we discern that it is good, based on what the Scriptures say, we infer that the bread used by the brotherhood in the early churches and now all the way down through time to us here today, ought to be unleavened as well. Sometimes you will hear that called necessary inferences. We gather from what is said that this is what it ought to be.

How? Once again, just as it was with the Lord’s Supper, some things are stipulated, others things are left to discretion or expediency and judgment. Stipulated in I Cor. 16 and II Cor. 8-9 is that the giving be according to one’s prosperity...freely without compulsion. And so based on that, mandating a tithe is not practiced here...and these freewill offerings are the only method by which monies are brought into the church. God did not say that it is the only way...nor did He say that other ways such as bake sales, bingo parties, or charging for services are wrong...but we respect what the Lord has said and His silence, and this is what we then do here. -- But, then there are other how-to’s left to our own discretion...passing the plate or leaving it on the front table (we do both here) or some third alternative...

3. There you have it...the authority to take up a collection. Yes, we are authorized to do so...we are commanded to do so...but I would rather emphasize that we are privileged to do so each Lord’s Day. Will the assistants please join me again.
loading and unloading before we ever reached Nigeria. My point, the support of preaching of the gospel includes the expenses and costs of getting that done. -- Similarly, the costs of providing for the edification of the flock might be providing me a computer or internet service, or paper and books, or songbooks and bibles or postage and telephone or such gas money for John and I to visit the members. These are the logistics of edifying the assembly and are expedient judgments that will be made.


Who? Every saint is to give as God says in I Cor. 16:1-2. Whether rich or poor or somewhere in between, every one is to give.

Where? Into a stored up place...the first mention in the NT is a bag or box. Then we have it being laid at the apostle’s feet. Now, since this could have ended up being a huge sum (some sold lands and brought the proceeds) they surely secured it somehow, somewhere, but in the absence of more specifics, it can be a bag, or box, or under a mattress, or in a safe...or in a bank.

What? Physical prosperity...once again there is no specific bound, but expediency says money works better than canned goods or a live chicken. But, if you wish to deed a piece of land to the church it will be accepted.

When? Scripture says on the first day of every week. Or every Sunday is how we might say it. Though not stated, this likely coincides with the gathering each Sunday for the Lord’s Supper that we spoke about earlier. And just as we respect the silence of God on the Lord’s Supper, so too we do the offering...we here in this place will not accept or take up any offerings on any day other than Sunday.

When? We have come together in this place today...on a Sunday, to participate in the Lord’s Supper...why? Why today? Some might be quick to say, well, it is commanded. To which I would respond, yes and no. Yes, it is commanded of God, but not as an explicit statement of command, but rather through what I alluded to earlier...through examples. Luke when writing his second letter to Theophilus records that Troas Christians gathered on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). With no other day elsewhere mentioned, freeing us to choose other days, we stay with that which we know is right...we meet on a Sunday to do this.

How? This question has multiple answers. Some things are stipulated about how to eat and some things are left in the realm of personal judgment or expediency. We are told that each one is to eat in a worthy manner thinking of the body and blood of Jesus. And so every one wishing to participate in a few moments is welcome to eat and encouraged to examine yourself while eating so as to do so properly. We will eat it all together, for Paul condemns segregated eating. And we will eat the bread first and then the cup...that is the order Jesus made and Paul repeats and so even though God did not say we cannot change up the order, we here are conservative when it comes to things authorized of the Lord and we walk as safely as we possibly can by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God and which is recorded in the holy pages of the Bible. When we speak, we speak as the oracles of God and try to give a “It is written” reason for all we do. I might hasten to say that it is also due to such thinking that we will give thanks twice (once before each item) and not just one prayer for both. -- Now, beyond that, the Lord has not been more specific as to how...early or late in the day...early or late in the assembly...a long or short observance...one or many containers...silver, gold or plastic ware...large or small cups...large or small portions of bread...served by others or help yourself...placing it in your mouth simultaneous with all others or each one doing so as it reaches your hand...and I feel sure there are others.
3. There you have it...the authority to eat the Lord’s Supper. Yes, we are authorized to eat it...we are commanded to eat it...but I would rather emphasize that we are privileged to eat it each Lord’s Day. Will the assistants please join me.

The Collection

1. Are we authorized to take up a collection?

Just as with the Lord’s Supper, let me begin with this...the Lord had a box in which they had a collection of funds to pay for their needs or give to the poor. - See John 13:29. -- But that is the Lord and His apostles, you say...maybe not for us today...NICE...you are a quick learner...But I Cor. 16:1-2 indicates that this practice of storing up funds was passed on to the Corinthian congregation. -- But that was the Corinthian church...true...but Paul says that he had given similar orders to the churches of Galatia...and if we go to Acts 4:34-35 we see where funds were gathered in Jerusalem and distribution then made to needs. -- So, unless we write off the entire teaching of the NT, as having any weight of obligation on anyone of any age, then we are authorized to take up a collection for the operations of this church.

2. And what are those operations?

Well, just as with the Lord’s Supper, we look to the Holy pages to see if God has spoken or not...are there any oracles of God, or are we left on our own to decide what to do with the money? What are the purposes of contributing to the Lord? --

The collection mentioned in I Cor. 16 was for the needy saints in Judea. Though needs were sometimes worldwide, the collections of the church were for brethren. And so, following that pattern, tomorrow this congregation is sending relief to needy Christians in Zimbabwe. -- II Cor. 11:8-9 shows churches paying wages for preaching work. And so, following that revealed pattern this congregation recently paid Rennie for his preaching labors and is providing Tim Rosengarten money for his preparations to preach in Australia. -- And thirdly, churches have operational expenditures in providing for the edification of its own membership...for example, in I Timothy 5:17-18, we learn that elders may be paid for their shepherding services...and no, this is not a solicitation for John and me. Ha! But, should the congregation so choose to pay for its edification through paying us, we are authorized to do so. And then there are my own wages as an evangelist. As Paul instructed Timothy to do well his work as an evangelist within the church (II Timothy 4:5), so do we...church funds are used for the building up of this band of saints through my support. -- Therefore, what we see is that the Sunday contributions made by members of a congregation may be used for any of these Scripturally authorized activities or works of a collectivity of saints. They can be lumped into three broad categories...preaching the gospel...relieving needy Christians...providing for it’s own edification...and included are the expediencies of getting that done. For example, our relieving needy saints in Zimbabwe will include postage to get a check in the mail...a fee for wiring money overseas...grain to be purchased in South Africa...and gas for a truck to transport it to Zimbabwe. I imagine there are other logistical expenses. -- In paying to have Rennie preach to us we not only paid for his services, but gas money to come from MN. Likewise, included in paying Tim for his preaching work in Australia are the logistics of getting there. I recall my father in the early 60’s was supported to go preach in Africa and we spent a week in NYC waiting for a call from the shipping company as to when we could board the freighter and then were 3 weeks on the Atlantic without seeing land...and then another week or so including stops in Liberia and Ghana for...