

THE PATTERN FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER:

# ONE CUP

(by George Battey)

The Lord's supper has been a point of controversy for a long time. Men are divided over 6 issues:

- 1) *Is the bread and fruit of the vine symbolic of the body and blood or do they actually become the body and blood?*
- 2) *When and how often should the communion be eaten?*
- 3) *Do all the disciples have to be assembled together to eat the supper?*  
(Transporting to sick; night communion).
- 4) *Can the church use plurality of loaves or divide the loaf?*
- 5) *Can fermented wine or even water be used?*
- 6) *Can a plurality of cups be used?*

In this study, we will focus only on the use of one cup.

I'm going to give 7 reasons why only one cup should be used.

## REASON #1: COMMANDED

### 1) One cup was commanded by the Lord.

*Matthew 26:26-29* (NKJV)

26 *And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body."*

27 *Then He took **the cup**, and gave thanks, and gave **it** to them, saying, "Drink from **it**, all of you.*

28 *For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for*

*the remission of sins.*

*29 But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."*

**"Then He took the cup"** (v27) – the word "cup" is from the Greek word **pothrion**. This word is defined as: ↯

- **"a cup, a drinking vessel"** (Thayer 533). According to Thayer this word is used literally in v27. Jesus took a literal drinking vessel in His hands.
- **"cup, drinking vessel"** (Arndt & Gingrich 702). According to Arndt & Gingrich this word is used literally in v27. Jesus took a literal drinking vessel in His hands.

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**NOTE:** ALL linguistic authorities concur that in Mt 26:27 the word "cup" is being used literally. Jesus picked up a literal cup in His hands.

The reason I'm emphasizing this is because some argue the word "cup" is used figuratively throughout the accounts of the Lord's supper. They argue since it is used figuratively:

- *We can't tell how many cups the Lord used.*
- *We can't tell if He even had a cup at all.*
- *It doesn't matter whether we use one literal cup or not.*

They are wrong. Verse 27 uses the word "cup" literally according to all linguistic authorities.

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Since the word "cup" is used literally, here's what we learn from Mt 26:

- *Jesus picked up one literal cup.*
- *Inside the literal cup was grape juice (v29).*
- *He gave thanks for the juice in only one cup.*
- *He gave one cup to His disciples.*
- *He commanded all the disciples to drink from the one cup He gave them.*

*Here is a command from the Lord for all the disciples to drink from one cup.*

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**NOTE:** Even if each disciple had his own cup at the table, it does not change the fact that they were commanded to drink from the one cup which Jesus handed them.

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I could stop right there and I have proven one cup is required, but I will give more proof:

*1 Corinthians 11:2* (NKJV)

*2 Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.*

Here we are reminded to keep the divine traditions "*just as they were delivered.*"

*1 Corinthians 11:23* (NKJV)

*23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: ...*

**Q:** Why do we have to keep divine traditions "*just as they were delivered*"?

**R:** Because they came directly from the Lord.

*1 Corinthians 11:23-25* (NKJV)

*23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;*

*24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."*

*25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. **This do**, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

**"This do"** – a command to do what Jesus did. Here, again, one cup is commanded.

**SUMMARY:**

- We are commanded to keep divine traditions "*just as they were delivered.*"

- The apostle received his instructions directly from the Lord Himself.
- The instructions were to follow the example of the Lord.
- The example includes only one undivided loaf of unleavened bread.
- Only one cup containing unfermented grape juice.

One cup, then, is commanded by the Lord Himself and by the apostles.

REASON #2:  
EXAMPLE

2) One cup is the example given. In Mt 26 we read the command of Jesus:

*Matthew 26:27* (NKJV)  
27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying,  
"Drink from it, all of you.

**Q:** Did the disciples actually drink from that one cup?

*Mark 14:23* (NKJV)  
23 Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave **it** to them, and **they all drank from it.**

There is the binding example.

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**"example"** – "a particular single item ... that serves as a pattern to be imitated" (Webster).

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This was given as a pattern to be imitated. How do I know this?

*1 Corinthians 11* (NKJV)

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: ...

25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. **This do**, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

What Jesus did when instituting the communion, we are to follow as an example.

- *We must use unleavened bread – because that's what He used.*
- *Unfermented grape juice ...*
- *We just use only one loaf ...*
- *One cup ...*

Brethren using individual cups are inconsistent.

- If someone started using *leavened bread* (Mormons) instead of **un**leavened bread, they would point to the pattern of Jesus.
- If someone started using *water* (Mormons) instead of fruit of the vine, they would point to the pattern.
- If someone started observing the communion *on Friday once a year* (Jehovah's Witnesses), they would point to the pattern (Acts 20:7).

**Q:** Why do we have to follow the pattern in all of these things, but we do not have to follow the pattern in every respect?

- *Why does it matter what we eat?*
- *What we drink?*
- *When we do it?*
- *BUT ... it doesn't matter **how** we do it?*

So ... one cup is required because **it is commanded by Jesus** and **it is the divine example given for us to follow.**

REASON #3:  
IMPLIED

3) One cup is implied by the Lord.

Thomas Warren:

Let it be repeated: what is bound on men living today by the *implication* of explicit statements is bound not because *men* have *inferred* it, but because *God* has *implied* it by His explicit statements. (When Is An Example Binding, 29)

This is important: *What is binding on men today is bound not because men have inferred it, but because God has implied it.*

One cup is required because it is implied by the Lord Himself:

1 Corinthians 11:26 (NKJV)

*26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

**"You (pl) ... drink this cup"** – here are a plurality of brethren. The word "you" is plural. A plurality of brethren are to "*drink this cup.*"

In this passage the Lord is implying that all Christians in the assembly drink from one cup. If a plurality of cups had been used, the passage would have said:

*26 For as often as you ... **drink these cups**, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

By saying, "*as often as you ... drink this cup,*" the Lord implied only one cup.

REASON #4:  
SYMBOLIC

4) One cup is symbolic. What does it signify?

**"This is my blood"** (Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24) – the word *"this"* grammatically and logically refers to the grape juice inside the cup. The grape juice represents the blood of Christ.

**"of the new covenant"** (v28) – means the blood *ratifies* the new covenant.

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**NOTE:** The blood is one thing. The new covenant is another thing. They are two separate items.

The grape juice does **not** represent the new covenant.

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If we had only Matthew and Mark, we would not know that the cup itself represented anything. With Matthew and Mark we only know what the grape juice represents.

Luke focuses on the cup (container) and explains what it represents:

Luke 22:20 (NKJV)  
*20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."*

**"This cup is the new covenant"** – means the cup *represents* the new covenant.

**"in My blood"** – means *ratified* by the blood of Christ.

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Let this soak in: *The cup represents the new covenant.*

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The apostle Paul, who trained Luke, said the same thing:

1 Corinthians 11:25 (NKJV)

*25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "**This cup is the new covenant in My blood.** This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

The cup represents the new covenant.

When Jesus died, three things happened:

- *His body was sacrificed.*
- *His blood was shed.*
- *The new covenant became ratified.*

In the communion, the Lord gave three things to remind us of these significant items:

One loaf ⇒ body

Grape juice ⇒ blood

One cup ⇒ new covenant

**There are three elements in the Lord's supper – not just two.** *The "emphasis"* is not on the fruit of the vine only. Emphasis is also placed on the container itself.



## SYMBOLS

Every major covenant which God made had a symbol to represent that covenant.

### 1) Noah.

*Genesis 9:13 (NKJV)*

*13 I set My **rainbow** in the cloud, and it shall be for **the sign of the covenant** between Me and the earth.*

The rainbow doesn't look like a covenant, but it symbolized a covenant simply because God said so.

### 2) Abraham.

*Genesis 17:11 (NKJV)*

*11 and you shall be **circumcised** in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be **a sign of the covenant** between Me and you.*

Circumcision doesn't look like a covenant, but it symbolized a covenant simply because God said so.

### 3) Israel.

*Exodus 31:16-17 (NKJV)*

*16 Therefore the children of Israel shall keep **the Sabbath**, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant.*

*17 It is **a sign** between Me and the children of Israel forever; ...*

The Sabbath day doesn't look like a covenant, but it symbolized a covenant simply because God said so.

#### 4) Christians.

*Luke 22:20 (NKJV)*

*20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.*

The cup doesn't look like a covenant, but it symbolizes a covenant simply because God said so.

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**REMEMBER:** The grape juice is not symbolic of the new covenant. It symbolizes the blood which ratified the covenant. The cup itself symbolizes the covenant.

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This is why *one cup* is significant.

- ***Jesus had only one body.*** *It is fitting, therefore, that only one loaf be used to symbolize His one body in communion. (1 Cor 10:16-17).*
- ***Jesus ratified only one covenant.*** *It is fitting, therefore, that only one cup be used to symbolize that one covenant.*

REASON #5:

#### THE WORD "COMMUNION"

#### 5) One cup fulfills the meaning of the word "communion."

The word "*communion*" requires the use of only one loaf and one cup.

