

Rusty Acheson's Response to Matey Yanakiev's "On An Oftener Lord's Supper"

This offers a point-by-point response to Matey Yanakiev's proposal for implementing a regular "Lord's Supper" observance at Eitz Chaim, modeled on Christian Communion. I offer a summary first. Each point is dealt with individually and in detail with Matey's paper, which I have copied and have responded to section-by-section.

Matey's central argument rests almost entirely on 1 Corinthians 11, which he interprets as prescribing a frequent, standalone ritual. However, a careful examination of the text—and of the broader apostolic and historical context—reveals otherwise.

First, Matey's appeal to David Stern is misapplied. Stern clearly and consistently anchors the Lord's Supper within the Jewish Passover, not as an independent rite. Second, 1 Corinthians 11 is a corrective rebuke, not a prescriptive command. Paul addresses abuses at what appears to be a Passover Seder—not a weekly sacrament—and his language emphasizes ethical conduct, not ritual frequency. Key phrases like "as often as you do this" are conditional, not calendrical.

The theological case that Yeshua fulfills more than just the Passover lamb is entirely valid—but it does not justify creating a new ritual. Rather, it enriches the meaning of the Passover memorial itself. Attempts to spiritualize or universalize the Supper, and to draw parallels to Melchizedek or the Ark of the Covenant, overextend the text and import later Church theology foreign to the Jewish context of the Scriptures and events.

Finally, the historical development of Communion—emerging a century later in gentile church structures—is critical. Nowhere in the apostolic writings or early Messianic Jewish practice do we find the practice of nor mandate for frequent, freestanding communion. The earliest believers, both Jewish and Gentile, honored the Lord's Supper annually at Passover, in continuity with Yeshua's own institution.

This response affirms the covenantal integrity of keeping the Lord's Supper within its biblical framework—Pesach—not by diminishing its power, but by honoring its original design.

Below is Matey Yanakiev's paper proposing and supporting the regular practice of a "Communion" at Shul. [My responses are all in blue.](#)

~Rusty Acheson

On An Oftener Lord's Supper

By Matey Yanakiev

One topic discussed at the 2025 Rabbis' Conference was the place of the Lord's Supper in Messianic Jewish communities, with the speaker encouraging congregations to practice the Supper more frequently. Finding myself in agreement with the sentiment expressed, I want to lay out a brief case why Eitz Chaim Dallas should consider making the Lord's Supper a regular aspect of our Sabbath worship.

(For a respected Messianic Jewish exegete who shares many aspects of my position, please see David Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary*.)

Rusty's Response to the Introduction:

Matey's citation of David Stern doesn't hold up under closer inspection. I went through the relevant sections of Stern's *Jewish New Testament Commentary* thoroughly, and not once does Stern advocate for a regular 'Communion' practice independent of Passover. On the contrary, his commentary explicitly places the bread and cup within the framework of the Jewish Passover Seder (see Matt. 26, pg. 77-82; Mark 14:1-31 pg. 99; Luke 22:7-20 pg.143-144; 1 Cor 5:6-8, p. 447; 1 Cor 11:26, pp. 475-476). Stern never suggests—or even hints at—a recurring ritual outside its covenantal context in Pesach.

"I question the common assumption that Shaul's Passover language here is entirely figurative. I see no compelling reason in the context to excise the plain sense (*p'shat*) from the phrase, **"Let us celebrate the Seder."** Instead, it seems that the early believers, Gentiles included, observed the Jewish feast of Pesach. As we will see, their service combined traditional Jewish Passover symbolism with new symbolism relating to Yeshua the Messiah's central role in Jewish and world history" (David Stern's Commentary on 1 Cor 5:6-8, pg. 447).

Similarly, when commenting on 1 Corinthians 11:26 (p. 475-476), Stern directly ties the Lord's Supper to Passover symbolism and its annual retelling: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord, until he comes.' At Passover Jews all over the world retell the story of the plagues and the Exodus... Likewise, members of the Messianic Community are to proclaim the death of the Lord as their exodus from sin..." Here, Stern clearly sees the Lord's Supper as a retelling of timeless Passover themes—not a weekly or monthly ritual separated from that moment. While he notes Paul expected these traditions to be observed "with love, not legalism," nowhere does he instruct Messianic congregations to adopt communion on a fixed, frequent schedule outside of Jewish festivals. Every bit of meaning in

Yeshua's words regarding the cup and the bread tie back to the Passover Seder, and **removing His teaching from the Seder thus removes the appropriate context.**

This consistent emphasis by Stern aligns with the established practice within Messianic Judaism. Having grown up within the Messianic Jewish movement, observing Passover my entire life, I can affirm that the practice of the Lord's Supper has invariably been connected to the annual Pesach observance. In all my years attending Messianic congregations, I've never once seen communion practiced weekly, monthly, or even quarterly, separate from Passover. Again, removing the Lord's Supper from the proper context of Passover removes most of the meaning and symbolism of the cup and bread. This isn't just my experience—it's a common understanding throughout Messianic Judaism.

Adopting regular communion, as advocated, risks diluting the unique Jewish identity of Messianic worship by aligning it with conventional Gentile church customs. This trajectory stands in direct contrast to Stern's Passover-centric view, which actively seeks to preserve and affirm the Jewish foundational context.

In the end, Matey's use of Stern completely misreads what Stern actually emphasizes. Stern does not advocate for a regular "Sunday communion" apart from Pesach. His extensive writings consistently tie the Lord's Supper to Passover observance, underscoring its role as a memorial *within* the Jewish festival calendar, not as a standalone, independent ordinance. Therefore, any argument for frequent communion based on Stern's work is unfounded in both his commentary and my lived experience of Messianic Jewish practice.

The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians

First Corinthians is our clearest New Testament witness to how the early Messianic communities integrated Yeshua's words over the bread and cup at His final Passover into community life.

We can confidently know the traditions regarding the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians were the universal apostolic practice. In introducing the section of the letter which deals extensively with the Supper, Paul begins with,

"you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you" (1 Cor 11:2).

Traditions—whether head covering etiquette (11:16), the Lord's Supper (11:23), or the early creed of the witnesses to the Gospel (15:3)—were universal elements of the messianic faith which Paul himself received, practices and beliefs shared between all the apostles and the congregations they founded.^[1]

[1] The Corinthian congregation was swamped with influence from some of the most significant missionaries of the early messianic movement: Apollos and Cephas (1 Cor 1:12); Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:1–3, 1 Cor 16:9). In other words, the Corinthian correspondence gives us a critical and representative picture of early messianic faith, not merely a picture of one isolated messianic community.

Rusty's Response to "The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians"

Matey's claim that 1 Corinthians 11 establishes the Lord's Supper as a "universal apostolic practice" of regular communion misreads both the passage and its purpose. This chapter is not laying out instructions for frequency—it is a rebuke for misusing something sacred. The Corinthian believers were treating Yeshua's final Passover meal like a common dinner party, and Paul confronts that directly.

1. Paul Is Correcting Abuse, Not Establishing Frequency

Paul's words—"*When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat*" (1 Cor 11:20)—show the Corinthians had distorted the meaning of the bread and cup. This is not a teaching on ritual form or timing. It is a correction. To build a doctrine of weekly communion on a passage where Paul says they are doing it wrong is shaky at best. The focus is restoration, not institution.

2. "Traditions" Does Not Mean Every Practice Was Regular

Matey appeals to the word "traditions" (παράδοσεις, *paradoseis*) in verse 2 to imply universal practice. But Paul uses this term broadly. It can mean core theology (like the gospel in 15:3), covenantal practices (like Passover), or even local customs (like head coverings, 11:16, see Gordon Fee, *NICNT* on 1 Cor, p. 530). Just calling something a tradition does not mean it was frequent or uniform. The same Greek word is used for rabbinic handwashing customs in Matthew 15 and Mark 7.

3. Apostolic Presence Doesn't Prove a Model

Matey also argues that because Apollos and Cephas were in Corinth, their behavior reflects standard apostolic practice. But Paul is writing because their actions were **not** faithful to what he delivered. Their abuse doesn't become a template just because the apostles were once present. In fact, it proves the need to correct back to the original meaning—**a Passover meal centered on Yeshua**.

4. The Lord's Supper Is a Passover Meal, Not a Recurring Ritual

Paul's phrase "*when you come together to eat*" (1 Cor 11:20–22) fits the pattern of a Jewish **festival meal**, not a weekly observance. The abuses—some going hungry, others getting drunk—are exactly the kind of problems that could arise during a large Seder, where both

sacred ritual and full meals were present. This fits the Passover context Yeshua Himself established.

Paul's rebuke is about the **disrespect shown during a covenant meal**, not about frequency. As David Stern writes regarding the Passover seder, "[Messianic believers] are to proclaim the death of the Lord as their exodus from sin" (*Jewish New Testament Commentary*, p. 476). That message is tied to **Passover**, not a calendar of convenience.

Conclusion

There is no command or model for regular communion in this passage—only a call to restore the meaning of Yeshua's Passover meal. The claim of "universal apostolic practice" is an import from later Christian tradition, not something Paul taught. The bread and cup point back to **redemption**, not repetition. What we see in 1 Corinthians 11 is not a weekly habit—it is a holy memory tied to **God's appointed time**.

First Corinthians 11:17–20 Describes Regular Practice

When Paul opens his discussion of the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34, he makes explicit the timing of the Supper's celebration: "the following instructions," he says, concern "when you come together" [Greek: *synerchomai*] (11:17)—a present indicative verb that communicates regular, recurring action.

Three times in rapid succession, Paul repeats the language of

"when you come together" (11:17),

"when you come together as a congregation" (11:18),

"when you come together" (11:20).

"Coming together" then appears two more times at the end of the section on the Lord's Supper (11:33, 34) and twice more in the instructions on how to use Spiritual gifts in corporate worship (14:23, 26).

Simply put, the Greek *synerchomai* (in all its conjugations) throughout 1 Corinthians always refers to the regular assembly of the Corinthians for corporate worship. Therefore, the context Paul establishes for his instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 how to properly partake of the Lord's Supper is the **regular gathering of the Corinthians, not an annual Passover celebration**.

Rusty's Response to "First Corinthians 11:17–20 Describes Regular Practice"

Matey argues that the repeated use of *synerchomai* (“to come together”) in 1 Corinthians 11 establishes the Lord’s Supper as a regular, recurring ritual. But this interpretation overstates what the word communicates and overlooks the context. The Greek verb does show the Corinthians gathered regularly—but that does not prove they were practicing the Lord’s Supper frequently, or correctly.

1. Assembly Does Not Equal Frequency of a Specific Rite

The word *synerchomai* simply means “to come together.” Paul uses it in various places to describe general gatherings (e.g., 1 Cor 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34; 14:23, 26). While it shows the Corinthians met often, it tells us nothing about **how often** they celebrated the bread and cup—or whether they were even doing it **correctly**. Paul begins with a rebuke: “*I do not commend you... it is not the Lord’s Supper you eat*” (11:17, 20). That is a correction, not a confirmation of faithful practice.

2. No Textual Clues About Timing

There is no mention of *when* this gathering took place—weekly, monthly, annually. Paul offers **no calendar cues** at all. If this were a new ritual replacing Passover, we would expect clear instructions. Instead, we find Paul trying to restore the meaning of the meal they were misusing. And Paul, who is known for being extremely careful when passing on commandments or customs, is especially explicit in other areas. In 1 Corinthians 7, for example, he gives step-by-step instructions on marriage and abstinence (“Do not deprive one another... unless by agreement,” vv. 2–5). In chapter 8, he walks through how to navigate food offered to idols. And in chapter 14, he provides detailed guidance for how many people should speak in tongues or prophecy in a single service, so that “everything may be done decently and in order” (v. 40).

If a regular, stand-alone ritual called “Communion” was meant to be established for weekly observance, Paul would not leave it to implication. He would have said it plainly—just like he does everywhere else.

3. Context Supports a Passover Setting

The abuses Paul lists—some going hungry, others getting drunk—make perfect sense in a **festival meal** like Passover, not in a bite-sized ritual. That would explain the social divide: some had plenty, others had nothing. This also fits the broader context of 1 Corinthians, where Paul connects Yeshua’s death with Passover: “*Messiah our Passover lamb has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the feast...*” (1 Cor 5:7–8). The simplest and most faithful reading is that the Corinthians were mishandling **an annual covenant meal**, not a weekly ordinance.

4. Communion as a Later Development

Modern communion practices reflect later Church tradition—not what Paul is prescribing here. The early believers met in homes (1 Cor 16:19; Rom 16:5), not in liturgical church buildings with sacraments. Even respected scholars like F.F. Bruce and Gordon Fee treat this as a meal-derived practice but do not connect it back to **Pesach**, which weakens the continuity Scripture preserves. Within Messianic Judaism, the bread and cup remain tied to Passover—a yearly memorial, not a routine ritual.

Conclusion

Paul's repeated use of *synerchomai* simply shows the Corinthians gathered often. It does not prove a frequently repeated Lord's Supper. The rebuke in 1 Corinthians 11 is about abusing a sacred meal rooted in redemption—not about setting up a new ritual. There is no evidence here of weekly communion—only a call to honor the meaning of Yeshua's Passover offering.

If God were instituting a regular, new ordinance for all believers, we would expect an overt command—just as He gave for Sabbath, the Feasts, and other appointed practices. Instead, we find correction, not institution. Yeshua's words—"do this in remembrance of Me"—occurred during the Passover meal. The "this" He referred to was not a new ritual, but the existing Seder, now given greater fullness.

As Acts 17:11 reminds us, the noble Bereans were commended for searching the Scriptures—not tradition—to test Paul's teaching. If we do the same, we will find that the Lord's Supper is best understood not as a Church-created ordinance, but as a covenantal memorial embedded in Passover itself.

Annual Supper Celebration Infeasible

There are two additional pieces of information from 1 Corinthians that require this reading.

First, throughout 1 Corinthians Paul restricts himself to only writing about **ongoing issues in need of urgent resolution**. The list speaks for itself:

- Sharp factionalism (1:10–13; 3:3–4, 22)
- Incest and other forms of continuous immorality (5:1–13)
- Ongoing lawsuits among the believers (6:1–11)
- Gluttony and visiting of prostitutes (6:12–20)

- Active confusion about marriage and celibacy (7:1–40)
- Unapologetic eating at idol temples, stumbling out of the faith (8:1–10:33)
- Gender confusion (11:2–16, 14:33–38)
- Abuse of the Lord's Supper, leading to factions, sickness, and death (11:17–34)
- Abuse of Spiritual gifts in corporate worship (12:1–14:40)
- Departure from the resurrection hope of the Gospel (15:1–58)

Second, **the epistle itself was written in the weeks leading up to Pentecost** (16:8).

We know the abuse of the Lord's Supper was a pressing, active issue in the community, with some still sick due to God's resulting judgment (11:29–30).

Under the hypothesis that the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper only once a year, it is plausible First Corinthians is specifically written shortly after Passover but before Pentecost, in the spring.

But if the Lord's Supper will not be celebrated again for another year, it is completely incomprehensible why Paul would include his reproof against the Supper's abuse among his urgent instructions that cannot wait.

Timothy is slated to make a visit to the Corinthians very soon (4:17) and **Paul himself plans to come in the winter** (16:6). Both Paul and Timothy would then have plenty of time to instruct the Corinthians before the next Passover.

Instead, Paul sharply distinguishes the instructions which can wait until his arrival and the urgent necessity to resolve the abuse of the Lord's Table:

“So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat [the Lord's Supper], wait for one another—if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment.

About the other things I will give directions when I come.” (1 Corinthians 11:33–34)

It is clear that Paul expected the Corinthians would celebrate the Supper regularly, long before he could be with them in-person to instruct them again, so any delay in resolving the Supper's misuse would mean a continual heaping of divine judgment.

Rusty's Comments regarding the "Annual Supper Celebration Infeasible" Argument

Matey claims that celebrating the Lord's Supper only once a year makes no sense, especially given how strongly Paul rebukes the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians. But that argument is built on a few misunderstandings—both about how correction works in Scripture and what Paul is actually doing in this passage.

1. Urgency Comes from the Seriousness of the Sin, Not How Often It Happens

Just because Paul urgently addresses the Lord's Supper does not mean it had to be happening weekly. Paul also deals urgently with other serious sins—like incest (1 Cor 5) and visiting prostitutes (1 Cor 6). No one would claim those were happening every week, yet Paul still rebukes them strongly. Why? Because the sins are serious, not because they happen often.

The same applies here. The Corinthians were treating something holy with disrespect. Some were eating in excess, some were getting drunk, and others were left out altogether. That level of dishonor toward Messiah's body brought real consequences—sickness and even death (1 Cor 11:29–30). Whether the meal happened once a year or more often, the behavior around it needed urgent correction because it was spiritually dangerous.

2. Paul's Travel Plans Do Not Prove Frequent Communion

Matey points out that Paul wrote this letter while staying in Ephesus until Pentecost (1 Cor 16:8), possibly just after Passover. He uses this timing to argue that the Lord's Supper must have been celebrated often. But that does not follow.

In Paul's day, letters could take weeks or even months to arrive. Just because Paul was in Ephesus for a while does not mean the Corinthians got his letter immediately or that they were about to take the Supper again soon. What matters is that some had already taken it the wrong way—and they were still suffering the consequences.

Paul's concern is not about how soon they would celebrate again. He is concerned that whenever they do, it must be done properly. If they do not change their behavior, they will keep piling up judgment. Paul is urging them to repent now—not because the Supper is coming next week, but because they had already treated it carelessly and needed to take it seriously before approaching it again.

3. "When You Come Together" Does Not Mean "Every Time You Gather"

Some argue that Paul's words in 1 Cor 11:33–34 imply regular, weekly observance: "When you come together to eat... wait for one another." But that is a misunderstanding. Paul is not setting a schedule—he is giving instructions for *whenever* they share this sacred meal.

The Greek word used—*synerchomai*—just means “to come together.” It appears many times in 1 Corinthians and always describes general gathering, not a ritual frequency. The word *hosakis* in verse 26—“as often as you do this”—also means “whenever you do it,” not “do this often.” Neither word sets a calendar. Paul is saying that whenever they come together for the Lord’s meal, they must treat it with reverence and love.

4. Paul Was Not Working Within a Church Ritual Framework

Today’s idea of weekly communion is shaped by later church traditions. In the first century, believers met in homes or synagogues. They shared meals, prayed, worshiped, and studied together, but they did not have an independent fixed liturgical calendar with sacraments. The idea of a weekly “communion service” came much later.

What Paul is correcting is not a ritual gone wrong. He is correcting the heart and behavior of a community that turned a sacred meal into a scene of pride, division, and selfishness. That kind of behavior needed to change immediately—not because the meal was frequent, but because it was holy.

(Note: I will discuss the history of Communion in a separate section.)

Conclusion:

Paul’s urgency in 1 Corinthians 11 is about fixing a serious problem, not about creating a new weekly ritual. The issue is not frequency—it is faithfulness. The Lord’s Supper is a sacred memorial of Yeshua’s death, and Paul wants the Corinthians to approach it with the reverence it deserves. Nothing in this chapter proves it was meant to become a regular, stand-alone Church ordinance.

Yeshua is More than the Passover

Beyond the regular celebration described in 1 Corinthians, let us consider the implications of tying the Lord’s Supper *exclusively* to Passover.

