

# 1 Corinthians 10:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils.

## Analysis

**Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table, and of the table of devils**—Paul draws the stark conclusion: dual participation is impossible. The verb οὐ δύνασθε (οὐ δύνασθε, "ye cannot/are not able") indicates not just prohibition but impossibility. This isn't "you shouldn't" but "you cannot"—it's spiritually, logically, and covenantally incoherent to claim fellowship with both Christ and demons.

**The cup of the Lord** versus **the cup of devils**; **the Lord's table** versus **the table of devils** creates direct antithesis. These are mutually exclusive covenants. Just as a wife cannot be simultaneously faithful to her husband and committing adultery, Christians cannot maintain covenant loyalty to Christ while participating in demon-worship. The parallelism emphasizes totality—not just avoiding the cup or the table, but both.

The word *trapezēs* (τραπέζης, "table") evokes covenant meals that establish binding relationships. Ancient treaties were sealed with shared meals. To eat at someone's table meant entering their protection, loyalty, and fellowship. Christians eat at the Lord's table, establishing covenant bond with Him. To then eat at demons' table commits covenant treason—spiritual adultery that provokes divine jealousy (v. 22).

## Historical Context

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Ancient Mediterranean culture understood table fellowship as creating binding social and spiritual obligations. To share a meal was to enter mutual commitment. Corinthian Christians who attended temple banquets (for business, social, or family reasons) while also taking communion thought they could compartmentalize these spheres. Paul insists covenant fellowship is indivisible—Christ demands exclusive loyalty, making dual participation impossible without spiritual catastrophe.

## Related Passages

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**1 Corinthians 13:4** — Characteristics of love

**John 15:13** — Greatest form of love

## Study Questions

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1. What dual allegiances in your life might seem compatible but actually constitute spiritual adultery against Christ?
2. How does the image of Christ's "table" versus demons' "table" clarify the stakes of seemingly minor compromises?
3. In what areas are you tempted to compartmentalize life into "spiritual" and "secular" zones rather than offering Christ comprehensive lordship?

## Interlinear Text

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οὐ δύνασθε ποτήριον κυρίου πίνειν καὶ ποτήριον  
Ye cannot G1410 the cup of the Lord drink and the cup  
G3756 G4221 G2962 G4095 G2532 G4221

δαιμονίων οὐ δύνασθε τραπέζης κυρίου μετέχειν  
of devils Ye cannot G1410 of the table of the Lord be partakers  
G1140 G3756 G5132 G2962 G3348

καὶ τραπέζης δαιμονίων  
and of the table of devils  
G2532 G5132 G1140

## Additional Cross-References

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**Matthew 6:24** (Parallel theme): No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

**1 Kings 18:21** (References Lord): And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

**Isaiah 65:11** (References Lord): But ye are they that forsake the LORD, that forget my holy mountain, that prepare a table for that troop, and that furnish the drink offering unto that number.

**1 Corinthians 10:16** (Parallel theme): 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 Corinthians 8:10** (Parallel theme): For if any man see thee which hast knowledge sit at meat in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols;