

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	G3588	one place	not	this is
G4905	G3767	G5216	G1909		G846	G3756	G2076
κυριακὸν	δεῖπνον	φαγεῖν·					
the Lord's	supper	to eat					
G2960	G1173	G5315					

From KJV Study • kjevstudy.org