Yeshua initiated the celebration of the bread and wine as elements representative of His New Covenant self-sacrifice at Passover. Paul (1 Cor 5:7), John the Baptist (John 1:29), and the Beloved Disciple (John 19:36) explicitly interpret Yeshua as the fulfillment of the Passover Lamb.

But Yeshua’s self-sacrifice fulfills aspects of the *entire* sacrificial system, not only the Passover. **To restrict the celebration of the Lord’s Supper only to Passover is to implicitly overlook Yeshua as the fulfillment of other sacrifices.**

For instance, Hebrews 9:7, 11–12 presents Yeshua as the ultimate Yom Kippur offering, cleansing the conscience of sinners and consecrating the true Heavenly Tabernacle.

Another example is the *zeḇaḥ šālāmīm*, the peace / fellowship offering described in Leviticus 3. Deuteronomy 27:7 summarizes the *šālāmīm* offering as a sacrifice that the worshippers eat in joy before the Lord's presence. Notably these sacrifices could be offered at any time. **God invited His people to feast with Him year-round through a sacrifice of peace.**

This is *precisely* the essence of the Lord's Supper, which commemorates the sacrificial death of Messiah by which we have peace with God (Rom 5:1, 8, 10; 1 Cor 11:26). We are invited to eat of the sacrifice itself, the bread and wine which stand for Messiah's body and blood (1 Cor 11:24–25), and which actually produce true fellowship with the Risen Lord (1 Cor 10:16)—as an exact analogy to how the various sacrifices of the Torah produce fellowship with the altar (1 Cor 10:18).

To isolate the Lord's Supper to Passover alone is to deny Yeshua's self-sacrifice the ability to fulfill the table fellowship God has always intended His people to have with Him through sacrifice. This ancient purpose of God predates even the Mosaic Tabernacle. In Abraham's day, Melchizedek, priest of El Elyon and precursor of the coming Messianic Priest,^[2] brought out consecrated bread and wine, to which he joined a blessing (Genesis 14:18–19). And again, after Moses had sanctified Israel by the blood of the covenant (Exodus 24:8, echoed at the Lord's Supper—Mark 14:24), he and the elders ascended Mount Sinai, “and they beheld God and ate and drank” (Exodus 24:11).

The tabernacle, given starting in Exodus 25, then universalizes accessibility to all Israel to come, sacrifice, and feast before the presence of the Lord. *This* is what Yeshua accomplishes and elevates in His own death and resurrection. The bread and the wine, regularly commemorated, are “the Table of the Lord” (1 Cor 10:21), and the invitation is no less open than at the Tabernacle of Moses.^[3]

[2] Hebrews 7:17

[3] Another striking text of dining with the Lord is Luke 24:30, where only in the breaking of bread is the Lord recognized. Luke's association between the Emmaus dinner, the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19), and the daily practice of the early messianic believers (Acts 2:46) is suggestive. Jude 12 gives us insight that early messianic worship included communal meals called agapes / love feasts (Greek: *agapais*).

Rusty's Comments regarding “Yeshua Is More Than the Passover”

Matey argues that if Yeshua fulfills more than just the Passover—like Yom Kippur and other sacrifices—then the Lord's Supper should not be tied only to Passover. On the surface, that sounds reasonable. After all, the New Testament does show that Yeshua fulfills many parts of the sacrificial system. But the problem is in the leap he makes from theology to practice. Just because Yeshua fulfills many sacrifices does not mean we are supposed to turn that fulfillment into a regular ritual—especially one separate from the context He actually gave us.

Let's look at a few key points:

1. Broad Fulfillment Does Not Mean Broad Ritual

Yes, Yeshua fulfills more than just the Passover lamb. Scripture shows He is also like the Yom Kippur offering (Hebrews 9) and even the peace offering (Romans 5). But that does not mean we are supposed to create a generic, repeatable ritual that tries to combine all of those things. Passover has a specific meaning: it celebrates deliverance and the beginning of God's covenant with Israel. That is exactly when Yeshua chose to break the bread and share the cup. It was not random.

Other holy days—like Yom Kippur—have their own meanings, symbols, and appointed times. God never told Israel to blend them all into one. He gave each of them their own purpose and timing. If we try to combine everything Yeshua fulfilled into a single frequent meal, we risk flattening out the beauty and meaning of each of these God-given patterns.

2. Speculation and Misapplied Texts

Matey brings up Melchizedek bringing out bread and wine (Genesis 14) and the Sinai meal with Moses and the elders (Exodus 24). Those are fascinating stories with deep meaning—but they were one-time events. Nowhere in Scripture are they turned into patterns for ongoing practice.

Yes, Melchizedek points forward to Yeshua's priesthood, and yes, the meal on Sinai was a powerful moment of covenant. But neither of those moments is presented as a model for a repeating ritual. The Lord's Supper, on the other hand, *is* given as a command—but only in the context of Passover. Yeshua did not say, "Do this every week." He said, "Do this in remembrance of Me," *while celebrating the Passover Seder*.

3. "Table of the Lord" Means Loyalty, Not Liturgical Planning

Matey also points to 1 Corinthians 10:21, where Paul says, "You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons." But this is not about how often the Supper should happen. Paul is warning the Corinthians not to mix pagan practices with faith in Messiah. His concern is about purity of worship—making sure their loyalty is to God alone. He is not giving us a schedule or frequency for Communion. He is dealing with idolatry and calling them to choose where their hearts really belong.

4. "Breaking Bread" in Acts 2:46 Is Not the Lord's Supper

Matey cites Acts 2:46 to suggest that the early believers practiced the Lord's Supper daily: "They broke bread in their homes." But this phrase, in both Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts, referred to ordinary fellowship meals—not to a reenactment of Yeshua's final Seder. Jewish households regularly broke bread on Shabbat and at common meals. Luke's use of the phrase here reflects shared life and hospitality, not a sacred ritual.

This confusion—treating "breaking bread" as synonymous with the Lord's Supper—has led modern churches to ritualize what was originally table fellowship. Even the "love feasts" in Jude

12 refer to communal meals, not sacraments. Scholars like F.F. Bruce and Gordon Fee offer helpful commentary, but often miss this critical distinction: the bread and cup were instituted in a Passover context, not abstracted into a generic ritual. A rite divorced from its roots becomes a symbol without a story.

Conclusion:

Yes, Yeshua fulfills many roles in Scripture—Passover lamb, Yom Kippur offering, peace offering, and more. But that does not mean we create a new, blended ritual to remember all of them at once. Yeshua chose the Passover to institute the bread and the cup for a reason. That context matters.

