

Bible Basics Conference 2007: Things God has prepared for us

Part 12

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[00:00:01] Someone's written a whole book. I really need notice of the question.

Was it questions? And to read it out is going to take... Can we... Yeah, this will go on to about 10 o'clock, reading this one out. In regards to gifts such as healing tongues, etc., if they died out after the Apostles, how does that match up with Mark 16, 16, 18, where whoever believes will have signs accompanying them? Surely whoever believes must apply to all believers, not just those within a specific time frame. Maybe that's an assumption either way. I would say to that.

Except that Hebrews, the verse I quote in Hebrews, seems to confine it to the Apostles within a specific time frame. Also, if after the Apostles the signs wane, is there any reason why they might not return as they did after the gap between Moses and Elijah and Elisha? Well, that is a possibility that, in fact, after the Church has gone, I think there will be a revival of certain spiritual outpourings.

[00:01:13] The Spirit of God will manifest Himself in the young men and the young maidens according to the prophecy of Joel.

But I don't believe that they'd be necessary today because my basic premise was that the sign gifts were given to corroborate or validate a new phase in God's dealings.

And we're really at the end, the conclusion of God's dealings.

One gets lost in this long enough.

So we're on the second page. So 1 Corinthians 14.2. In 1 Corinthians 14.2 it speaks of those speaking in tongues, speaking not to men but to God. [00:02:05] For no one understands Him. Surely this shows the gift of tongues as being more than a sign of validity of the Apostles' message. It would suggest it's an ongoing gift to aid our relationship with God. Really, I think that the use of that verse to

say that it is a proving of speaking in tongues is not the way the Apostle Paul meant it. He is saying there that what you say, as I gave you some examples, you may remember, Remember that?

Well, you say, Edwin, you're not speaking to us. It doesn't mean anything. Well, God will understand what's in your mind, but you're not speaking to us. So the gift of tongues has to be a language. Well, if I'm speaking nonsense, well, I would say God wouldn't understand nonsense. But if I speak to him in Dutch, he will understand it. Maybe the brethren here won't. [00:03:02] But that's not the purpose of the exercise of the gift. It must always be for building up, whether it be unbelievers or believers. In fact, it's the sole rule in the assembly of God. It's the sole rule in church life that you are there for others, that you must love others, that you must do good to others, not look after yourself, which so many people like to do. They go to church because they want to get something out of it, but you never get that concept in Scripture. In the church, you have to love. 1 Corinthians 13, love seeks not its own.

I suppose in marriage they say it's give and take, but really it's not, and certainly not in the assembly. It's only give, give. You're not there to take. If you get a blessing, that's fine, but that's not the purpose. So the purpose of speaking in tongues should be for the edification of those around. Only God will understand if there's no one to translate or interpret. [00:04:02] This is my understanding of the passage. 1 Corinthians 13, verse 8 says that tongues will cease, but it also says prophecies and knowledge will cease. And as we still have those two, why would tongues have ceased earlier? Well, yes, thank you.

There is a different word used in relation to the cessation, but nevertheless I would say that even with prophecies and knowledge, there's been a change in the character.

There was prophetic utterances in the New Testament which were revelatory, distinctively revelatory. There are those who speak today who might have prophetic character speaking to edification. And we can just check the verse. 1 Corinthians 14, verse 3.

[00:05:03] It says, he that prophesies to men speaks for building up encouragement and consolation. So the original revelatory gifts had that threefold character.

But I don't believe that the revelatory gifts, there are no fresh revelations because we have the complete Word of God today. There's no need for fresh revelation. But there may be a need for application of the mind of God from the scriptures, from the heart of God to the hearts of the listeners, whether they be saints or otherwise, particularly saints. And therefore there may be exercise of what has, in a subsidiary sense, a prophetic character. And it will be marked by those three things. So that the answer to that part of the question is that I believe the revelatory character of prophecies, prophesying and utterances of knowledge and words of wisdom, that sort of thing has ceased. [00:06:05] But there may be an application of it in a subsidiary sense where there is no fresh manifestation of the will of God on any particular point. Because I firmly believe that in the Bibles you have in your hands, you have the complete and fullest revelation of God and his Son.

I'm going to ask Rusty to come and answer a question now.

It has your name on the piece of paper. So if you could briefly read it and give an answer to that question, please. Great. The question is, if someone breaks bread, then commits a sin, fornication in brackets, and is put out of fellowship, [00:07:07] later that person repents but has to live with the

consequences of their action, i.e. live with their second husband and the children of their second marriage. Is it possible for them to break bread again?

I suppose the answer could be given in three points.

First of all, I tried to say it this afternoon and Simon added to it, all discipline is for restoration.

And so the man in 1 Corinthians 5, he's put out of fellowship.

When we come to 2 Corinthians 2, Simon read the scripture up here. The Apostle Paul says, you should, the assembly, should receive him back into the assembly.

