

The Memorial Emblems

GOD'S TRULY CONSECRATED people will soon join together to partake of the Memorial supper that Jesus instituted nearly two thousand years ago. With great joy we echo the words that the Apostle Paul wrote, as recorded in I Corinthians 11:23-26, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

As we participate in this Memorial feast we will be partaking of two symbolic emblems: the unleavened bread and the cup, or fruit of the vine. In order to appreciate the meaning of this Memorial observance, we must know the symbolic significance of these two emblems. We will examine them each from

two standpoints: first, the meaning of the emblems themselves; and second, the meaning attached to our partaking of them.

THE BREAD—JESUS' BROKEN BODY

When Jesus instituted the symbol of the bread, he told his disciples three things. First, he told them the bread represented his broken body; second, he told them to eat of it; and third, that they were to do this in remembrance of him. What did he mean when he said that the bread represented his broken body? Jesus' body was representative of his perfect human life—a corresponding price—which was to be laid down in sacrifice to redeem Adam and his posterity. As the typical Passover involved the 'breaking,' or slaying, of an unblemished lamb, so Jesus is also spoken of as a "lamb without blemish and without spot." (I Pet. 1:19) He is the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) John the Revelator says that Jesus was the "Lamb slain from the foundation of the world."—Rev. 13:8

We partake of Jesus' broken body by accepting him as our Redeemer. "Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." (Heb. 12:2) It is only because of that broken body that we have a relationship with God. A living Jesus in the flesh, even though perfect, could accomplish nothing as far as our redemption is concerned. He had to die as a human being. His body had to be broken in death.

The psalmist stated prophetically concerning Jesus, "He keepeth all his bones: not one of them

is broken.” (Ps. 34:20) To this, the Gospel of John says in fulfillment, “That the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.” (John 19:36) We are not to understand from this that the Scriptures are out of harmony when they speak on the one hand of Jesus’ bones not being broken, while yet Jesus himself stated that the emblem of the bread represented ‘my body, which is broken for you.’ Jesus here spoke figuratively of his death, in which his body, or humanity, would be voluntarily broken, or cut off, in order to fully take Adam’s place as the ransom price. It is in this sense, then, that Jesus’ body had to be broken in death, but not as a result of any disease, weakness, or imperfection—or literal broken bones—that had come upon him. None of these fleshly causes of death applied in the case of Jesus. As he said, “I lay down my life.”—John 10:17

Not only was Jesus’ body broken in his death on the cross, but it was also broken, during the entire three and a half years of his earthly ministry, from the standpoint that he continuously poured out his life for our benefit through his words, actions, preaching, conduct, example, and character. These things have become life-sustaining food to us, the keys to our growth and development as New Creatures. This is why Jesus used the symbol of bread to describe his body. These things that emanated from his body continuously throughout his earthly ministry were, as Jesus described, the “living bread.” In John, chapter 6, Jesus explained this aspect of eating his body. We read, “I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that

I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.”—vss. 51-55

Jesus was not speaking of eating his literal flesh or literally drinking his blood. These were merely symbols. Just as one would expect to receive life-giving nourishment from eating bread, so would one benefit from all the examples provided from the life of Jesus. We are to ‘eat’ of him by speaking as he did, acting as he acted, thinking as he thought. This is what Jesus meant when he stated, as recorded in John 6:56,57, “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.” Notice that it is those who ‘dwelleth in me’ and ‘live by me’ who partake of him as that bread from heaven. Jesus again emphasizes the symbolic nature of what he is saying in verse 63: “It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.”

In I Corinthians 5:7,8, the Apostle Paul relates this symbol of the bread to the development of the Christian character exemplified in Jesus, saying, “Even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither

with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Unleavened bread signifies that which sanctifies us and separates us from the fallen tendencies of the flesh and the world. Thus, when we partake of the bread, in addition to remembering Jesus’ broken body we also are renewing our commitment to the great work of sanctification within our being, appropriating to ourselves the benefits of that which was accomplished during our Lord’s earthly ministry.

THE CUP—JESUS’ SHED BLOOD

As with the bread, Jesus told his disciples, and us, what the cup symbolized when he instituted this Memorial supper. He said, as recorded in Matthew 26:27,28, that the cup represented blood—his blood. As the bread represented his body broken for three and a half years culminating on the cross, so the cup represented the value, or merit, of that life represented in the blood. Peter says, in I Peter 1:19, that we were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

It is important to note the necessity of both parts of the transaction. Jesus’ body—the corresponding price—had to be broken, put to death, for the ransom to be provided. This by itself, though, was not sufficient. A dead Messiah could not restore the race back to perfection. However, the value of that life as represented in the blood, if applied as payment into the hands of justice, could bring about the release of man from condemnation and provide a hope for his restoration back to God. We see that this is exactly what happened. Jesus, by his death, provided

the ransom price. By his resurrection—accomplished through the mighty power of God—with the value of that ransom in his possession, he was able to initiate the process by which that value would be applied, first on behalf of the church, and later on behalf of the remainder of mankind.

We see, in Matthew 26:28, that Jesus additionally said this cup represented the blood of the New Testament, or Covenant. Notice that only the cup, not the bread, is mentioned in this way. Jesus' broken body could do nothing relative to the New Covenant, but his blood could. