

First Things First (Marriage)

David Halbrook

Imagine a baseball team claiming many championships who later admitted that they had thirteen players in the field. “First things” matter in all of life—in marriage too! Jesus used Adam and Eve to show the first things of marriage--*He...made them male and female...what God has joined together, let not man separate* (Matt.19:4-6).

God joins man and woman (Matt. 19:4) God has never permitted anything else. Families, governments, or churches who differ write their laws to please man not God.

God joins one man to one woman (Matt. 19:6) Marriage is for “two.” Some people claim “love” cannot be limited by a number and seek “equal marriage rights.” God permitted polygamy before the gospel of Christ came but not since. Last year, the Mormon Church admitted that their founder, Joseph Smith, married dozens of women, even “a number of women who were already married.” www.lds.org/

God restricts divorce to the cause of adultery (Matt. 5:32; 19:9) Many religious groups and people strongly defend some parts of God’s plan but compromise this part.

If you do not teach your children these things, how will they know what true marriage is? (Ps. 127:1; Eph. 6:4).

Editor’s Note: Because previous generations did not like to retain the knowledge of God (Rom. 1:28) regarding marriage, many people today are ignorant of the “first things” of marriage. Use our *Arkansas Weekly* article to introduce these things to some, especially your children and grandchildren.

Simple opportunities to teach the lost and assist each other.

Pray for: Ed & Janice White, The Ledgerwoods, Novela Puckett, Noleka Hopper, Samuel Southall, others with ongoing trials, and new Christians among us.

Join us each Sunday at 10AM (classes), 10:45AM, & 5PM and Wednesday at 7PM.

church of Christ—Quail Valley
4104 E. Harrison St.
Batesville, AR 72501
Office- (870) 793-6700

Evangelist:
David Halbrook 569-4491

The Exhorter

Acts 11:23 *Exhorted them all... cleave unto the Lord*
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The One Cup & Church in Jerusalem

David Halbrook

Some Christians and churches insist that when drinking the fruit of the vine in the Lord’s Supper all must drink from the same container. They believe this as strongly as they do that the Lord’s Supper is a memorial of Jesus’ death. I am not writing to question their sincerity but to question their teaching by considering the church in Jerusalem in Acts 2-8. We know that God would not command something that was impossible to do, so is it possible that all saints in Jerusalem remembered Jesus’ blood by drinking the fruit of the vine from a single container? Some of these brethren have dismissed this point by doubting or denying that the church in Acts 2-8 was one single congregation. Here is one person’s explanation:

There is no reason to think that all Christians in that city made up only one congregation. Although they met daily in the temple, we know that they did not celebrate the Lord’s supper there. The Jews would never have permitted that! If they did not observe the supper there, then where? In their homes (Acts 2:46). <http://www.christianlandmark.com/why-only-one-cup/>

All Were Together As One Unified Congregation

Is there any reason to think that all of those who gladly received the apostles’ word in Jerusalem continued together as one congregation?

First, Acts 2:44 says, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” All 3,000 of them were together, so we do not have to doubt that there was a place for them to meet and do whatever they were meeting to do.

Second, we must consider the funds. To meet the physical needs of saints unable to meet their own needs, funds were laid “at the apostles’ feet” instead of each individual exclusively sharing with his brethren on a private basis (Acts 4:37; 5:2).

Today, this is commonly called a church treasury—funds given by the members of the church to the church for the needs of other members of the church. This fund is proof of a single church in Jerusalem overseen by the apostles.

Third, Acts 6 presents a single unified church in action. Verse 1 identifies a single, ongoing distribution. In verse 2, there was one assembly when “the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples”. Were the apostles assembling saints from a variety of congregations to solve the problem of a single congregation? In verse 3, there was a single unified solution to the problem offered by the apostles. The multitude of the disciples was told to find seven men “from among you...whom we may appoint over this business.” Will seven men from different congregations be appointed over the business of a single congregation? In verse 5, there was a single unified selection of seven men by the multitude, approved by the apostles.