We honor Yeshua best when we keep His appointed meanings in their proper place. The Lord's Supper is a covenant meal. He gave it during Passover, with Passover symbols, tied to Israel's deliverance. That is not something to be separated, watered down, repeated weekly, and turned into a new Church ordinance.

For observant Jews this imagery is powerful and insightful - "Communion" is not. For Messianic believers especially, the connection to Passover is essential—not optional. When we keep that context, we preserve both the Jewish identity of the meal and the full meaning of what Yeshua did.

Is Such An Understanding Un-Jewish?

One objection occasionally raised to a regular celebration of the Lord's Supper is that it seems fundamentally un-Jewish. But if the universal practice of Yeshua's Jewish apostles was to institute regular commemorations of the Lord's Supper among the early congregations, then whatever we may think of the practice, we cannot call it un-Jewish. Additionally, Jewish halakhah has always developed through the ages in response to new circumstances in history. Daniel did not celebrate the Passover in exile but mourned and fasted (Dan 10:2–4). Only when the people returned and the Temple was rededicated (Ezra 6:16–18) did Passover celebration resume (Ezra 6:19–22). Indeed, in the Torah, Passover may only be kept at the place God chose, Jerusalem (Deut 16:5–6, 15–16). But in the face of a second exile, rabbinic tradition found a way to maintain the commemoration of the festival, without sacrifice, even in the dispersion. We sometimes overlook the fact that this development is itself a considerable innovation. But who would say it is thereby un-Jewish? If the rabbis have the authority to institute a tradition of Passover commemoration even for the Diaspora, how much more would the Jewish Resurrected Son of God have the right to institute a regular commemoration of His death until He returns? The frequent celebration of the Lord's Supper is as Jewish as the Lord behind it.

Rusty's Comments regarding the "Is Such An Understanding Un-Jewish?" Argument

Matey argues that celebrating the Lord's Supper frequently cannot be called "un-Jewish" if Yeshua's Jewish apostles practiced it that way. He also compares it to how Jewish tradition adapted Passover after the Temple was destroyed—saying that if the rabbis could innovate, surely Yeshua could too.

This sounds reasonable on the surface, but it is built on assumptions that are not supported by Scripture or history. This premise is unproven and repeating it does not render a proposed practice authentically Jewish or universally apostolic.

1. The Apostles Did Not Establish a New Weekly Supper

Matey's entire point depends on the idea that the apostles regularly held a separate, frequent Lord's Supper outside of Passover. But he never proves that. 1 Corinthians 11, which he leans on heavily, is actually Paul correcting a problem—not giving instructions for how often to hold a ritual.

You cannot just assume a new practice existed and then declare it Jewish because Jews supposedly did it. You have to show that Scripture supports it—and so far, that case has not been made.

(Jacob Neusner provides interesting insights into these adaptations in his work *Introduction to Rabbinic Literature*).

2. Rabbinic Adaptation

Matey compares the idea of regular Communion to how the rabbis adapted Passover after the Temple was destroyed. But that is a flawed comparison.

Daniel did not create a new ritual when he was in exile—he fasted and mourned because he could not celebrate Passover the way Torah required (see Deut 16:5–6). And after the Temple was destroyed, the rabbis made **conservative adjustments**—like using symbolic foods at the Seder—to preserve the meaning of Passover without changing its timing or purpose. They were trying to hold onto what Scripture already gave them, not replace it. It is well documented that Jews and Christians in the 1st Century, around the Roman Empire, kept the Passover (along with many other things "Jewish").

The Church's later development of a weekly Communion, detached from Passover, is something different entirely. It is not an adaptation; it is a new creation. That kind of innovation does not have the same scriptural foundation.

3. Yeshua's Authority Is Not the Issue—Proof Is

Matey also says that if rabbis have the authority to adapt practices, surely Yeshua does too. But that is not the issue. The question is not whether Yeshua *could* institute a new frequent ritual—but whether He *did*.

And Scripture shows He did not. He instituted the Lord's Supper during the Passover meal (see Matt 26:17–30), using Passover symbols—unleavened bread and wine—to point to His role as the Passover Lamb. He never gave instructions for a new, ongoing, separate rite. If such a thing were commanded, we would expect to find it clearly in the New Testament. We do not.

4. What Makes Something “Jewish”?

Matey ends by saying that regular Communion is “as Jewish as the Lord behind it.” That sounds poetic—but it dodges the deeper question: What actually makes a practice Jewish?

Just being done by a Jew does not make something “Jewish” in a biblical sense. The Catholic Mass, for example, began with Jewish believers—but over time, it developed into something far removed from Torah or Jewish practice.

In Messianic Judaism, Jewishness is defined by covenant faithfulness, alignment with Torah, and continuity with Israel's identity—not just origin. If we detach the Lord's Supper from Passover and turn it into a weekly ritual, we risk losing the very roots that make it meaningful in the first place.

Conclusion:

Matey's defense of frequent Communion being “Jewish” relies on assumptions, not Scripture. He assumes the apostles practiced it regularly without proving it. He compares it to rabbinic adaptations that preserved Scripture—not ones that created new rituals. And he appeals to Yeshua's authority without showing any biblical command that He actually did institute a new rite.

The Lord's Supper is deeply Jewish—but not because it happens often. It is Jewish because it is rooted in Passover. That is where it gets its meaning. If we shift it out of that context, we do not preserve its Jewish character—we lose it.

Summary on Frequency

In brief, 1 Corinthians 11 offers us a precious window into the practice of early messianic believers of celebrating the Lord's Supper regularly at their corporate gatherings.

The bread and the cup organically emerged from the Passover seder, but they transcended the timing of the holiday. While Paul still recognized the literal feasts of the Torah (1 Cor 16:8), which continued in full force at the Jerusalem Temple, he could also speak of a perpetual state of “Passover” (5:7–8) that must reign in the scattered new covenant communities (11:25), which had become the Temple of God (3:16):^[4]

not with a lamb sacrificed but with the Lord (5:7), not ever-cleansed of literal leaven but of sin (5:8), not made up of circumcised Jews only but uncircumcised Gentiles also (7:18, 12:2).

As the community perpetually celebrated such a “Passover” (5:7–8), they also perpetually broke the bread and drank the cup. “For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes” (11:26).

[4] When Paul says, “Let us celebrate the feast,” in 1 Cor 5:8, he uses the term *heortazōmen*, which only appears here in the NT, and in the Tanakh LXX is the technical term for celebrating the Torah’s holidays (Ex 12:14, 23:14; Lev 23:39, 41; Num 29:12; Deut 16:15). Some messianic interpreters therefore take 1 Cor 5:8 as a command to celebrate the literal, annual Mosaic Passover. But not only is this at odds with the spiritual interpretation Paul applies to every element of the Passover in 1 Cor 5:7–9, it would also be a direct violation of the Torah, which, as I mention previously, only allows Passover celebration in Jerusalem (Deut 16:15–16). In the Dispersion, away from Jerusalem and the Temple, the Mosaic Passover may be *commemorated* (Mishnah Pesachim 10), but not celebrated. Yet Paul here speaks of a celebration in the full sense—precisely because it is *not* the traditional Mosaic Passover proper, but the Passover with a new once-for-all sacrifice, Messiah. (See David Stern’s commentary for an additional defense of this view. Again, this does not mean Paul was disinterested in the traditional Mosaic holidays; on the contrary, as stated previously, he is cognizant of the timing of Pentecost in 1 Cor 16:8—as well as Acts 20:16.)

Rusty’s Comments: Regarding the "Summary on Frequency"

Matey ends by claiming that early believers celebrated the Lord’s Supper regularly at their gatherings, and that Paul speaks of a kind of “perpetual Passover” that transcends the original holiday. On the surface, that sounds like a strong closing—but it actually stretches Paul’s words far beyond what the text supports. (Side-note, Mishnat Pesachim 10 is not helpful to Matey’s argument - I am confused why he references it here)

1. 1 Corinthians 5:7–8: The Literal Passover as a Source for Ethical Exhortation, Not a New Rite: Paul’s instruction to “celebrate the feast” (ἐορτάζωμεν, *heortazōmen*) in 1 Corinthians 5:7–8 undeniably refers to the **biblical Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread**. Paul assumes his audience understands this literal annual feast. Paul uses that shared understanding to systematically draw spiritual parallels from the literal elements of the Passover:

- The “leaven” becomes a picture of sin (malice and wickedness),
- The “lamb” becomes Messiah Himself,
- And the call to “celebrate” becomes a call to live with sincerity and truth.

Paul isn't creating a new calendar ritual. He's reminding them of the meaning of Passover and calling them to live that meaning out daily. As David Stern points out, Paul is referencing the literal Passover, not rewriting it into a new form of frequent communion. That's why we don't see Paul or any of the apostles commanding regular ritual meals like modern communion apart from the annual Seder.

2. Misapplication of "Temple of God" and Torah Constraints: Matey argues that since believers are now the "Temple of God," they can hold a new, spiritualized form of Passover and celebrate the Lord's Supper frequently. But this takes Paul's metaphor too far.

When Paul calls the community "God's Temple" (1 Cor 3:16), he's urging them to stay pure and unified—not setting up a new ritual system. The Temple imagery is about holiness, not about replacing the calendar God gave Israel.

Matey even admits that Paul still respected the literal feast days of Torah and knew that Passover had to be celebrated in the place God chose—Jerusalem. So it does not make sense to say Paul would suddenly introduce a brand-new ritual to be done anywhere, anytime, detached from Passover. That would be inconsistent with both Torah and Paul's own teaching.

Conclusion:

Matey's summary turns Paul's moral teaching into a liturgical innovation that Paul never intended. Paul uses Passover imagery to call the Corinthians to live holy lives—not to set up a new, ongoing ritual apart from the original Passover context.

Messianic believers honor Yeshua's sacrifice most faithfully by keeping the Lord's Supper where He placed it—in the Passover Seder. Turning it into a generic, frequent ritual pulls it out of its biblical roots and into later Christian tradition. That shift risks diluting both its meaning and its identity as a covenant meal rooted in the story of Israel's redemption.

Note on the Nature of the Lord's Supper

Some trepidation with celebrating the Lord's Supper may arise because many of us are familiar with the Roman Catholic Church's claim that the bread and wine cease to be such and transubstantiate into body and blood. In response, even many Protestant churches have scaled back the frequency of commemorating the Supper, as well as conceptualized it as solely a symbolic and intellectual reminder of past events.

But historically, a number of other views have existed. Many of the Early Reformers believed in a *spiritual presence* view, where the elements were truly bread and wine, and yet the Risen Lord actually manifested His presence in a special way among the faithful through the elements.

Without going into too much detail, I find this view to be the most faithful to the Scriptures. The bread and wine are absolutely a memorial of the Lord's death (1 Cor 11:24–26). But partaking in them is also an inherent, supernatural participation in the body and blood of Messiah (10:16–17). The Corinthians, who did not understand this participation, were not thereby immune to the numinous aspect of the concentrated elements. The blessed bread and wine were *not* like any other blessed article. The Lord was, invisibly but truly, seated at the Table where the Corinthians ate His bread and wine, and He burned with jealousy in the face of any infidelity (10:20–22). Many who abused the Lord's Supper were struck with sickness, and some even died (11:29–30). God judges all those who approach His Table wickedly (11:32, 34)—but those who approach the cup rightly will find it to be a “cup of blessing” (10:16).

The only other object in the Scripture that so powerfully manifests the Power and Presence of God, regardless of the understanding of the people that approach, is the Ark of the Covenant. It too startles with disease (1 Sam 5:6, 9) and death (1 Sam 5:11–12, 6:19; 2 Sam 6:7). And it too, when treated reverentially, brings great blessing (2 Sam 6:11)—because the Lord Himself is present.

Rusty's Comments: Regarding the "Note on the Nature of the Lord's Supper"

Matey's defense of a “spiritual presence” view—where the bread and wine remain physically unchanged but carry a special, supernatural manifestation of Yeshua—moves beyond the plain meaning of the text and introduces a later theological lens foreign to both Scripture and Messianic Jewish practice.

1. Paul Emphasizes Covenant Behavior, Not Mystical Properties

Matey points to divine judgment in 1 Corinthians 11 (e.g., sickness or death) as proof that the bread and wine contain supernatural power. But this misreads the text. Paul clearly says the judgment comes from partaking “in an unworthy manner” (1 Cor 11:27), and from failing to “discern the body” (v. 29)—which, contextually, refers to the congregation itself (cf. 10:17; 12:12–27), not the physical body of Messiah in the elements. The issue was ethical: divisions, selfishness, and humiliation of the poor (11:20–22). Divine judgment flowed from covenant violation, not mystical mishandling of sacred objects. Biblical examples like Nadav and Avihu (Lev 10:1–2) or Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:1–11) show that God's discipline often targets those who treat His covenant lightly—not because of hidden metaphysics in bread or wine.