**"Communion"** – means "*joint participation*" or "*sharing something together.*"

"*Communion*" and "*individual*" are antonyms. It is impossible to have "*individual communion.*"

"Communion" implies assembling together with brethren and sharing something with each other.

Acts 20:7 (NKJV)

7 ... on the first day of the week, ... **the disciples came together** to break bread, ...

1 Corinthians 11:33 (NKJV)

33 Therefore, my brethren, when you **come together to eat**, wait for one another.

If communion were "individual" they would not need to "come together."

Communion requires all the brethren assembling together and sharing together the one loaf and one cup.

The Christians at Corinth were not sharing together anything and were therefore not having communion:

1 Corinthians 11:20-22 (NKJV)

20 Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

21 For in eating, **each one takes his own supper** ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you.

**"each one takes his own supper"** (v21) – when these brethren ate by themselves "ahead of others" without sharing, they were turning the Lord's supper into an "individual supper."

An "individual supper" is not the Lord's supper.

An "individual supper" is each man's "own supper."

- The Lord's supper is sharing together a common loaf and cup.

- *This passage is an explicit prohibition against everyone has their own wafer and cup.*

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This is why serving the Lord's supper on Sunday afternoon is wrong.

**ILL:** Many congregations allow brethren to miss worship on the Lord's day. While most of the brethren have assembled for worship, others are working or sleeping late. In the evening, the ones who missed the morning service come sit on the front row. While the rest of the congregation watches, these few eat a meal by themselves.

This is not the Lord's supper. This is "*each one taking his own supper*" – a violation of an explicit prohibition.

Communion means sharing together one loaf and one cup. It requires all the brethren and sisters to assemble. Can't work / sleep late.

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Individual cups destroy the very purpose of communion. They are not only unscriptural, they are antiscriptural.

#### REASON #6: HISTORY

#### 6) History says only one cup was used by Christians.

Individual cups did not come from the Bible. They came from denominations.

Individual communion cups were first invented and patented by **John G. Thomas** who was a Presbyterian preacher and doctor. He was concerned about the spread of germs and he wanted each person to have his own sanitary cup.

Sanitation is the real reason people began using individual cups.

- *They didn't pick up their Bibles and study and then draw the conclusion that individual cups were used.*
- *They were afraid of germs.*

- *They changed the communion.*
- *Then they invented ridiculous arguments to justify what is unjustifiable.*

You see ... people did not have enough faith in God to obey what He instructed in the scriptures. They say they have faith in God, but they are afraid to drink from one cup like He commanded because they might get germs. They are afraid that if they did what God said, they might die.

It boils down to lack of faith.

We have only learned where individual cups came from. We have not yet learned how they came into the church of Christ.

G. C. Brewer, a preacher, claims to have been the first to introduce individual cups into the church:

*"A good many of the **figh**ts that I have made have been with my own brethren on points where I believed them to be in the wrong. I think I was the first preacher to advocate the use of the individual communion cup and the first church in the State of Tennessee that adopted it was the church for which I was preaching, the Central Church of Christ at Chattanooga, Tennessee, then meeting in the Masonic Temple. My next work was with the church at Columbia, Tennessee, and, **after a long struggle**, I got the individual communion service into that congregation. About this time, Brother G. Dallas Smith began to advocate the individual communion service and he introduce it at Fayetteville, Tennessee; then later at Murfreesboro. Of course, I was **fought both privately and publicly** and several brethren took me to task in the religious papers and called me digressive. Brother Smith came to my rescue and, in the year 1915, Brother David Lipscomb wrote a short paragraph in the Gospel Advocate saying that he had changed his view in reference to the communion cup and that he did not believe it was any digression or in any way a corruption of the service to use as many cups as might be demanded by the occasion. This brought that controversy to an end and, from then on, the **churches began** using the individual communion cup everywhere."  
(Forty Years on the Firing Line xii-xiii).*

The point to focus on is the fact that Brewer admits to fighting and struggling with brethren to force an innovation into the church which he himself believed to be a matter of liberty. He was willing to divide the body of Christ for what he believed to be a matter of liberty.

Here we read that "*churches **began** using the individual communion cup.*" You cannot read it in scripture – for it is not there.

Divine history says Jesus used one cup.

REASON #7:  
UNITY

7) **One cup is the only way we can have unity.**

We are commanded to have unity. Division is wrong:

*1 Corinthians 1:10* (NKJV)

*10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all **speak the same thing**, and that there be **no divisions** among you, but that you **be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.***

The only way we can "*speak the same thing*" and "*be perfectly joined together in the same mind and same judgment*" is to only do what we read in scripture.

We all agree that one cup is scriptural, but we are divided over the use of individual cups. Therefore, the only way to have unity is to use what we all agree is right.

