



“THE LORD’S SUPPER: A Discussion with Jimmy Cating”

Welcome to Let the Bible Speak. It’s great to have you with us, as always. I’m joined today by a special friend of mine, brother Jimmy Cating. Jimmy has been preaching the gospel now for about the same length of time as I have, about twenty-five years or so. And we’ve known one another for about that long. He has worked with churches in Oklahoma and Texas. He is originally from Indiana. He is a great gospel preacher and has been holding a gospel meeting at my home congregation where I labor here in Alabama.

I wanted to have Jimmy as a guest today because he has an interesting story that I believe will serve to illustrate some of the truths of the Bible concerning the New Testament church, specifically God’s plan and pattern for how the church is to worship.

Kevin: We come from very similar backgrounds. We actually began preaching the gospel about the same time. We were raised among churches that adopted the ideas of the Restoration Movement, meaning the restoration of New Testament Christianity. Sometimes as you go through life, however, and you study the Bible, you come to understand that maybe in your own life, the restoration is not yet complete. You’ve come to understand things that you were not taught as a child; maybe what you were taught was contrary to what the Bible actually teaches. That was the case with both of us. For a lot of people, when they find themselves in a situation like that, they struggle with questions like, *what do I need to do about this?* It sometimes calls upon us to make very difficult choices--to leave something we’ve known our entire lives and embrace what we know from God’s word to be the truth.

We’ve talked about this numerous times on the program down through the years. Many of the practices that are used that are adopted within churches of Christ are NOT biblical. Rather, they are modern innovations of man, as opposed to following the pattern that the Lord Jesus and His apostles gave in the scriptures. One such case is the Lord’s Supper and how it is observed. Tell me a little bit about your journey and how you came to understand the truth of what the Bible teaches about a congregation using one loaf and one cup containing fruit of the vine in the observance of the Lord’s Supper.

Jimmy: First of all, thank you for having me. It is my privilege to be here and to share a little bit about myself, as well as some things from the scriptures. That’s really our standard and what we must go by. As you said, we do have a similar background. I was raised respecting the doctrines of the church, the doctrines of Christ. My family and I were members of a very loving and what many would consider a very conservative congregation. In 1992, on one particular Sunday morning, as we were getting ready

for services, I went into the living room where my grandmother was bedfast, and I turned the television on for her. As we visited for a few minutes while I was waiting to leave, we came across a broadcast called Let the Bible Speak. This was many years ago now, and there was a different host. His name was Irvin Barnes. We were attracted to the familiar doctrine and were very impressed with the use of scripture to support his points. We also liked the a cappella singing. We became fascinated fans of that T.V. program and started a new routine of watching every week. One Sunday morning, as we watched the program, we heard something that we'd never heard before: the importance of using one cup in the distribution of the fruit of the vine and of using one loaf in the Lord's Supper.

Kevin: That was the typical practice, not only of the churches of Christ down through the centuries, but also of most religious organizations for a long, long time. About a hundred years ago or so, in 1915, brother G.C. Brewer, who was a prominent preacher amongst churches of Christ, introduced the practice of individual communion cups in a church in Tennessee. It spread from there among the churches of Christ.

The point that I want to make is this: a few generations ago, there were a lot of people who were familiar with this controversy. In fact, many of them had been in congregations that had used one cup, but those churches changed somewhere along the way. Now that generations have passed, there are multitudes of people out there—just like you, me, and others—who at one time had never heard this. Who just take it for granted, they were raised using modern innovations. I assume there are even people watching this program—maybe someone for the first time—thinking, *what in the world? There are people who believe in using one container?*

Jimmy: That was us. We had never heard of that before. Of course, because it was new to us, we were very cautious, but as we studied, we realized that it wasn't new in the scriptures. At the same time, we didn't want to be too dismissive of it. We wanted to investigate because we know that the Bible warns against being gullible and being deceived. The Bible also warns about the blinding power of preconceived ideas. So, we wanted to study the scriptures to see whether or not it was so.

Kevin: So, this began a process of studying the Bible about this issue. Of course, the authority is in the word of God. It's in the teachings of Christ and the apostles; not in what you or I say, or what anybody might try to teach us—it's what the Bible says. So, let's go back to some of the very things that you began to study and examine, and I, likewise, a little before that. What are some of the things that stood out to you as you read through the biblical accounts that made you realize, *hey, there's something to this. This is what the Bible actually teaches?*

Jimmy: Well, first of all, we had to determine whether or not there was a pattern for the Lord's Supper. We began to look at scriptures like **I Corinthians 11:23-25** where Paul reiterated the Lord's Supper and reminded the Corinthians of what the Lord had said.

I Corinthians 11:23-25 **“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”**

Paul had told the Corinthians earlier in this chapter to *“keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you” (verse 2)*. That indicates that there IS a pattern for the Lord's Supper and it must be followed. A pattern would indicate that the Lord wanted it to be done a certain way. Like you said, most churches of Christ today recognize that there is a pattern to some degree; the question some have is whether or not one cup is part of the pattern.

Kevin: How do we determine what is incidental to the establishment of the Supper and on the other hand what Jesus intended as part of the pattern that the church from there forward was to abide by?

Jimmy: You go back to the examples and teachings of the gospels. Most people would be surprised that the Lord's Supper is only mentioned four times within the New Testament. I think it's worthy of going back and looking at what the New Testament teaches concerning the Lord's Supper in these accounts, beginning with Matthew.

Matthew 26:27-29 "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Here we find that Jesus picked up *one cup*. Most lexicographers agree that this was a literal drinking vessel that Jesus picked up. He gave thanks for one cup, He gave His disciples one cup, and He commanded that they drink from the cup that He gave them.

Kevin: That's a point that people oftentimes miss: there is a command involved. Not just merely a record telling what He did; He attached a command to that.

Jimmy: That's exactly right, and if Jesus were here and He handed you a cup and said, "Drink from it," I think you would agree that it would be disobedience to pick up your own cup or something else besides what He gave you. Let's look at Mark's account.

Mark 14:22-23 "And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it."

So, we have Matthew recording the *command* of Jesus, and Mark giving the *example*. The disciples followed the command and they all drank from it.

Kevin: When we were in bible studies and discussions with brethren on the other side of this issue during the time of our conversion, we made the argument that I have heard countless times since, that when the Bible says "cup" it has nothing to do with the drinking vessel, but is a metonymy referring to the contents of the cup, which makes the drinking vessel itself immaterial. Now, metonymy is sometimes used, but is not always figurative. So, how did you come to understand that that was a fallacious argument?

Jimmy: We have to understand that in order for metonymy to work, the thing named has to represent something else, but the thing named must be present. I understand the argument; I used to think of those kinds of arguments as well when I was on the other side of the issue. But in order for the fruit of the vine to be referred to as *the cup*, it must be IN a cup. Of course, you *drink the cup* by drinking the contents of the cup. You don't go the store and ask the clerk, "Where is your cup?" and the clerk know that you are referring to grape juice.

Kevin: If the account had said that Jesus took the cups, would there be any doubt in anyone's mind that He was referring to drinking vessels? Everyone would point to that as an authority for using more than one.

Jimmy: Absolutely, yes. The fact that He used one cup and used the language "*one cup*" indicates that He intended for this to be a part of the pattern. It's not just that Matthew gives the command and Mark gives the example, but there is spiritual significance also attached to the cup itself.

Kevin: I was going to go to that point next. Yes, there is an example that Jesus did it this way. But at what point did you stop and say to yourself that this is more than merely an example, but stands out as something very important to follow? That there is a spiritual significance behind doing it this way?

Jimmy: Let me answer that by going first to Luke's account.

Luke 22:20 "Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you."

We see here that Jesus took a literal cup and said, "*This cup is the new testament in my blood...*" When we consider what Jesus did on the cross, three things occurred: His body was given, His blood was shed, and a new covenant was ratified. In the Lord's Supper, we find Jesus recognizing and placing spiritual

significance on each of those three events. The bread represents His body that was given, the fruit of the vine represents His blood that was shed, and the cup represents the new covenant that was ratified by the blood of Christ.

Kevin: The covenant and the blood are NOT the same thing. They have an inseparable relationship in that the covenant would not have been in force without the shedding of Christ's blood, but the covenant itself is not the blood.

Jimmy: Exactly right. Often, folks who want to defend individual cups will say that the fruit of the vine is the same thing as the cup, or that the cup that Jesus took really refers to the contents and not to the container. But, if that's the case, you have the fruit of the vine representing two different things, being the blood AND the covenant, insinuating that the blood and the covenant are the same thing. That's simply not the case. God makes a distinction throughout the old covenant, the Old Testament, between the covenant itself and the blood that ratified it. So it is with the new covenant. Jesus had a covenant that would be ratified and would provide forgiveness for sins, but He would also ratify that covenant by the shedding of His blood. The blood that ratified the covenant is not the same thing as the covenant itself.