2. The Ark Analogy Does Not Hold

Comparing the elements of the Lord's Supper to the Ark of the Covenant overstates their role and function. The Ark was a divinely commanded object, part of the Temple system, and uniquely designated as the place of God's enthroned presence (Exod 25:22). The bread and wine, by contrast, are described as a memorial (anamnēsis) in 1 Corinthians 11:24–25. Paul

never says these elements become holy in themselves or operate with ontological power. Rather, his focus is remembrance, community, and honoring Yeshua's sacrifice through proper conduct (11:28–32).

3. "Participation" in 1 Corinthians 10 Means Fellowship, Not Transference

Paul's use of the word *koinōnia* ("participation" or "sharing") in 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 is relational, not metaphysical. It speaks of shared fellowship in Messiah's death, much like we share in His Spirit (2 Cor 13:14), in suffering (Phil 3:10), or in financial support (Rom 15:26). None of these imply that the act or object becomes mystical. The "cup of blessing" is a covenantal symbol—honoring Yeshua's atonement, not channeling His physical presence into food and drink. This fits the Passover context, where shared bread and wine always pointed to redemption, not transformation.

4. Implications for Messianic Jewish Practice

Scripture does assign holiness to certain objects (e.g., Ark, altar), but only when explicitly commanded by God within the Temple system. Paul never extends this to the bread and wine. His priority is covenant integrity: believers must approach the Lord's Table with reverence, unity, and self-examination (1 Cor 11:28). Introducing mystical presence language borrows from later Gentile sacramental theology and blurs the clear, Torah-rooted meaning of the Supper as a Passover memorial. The weight of Paul's warning lies not in the elements themselves—but in the heart and conduct of those who partake.

Conclusion

The Lord's Supper is powerful—but not because of metaphysical change in the elements. Its power flows from its meaning: a covenantal act rooted in the Exodus, fulfilled in Messiah, and honored through community, humility, and remembrance. Elevating the bread and wine to quasi-sacramental objects risks distorting the original Jewish framework. The Supper remains sacred not because of what happens to the elements, but because of what it calls us to remember, and how it calls us to live.

Conclusion

In the end, I hope to have made a case that the early messianic communities regularly celebrated the Lord's Supper—not in a way divorced from its Passover roots, but in a way that transcended the immediate annual context of the festival.

Eitz Chaim would be richly blessed by imitating our ancestors' regular approach to the Lord's Table, one which embraces the meal's Jewish context and comes reverentially to the bread and wine as a mysterious participation in the body and blood of the Risen Lord, who is truly and specially present among His people at the Table.

Respectfully yours,

Rusty's Comments: Conclusion

Matey concludes by appealing to the value of frequent participation in the Lord's Supper, rooted in Passover yet said to "transcend" its annual observance. While his intentions are commendable, this proposal lacks biblical and historical support and ultimately imports later Gentile frameworks into Messianic Jewish life.

1. The Core Claim of Regular Observance Remains Unproven

The central argument—that early Messianic communities frequently celebrated the Lord's Supper outside of Passover—remains unsubstantiated. Paul's remarks in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34 are corrective, not prescriptive. He is addressing disorder and ethical failure surrounding a specific meal, not instituting a new ritual with fixed frequency. As Gordon Fee notes, Paul is dealing with "abuse at a meal" rather than giving instructions for an ongoing sacrament (NICNT, 1987, p. 530).

Matey offers no additional support from Acts (e.g., Acts 2:46, which refers to shared meals in general) or from early Jewish-Christian sources like the *Didache*, which outlines distinct blessings over bread and wine but does not prescribe a unified, weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. Generalizing from one rebuke to a new, universal practice is a leap not warranted by the text.

2. "Jewishness" Alone Does Not Authorize Liturgical Innovation

Describing the Lord's Supper as "Jewish" does not automatically validate frequent observance. In Scripture, all commanded Jewish rituals—such as Passover, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot—are governed by precise timing and divine instruction (Lev 23). The claim that early believers were "blessed" by frequent observance must be supported by explicit biblical mandate, not sentiment.

The phrase "as often as" (ὡσάκις ἐὰν, *hosakis ean*, 1 Cor 11:26) is conditional, not prescriptive. It emphasizes the meaning of the act *whenever* it is done—not how often it must be done (cf. BDAG, s.v. ὡσάκις; Without direct command from Yeshua or the Apostles, the claim of frequent communion remains an extra-biblical innovation.

3. "Spiritual Presence" Theology Exceeds the Text

Matey's description of a "mysterious participation" in Messiah's body and blood, where He is "truly and specially present" at the Table, goes beyond the language of Scripture. While this reflects certain Protestant or Catholic traditions, it has no grounding in the Tanakh or in Paul's own writings.

1 Corinthians 11:24–25 calls the bread and wine a memorial (*anamnēsis*), not vessels of divine presence. Likewise, *koinōnia* (1 Cor 10:16) refers to relational fellowship, not metaphysical

infusion. Paul uses this word for sharing in suffering (Phil 3:10), financial giving (Rom 15:26), and partnership in the Spirit (2 Cor 13:14)—none of which imply mystical transformation.

Yeshua's presence is real, but it is relational and covenantal: "Where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there among them" (Matt 18:20). He is not confined to objects. Scripture consistently warns against locating God's presence in elements without explicit instruction (cf. the golden calf, Exod 32).

4. Unity Comes Through Covenant Faithfulness, Not Ritual Frequency

Matey's suggestion that congregations like Eitz Chaim would be "richly blessed" by adopting regular communion assumes a spiritual necessity Scripture does not affirm. True unity is achieved through mutual love, Torah faithfulness, and allegiance to Messiah—not through copying liturgical rhythms that emerged centuries later in the Church.

The early Jewish believers were not monolithic in practice, and neither must Messianic communities be today. Passover itself provides an annual, God-ordained context for the Lord's Supper—rich with covenant meaning, historical memory, and prophetic fulfillment. Seeking to replicate weekly communion under a "Jewish" label risks detaching this sacred act from its Torah foundation and replacing it with a ritual that never appears in Scripture.

Conclusion

Matey's proposal rests on well-intended but flawed premises. It conflates metaphor with mandate, draws doctrinal weight from one corrective passage, and introduces extra-biblical theological assumptions about divine presence. The Lord's Supper, as instituted by Yeshua, is best understood as a Passover memorial—rooted in Torah, fulfilled in the Messiah, and honored through ethical conduct and covenantal unity.

Messianic Judaism strengthens its identity not by replicating post-apostolic liturgical traditions, but by preserving the Supper in its original form: once a year, in the context God appointed, as a lasting remembrance of our Redeemer.

The evolution/history of "Communion"

A Fragile Foundation

Communion, as practiced in most churches today, is built almost entirely on a single chapter: 1 Corinthians 11. This is a dangerous foundation. If that passage were removed, the entire practice would collapse. Paul's other letters—twelve of them—are completely silent on this.