N. B. Hardeman:

*"If ... you can worship God acceptably without the organ - and still will not give it up, I must charge you with the responsibility of perpetuating division and strife against the pleadings and prayer of our Lord."* (Boswell-Hardeman 62).

*"The man that injects the difference, the man that brings in the thing that causes the trouble is the man that makes the test of fellowship."* (Boswell-Hardeman 181).

Brethren who use individual cups:

- Admit it is scriptural to worship without individual cups.

- *But they say anyone who binds one cup on them is "making a law where God made none."*
- *Their final argument is to say that brethren insisting on one cup are the ones causing division.*

This is wrong. Brethren are not causing division when they insist the NT pattern for communion be followed.

## COMMON ARGUMENTS

### #1

Now let's notice some common arguments made against one cup.

The first argument is based on:

*1 Corinthians 11:26 (NKJV)  
26 For as often as you eat this bread and **drink this cup**, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*

Here's the argument:

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*Drinking the cup argument – "Paul said we "drink the cup." We cannot drink a drinking vessel. Therefore, the "cup" is not a drinking vessel, but fruit of the vine and we can put the fruit of the vine into as many drinking vessels as we wish and it's still "the cup.""*

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Before we answer this argument, let's review what we have learned:

- *In Mt 26:27 that Jesus took a literal drinking vessel.*
- *In Lk 22:20 Jesus said the drinking vessel represented the new covenant.*

So whatever 1 Cor 11:26 means, it does not negate the fact that Jesus used one literal drinking vessel to symbolize the new covenant.

**Q:** How can 1 Cor 11:26 say we "*drink the cup*"? How do you "*drink a cup*"?

**R:** You drink a cup by putting a cup up to your lips and drinking what is inside the cup!

(It is difficult to respond to some of these arguments with a straight face.)

1 Cor 11:26 does not erase the need for one cup. In fact this passage reinforces the need for one cup – *it implies one cup*.

If 1 Cor 11:26 had said, "... *drink these cups* ...," advocates of individual cups would have argued the plural word "*cups*" means a plurality of drinking vessels and they would have used this passage to justify the use of individual cups.

In other words:

- If an "s" had been on the end of "*cup*" – it would have meant drinking vessels and everyone would have understood how we could "*drink these cups*" to show the Lord's death till He comes.
- But because the word "*cup*" is singular – now thousands of brethren cannot understand how to "*drink a cup*."

## COMMON ARGUMENTS

### #2

The next common argument is based on Lk 22:

Luke 22:17 (NKJV)

*17 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves;*

Here's the argument:

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**Dividing the cup argument** – "*Jesus said to "divide" the cup. A cup can be divided by each man pouring the fruit of the vine into his own cup and then drinking. Therefore, we do not have to all drink from the same cup.*"

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Taking one cup and pouring it into individual cups could be called "*dividing the cup.*" This is true.

But it is also true that men can "*divide*" a cup by all drinking from the same vessel.

The question is not what *could* this mean, but what does this mean?

We do not have to guess. We know from scripture exactly how the cup was "*divided*":

Matthew 26:27 (NKJV)

*27 Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you.*

Mark 14:23 (NKJV)

*23 Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it.*

They "*divided*" the cup by all drinking from it.

## COMMON ARGUMENTS

### #3

Here's the next argument:

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Same cup as Jesus argument – "*If we must use one cup like Jesus did, then we would need the very same cup that He used.*"

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I'm not sure why people make this argument.

The fallacy of this argument is easily seen when we ask the same questions about the loaf and fruit of the vine:

- *Must we use **unleavened bread** like Jesus did? If so, must we use the very same loaf He used?*

- *Must we use **fruit of the vine** like Jesus did? If so, must we use the very same fruit of the vine He used?*

The point is, we use unleavened bread like Jesus used, but not the very same loaf He used. We must also use one cup like He used, but it is not necessary to use the very same one.

## COMMON ARGUMENTS

### #4

Here's the next argument:

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**Upper room argument** – *"If we must use one cup like Jesus did, then we must also meet in an upper room like Jesus did. We have to recline at a table like He did. We have to wear sandals like He wore."*

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Brethren making this argument would not tolerate this "reasoning" when it comes to the loaf or the fruit of the vine.

- *They say we have to use unleavened bread like Jesus, but we don't have to meet in an upper room like He did.*
- *They say we have to use fruit of the vine like Jesus, but we don't have to recline at a table like He did.*

If they can see this, then they can also understand why we should use one cup like Jesus did, but we don't have to wear sandals like He did.

