scriptures (1 Cor. 2:6-16). This is Christianity in its foundation principles as contrasted with the world’s wisdom and power.

The fruit of these three great principles that make up Christianity is seen in 1 Cor. 3. The temple of God is formed by Paul, the wise master-builder; God had handed over the work of His temple to him to lay the foundation, namely, Christ Jesus, and to other Christians as the builders to build upon it. The walls were being built of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; and the builders were warned as to the material with which they would build it; but the assembly or the temple was God’s, and God the Holy Spirit dwelt in it. All this is brought in as a corrective to the evil of divisions, which was the fruit of that human wisdom that created great philosophers in Greece, as the heads of human opinion and schools of thought. This was working among the saints of Corinth. The true corrective power was for the saints to see that the vineyard was God’s, that the building was God’s, that they were the temple of God, and that God the Holy Spirit dwelt amongst them as in a house. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were but laborers in the vineyard and in the temple, servants of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God; but the assembly was His, not theirs.

Thus we see that, Christ having been rejected of the world, it has been judged by His cross; and God having exalted Him to His right hand in consequence of His obedience unto death, the Holy Ghost has come down from heaven, and baptized all believers into one body (1 Cor. 12:13). They then together on earth to be His habitation, His temple. How important, then, for the saints in these last days to gather on these principles, to realize the judgment of the flesh, their place in Christ where He is, and their union with Him by the Holy Ghost come down, as members of His body, builded together as God’s temple and under God’s rule.

It is only as thus gathered that God can in any way own a remnant as [meeting as] His assembly. For where the point of God and united together in any other way than to Christ, the Head of the church in heaven, and where they submit to human rules and ordinances, instead of the Holy Ghost, they are verily a sect; they are not gathered as God’s assembly, and He cannot own them.

Now the church set up in its responsibility to God is the way in which it is looked at in the Epistle to the Corinthians, especially in the first ten chapters. It is looked at in chapter 3 as the temple of God, founded by Paul, built by Christian builders, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in it. In chapter 12 it is the body of Christ, as we shall see further on.

1 Cor. 5 introduces us to the assembly of God gathered together to exercise discipline and the Lord’s table is introduced as the place on earth from which the evil which had got into the assembly was to be put away (see vv. 4, 5, and 7, 8). Consequently the Lord’s table held a special place, as it were, in God’s temple, and that is, the then gathered assembly; just as the feast of the Passover took its place amongst the Israelites as the memorial of their redemption out of Egypt. At that feast the lamb was slain, the blood was sprinkled, and each household fed on the roasted lamb (Lev. 23:5). Thus surely a shelter of the blood was at the same time put away all leaven out of their house. So Christ, our Passover, has been once sacrificed for us on Calvary’s cross, and Christians gather to the Lord’s table, on the ground of the blood of Christ, to remember this, and feed on the same slain, which they see by faith in the memorials spread before their eyes, having put away all evil from amongst them, of which the leaven was the type (see vv. 6-11). If any Israelite ate leavened bread, he was cut off from the congregation of Israel; so a Christian who eats the Lord’s supper, having fallen into sin morally or doctrinally, ought to be put away from the assembly.

Thus we see that the Lord’s table holds a most important place as the gathering place for the assembly of God. It is the memorial of redemption from sin, Satan, and the world, and consequently sin and untruth can have no place there. If it enters as a public known thing, it must be judged and put away, as the leaven was put away from the houses of the children of Israel when they kept the Passover. Thus the death of Christ holds a double place; whilst it is the death which saves and redeems, it is at the same time that by which all evil is judged.

Thus the temple of God is kept clean; thus the assembly preserves its character of being an unleavened lump (vv. 6, 7). Formed by the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God on the ground of redemption, and by the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, the assembly was a new creation outside the world; it was called practically to walk up to its standing, by exercising discipline and putting away manifested evil from the midst.

This the assembly at Corinth were not doing. A man had committed adultery among them; and, instead of mourning that such a sin was there, and that it was not taken away from them, they were puffed up, and glorying in their gifts. The apostle, therefore, writes to them, and connecting the holy name of Christ with the grace of the Spirit, and bringing to their remembrance His power for the judgment of the evil, he forces them to do it, not for the destruction of the man’s soul, but on the contrary for the destruction of the flesh; the outside of that which he would not judge, that his spirit might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.

