

“ONE BREAD AND ONE CUP”

There is a booklet in circulation where the author maintains that churches of Christ should agree to partake of only one loaf of bread and drink from one cup on the Lord's day in their communion services. We can agree with the apostle Paul that there is only one bread for the communion, and one cup, but cannot agree with those who maintain that there can only be one literal loaf of bread, and one literal cup (container) for the fruit of the vine. These “one cup churches of Christ” are scattered throughout Texomaland, meeting in small buildings and do their advertising through a TV program called “*Let the Bible Speak*” by Brett Hickey. These folks maintain that it is scriptural to have only **one loaf** of bread (unleavened) and only one **cup** fruit of the vine in each congregation.. They argue that our practice of more than one cup, and bread that is different in form than “one loaf” is unscriptural and that the word “one” must modify the number of loaves and cups in our communion.

{1} Before delving into this position, let's look at what the New Testament says about the two elements of the communion. When Jesus was with the disciples in His last Passover meal, He used the two elements **of** the Passover to institute the Lord's Supper for Christian worship. FIRST He took “bread (Matt. 26:26; Luke 22:19) and gave it to the disciples, saying to them “This is my body which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19). Note 3 things from this passage: [1] The bread represents the body of the Lord, as “body” is used symbolically. It was not His body literally, for He was still alive, and He “took bread,” and it was understood **as** such by His disciples. The word “bread” is from the Greek word *artos* which can be translated “bread” as to content, or “loaf” as to form. The size of loaves in the first century varied from a very small loaf about the size of a banana to about the size of our one pound loaf of bread. We do not know which size was used the night of the Passover in Luke 2.

{2} The first congregation of the church met in Jerusalem and consisted of about 3,000 members (Acts 2:41), AND soon had multitudes added to their number (Acts 5:14), Then later that number was “multiplied” (Acts 6:11); and then later that number was multiplied greatly, to a number in the thousands. They continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread (communion). They were together and had all things common, and met in the temple (Acts 2:43-46). When Saul began to persecute the church, its members were scattered and went to other places, preaching the word and establishing congregations that observed the Lord's Supper. We do not know for certain just how they distributed communion, but their method was surely effective, for they were able to meet each Lord's day. **If** they had only one loaf numerically, and one cup numerically, it could **not** have been completed in one day, and one container would have been too large to pass around. A multiplicity of containers was probably the answer. (2) Then the bread represented something “given” in sacrifice: (cf John 3:16). (3) Next we learn they “remembered” Jesus in their weekly communion. It was to be a permanent remembrance of the death of Jesus. Cf 1 Cor. 11:25-26

{3} This “bread” was undoubtedly the bread that had been used in the Passover. Such was unleavened in nature, that as had been commanded by God (Exo. 13:7). Hence, “the “unleavened” (lifeless) bread could truly suggest something else lifeless, the body of our Lord. Now when the Passover was originally given, God gave “some” significance to it

being unleavened, and the feast was called “The Feast of Unleavened bread.” Just as the Lord later told the disciples to take the cup of fruit of the vine and divide or distribute it, there was surely some way the unleavened bread was distributed at this point.

{4} The Lord did not identify **any** container **for** the bread, whether it was to be a large bowl, basket or bucket, for it was surely a matter of insignificance or choice, as the container meant nothing prophetically or spiritually. So, if the container of the bread was insignificant, **why** would the container for the fruit of the vine (the cup) be significant? The purpose of a cup was simply to contain or hold the juice. Some have tried to make the “container” stand for something, such as the New Testament. If that be true, and we only have one testament (the New Testament), then there should only be one copy of the New Testament in the assembly of the church when the Lord’s Supper is observed. Speaking of the “container,” **if** when Jesus blessed the “cup”, He was blessing the container rather than the content: (a) If he also blessed the content in the same prayer **or** at a different time, was He blessing 2 cups: the cup **and** the container? (b) If he did bless the content at the same time **when** did He bless the content? Did He leave the content **unblessed**? Yet, we know He did the same for both! Matt. 26: says He “**gave thanks**”, while 1 Cor. 10:16 says He “blessed” the cup. (c) One more point for consider: **If Jesus blessed both the container and the contents (2 cups), then there are 2 cups, and the whole “one cup movement” collapses.**

{5} **Incidentally**, when Jesus “blessed” the cup, He was **not** pronouncing some kind of special blessing **upon** the cup, but was simply giving thanks. This is proven from looking at Matt. 26:26-27. Verse 26 says Jesus “blessed it” (the bread) and then took some for Himself, and **then he “took the cup”** and gave thanks.” He did not do for one which He did not do for another! IF He blessed the bread, but then gave thanks for the cup, and they are not the same thing, then He left one “un-blessed” and “gave thanks” for one and did not give thanks for another

{6} Another important point is clear from 1 Cor. 10:16. We are told by advocates of the false doctrine of “one bread and one cup” that the use of the term “the cup”, with the word “cup” being **singular** “proves” that one cup is ALL we can have in a congregation. Well, what proves too much proves nothing. IF this claim about “cup” being singular” proves ONE cup permission, then it would follow that in the first century that a **half cup is all a congregation can have.** Now, you may ask, “Why do you say that?” Simply this: In 1 Cor. 10:16, we have the writer, Paul, being **in Ephesus** when he writes, and he writes **to** the church in Corinth, and uses the plural “we” (two congregations) blessing a “**cup**” singular. **was it the same cup?** OR, did one congregation bless it, and someone get on a donkey and take it to the other congregation and they bless it again, OR did they just get in on the first blessing? They had no jet plane to even make it possible for the one cup to be used by 2 congregations on the same Lord’s day. Ponder this!!

