

1 Corinthians 11:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

Analysis

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper—Stinging indictment. Συνερχομένων οὖν ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτό (when you come together into one place)—the phrase epi to auto recalls Acts 2:44, 47 (believers gathered 'together'). Church assembly is meant for unity, but Corinthian practice contradicted this.

This is not to eat the Lord's supper (οὐκ ἔστιν κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν)—kyriakon deipnon (Lord's supper) appears here first in Scripture. Paul coins the term to distinguish the sacred meal from ordinary eating. Their gatherings looked like the Lord's Supper but weren't—divisions, gluttony, and drunkenness evacuated the meal of its covenantal meaning. Form without substance, ritual without reality. This anticipates vv. 27-29: unworthy participation brings judgment. The Lord's Supper belongs to the Lord and must reflect His character (self-giving love) and His body (unity in diversity).

Historical Context

The agape feast combined fellowship meal with Eucharist. Believers brought food to share—a countercultural practice in Greco-Roman society where meals were stratified by class. But Corinthians perverted this: wealthy members arrived early, consumed their lavish food and wine, and left nothing for poorer members arriving late from work. The resulting meal mimicked pagan banquets (hierarchical,

gluttonous) rather than embodying Christ's self-sacrifice. Paul's shock is palpable—how dare they call this "the Lord's Supper"?

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How can religious rituals be formally correct but spiritually empty?
2. What does it mean for a meal (or worship practice) to 'belong to the Lord'—how does ownership shape practice?
3. How might modern communion practices subtly undermine the Table's meaning through individualism or formalism?

Interlinear Text

Συνερχομένων οὖν ὑμῶν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ οὐκ ἔστιν

come together therefore When ye into one place not this is

G4905

G3767

G5216

G3588

G846

G3756

G2076

κυριακὸν δεῖπνον φαγεῖν·

the Lord's supper to eat

G2960

G1173

G5315

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