All this brings out that God’s assembly is the place of judgment for the saints on earth. The world is outside, and God will judge it in the day of judgment; but the responsibility of the gathered assembly is to guard the character and doctrine; hence discipline must be exercised. There, also, difficult cases amongst the saints should be settled by some wise brother or brethren; for saints should never take their causes before the world’s law-courts (see 1 Cor. 6:1). The world’s law-courts are the place of judgment for the world; but the assembly of God, of which the Lord’s table is the place of gathering, is the place of judgment for the children of God.

1 Cor. 10:14-22 brings out the more blessed place the Lord’s table holds in connection with the communion of the saints, and the unity of the body of Christ. It is the place where the fellowship of the saints with Christ, after His death, and with one another, is exhibited, and that on the ground of the unity of the body of Christ.

The assembly is the body of Christ (see 1 Cor. 12:2, 13). The Lord’s table is the place where unity is exhibited by the members, all partaking of the one, the symbol of unity (see 1 Cor. 10:17).

This is put in contrast with Israel, and the Gentiles, in 1 Cor. 10:18-22. The Israelites, by partaking of the sacrifices offered on the altar of Judaism, showed their fellowship with that system of worship. The Gentiles, by partaking of the sacrifices offered on their altars, showed their fellowship with that system. But they offered to demons, consequently it was fellowship with demon worship.

At the Lord’s table the Christian exhibits fellowship with the Lord, and His altar, His death, and that as a member of the body of Christ with the others gathered on that ground [i.e., basis]. This would show the Corinthians the utter impossibility of mixing up fellowship at the Lord’s table with fellowship with devil worship. Thus we see that the Lord’s table holds the very central place in Christian worship; so much so that if saints are not gathered as members of Christ’s body to that table, there is no exhibition of the church of God in the place. The Lord’s table is the place of gathering, and saints gathered as members of one body, to show it by partaking together of the one loaf, which is the symbol of unity, and where the authority and claims of the Lord are owned. It is the Lord’s table. The Lord therefore invites; the assembly, as representing Him there, receives in His name (Rom. 15:7).

In 1 Cor. 11-14 we have [directions for] an orderly exhibition of the assembly and its working. Chapter 11:1-16 gives the introduction to it, in showing God’s present place as the gathering place for the assembly of God. It is the memorial of redemption from sin, Satan, and the world, and consequently sin and untruth can have no place there. If it enters as a public known thing, it must be judged and put away, as the leaven was put away from the houses of the children of Israel when they kept the Passover. Thus whilst the assembly is the place of judgment for the saints on earth, the world is outside, and God will judge it in the day of judgment; but the Lord’s table is the place of gathering, though the apostle would not allow that the way in which they were celebrating it was to be called a Lord’s supper. They were mixing it up with a common meal, and making it a time of feasting, forgetting altogether its real import.

To correct this the apostle lets us into the secret of having had a spiritual revelation from the Lord in glory in reference to the administration of the Lord’s supper. Before leaving the world (we know, in fact,
before the Lord’s death) He instituted the feast, putting it in the place of the Passover, which was the memorial of Israel’s redemption out of Egypt. But the full revelation of Christian institution is in the Lord’s death as having put Israel’s redemption out of the curse. But now the Lord, having been finally rejected by Israel as a nation, had taken a new place at the right hand of God, so that not only was the kingdom of heaven set up in a new form, but the assembly of God, the body of Christ, was formed. The special revelation of this mystery was given to Paul, namely, that Jew and Gentile were now fellow-heirs, members of one body, common partakers of God’s promises through Christ by the gospel (Eph. 3); and the Lord’s table was the place where the truth was exhibited, as we have seen in 1 Cor. 10. In the kingdom the Jew always had the first place, and the Gentile was to get the blessing sent through the people of Christ. In chapter 10 it is fellowship with the sacrifice --we participate together as members of the body of Christ in His death, but here it is more individual --we participate in the judgment of the body of Christ. We shew His death till He come. But this last thought, as I said, leads us on to the judgment of the flesh, for the flesh killed the Lord; to allow it at the Lord’s table, to eat and drink unhappily, irrespective of its moral results, is in communion with that which killed the Lord, and to be guilty of His body and blood. Thus we are led to individual self-judgment. And where there is not this in exercise, the Lord’s hand is laid on us in chastisement, sickness or even death, to the end that the flesh in us may be judged.