And so if somebody sins, if somebody commits fornication, if they repent, the obvious thing for the assembly to do when they have repented is to receive them back into the assembly. [00:08:16] But there is another verse that we could turn to. It's in 2 Samuel, in relation to David.

You remember when David sinned, in that not only did he have Uriah the Hittite killed, but he also went into his wife, Bathsheba, and they had a son. And in relation to that, God says through the prophet Nathan, wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord to do evil in his sight? That's the first thing. The second thing, verse 10, because thou hast despised me, and in verse 14, howbeit by this deed thou hast done great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.

[00:09:08] The child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

David had obviously sinned, and the first consequence that Nathan gives is that it was against the glory of God.

And when we do things wrong, as Christians, we're doing things against God.

And the first thing is, as David is told, it's against God.

Now David had this child, and the child, we know, it died. There is a consequences that will last of our sins.

And we have to be prepared to live with those consequences. There are some sins that we can commit, and we can get away with it, and there aren't any consequences. But as we had the question here, if a person in the assembly, let's take a married man, has an affair, and the person that he's had the affair with has a child, he has to live with those consequences. [00:10:16] You have another child. You can't just forget about it. We have to live, therefore, with the consequences of our sins.

So the question could then be raised, as it's in relation to a second husband, and children of their second marriage, what can we do? Let us imagine somebody presents themselves to the Lord's table. They are remarried. They have children from the first marriage. Do we say, we cannot receive them?

If they have repented, if they acknowledge that what they did was wrong, they are living every day with the consequences of what they have done wrong, would the assembly be right to receive them?

[00:11:11] Well, I will put my neck out and say the assembly would be right to receive them, but given

the consequences of what they had done, given the consequences that they already have had a wife, and they now have a second wife, the verses that we read in 1 Timothy, in relation to the elders, they are told to be the husband of one wife. So I think it would be perhaps wise that that person, who is already married, who has children with his first wife, then has another wife, and has children, that although he would be received through the privileges, should necessarily take a back seat, should not be the one that does the teaching, should not be the one that takes great part in the assembly. [00:12:01] If we are really repentant of what we have done, if we really realise some of those things which Nathan says about David, it would really have an effect upon our lives, and we would be extremely humble in our life. Does that answer the question? If it doesn't, I'll leave it there for the next question. Thank you very much, Rusty. I'm going to ask Gavin.

I've got one.

You have two, actually. So you should come and maybe have a look at the questions and give an answer.

Thank you, Gavin. I'll try.

Thank you.

What does the expression the unity of the spirit exactly mean?

[00:13:02] Well, I'm sure somebody will add to what I say.

They'll probably need to. But it's of God, the unity of the spirit.

It's a commonness of thought and motive and action, and we're told to keep it.

It can't be broken.

It's there, provided by God, and we are to keep it.

It can't be broken.

But I don't think that's a very good answer. What could you say, Michael, for that one? Because it did have Michael's name on it as well. You forgot that question, didn't you? I tried to.

Pass it on. Could I just say that in his last talk, Simon referred to that verse, so you might care to invite me on to talk about it. Time? [00:14:03] No, I'll try.

Time? The unity of the spirit.

It's the spirit. The unity of the spirit produces it, doesn't it? And all I say is that I think we must, we are in debt.

We are.

We don't create it.

We don't create it. It's brought about by the Holy Spirit, and as we're filled with the Holy Spirit, as we let the Holy Spirit direct us, it will flourish, and it will be a practical thing that we enjoy. But I do think in, let's just, it's us endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

If we're to enjoy the unity that the Holy Spirit, the unity of the spirit, the unity that he brings about, [00:15:05] then we must, we have a responsibility to endeavour to maintain it. It involves energy on our part. In the uniting bond of peace, the verse ends with. So we see with a lot of these truths that there's God's side. It's what God provides. But there's what we also have a responsibility to put into practice. And so we can't say it's just something that's there. It's almost an abstract thing. It's there.

It's got to be manifested. And the Holy Spirit is wanting to see that unity come out in a practical way, in the way in which we live together, we meet together, the way we act together. Then it will be for our blessing and for the witness to the world and for the glory of the Lord.

This is the next question.

Yes, please.

[00:16:06] Just very quickly, it might be good to distinguish two things, the unity of the body and the unity of the spirit. The unity of the body is what God has done, what God has made, what is there, what nobody can destroy, and it just exists.

The unity of the spirit we have a responsibility to keep. And if I had to give a definition, I would say it is the unity that the spirit wants to bring about among those who form part of the one body.

The second footnote is spirit with a capital S.

It's not a unity of spirits or our spirit.

It is a unity that the Holy Spirit produces.

So it's not just agreeing with one another, but it's on a scriptural basis.

[00:17:06] Some practical tests have been mentioned in the various talks, relationship between assemblies, recognition of discipline, and all those things are part of aiming at keeping that unity. And last footnote, we must never confound the qualities that we need to keep the unity with the unity itself.

As I've said, the unity of the spirit is when you're humble. Now you need to be humble to keep the unity.

They're all getting down and I've got the hardest questions. Although I think the person that asked this, well I don't know who it is really. We mentioned that women's meetings and such are not in the Bible but can be good. Are they good?

I feel that the person who asked that question probably knows the answer themselves. [00:18:03] Are they good? I've not been to a women's meeting.

There are those that are not happy with women's meetings and with the thought of women teaching.

But then there are those that feel that they're a good idea for brothers there to teach them. That's what I've gleaned so far on the subject. Are they good?

Women you could raise your hands if you think they're good. Put your money where your mouth is. Do you think they're good? I haven't been to one of course. How does it come that sisters shouldn't teach? What do we know about the daughters of, who are those daughters that prophesied? Philip. They prophesied didn't they?

What else would you like to say on this subject? [00:19:03] They weren't permitted to speak in the assembly. In the assembly, no.

So they couldn't speak to the brothers in the assembly. One assumes that they weren't either relaxed when they were amongst children. That's right. It's very explicit in the assembly meetings we talked about earlier that they keep silent in the churches. Perhaps we should just mention there is a verse in Titus, is there not, about this? We could just say briefly what it says in Titus.

The elder women in like manner be in deportment as becoming those who have to say to sacred things, not slanderous, not enslaved to much wine. Teachers of what is right, that they may admonish the young women to be attached to their husbands, to be attached to their children. Now that may not be an organised meeting but there is a role there for elder sisters to admonish. I think it means more practical, practical instruction, not doctrinal teaching. [00:20:06] The word admonish there isn't teaching in the normal sense. But we do see there is a role. But it seems appropriate that it should be practised not in public but in the home circle, in the informal setting. I might be wrong.

Titus chapter 2, verses 3 and 4.

Can I just add a word to that?

It is in Acts 21 where, verse 8, Paul entered the house of Philip the evangelist, verse 9, and the same man had four daughters which did prophesy. And then the very next verse says, We waited many days and there came down from Judea a certain prophet named Agabus. If you read on, it's Agabus that gives the prophecy that if Paul is to go up to Jerusalem he'll be bound. [00:21:07] Now we might say, well, there were four prophetesses in the house, why didn't God use them to bring the prophecy to Paul? And the answer is that that wouldn't be appropriate. The four daughters, they prophesied, yes, but in a domestic sphere and a private sphere. Not publicly and certainly not to men. So when Paul the apostle was to be the recipient of a prophecy, it was Agabus. He came all the way from Judea. And I think that tells us something of how God provides the right messenger. I think that's a helpful thing.

While I'm here, can I just answer Edwin's too? I think it's a very important question at the end of Mark about the signs that follow those that believe. You know, one of the things we must be really careful about is to have a good translation. [00:22:04] You know, you can't rely on a paraphrase or an inaccurate translation. Another translation, it says this. These signs shall follow those that have believed.

And it lists them. And it seems to me that the tense there is those that have believed. So those that

were living then who had believed, certain signs should follow them. And I think that teaches us that it's limited to those believers that had believed at that time. It doesn't say will believe and all those that will believe. And then there's a question about the prophecy, knowledge, and tongues ceasing.

Again, if you read a literal translation, it says that 1 Corinthians 13 verse 8.

[00:23:03] Prophecies, they shall be done away. Tongues, they shall cease. Knowledge, it shall be done away. And then it says when that which is perfect has come, that which is in part shall be done away. So there are two different words. Don't be misled by a paraphrase or an inaccurate translation. Knowledge and prophecy shall be done away.

That's one Greek word. And it means to be done away by an external action.

And the external action, it seems, is when that which is perfect shall come. I'm not going to get into exactly what that is. It may be when the New Testament is complete. It may be when the Lord comes. But either way, some external action causes prophecy and knowledge to be done away. Tongues, they shall cease.

And that's a different word in the Greek. And it's helpful to have a translation that distinguishes different words. [00:24:03] Tongues, they won't be done away by an external action. And the word means to fizzle out. They just fizzle out all of themselves. So it's a completely different thing. And it seems entirely consistent that tongues, the gift of healing, it just gradually fizzled out of its own accord. Whereas knowledge and prophecy, it remains until some specific thing comes in and causes it to be done away. I hope that's a helpful addition. We have a number of other questions. Hugh, you have one yourself here. If you'd like to answer, please.

The question is, is there a difference between the church and the saints?

Or the saints is just another way to call the church.

[00:25:03] Let me take the second bit first. No, no.

Those two words are not synonymous. They do not mean the same thing. And don't run away with the idea that they do. The church, as we've been at pains to point out, is a unity, one body.

The saints are a collection of individuals.

Now, depending on the circumstances, depending on the message that's being conveyed, the term the saints may be used.

For example, Nick read to us the opening verse of Philippians, where Paul writes to the saints.

Now, why didn't he write to the assembly in Philippi?

Because of the matter that he had to convey to them.

It was not new doctrine. [00:26:02] It was not things that they had not heard before.

But rather, it consisted of personal matters.

Christ, our example.

Christ, our object.

Christ, our joy.

These were things for each individual in that meeting to take to their hearts and seek to put into practice those practical aspects. Later in the epistle, there is a word of mild correction to two sisters who had a difference and another brother is exhorted to help them. Now, these are individual matters. And as Simon pointed out to us in Matthew 18, there are those matters that concern individuals. If you have something against your brother, take it up with him. Don't take it straight away to the assembly.

[00:27:05] There are three steps, aren't there, in Matthew 18. And the assembly is the final one. There are differences, vital differences, between the assembly, when it meets as the assembly, and a collection of individual believers who we might refer to as the saints.

So, in a word, it depends on the circumstances, which word it is appropriate to use, but the church is always unique.

Just one sentence.

Would you agree that in the Old Testament there were saints, but there wasn't a church? Oh, yes. Yes.

So it really just means separating. There are saints in every dispensation, if I may use that word. I don't think it's been used so far. There are saints in every dispensation, [00:28:01] but if we're talking about the saints in the world now, then they are individual saints, but they are also part of the assembly, that's all.

Jeff, you have quite a number of questions.

And there's only one other brother who has as many as you, which is Andrew, who might follow you, but if you'd like to look through your questions.

I'll ask Andrew afterwards to come up.

I'm sure, as you appreciate, we're reading these questions and trying to answer them at the same time. I'm sure you'll forgive and those will help where we might give a wrong meaning or a wrong answer. So the first question I've got here, [00:29:01] how do we know we have a gift as opposed to a natural ability? We said that a natural ability is in essence that what God has given us also, but it's natural. A spiritual gift is something that's been added and distributed by the saint, perhaps you can see it as an extra for the benefit and for the edifying of the church.

So in our daily lives, we might have natural abilities. We might be good at this, good at that, good at the other. But in the assembly circumstances, where the Holy Spirit should have his sway, then the

spirit clearly distributes and acts and helps and gives those gifts, so for the benefit and for the edification and for those aspects of the building up of the church that we considered.

But I think it's an important question. How do we know what that gift is?

[00:30:03] I'm sure it's a question that most of us have asked ourselves. How do we know what gift the Lord Jesus has given to us?

I think if we're not sure, the first recourse is by prayer and careful bringing ourselves into the presence of the Lord is to ask the Lord whether we have this gift, to ask him to help us and reveal that to us. But I think also that our brethren can help us with this, that if we have a particular gift, I'm sure our brethren will recognise that, that they will see the working of the Holy Spirit in how we act and how we work in the assembly.

And our local brethren will encourage us, and perhaps it's a word for all of us, to encourage those that we feel do have gift to use that gift, [00:31:05] to allow opportunities for that gift to be used, particularly amongst the younger ones, so that all the saints are helped.

There's another part of the question. Can a gift be given and taken away?

I'm getting some prompts here.

I tend to think that's the right answer, Nick. What was it?

No, sorry, thank you.

The answer was no.

If the Lord gives something, I don't think we have any instance where he takes it away. I think that's a wonderful thing about the Lord as a giver. He's given us the Lord Jesus Christ. He doesn't take that away. He's given us free and full salvation.

He doesn't take that away.

When he gives, he gives us something permanently. [00:32:03] We know that there are scriptures in 1 Timothy, 1 Peter, where Peter's encouraged not to neglect that gift, where he's encouraged to use that gift. So I feel encouraged to say no.

Do all true Christians have a gift?

I meant to emphasize that. I must apologize.

I think if we look in two verses, 1 Corinthians 12 and verse 7, the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with all.

I think also in the other main passage, Ephesians 4, Ephesians 4, verse 7, but unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Again, I think that's truly wonderful and to be deeply appreciated.

[00:33:02] But in the church of God, amongst the saints, the Lord hasn't set up an organism whereby there's one or two people who are perhaps doing all the work, one or two people who are highly gifted. He gives to each one of us a gift or gifts that we can all use.

If I can say it reverently, don't there's any unemployment in the church of God? Nobody's unemployed because we all have a gift and we're encouraged and exalted to use that gift.

All priests, question mark, all should serve or have opportunity to serve.

What about women?

Yes, I can see where that question is coming from. We all are priests and we all should be thanking, praising, worshipping God. [00:34:04] We all should do that in our homes, individually, in our own special circumstances. But we have from other scriptures where women should keep silent in the assembly. So all would have that priestly character.

But in the assembly, when we come together, it is the brothers and men who are called upon to act audibly. And of course, we tend to forget that the sisters are praising, worshipping, thanking the Lord silently, quietly in that assembly.

I think it's one of the areas where we do need to remind ourselves.

We're creatures that everything that we see and hear, we think of, that comes to our attention, we seem to think as important.

One of the verses, and I think many of us, [00:35:01] I'm certainly conscious that in the half hour, we couldn't really cover everything. There was bits that we just had to leave out.

First 23 of chapter 12, 1 Corinthians.

And those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow a more abundant honor. And our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. We tend to look up to, we tend to value those things that are seen and heard.

Perhaps, or do we really value those that are praying? We don't see or hear the prayers that have gone forth this weekend, in particular. Do we really value those prayers?

They go, or they can go, unnoticed, and they shouldn't be. Even when it comes to, we've heard a question about teaching, and again, the sister's role.

[00:36:05] We value the word that goes out.

And perhaps we might only hear of ministry, of the word, somebody speaking for half an hour a week, or a Bible reading for a little bit more. But the sisters have, I would even call it the most important role, that in the families, 24-7, the way they teach the children, the way they can encourage the husbands, the way through their lives and actions.

Teaching is not just saying it, it's often very easy to say things. But it's the way we act and behave

that show how the Lord would have us behave, that is far more important than somebody standing up there, I can say it sort of reverently, talking about it, doing it, seeing it in action, has a very great effect, I would suggest. [00:37:03] I have to ask a little question there. As long as you answer it. I think you'll answer it very well. It's simply a comment, really. You speak about the sisters praying and worshipping, and we all know what that means. But is there any reason why they shouldn't say amen at the end of it?

And is there any reason why we all shouldn't say amen? I've been to meetings where at the end of a prayer, at the end of the worship, all you get is... I personally very much agree with you, and I'm one of the ones who finds it difficult to do it. I was very impressed, Dilan, when I go across to centers in France in particular, occasionally just once in Germany, when it's a very...

I'm sure those of you who come from those countries are very much impressed that when a brother sits down, there's a loud amen from everybody.

Here, in this country, it can be a bit like a morgue. [00:38:03] And I think we should be encouraged to do that. It's perhaps a tradition that's grown up, but a loud amen from everybody.

I think the last question here, if male and female are priests and saints, what gifts do females receive that they can use in the assembly? Especially when it has been taught today that sisters are to remain quiet in the assembly. I think I've perhaps covered some of that in my previous comments. But there is a tremendous work for the sisters to do in the assembly. But we shouldn't just feel, perhaps particularly when we're young, that because somebody stands up there, that that's the only action that's taking place. And that perhaps the obvious gifts in the assembly, we could almost go through the list I have [00:39:01] and look at them and see which ones the sisters could do. The teaching of the children.

Certainly, whether it's in the Sunday school or whether on other occasions.

There's certainly...

I know us brothers value the help of our wives, and particularly putting us straight and sorting us out when perhaps what we say doesn't match up with our actions. There, we've mentioned the gift of helps. The sisters can certainly help and do help, perhaps in many more ways than the brothers. And we must value that.

It's very, very important.

I hope, I think, that's all.

Could I perhaps ask a question?

In 1 Corinthians 14, verse 1, it talks about earnestly desiring the spiritual gifts. So is there, in some sense, if we desire a spiritual gift, [00:40:01] then the Lord will give it to us? Is there some activity in attaining this gift? Yes, thank you.

Do you mean 1 Corinthians 12, verse 31?

That covets earnestly the best gifts. I suppose that backs up what is said in 14.1 as well. Yes, and again, it's another thing I sort of wish I had time to say. There is a responsibility there, isn't there? Covet earnestly the best gifts.

That there is that diligent exercise, which I think you said, Philip, of wanting to help, wanting to edify and encourage the saints, that there is an exercise to be had on our part that we should ask the Lord and that we should take this action to covet the best gifts.

Can I just say something? Yes, sure.

You touched on it just at the end there, but gifts are a means to an end, aren't they? [00:41:01] A gift is given in order to fulfil a need. And so perhaps we shouldn't be so worried about what gift we've got, but the Lord should show us the need and that he will meet that need and perhaps he'll meet us if we supply the gift. And of course, the poor man, he was saying, the first thing he said was, Lord, what would I have me to do? And the gifts followed, didn't they? The Lord had a task for him. He was an apostle. And so the gifts were supplied. But the first thing is the need, isn't it? That's the important thing. Yes, thanks very much, Philip. Just on this question of gifts, in Proverbs 18, Proverbs 18, verse 16 says, A man's gift makes a room for him and bringeth him before great men. We don't really have to do anything if we've got a gift. We just have to be in the pathway that the Lord would have us. And then it will be clear to see what it is. Yes, cleaving closer to the Lord. Andrew, if you'd like to come up [00:42:03] and ask your question, and then following on, Michael has a couple of questions as well. I did think when it came to answering these questions that there should have been a panel up at the front here, and I'm even more convinced of it now. The first question which I want to deal with is, to my mind, fairly straightforward.

It's, is the Passover the same as the Lord's Supper?

And if not, what is the relationship?

And there is a citation at the top to introduce the question from Luke chapter 22, where the Lord Jesus says, With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

If we're looking historically [00:43:03] at the Passover and the Lord's Supper, they're not the same.

And I think the verses in Luke 22 properly divided and properly understood will bring this up.