Kevin: Right. Jesus never used words on accident, and neither did the apostles. The scriptures are given by inspiration of God. They are the breath of God (**II Timothy 3:16**). There are no words in the scriptures that are there incidentally or by accident; the Spirit chose them. I would challenge anyone who wants to study this issue to go through all four accounts of the Lord's Supper and read them very carefully. You will never find the statement "this cup is my blood." You will also never find the statement "this fruit of the vine is the new covenant."

Jimmy: That's a good point. I think this shows the wisdom of God, how He designed a memorial that would represent the covenant and the blood, two mutually dependent items, meaning that without the blood of Christ there would be no covenant and without the covenant, Christ's shed blood would not have satisfied its purpose. So, in the cup of the Lord, we have two elements: the fruit of the vine and the container that holds it. They are mutually dependent on one another.

Kevin: That's right, Now, it's fairly easy to see, especially if you have been raised to observe the Lord's Supper, that the bread represents the body of Christ. There is an obvious symbolic relationship there. The fruit of the vine represents His blood. But some people may have never thought about this: what relationship would everybody drinking from a container have with the new covenant? And by the way, the new covenant doesn't refer to the Bible, but what is revealed in the New Testament: the agreement between us and God. But, what is the significance of a congregation sharing one container and the new covenant?

Jimmy: That's a good question and a good point to be made. Answering the question reveals a beautiful picture. Just as with every other aspect of the Lord's Supper, you have represented in the bread the unity of the body of Christ—typically, figuratively, and spiritually speaking. When a congregation of believers meets to worship the Lord and to remember what He has done, we are reminded of the unity that should exist among the body and of Christ's sacrifice. When the cup of blessing is shared, we are reminded that in the same covenant or agreement, we all have a relationship with God and each other, and we all share in the blessings that are provided under that covenant.

Kevin: The *communion* is a *common union*, a *joint participation*. I think that is the root of the issue going back a number of generations now. I think that somewhere along the way, we allowed ourselves to lose sight of what communion is. There are those who have the view that communion is merely something between me and God; it's something that I, by myself, can even partake of because it's just a special moment between me and the Lord. While spiritually He IS present when we commune, communion is about a congregation of people coming together and sharing something, isn't it?

Jimmy: Exactly. That's why the emphasis is placed on the church coming together and staying together while they communed. It's not just something you do with the Lord; it's something that you do with other Christians.

Acts 20:7 "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them..."

Often, churches of Christ go to that verse as an example to show that the Lord's Supper is to be done on the first day of the week, and rightly so. But, equally emphasized in that passage is the fact that the disciples "came together." Communion is a joint participation that we don't do by ourselves, between us and God or heaven, but between us and the brethren, our church family.

Kevin: One argument that I've heard many times and even made myself at one time, is *if that's the case, why wouldn't all believers everywhere have to come together and share one loaf and one cup?* The answer is that communion is a congregational activity. The only organized and visible manifestation of the church operating in joint activity is the congregation. There is nothing larger than each local congregation. We see in the book of **Acts** that the church came together and did this, and Paul refers to it in the book of **Corinthians**. This was something that each congregation came together to do and each one is to follow the pattern within itself.

Jimmy: And in the institution of the Passover, we see a supper that the whole nation observed, but it was actually observed on a household level.

Kevin: Right. And God said one lamb per house, and if they had more people than could consume the lamb, they were to go somewhere else.

Jimmy: Yes, you don't change the meal to fit the house—

Kevin: You change the circumstance to fit the pattern, obviously.

Jimmy: That's right.

Kevin: Unfortunately, in regards to this issue and many other issues, what we see today are people trying to change the pattern to fit the circumstance or to agree with modern ideas of religion or the modern culture. But when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, He commanded, "*This do in remembrance of Me.*" He didn't say to do something *like* this. He didn't say that this was just an idea that they were to develop further. He said, *I'm setting an example. You do what I have done with you, going forward.*

Jimmy: I might just add, to come back to where we began, this was a very difficult change for my family. We loved the congregation we were attending, but we had to study the scriptures.

Proverbs 3:5 "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding."

Proverbs 14:12 "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

We had to put the Lord first and what His will and His way was. As difficult as it was, we understood that if we learned the truth, it was going to bring about a change in some of our relationships and how we worshipped.

Kevin: That's right. Well, we're out of time. God bless you, brother. Thank you joining us today.

Jimmy: Thank you so much.

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