Even in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul is responding to problems, not prescribing a universal rite. Like most of his letters, we are only hearing one side of a conversation. We do not have the original question or context. That alone should give us pause.

If the Apostles had indeed instituted a weekly ritual of bread and wine, divorced from Passover, we should expect to see clear and repeated support for it—not one disputed passage. So what does the historical record show?

The Early Record: The Didache

This early manual for believers includes blessings with bread and wine—but never calls them the body and blood. There is no mention of Yeshua's words at the Last Supper, no talk of sacrifice, and no mystical Passover language. It is simply a meal of thanksgiving—*eucharistia* in the generic Greek sense (see Chapters 9, 10, 14).

If the Last Supper had been extracted into an observance separate from Passover, THIS IS WHERE WE WOULD EXPECT TO FIND THOSE DETAILS. Instead, it reads more like a version of motzi and kiddush, and then grace after meals.

The Fiscus Judaicus (70 CE and after)

After the destruction of the Temple, Rome imposed a new tax on anyone practicing Jewish customs. Sabbath, circumcision, and especially Passover became dangerous identifiers. Gentile believers who once proudly saw themselves as grafted-in began pulling back. Jewish customs could now cost you your freedom—or your life.

Titus Flavius Clemens, a Roman nobleman and early believer, was executed under Domitian for “living a Jewish life.” Even Clement of Rome, writing in the late 1st century, shows strong Jewish influence, quoting the Tanakh constantly and reflecting a temple-aware worldview.

Ignatius of Antioch (c. 110 CE)

He warned believers not to “live according to Judaism” and emphasized loyalty to the bishop. His tone reflects the growing division and the birth of hierarchical Church structure.

The Bar Kokhba Revolt (132–135 CE)

This final Jewish revolt against Rome ended in catastrophe. Emperor Hadrian responded with brutal laws: circumcision was banned, Sabbath observance outlawed, Torah scrolls burned. Jews were barred from entering Jerusalem except once a year.

To look Jewish was to invite persecution. Many Gentile believers distanced themselves further, seeking safety in separation. The shift was no longer just social—it was becoming theological.

The Fork in the Road

Polycarp vs. Anicetus

Polycarp, a disciple of John, continued to observe Passover on the 14th of Nisan. When he met with Anicetus, bishop of Rome, they discovered they were not on the same calendar. Others had begun celebrating the resurrection on Sunday instead. For a time, the Church tolerated both.

Melito of Sardis

Melito's *On Pascha* is the earliest surviving Christian Passover sermon. It is steeped in biblical imagery and deeply reverent toward the Exodus story. But it offers no support for weekly Communion. There is no mention of 1 Corinthians 11. No mystical rite. Just a yearly commemoration of Messiah's victory.

Justin Martyr

In his *First Apology*, Justin describes a weekly gathering on Sunday with Scripture readings, prayers, and a meal of bread and wine. He calls it "the Eucharist" and ties it to Christ's resurrection. But this is an apologetic work, written to a pagan emperor—not an apostolic letter or early liturgical instruction.

This is the first detailed description of a *weekly* Lord's Supper—appearing over a century after the resurrection, and written to the Roman Emperor. Not in Acts. Not in any Gospel. Not in the Didache. Not in *On Pascha*. Just here.

That is telling.

A primary purpose of Justin Martyr's *First Apology* was to defend Christianity to the Roman Emperor as a legitimate religion entirely distinct from paganism and Judaism.

The Wall Goes Up

Tertullian

Tertullian began arguing fiercely against Jewish influence, helping define a separate Christian identity. His writings are sharp, polemical, and aimed at legal distinction from both Jews and pagans. The theological wall was rising.

Victor of Rome

Victor attempted to excommunicate churches that still observed Passover on the biblical calendar. Sunday was to become universal. Irenaeus tried to mediate, citing the example of Polycarp—but the tide had turned. Rome was taking over.

The Didascalia Apostolorum (early 3rd century)

This Church manual, written in Syria, commands believers not to “keep the festival with the Jews,” but to celebrate the resurrection instead. The break with Jewish practice was now official. The weekly rite was firmly planted.

Council of Nicaea (325 CE)

Constantine declared it improper to follow the Jewish calendar, stating, “It is unworthy to celebrate the most holy festival following the practice of the Jews, who have polluted their hands with the most fearful crime.”

The First Epistle to the Corinthians

By Gordon D. Fee

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS

these women is that "we have no such²⁸ practice²⁹—nor do the churches of God." The words "such practice," therefore, must refer to that which the "contentious" are advocating, and which this argument has been combating.

This is now the third time that Paul has tried to correct Corinthian behavior by appealing to what is taught or practiced in the other churches.³⁰ As noted on 1:2, this probably reflects something of the independent spirit that is at work in this community. The distinction between "we" and "the churches of God" is most likely between the Pauline (and therefore the "we" includes the Corinthians) and other churches. If so, then Paul is also reminding the Corinthians of how much greater a body it is to which he and they belong.

Even though Paul has now spent considerable effort on this issue, the very nature of his argumentation reveals that it is not something over which he has great passion. Indeed, there is nothing quite like this in his extant letters, where he argues for maintaining a custom, let alone predicating a large part of the argument on shame, propriety, and custom. Two final observations, therefore, need to be made.

First, the very fact that Paul argues in this way, and that even at the end he does not give a commandment, suggests that such a "church custom," although not thereby unimportant for the Corinthians, is not to be raised to Canon Law. The very "customary" nature of the problem, which could be argued in this way in a basically monolithic cultural environment, makes it nearly impossible to transfer "across the board" to the multifaceted cultures in which the church finds itself today—even if we knew exactly what it was we were to transfer, which we do not. But in each culture there are surely those modes of dress that are appropriate and those that are not.

Second, the more casual way Paul argues against this present "deviation" in comparison with what follows, seems to indicate the greater significance—for him at least—of the next one. Here he can appeal to shame, propriety, and custom (as well as theological presuppositions and church practice); in the abuse that follows there is only attack and imperative. What they were doing with the Supper cut at the heart of both the gospel and the church; therefore, much is at stake. But here it is not quite so. The distinction between the sexes is to be maintained; the covering is to go back on; but for Paul it does not seem to be a life-and-death matter.

²⁸Gk. τοιαύτην, "such a kind" (cf. 5:1); there is no evidence of any kind that it means "other."

²⁹Gk. συνήθεια; cf. 8:7, where it was used in its subjective sense; here it is objective, referring to a specific custom.

³⁰See 4:17 and 7:17; cf. on 1:2 and see further 14:33.