The Passover was the last of a Jewish supper, of a Jewish institution, which the Lord physically and literally partook of.

He sat down with the twelve, he sat down and the twelve apostles with him. And he desired to actually commemorate the coming of the children of Israel out of Egypt by keeping the Passover. And from verses 14 to 17 of Luke 22, we find that he's doing exactly that. Then verse 19 through to verse 20 [00:44:04] introduces what we speak of as the Lord's Supper, where he took the bread. And we've spoken a good deal about the breaking of bread. And it may not be intelligible to people outside of certain circles. The breaking of bread, we're not just talking about partaking of bread as a common meal.

We're talking of remembering the Lord, remembering in his death, what's called elsewhere the

communion service, sometimes the Eucharist, and so on, the Last Supper, the Lord's Supper. But the Lord Jesus, in Luke's Gospel, certainly chapter 22, distinguishes.

After the Passover, he took the bread, he took the bread in the Christian sense, he gave thanks, he broke it. And this occasion he didn't partake of it himself. He gave it on to the disciples. And the significance is, this is my body which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me. So we call the Lord to mind in his death, [00:45:02] in participating in breaking bread, and partaking of it together. And in like manner, the cup, the wine, the communion, after supper, this cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you.

And there's further instruction about the Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, and about the Lord's Table in 1 Corinthians 10.

The Passover was on an annual cycle of the seven feasts of Jehovah relating to Judaism.

The Lord's Supper is the standing institution of Christianity, and the two are distinguished. Of course, there is a spiritual significance to the Passover, and that's given to us in 1 Corinthians chapter 5, where it says in verse 7, Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.

And that's Christ's death in its sacrificial character. It shows that his death, [00:46:02] his suffering, his passion is the anti-type of the Passover lamb whose blood was shed in Egypt, and the blood poured on the doorposts and the lintel. The lamb roast with fire speaks of his suffering. How truly the Lord suffered for us on the cross of Calvary. Not real sufferings, but he suffered in his soul, and he suffered abandonment by God, and he suffered penally, and he suffered substitutionally. He suffered vicariously. He suffered on behalf of others. He suffered for sins not his own. He suffered for us. He was sacrificed for us. He stood in our place and bore God's judgment against sin.

And that's the true meaning of the Passover. And then it says, therefore let us keep the feast in verse 8 of 1 Corinthians 5. That's the feast of unleavened bread. And it means if we have a proper appreciation of the death of Christ, it will, [00:47:02] dear brothers and sisters in Christ, have an effect on our lives. It will lead meditation on Christ's sufferings.

Being taken up with Christ when we come together on the Lord's day to remember him in his death will produce an effect in our lives more even than listening to a sermon, even if it's a good sermon, because we'll be drawn into the very presence of Christ. We'll know something of the reality of his presence in the midst. He came into the midst of the disciples in resurrection. He showed them his hands and his feet. He showed them Thomas the Mark's on his side. Thomas, presented with this evidence in front of his eyes, he exclaimed, My Lord and my God!

He'd seen him die on the cross. He had the intelligence of it, even though they forsook him and fled. They knew he wasn't just a phantom. And they knew that he wasn't resuscitated from the dead. They knew he'd been [00:48:02] in the grave three days. The disciples knew the physical reality of his death. It wasn't that he went into a swoon and revived himself. He was dead.

He was dead, Christ.

And he was buried.

And the Roman soldiers were there. They came to put a spear in him, to put him to death.

To hasten the death, because it was a high feast for the Jews. It was a holy day. And they marveled that he was dead already. Those were the enemies of Christ. They weren't Christians making up some sort of a story to deceive the world. That was the Roman Empire. That was the judicial executioners. They satisfied themselves that Christ had died.

The truth of Christianity is, Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. He was buried and he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. As we have a sense of that, as we meditate upon that, as we keep the feast in that way, contemplating Christ [00:49:02] in his sufferings, it says it will...

We keep the feast then in response of unleavened bread. As Simon has referred, there will not be malice and wickedness. There will be sincerity and truth, because there will be a response in our life. So, the Passover and the Lord's Supper are completely distinct as to their actual physical accomplishment.

But as to their significance, they both point to the death of Christ.

So that was the first question. Next is one in three parts.

What if an assembly takes a wrong decision? Were they not gathered to the Lord's name?

And what if they insist on a decision that was wrong? Brackets on Scriptural. Question mark.

What if an assembly takes [00:50:02] a wrong decision?

So, I think in the government of God, actually, we suffer, the believers suffer, the assemblies suffer. Sometimes they suffer for many years.

