

## Communion - 1 Corinthians 10:14-17; 11:17-34

1. Two weeks ago we spoke about baptism. That is a one-off event in the life of a believer. We don't baptise people more than once. Communion, on the other hand, is celebrated regularly in all churches. It's a core activity of the church. It is the meal we eat together.
2. Meals were important in the Old Testament (think of Abraham in Genesis 18) and for Jesus. Luke has most stories about Jesus enjoying meals, even with Pharisees (5:29; 7:36; 14:1). Meals have value in themselves as they bring people together, but they also carry the message of God's acceptance. And Jesus' meals also point to the messianic feast, to the Kingdom of God.  
After Jesus' departure, in Acts meals are central again: the first Christians often eat together and they obviously rejoice in each other's company; see esp. Acts 2:42-47.
3. Yet when Communion is celebrated in Christian churches, we often see glum faces and even sometimes people wearing black, as if they were attending a funeral. Why would that be?  
We eat in memory of Jesus, so we remember his death, but because he is alive, the atmosphere can be glad, even jubilant. We serve a living saviour, so we can 'celebrate'!
4. As a young man I once took part in an oecumenical celebration of Communion, led by a Roman Catholic priest. Afterwards I was asked by him to help him finish the wine. He believed that the wine he had consecrated had become the blood of Jesus and therefore should not be kept. (I did not get drunk so we probably had juice on that day...)  
This action reflects the mistaken idea that the wine changes during Communion. In actual fact, the wine remains wine, of course. Jesus is present when we celebrate, but not physically. Communion is not a repetition of the offer of Jesus, but a commemoration. Bread and wine are the symbols of his body and blood, but they remain bread and wine.
5. The Lord's Supper points to past, present (fellowship) and future:
  - The past: Jesus' death on the cross
  - The present: our fellowship with Jesus and with one another
  - The future: the heavenly feast, the wedding feast of the Lamb
6. In 1 Corinthians 11 we read:  
*<sup>20</sup>So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, <sup>21</sup>for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. <sup>22</sup>Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? ...*  
*<sup>33</sup>So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. <sup>34</sup>Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home...*  
This shows that in Corinth, as in Acts 2, Communion was celebrated as part of a normal meal. The problem in Corinth seems to be that the rich, who were not working, already started eating (and getting drunk) before the ordinary people had arrived after work. Paul is clearly unhappy with this situation and tries to correct it.
7. Because in New Testament times Communion was celebrated as part of a normal meal, how should we celebrate it in KBC? Is this New Testament practice something we want to replicate in Knaphill? If so, how would you do this? I have no strong views on this, but I would love to hear from you.