

## **I CORINTHIANS 11:23-- BUT LET A MAN EXAMINE HIMSELF...**

In I Corinthians 11:23-32, the apostle Paul instructs Christians regarding the observance of the Passover or Lord's Supper and the importance of our state of mind in preparation for this memorial festival.

Many denominations or groups that partake of the New Testament symbols representing the body and blood of Jesus Christ don't have an annual ceremony on the same night he was betrayed, but may practice this ceremony on numerous occasions throughout the year. Our congregation and most of the churches of God we are familiar with deem it appropriate to observe this ceremony annually. Is there any benefit to that or are we missing out by not practicing it more often.

Most, if not all, Christian churches do however have an intensified focus this time of the year as they remember the crucifixion of our Savior.

One positive benefit is to exercise Paul's instruction on examining ourselves. While this spiritual process may be perceived or may be preached about in a manner that casts a negative or dreaded connotation on the subject, that very outlook and attitude is one we need to grow out of and overcome!

The translation of the word "unworthily" in the King James Bible of verses 27 and 29 can tend to make us think we must accomplish the impossible task of achieving perfection in order to partake of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The importance of our frame of mind concerning this ceremony is reinforced in verse 30. "Many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (or are dead).

A negative perception of our worth or a dreadful outlook on this examination process because we don't want to focus on our faults and shortcomings can cast a stumbling block that circumvents or delays the implementation of this valuable spiritual tool. It can also fuel the fire of religious leaders or groups whose method is to control or manipulate their followers.

Mature Christians realize what our loving God has set before us in order to choose life is for our good. Whether that is His commandments, His Laws, His principles or this admonition to examine ourselves, He is forwarding the purpose of His spiritual creation through us, His instruments.

We are God's instruments in fulfilling His spiritual creation.

When we consider the realities revealed in God's word, hopefully we will look at this self examination process and the discerning of the Lord's body in a positive and encouraging light.

Three realities to consider:

1. The harsh fleshly reality
2. The encouraging ongoing spiritual creation
3. The glorious spiritual fulfillment

**HARSH FLESHLY REALITY****ENCOURAGING ONGOING****THE GLORIOUS****SPIRITUAL CREATION****SPIRITUAL****FULFILLMENT**

I Peter 1: 24

I Peter 1:25

I Peter 2:9

Jeremiah 17: 9

Jeremiah 17: 5-8

Jeremiah 17: 12-14

Romans 3: 23

Romans 3: 24

Romans 4: 16

Romans 6: 23

Romans 6:23

Romans 6:23

John 6: 63

John 6: 63

John 6: 51

Romans 7: 18-24

Romans 7: 25

Romans 8: 1-2, 36-39

The ultimate fulfillment: Drinking new with Jesus Christ in His Father's Kingdom. Matthew 26: 29

What God creates is good. Genesis 1: After each day of creation God says "It is good".

After the creation of man and before he sinned, God said "It is very good". Genesis 1: 31

If the physical creation is good, how much better is the spiritual creation that God planned before the foundation of the world? Revelation 13: 8

Let us properly discern the Lord's body. Let a man examine himself, not everybody else. For if we would judge ourselves, we shall not be judged with the world. We will be chastened of the Lord.

Recognize we are only the instrument. Recognize the spiritual creator. Philippians 2: 13

If the result of this annual exercise is to come together partaking of the symbols of the body and blood of Christ, discerning the body, being reconciled to God and our brothers all in one accord in one place, then God will say about His spiritual creation, "It is very good".

Perhaps we can look at this process similar to the way John Adams felt after signing the Declaration of Independence. "You will think me transported with enthusiasm, but I am not. I am well aware of the toil and the bloodshed and the treasure that it will cost us to maintain this Declaration and support and defend these States. Yet through all the gloom I can see the rays of ravishing light and glory. I can see that the end is worth more than all the means; and that posterity will triumph in that day's transactions."