1 Cor. 12 brings out the truth of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, and His workings in the several gifts He gives to men; then the unity of the body formed by the baptized ones, and the special gifts of power, and its working in the members. Thus, the Lord’s supper being the great assembly meeting, we are prepared to see there how the Holy Ghost works in the assembly, which is now wholly viewed as the body of Christ, not using one member only (for the body is not one member, but many), but working in the unity of the whole body which should be there exhibited; many members, and yet but one body. Thus the principle of one-man ministry and many different bodies is entirely set aside. The double principle in the order of God’s assembly, is many members, yet working in one body. 1 Cor. 13 shows the true character of Christ and the Spirit, which is love, the true bond of union of the members. 1 Cor. 14 regulates the working of the assembly, for the Corinthians had turned the liberty of the Spirit into license. But all through the principle is, the reality of the presence of the Holy Ghost in the assembly, His free working in the members, the body which He Himself formed, and His character love, which should mark each member. In the assembly the women were to keep silence, for it was not permitted to them to speak. Thus we have seen in this blessed epistle the assembly in its double aspect of being the temple of God, and the body of Christ. In the former aspect it was the fruit of the wisdom of God in contrast with that human wisdom which was forming sects and parties, following leaders. It was founded on the cross of Christ which judged the flesh, Christ Himself in the glory, God’s wisdom and the Holy Ghost come down here as the Revealer and Communicator of that wisdom. In 1 Cor. 5 the Lord’s table is seen as the gathering place of the assembly on earth, a place from which all evil must be put away, as the heaven from the houses of the children of the Passover. Thus the assembly is the place of judgment for the saints on earth, where also amongst wise brethren any difficulties among the saints may be settled (chap. 6). In 1 Cor. 10 the Lord’s table is seen connected with that through the thought of the assembly being the body of Christ. There the saints have communication together over the Lord’s death. There they exhibit the unity of the body. This also guards them from fellowship with any other false system of worship. In 1 Cor. 11 we see the Lord’s supper plainly shown forth to be the assembly meeting, yet seen rather in the family aspect of the supper, the saints there individually remembering the Lord. He comes in, and exercising themselves in habitual individual self-judgment before they come there, so that the flesh might not dishonor the Lord. The great thing to realize is that it is the Lord’s table -- the Lord’s supper. The Lord is present in Spirit, though actually absent in body. His authority, therefore, should be owned there. According to the word in Eph. 4: 4, 5, there is one body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The ground of gathering is the unity of the body, the center of gathering is the Lord’s person, the place of gathering on earth is the Lord’s table. Here the Christians gather possessed of the Lord Himself, to break bread (Acts 2:42, 46) in remembrance of His death, and to worship the Father through Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:5).

May the Lord bless these few thoughts to the reader, that he may be enlightened both as to the true place the church holds, and as to the place the Lord’s table holds in connection with it.

A. P. Cecil,

The Bible Treasury

12:183-186.

2. (The worship is in the holiest -- see Hebrews.)

Present Truth Publishers
825 Harmony Road
Jackson NJ 08527 USA

Made and printed in USA
2009

website: presenttruthpublishers.com

The Lord’s Table, and Its Place in the Church

The Epistle to the Romans lays the foundation of Christianity. There, first, we see man, whether Gentile or Jew, a guilty sinner under the judgment of God which awaits him, and God as a justifier through Jesus and His blood; secondly, man, connected with Adam, born in sin, and God a deliverer through the same Jesus, whom He gives us His gift of eternal life (Rom. 1-7). The fruit is that the Holy Ghost is also given to him that believes, and Rom. 8 shows his full place as being in Christ, and Christ in him, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. In this position he waits for the appearing of glory, and the deliverance of creation by the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven.

First Corinthians follows in beautiful order. The individual place of the Christian having been settled, his corporate place in the church of God is then seen. We have there the internal condition of an assembly of God laid before us, and the true place the church holds in the midst of the world explained. It is addressed to the assembly of God at Corinth, which is looked at under two aspects, being the temple of God and the body of Christ (Rom. 1-7). The fruit is that the Holy Ghost is also given to him that believes, and Rom. 8 shows his full place as being in Christ, and Christ in him, and the Holy Ghost dwelling in him, bearing witness with his spirit that he is a child of God. In this position he waits for the appearing of glory, and the deliverance of creation by the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ from heaven.