

The Cup Metaphors: The Cup of Demons: the Devil's Communion Table: Paul Contrasts the Eucharist with Corinthian Practice of Eating Food Sacrificed to Idols, 1 Cor 10:19–21; Eucharist Cup Represents Retroactive Positional Truth, the Bread: Current Positional Truth

- (6) The Cup of Demons. In 1 Corinthians 10:16–22, Paul takes up the problem of eating food that has been sacrificed to idols. He refers to the ritual of the Eucharist as “communion,” the Greek noun **κοινωνία (koinōnia)**: fellowship.

The communion table represents the doctrine of **Positional Truth**. When we partake of the elements we are in fellowship with the Person and work of Christ. The **cup** represents the work of Christ emphasizing **Retroactive Positional Truth**: identification with the spiritual death, physical death, and burial of Christ, while the **bread** represents the body of Christ emphasizing **Current Positional Truth**: identification with the resurrection, ascension, and session of Christ.

The elements of the Eucharist are approved mnemonic vectors designed to stimulate recall of the foundational principles of salvation and eternal life. The cup represents the work of Christ that resulted in our salvation while the bread represents the body of Christ into which we are baptized by the Holy Spirit. Our positional location is in Him and certifies our heavenly *politeuma*.

In 1 Corinthians 10:18, Paul makes reference to the Jewish Passover Seder. When they ate the Paschal Lamb they were expressing faith in the coming Messiah. The Passover Seder was the Jewish ritual that anticipated the cross while the Eucharist is the Christian ritual that remembers the cross.

The problem that Paul wants to head off is believers eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols as was the custom in Corinthian temples. Paul confirms the fact there was nothing inherently wrong with the meat of an animal that had been sacrificed to idols.

1 Corinthians 10:19 - What do I mean then? That a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything?

The questions require negative answers. The use of an animal in a heathen sacrifice does not in any way change the physical properties of the animal's flesh. The whittling and sculpting of wood and stone into idols in no way transforms the physical properties of the two elements. What matters, Paul argues, is with whom one has fellowship when the animals are sacrificed to them:

1 Corinthians 10:20 - No, but I say that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers in demons.

The word “sharers” is the noun **κοινωνός (koinōnos)**: one with whom one fellowships, “to become one who fellowships with demons.”

In the next verse, Paul indicates through the figurative use of the cup that the elements of a ritual are harmless but the one with whom you fellowship is not.

1 Corinthians 10:21- You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the table of the Lord the table of demons.

The cup of the Lord is the cup of the Eucharist; the cup of demons is the ritual associated with idol worship.

These terms have meaning to the believers in the Corinthian church:

Paul speaks of “The Lord’s Table”—a term that the Corinthian converts from Paganism would readily associate with “tables” used for pagan idol meals. In the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus CX there is a revealing sentence that says, “Chairemon invites you to a meal at the table of the lord Serapis \sa-rā’-pas\¹ in the Serapeum, tomorrow the fifteenth from nine o’clock onwards.” So Paul is teaching that a Christian cannot at the same time participate in the meal at the table of the pagan god and the table of the Lord.²

The former worshippers of idols in Corinth are warned by Paul to forget about the cup of demons they once drank in the heathen temples and to concentrate on the cup of thanksgiving in the church.

¹ “Serapis: an Egyptian god combining attributes of Osiris \ō-sī’-ras\ (Egyptian God of the underworld) and Apis \ā’-pes\ (sacred bull of the Egyptians) and having a widespread cult in Ptolemaic Egypt and ancient Greece” (*Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.vv.: “Serapis,” “Osiris,” and “Apis”).

² W. Harold Mare. “1 Corinthians,” in *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Regency Reference Library, 1976), 10:251.