***Only those things which directly related to the communion are bound on the church today.***

*1 Corinthians 11:23-25 (NKJV)*

*23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;*

*24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."*

*25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This*

*cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

**Q:** Did the Lord deliver to Paul and then Paul deliver to the church: upper rooms, reclining at tables, or wearing sandals?

**R:** No. But he did receive from the Lord and deliver to the church one cup.

## COMMON ARGUMENTS

### #5

Here's the next argument:

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**Large church at Jerusalem argument** – *"The church at Jerusalem was too large to use just one cup. A plurality of cups had to be used to serve such a large congregation."*

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**FIRST:** This argument says we are free to ignore the commands, examples and implications of the NT because we cannot understand how the church at Jerusalem could use one cup. This is an unsound basis on which to argue.

**SECOND:** This argument assumes there was only one congregation in the Jerusalem vicinity. For this argument to work there could not have been a congregation at:

- *Bethany* (1 ½ miles from Jerusalem – Unger's)
- *Bethphage* (on the Mt. of Olives close to Bethany – Unger's)
- *Bethlehem* (5 miles south of Jerusalem – Unger's)
- *Emmaus* (7 ½ miles west of Jerusalem – Unger's; within walking distance – Lk 24.)
- *Jericho* (7 ½ miles east of Jerusalem – Bible map)

All of these cities were within walking distance from Jerusalem. If there were congregations in all these cities, counting Jerusalem, there would be six congregations within walking distance.

Three thousand disciples distributed among six congregations would make 500 people per congregation - an audience small enough to use a single cup.

- *If there were any "country churches," the number of people per congregation would decrease even more.*
- *If some of these cities had two or more congregations, then the number of people per congregation is decreased even more.*
- *It would have been possible to have had 12 congregations within walking distance of each other. One apostle could preside over each congregation. With 12 congregations in the area, there would be only 250 people present – a crowd small enough that one cup could easily be used in communion.*

There is scriptural authority for having more than one congregation within a city, but there is no authority for having more than one cup on the Lord's table.

## CONCLUSION

There are more arguments used by advocates of individual cups, but I hope you are beginning to see they are all smoke screens. None of these arguments erase the fact that:

- *Jesus used one cup when He instituted the Lord's supper.*
- *He commanded one cup.*
- *The pattern to be imitated requires one cup.*
- *One cup is implied.*
- *One cup symbolizes the one new covenant.*
- *One cup fulfills the meaning of "communion."*
- *History shows one cup was used.*
- *Unity demands one cup be used.*

In contrast:

- *Individual cups are without Biblical authority.*
- *They destroy the symbolism of the Lord's supper.*
- *They violate the meaning of "communion."*

- *They have resulted in dividing the Lord's church even though the advocates admit they are not necessary.*

Individual cups were invented because of germs. Men had little faith in God. They did not believe that if they obeyed what God said, He would take care of them.

The same thing that makes instrumental music wrong also makes individual cups wrong. It is inconsistent to condemn instruments while accepting individual cups.

## FINAL NOTE

The scriptures can authorize something in one of two ways:

- **Explicitly**
- **Implicitly**

For individual cups to be used, the scriptures must either *explicitly* authorize them or *implicitly* authorize them.

**Q:** Where is any scripture that either *explicitly* or *implicitly* authorizes a plurality of cups?

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**NOTE:** If I cannot give implicit authority for a microphone or podium or benches, this does not, therefore, authorize a plurality of cups. It only shows I'm inconsistent.

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- **Benches** – implicitly authorized (Acts 16:13).
- **Podium** – implicitly authorized (2 Tim 4:2).
- **Electric lights** – implicitly authorized (Acts 20:8).
- **Microphone** – implicitly authorized (Acts 2:14).

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**NOTE:** Implicit authority cannot contradict explicit statements.

For example, one cannot argue Lk 22:17 "*implies*" a plurality of cups when Mk 14:23 explicitly says, "*they all drank from it.*"

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THE PATTERN FOR THE LORD'S SUPPER:

# ONE CUP

**QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What do all linguistic authorities say about the word "*cup*" in Mt 26:27?
- 2) Jesus said, "*This is my blood.*" What does the word "*this*" grammatically and logically refer to?
- 3) Instead of focusing on the fruit of the vine, what do Luke and Paul focus on in the communion?
- 4) What did every major covenant in the Bible have?
- 5) In the Lord's supper, is the emphasis only upon the fruit of the vine or does the Bible ever put emphasis on the container itself?
- 6) What is the antonym of "*individual*"?
- 7) Do we have to meet in an "*upper room*" like Jesus did?
- 8) How far was the city Emmaus from Jerusalem?