{7} Now, the bread being “unleavened” brings to mind that the fruit of the vine was also to be “unleavened” or unfermented, that is, not intoxicating. The word “wine” (Heb. *Yayin*, the drink of the feast of unleavened bread) was thus to become a part of the institution of the Lord’s Supper, and it too was unfermented. Whatever was IN the cup represented the blood of Jesus. Jesus said the cup originally contained *yayin* of the Old Testament.

{8} One final point. In Luke 22:17, Jesus told the disciples to take “the cup” and “divide it” among themselves. How were they to divide the container—with a hammer? Certainly not! He was **NOT** talking about a container there, but they were to each have a part of the contents—the fruit of the vine. They did THIS before Jesus blessed or gave thanks for the cup. It was **then** that they drank. Remember, the cup had already been divided (obviously from a large cup (or container) and NOW it has been divided into at least 12 smaller cups or containers. So, here in the institution of the Lord’s Supper you have a **plurality of cups as commanded by the Lord.**

{9} Yes, there is one bread (unleavened), and one cup (fruit of the vine).

{10} Brett Hickey of the “one cup” persuasion spends much of his space quoting from some who agree with him, rather than true arguments from scripture. Most of his arguments that are from scripture center around the word “cup” itself, being “singular” in number when referring to the Lord’s Supper. Let’s see if his arguments are valid or consistent. FIRST, let’s see how Jesus used the word cup, and note that He says “cup” with reference to the communion IS “fruit of the vine.” Luke records, “And he took **the cup** and gave thanks, and said, Take this and **divide** it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of **the fruit of the vine**, until the **kingdom** of God shall come.” (Luke 22:17-18) Note that “cup” and “fruit of the vine” are used interchangeably—showing that the cup is fruit of the vine, and that the cup is fruit of the vine—in this context. Jesus said to “divide” the cup between themselves, now making 12 cups among them. Do we suppose that the disciples thought Jesus was inconsistent, by telling them to use the word “cup” singular (one) and then divide it among themselves, and that it would no longer be “one”, for it is to be divided?? Though divided into 12 containers or cups, it is **still** “fruit of the vine. It was to be a part of worship when the kingdom of God would soon come, as Paul pointed out in 1 Cor. 11. Grape juice, being liquid, could not be divided and still be drinkable, but needed a container, and Jesus used the word “cup” to identify that container, and **now** that cup was in 12 containers, or 12 cups. Each container was smaller than the original container, as the whole cup was divided.

{11} In John 4:12, reference is made that Jacob and his children all drank from the well in Samaria as they journeyed. Surely they did not tip up the well (one source) and pass it around, but they all **“drank”** of the well, just as the disciples **“drank”** from the fruit of the vine.

{12} If Brett wants a passage that describes the church having one cup, I’ll do better than that. I’ll give him a passage that describes 2 churches having the same cup in two different cities, and on the same day. Turn in your New Testament to 1 Cor. 10. In verse 14 he refers to the recipients as “dear beloved.” **They** were members of the church in the city of Corinth, where they lived, while Paul was in the city of Ephesus (16:7-18) with a different congregation, **Yet**, Paul uses the word “we” to describe those who engage in true worship, at 2 different locations. IN that worship, there is the “cup”, that saints in both congregations used—that being “the fruit of the vine.” Here is the passage: **“The cup** of blessing which **we** bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? **The bread** which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor. 10:16). So you see, when

trying to take a word that can be either singular or plural and trying restrict it to support a human theory or tradition of man, you run into trouble, what **proves** too much proves nothing. Brethren need to stop perverting the scripture to support a hobby. Seems to me I read somewhere in the scripture that such is sinful (Gal. 1:7; 2 Pet. 3:16). So, “the cup” does **not** support the demands of God to only have “one container” for the communion, but to have only **one content in the container, “fruit of the vine”, and one bread, unleavened.** One sitting at the breakfast table may say “pass me the gravy.” If someone else sitting next to the gravy reaches his hand into the gravy and tries to hand it to the one requesting gravy, may properly say, “That’s not what I meant. Pass me the **bowl**” is used figuratively—referring to that which the **bowl contains.** So it is with the cup in the Lord’s Supper. “And he took **the cup,** and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it, for **this is my blood of the New Testament which is shed for many for the remission of sins**” (Matt. 26:28). In the very next verse, He makes it clear that He was not emphasizing the “container” but the contents **the fruit of the vine.**

{13} The New Testament teaches “one bread” and “one cup”, and both represent the body and blood of Jesus, that we are to remember each time we commune.

{14} Our prayer is that we receive the truth with open minds, and be willing to accept truth as it is revealed, for who knows who may looking to us for a better understanding of what is right. Eternal life in heaven will be too wonderful to miss.

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