So, those who are in a position to make decisions that are going to affect the saints in their own locality and in other localities should seek to be very sure that they have the Lord's mind. And that there's adequate testimony, whatever the problem is, that there's sufficient witness, that there are two or three witnesses, that the facts are verified, that the matter has gone into, that there should not be haste, there should not be precipitation, but there should be a waiting on the Lord, and they should be fully persuaded in their own minds and to as great an extent as possible that there should be unanimity and that the matter [00:51:02] should be clear, otherwise there can be severe repercussions. So, if an assembly takes a wrong decision, others are going to be affected. That's clear. But, and this impinges somewhat on what Simon was speaking about in regard to binding and loosing an assembly and so he may want to come in on it. The assembly, no assembly, no company of believers is infallible and an assembly can make a mistake and making a wrong decision does not mean that they were not gathered to the Lord's name. It's very possible to be gathered to the Lord's name and such is our weak condition and we have the flesh in us and it's very possible that an assembly [00:52:02] can come and has come to a wrong decision but it's not an indication thereby that they were not gathered to the Lord's name. If they insist on a decision that was wrong or unscriptural, others can bring wise counsel, maybe those spiritual brothers or sisters maybe I should add who can remonstrate, who can correspond, who can approach an assembly and to seek to act on their conscience to point out the error of the decision they've made. Adjacent assemblies can also become

involved certainly in the principle of the Old Testament the city that is nearest to the slain man would indicate [00:53:02] that those in the general vicinity rather than assemblies at a distance should in the first instance take matters up.

If after much patience and deliberation and contact nothing can be done to adjust or overrule or correct a wrong decision it then is going to raise a question eventually if that gathering can be recognized as properly gathered to the Lord's name and it may well be that it will cease to be recognized by the other assemblies.

Did you want to add anything on that Simon? Okay. Fine for you to say it's fine.

The other question is about the relationship between assemblies.

[00:54:02] How can we tell which groups of assemblies are recognized as assemblies and who recognizes assemblies?

Well I would say in the first instance that our Lord Jesus Christ recognizes assemblies. He recognizes those who are truly gathered to his name. In the book of Revelation there are lots of prophetic books in chapters 2 and 3.

We have the son of man in the midst of the candlesticks referring to individual assemblies in seven localities in Asia Minor now although there is a prophetic significance to it given a prophetic outline of the church's history on earth. Nevertheless, there were seven actually existing assemblies in those geographical locations Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos and so on right through to Philadelphia and Laodicea. The Lord recognized them and owned them [00:55:02] as being such.

We should seek to see things from his point of view and from his mind. There are certain difficulties of course because of the broken state of things in which we are found and because of all the ruin and confusion that is around us.

I think how can we tell that groups of Christians are gathered as assemblies? I think it really comes down to whether they fulfill the scriptural criteria that I mentioned this afternoon the ground in which they should gather the recognition that there is one body. In other words, are they gathered to the Lord's name? Are they gathered in unity? Do they recognize the essential unity of the assembly of God? Those other tests I mentioned, is the authority of the word of God owned in all things?

Is there liberty for the Holy Spirit to act by whom he will in worship and in ministry? Is there that [00:56:02] dependence on the Lord the Spirit? Then the matters that Rusty particularly brought before us, the purity of the Lord's table duly maintained godly discipline in regard to bad doctrine, evil conduct and false associations because evil communications, corrupt good manners, a little leaven, leavens the whole lump. So, we've got to see that what purports or claims to be gathered on the ground of the assembly as an expression of God's church that the reality is there that the spiritual reality is present and if that is so believers and those who have any spiritual discernment can see and can indicate and can assure themselves that that's a company that is properly gathered to Christ's name [00:57:02] and in this regard it's probably good you know that there's two or three, it's not an individual judgment but two or three brothers can recognize believers meeting together as such or there may be assemblies in the vicinity, in the general area that can indicate that they're satisfied that believers are meeting according to the scripture and for their recognition. Michael, would you lastly

like to answer the questions you had there? Yeah, I'll be very brief. It's getting late.

Just two footnotes and then the two questions. The first footnote is that if you believe there are dinosaurs today then you need to show me the dinosaur.

Now why am I saying that? [00:58:02] I believe that if you believe there is a certain spiritual gift today the onus is on you to show it to me. I remember once saying that to believers, there were about 200 of them who had come out of Pentecostalism and I asked them can you show me one who has that gift?

And they said actually no we can't.

It's easy really.

The second footnote is just on this point of recognition. This morning when I saw Philip I recognized him.

Now which may surprise you that I recognize someone. Now the fact that I recognized him didn't make him Philip but he looked like Philip and I recognized that. And in that sense we recognize assemblies. [00:59:02] That doesn't make them assemblies but if they follow the New Testament pattern we say oh yeah that looks like an assembly. Now here's a question that's a very short one. What does paradox mean? I was very encouraged by that question because it shows that some of the younger ones have been listening.

A very short answer.

A paradox is a red elephant.

And I say well that doesn't work. It's either red or it's an elephant. Well exactly that's a paradox. It's something that the Greek philosophers were very keen on.

I'll just tell you about one. They said if you have a runner in the stadium who tries to cross the stadium he will never get to the other end. And you know why?

Because before he can cross it he has to cross [01:00:02] the first half.

And then before he crosses the second half he has to cross half of that. And before he crosses the last quarter he has to cross half of that. And so it goes on. So he can never reach the end. Well the mathematician solved that.

