**MULTIPLE DRINKING VESSELS IN COMMUNION**

Some brethren sincerely believe that the use of multiple drinking vessels in communion is a violation of God’s will. I do not share that viewpoint; but I’ve always believed that “the person with the practice” has the obligation to show that his practice is authorized (Col.3:17). In this article, I shall try to provide the authorization for our practice in as simple a manner as possible.

Assembling ***necessitates*** a place of some kind (e.g. a field, a house, or a building). Baptizing ***necessitates*** a sufficient body of water of some kind (e.g. a creek, river, pond, lake, ocean, or baptistery). Likewise, drinking the fruit of the vine in communion ***necessitates*** a drinking vessel (or vessels) of some kind. There is no way around that!

The question is: Does the ***“number”*** of drinking vessels matter? ***The only way that the “number” of drinking vessels can matter is if the drinking vessel itself has significance!*** This is the very heart of the issue with the “one container” brethren. In their minds, the drinking vessel itself has significance. They believe that the bread represents Christ’s body; the fruit of the vine represents His blood; and ***the drinking vessel*** represents “the new covenant in My blood” (cf. Lk.22:20; 1Cor.11:25). If they are right about this, then only one container may be used; but if they are wrong, then the number of containers is irrelevant. The solution is found in an examination the phrase, “this cup is the new covenant in My blood,” in its context.

“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.’ For as often as you eat this bread and ***drink this cup,*** you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes. Therefore, whoever eats this bread or ***drinks this cup*** of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and ***blood of the Lord.*** (1Cor.11:25-27). Note the highlighted words in the text above. We are commanded to drink the cup. This is not literally possible, for one cannot literally drink a cup. Hence, the language is figurative: ***“This cup” refers to what we “drink” – i.e. the fruit of the vine.*** This is further confirmed when Paul said that one who “drinks ***this cup of the Lord*** in an unworthy manner” is guilty of the ***“blood of the Lord.”*** Therefore, the container has NO significance. Since the container has no significance, the “number” of containers is completely irrelevant! Therefore, a plurality of drinking vessels for the communion is authorized. Note carefully that I said ***“authorized”*** – multiple drinking vessels are NOT “required.” But it is OK to use them, if we so choose.

Once you can see this simple point, it no longer matters how many containers Jesus used when He “instituted” the Lord’s Supper. Indeed, why get bogged down with such a question when the container has no significance anyway? The fact that Jesus may have used one drinking vessel for the Lord’s Supper is no more significant that the fact that He took it at night (1Cor.11:23), or that He took it in an upper room (Lk.22:12; cf. Ac.20:7-8). I’m actually inclined to believe that He and His disciples did use one container (Mk.14:23); but others seem to think they used multiple cups (cf. Lk.22:17). ***But why have that debate at all, since the container has no significance?*** Frankly, I prefer the simplest explanations of Bible principles!

To the above, we can add the fact that the apostle Paul (who was at Ephesus, 1Cor.16:8) drank from the same “cup” as his brethren in Corinth (1Cor.10:16). ***In fact, the entire body of Christ eats the same “bread” and drinks the same “cup” (cf. v.17).*** Once again, it is abundantly clear that this cannot be referring to one “drinking vessel.” Rather, it refers to the fruit of the vine. Note: ***“The cup*** of blessing which we bless, it is not the communion of ***the blood*** of Christ?” Rather simple, is it not?

Bottom line: Drinking the fruit of the vine in communion ***necessitates*** a drinking vessel (or vessels) of some kind. But the size, shape, style, color, ***and number*** of drinking vessels is irrelevant. So, multiple drinking vessels are authorized in Scripture.

--Lanny Smith