There is no reason to think that all Christians in that city were divided into multiple congregations because all the evidence in the text identifies a single unified congregation in Jerusalem.

Did The Disciples Eat The Lord’s Supper *From House to House*?

Earlier, you read the claim that “although they met daily in the temple, we know that they did not celebrate the Lord’s supper there. The Jews would never have permitted that!” How do “we know that”? Whatever objections would have arisen when the disciples broke bread would have also arisen when the apostles’ doctrine was declared and when prayers were offered. Who can imagine that these daily meetings at the Temple were so neutral in their content that any Jew could have joined the meeting and agreed with all that was heard? Additionally, breaking bread is a part of the apostles’ doctrine---if breaking bread could be taught about in the Temple, it could be done in the Temple. If not, why not?

Then the author claims that the disciples met in the Temple but ate the Lord’s Supper from house to house (Acts 2:46). Since we have already seen that the disciples are a single unified congregation, then this claim is answered. There is no biblical basis to believe that a congregation may divide into small groups and meet in separate locations to worship on the Lord’s Day. This is the “satellite church” mentality of the denominations, not the thinking that comes from the apostles’ doctrine and practice. Saints come together as a church in order to break bread (1 Cor. 11:18, 20). In Acts 2:46, the disciples all met in the Temple and saints who were given to hospitality opened their homes to their brethren, just like often happens today after assemblies on the Lord’s Day and other occasions. In fact, I wish my brethren who build and maintain their “fellowship halls” would be content to imitate the teaching and practice

of the disciples of Jerusalem. If they would do so, this would be a step in healing divisions of the past and present.

Could Thousands of Disciples Meet and Worship in One Place?

In case anyone wonders whether it was possible for the thousands of disciples to have a place to meet and worship, the answer is clear. Matthew twice tells us that thousands assembled to hear Jesus teach, indicating that there were places which allowed all to sit or stand and hear (Matt. 14:21; 15:38). In Matthew 14:21 there “were about five thousand men, besides women and children,” so the number of people present could easily have been above ten thousand. On that occasion, when Jesus miraculously fed them, Jesus sat the people in groups of fifty in order to distribute the food (Lk. 9:14). This brings us back to the Lord’s Supper. We have no reason to doubt that the large single congregation in Jerusalem found a place where they could continue steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42).

And this brings us back to the original question---could the single congregation in Jerusalem have assembled and drunk the fruit of the vine from a single container?

The church of Jesus in Jerusalem began with 3,000 members on the day of Pentecost, and it is a safe estimate to say that eventually there were at least 10,000 saints in Jerusalem (Acts 2:41; 4:4; 6:7). If it takes a single individual three total seconds to receive a cup, drink from the cup, and pass the cup then it would take over four hours for five thousand people just to remember Jesus’ blood, not counting breaking bread, hearing the apostle’s doctrine, fellowship, praying, and singing. Beside that, there is no cup large enough to hold enough juice for that many people and refilling the same container several times would have extended the length of time it took to remember Jesus’ blood. You do the math for an assembly of ten thousand people, or more.

All this shows is that it was impossible for the saints in Jerusalem to assemble together and remember Jesus’ blood by using a single drinking vessel. This, among other points related to this study, forces us to this necessary conclusion---when Jesus “took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you for this is My blood of the new covenant. . . Do this in remembrance of Me,’” He was not requiring that they all drink directly out of the same vessel (Matt. 26:27-28; 1 Cor. 11:25). The church of the Lord in Jerusalem shows us that drinking the same substance for the same purpose is the communion of the blood of Christ even when all participants do not drink directly from the same vessel (1 Cor. 10:16).

Conclusion When all related evidence is weighed, we see that the cup of blessing is the fruit of the vine. By its nature, the fruit of the vine requires a container of some kind, and the number of containers used (one, two, or more) neither adds to nor subtracts from the substance of the memorial of Christ or the communion we share with Him by faith.

I pray that a study of these things will promote unity in the truth and restore unity where there has been unnecessary division.