Because it's possible to have an infinite sum of numbers which gets more and smaller and the outcome is still finite. So a paradox is something that doesn't ring right. It seems it's counterintuitive. It's not good to explain with another difficult word. It doesn't seem to work. It seems a contradiction. And it gives me a chance to say just one point that I forgot. When we said God wants both.

The unity and the separation.

I didn't give you the reason for the second.

Because some might think well are you people really so much better than everybody else [01:01:02] that you need to separate? And my answer to that is Numbers chapter 5.

God says there are certain categories of people, lepers and so on they mustn't be in the camp. And then he gives the reason and the reason is not that he says because my people is so much better than everybody else. The reason is remove them out of the camp in the midst of which I dwell. It's not because of us. It's because of the Lord. So much on the paradox. Last question.

God's church in ruins?

Surely not.

Christ says he will build his church.

Can't be can't be a ruin that there can't be ruin in his work. Clarity please. Well what does a pound coin look like? [01:02:02] Are you telling me there's the head of the queen on it? I'll disagree. I'll say it looks more like a palm tree.

Well that's because here we're looking at one side of the coin and I was looking at the other side of the coin. That's why we had this slide which said you can look at the church from two sides.

One is God's perspective and one is the practical condition of the Christian testimony. What man has done.

I'll just give you some examples to think about. When the church started in the early book of the Acts it says they were all one heart and one soul. It said that no unbeliever would have dared to come among them pretending to be a Christian.

And you find features of that early church. Andrew mentioned the assemblies in different localities [01:03:02] walking together.

There was the cooperation between the different different believers in different places. There was a display of love. There was unity. And all of that. Now that has changed hasn't it? It's like that picture we saw with the ruin where the roof was gone and the windows and so forth. So just compare what happened in the early beginning and compare the practical state now and that's what we mean by ruin. Perhaps we should say the ruin of the Christian testimony. That which is visible. And that Christian testimony will even continue after the rapture. And then it will get even worse. And at that point in time it develops into this terrible system that is called Babylon. And that is no longer compared to a bride but to a harlot. And that shows really [01:04:02] how far the Christian testimony has gone and will go away from what it was originally. So short answer.

Two sides of the coin. Because this was my question. I was going to ask this. I know that this expression that church is in ruins dates back to the time that the brethren came to exist. I think it was, I hesitate to say it was Mr. Darwin who used the expression. But I have very sympathy with the asker of the question that you had. Christ is building his church. He's not building a ruin. He's adding to his church. He's not adding to a ruin. This is my understanding of it. I fully share that understanding. As God looks down from heaven and he looks on the church [01:05:02] and he looks on his people surely he doesn't see a ruin. He sees a perfect church.

Now when you said it perhaps would be better to use the expression the Christian testimony is in ruins I would fully agree with that. And I think it might be better to say or more exactly to say that the church is in ruins.

But simply to say a dogmatic statement that the church is in ruins I have some question.

I've heard people say things like the body of Christ is divided. Well I don't see that in the Bible. So I agree with that statement. I'd be careful on the other hand to say it's just the professing church. It's true believers excluded.

[01:06:02] Let me just ask you if that includes true believers. Alright.

So already we agree it is not only the professors after the rapture but it is all those who profess to be Christians who constitute the Christian testimony and the picture they give is very different from the picture they gave in the beginning. You might say in the beginning there was congruence, there was harmony between God's view and the practical state. And that lasted for Acts 2 and 3 and 4 there was opposition from outside and in 5 it was gone.

In 5 the problem started, Acts 5 and they continued in Acts 7 and since then it has not become better. I don't want to make a man in particular not an appreciated writer, an offender for a word. I think we know what we mean. [01:07:02] From God's perspective it's perfect.

But the church in Laodicea is still called the church and that speaks of the Christian testimony that remains even after the true believers are gone. And so far I think that expression still conveys what has been happening, a sad departure from what God wanted.

Again later on in the second chapter [01:08:02] it says the chief of the fathers went to the house of the Lord which is at Jerusalem offered freely for the house of God to stand up in its place. So there seems to be this dual aspect where one is on the side of man's responsibility, that's in ruins but nevertheless that's the place where God had put his name and in his eyes that house is there in all its perfection, in all its glory.

But as Michael put it, it's man's responsibility on one side and how God views his work on the other. And maybe it's more accurate to speak of it as the testimony to that house. And I think in 1 Timothy when Paul speaks of the great house he's not saying the church of God has become a great house, he's saying that the Christian profession is right now a great house and in it [01:09:02] there's that which is defined there's that which is not defined but there is also that which is of Christ and the two they are seeking to go on in faith if the true is seeking to go on in faith it cannot go on with that which is false.

I'm very grateful for all the questions that have been asked and all the answers that have been given. I'm sure you have many more questions. There will be another opportunity tomorrow but today we must now draw to a close. Can I suggest before we close we've just seen hymn number 389.