

Unity In The Church

One Cup (Mt 26:26-29)

INTRODUCTION

1. Good Morning,
 - a. Greeting...
2. Series of lessons on the “Unity In The Church.”
 - a. Last week we looked at “Women’s Authority.”
 - i. **I Co 11:3** “But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God.”¹
 - b. This week we are going to be examining some brethren’s claim that for the Lord’s Supper, in particular the fruit of the vine, we must only use “One Cup.”
 - i. **Mt 26:27-28** “And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you, 28 for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”
3. The Lord’s Supper today.
 - a. Illustration:
 - i. Brother Hardeman Nichols tells of the time he was on a missionary journey.
 - ii. He was stopping off one Sunday in a familiar place where he had been often when going on this trip.
 1. This particular congregation only used one cup for the fruit of the vine.
 2. Each time they started on the front right, looking from the back of the auditorium, and continued to the back.
 - iii. Brother Nichols knowing their tradition from past time worshiping with the brethren made it a point to get there early and it in the front right.
 1. That Sunday they start in the back left.
 - b. Today we do not think twice about having multiple cups but in earlier years this was a heated discussion.
4. Brethren have been divided over this issue far too long and truth be told there are not many brethren today who have studied it enough anymore to know if we are in the right or wrong.
 - a. Therefore we are going to examine this most needed topic to find if we are indeed right or wrong in our worship of parting of the fruit of the vine.

I. The Argument For One Cup

- A. The verses containing the Lord’s Supper talk about a singular cup
 1. Notice the verse...
 - i. **Mt 26:27** “And he took **a cup**, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you”²
 - ii. **Mk 14:24** “And he took **a cup**, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it.”
 - iii. **Lk 22:20** “And likewise **the cup** after they had eaten, saying, “**This cup** that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”

¹ All Scriptures are taken from the ESV unless otherwise noted. If other translations are used this is not necessarily an endorsement of the translation.

² Where ever bold is found in a verse the emphasis is mine and not the translations.

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- iv. **I Co 11:25** “In the same way also he took **the cup**, after supper, saying, “**This cup** is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”
- v.
2. Thus the argument goes...
 - i. The Scriptures clearly state there was but one cup and thus we should use but one cup.
- B. History proves there was only cup as multiple cups did not come until the 1800’s
 1. Notice this argument by Steve Melton, an Oklahoma native and advocate of the one cup.
 - i. “...we know that individual cups were introduced in the late 1800s. When was the use of one cup introduced?” (<http://goo.gl/C4WkKw>)
 - ii. “We know G.C. Brewer introduced them into the Church of Christ in 1915. In his book, “Forty Years on the Firing Line” he says: “I think I was the first preacher to advocate the use of individual communion cup and the first church in the state of Tennessee to adopt it was the church for which I was preaching, the Central Church of Christ at Chatanogga, Tennessee.” The modern individual communion cup service was invented by G.C. Thomas in 1894. He further states “My next work was with the church at Columbia, Tennessee, and after a long struggle I got the individual communion service into that congregation.” (Ibid)
 2. Thus the argument goes...
 - i. This was not a common practice until the 1800’s and as such this proves that the early church used one cup.
- C. The one cup represents the one covenant
 1. Notice this argument by Steve Melton.
 - i. “The cup is both literal and metaphorical. The literal one container is a metaphor for the one covenant that we have. The metaphorical cup does not represent literal physical copies of the new testament, but the testament itself.” (Ibid)
 2. Thus the argument goes...
 - i. The cup not the fruit of the vine is the covenant and as such is a command by which we are to follow.

II. The Arguments In Light Of The Scripture

- A. Understanding metonymy a figure of speech
 1. There is a common use of speech called metonymy in the Bible.
 - i. Metonymy simply means a change in name or when one thing stands for another.
 2. The use of metonymy is often found in our everyday language.
 - i. “I drank the whole cup.”
 - ii. “The kettle is boiling.”

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3. The use of metonymy is often found in the Scriptures.
 - i. **Gn 6:11** “Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight...”
 - a. Earth here is the people not the plant we live on.
 - ii. **Jn 3:16** “For God so loved the world...”
 - a. World here is the people not the globe we live on.
- B. The argument for “a cup” in Scripture along with the cup representing the new covenant
 1. There can be no doubt that the use of a single cup was used by Christ when He instituted the command to partake of the Lord’s Supper.
 - i. The Scriptures previously mentioned show that very well.
 2. The question isn’t if Jesus used one cup the question is where is the emphasis is found. Is it with the vessel or the contents?
 - i. To understand this we must understand that Jesus used metonymy with the word cup.
 - a. In other words the word cup was to be seen as the fruit of the vine as we will see.
 - ii. Notice...
 - a. **Mt 26:27-29** “And he took **a cup**, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “**Drink of it**, all of you, **28 for this is my blood of the covenant**, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. **29 I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine** until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”
 1. The cup is the new covenant which is the fruit of the vine.
 - b. **Lk 22:20** “And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “**This cup that is poured** out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”
 1. Notice the cup was poured out.
 - c. **Lk 22:17** “And he took **a cup**, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take **this**, and **divide it** among yourselves.”
 1. Notice the cup was to be divided.
 - d. **I Co 11:25-27** “In the same way also he took **the cup**, after supper, saying, “**This cup is the new covenant in my blood**. Do this, as often as you **drink it**, in remembrance of me.” **26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup**, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. **27 Whoever**, therefore, eats the bread or **drinks the cup of the Lord** in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord.”
 1. Notice the cup is the new covenant and they were to drink of the cup.

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- iii. This is further illustrated by Paul explaining that no matter how many cups are used they there is still one cup of the Lord.
 - a. **I Co 10:16** “The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ...”
 1. God through Paul makes clear that when the brethren are using multiple cups all over the world they are participating in one cup.
 - i. That cup though is the fruit of the vine.
 - b. Thus not matter how many cups are used the congregation is still partaking of the fruit of the vine or one cup of the Lord.
- C. The argument for “history”
 1. There is no doubt that in the church of Christ, during the early days in America, the common practice was a single cup use.
 - i. This is not a valid argument however as the early days of the church, in America, had many issues that were not accurate.
 - ii. Also a plea to history does not really prove anything.
 2. Notice in the 4th century multiple cups were already being used in the Lord’s Supper albeit by the Catholics.
 - i. “Then he distributes to the clergy; and when the deacons take the disks Or patens. and the chalices (plural) for distribution to the people, the Deacon, who takes the first disk...” (<http://goo.gl/C4WkKw>)
 - a. Notice chalices is plural.
 - ii. The idea that it started in the 1800’s if simply far from accurate.
 3. Though looking at history is good for determining what was the “norm” for the church in different times it cannot be used to “prove” anything.
 - i. That Bible is our authority not history.

CONCLUSION

1. Brothers and sisters I have no problem if some of our brotherhood wants to use a single cup to distribute the fruit of the vine to the members of that congregation.
 - a. The problem is when it is bound on others either way.
 - i. We should not bind multiple cups nor should they bind a single cup.
 - b. Let us each have a better understanding on this topic and grow from it.
2. Question: Did you know how to defend this?
 - a. If so that is great!!!
 - b. If not why not as it has divided the brotherhood and is something we all should know.
3. Invitation
 - a. For those that are Christians but are not living for Christ repent by confessing your sins to God that He may forgive you and dedicate your life/time back to Him.
 - i. **I Jn 1:7, 9** "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin...9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

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- b. For those that are not Christians or for those that think they are Christians and want to know for sure notice what is required to become a child of God or Christian according to God and God only.
- i. Hear/Study **Rom 10:17; II Tim 2:15**
 - ii. Have Faith In Jesus **Jn 3:16; 8:24**
 - iii. Repent/Turn To God **Ac 17:30; Lk 24:47**
 - iv. Confess Jesus As Lord **Mt 10:32; Rom 10:9**
 - v. Immersed For The Forgiveness of Sins **Ac 2:38; 22:16; I Pt 3:21**
 - vi. Live A Faithful Life **I Jn 1:7; Eph 5:8**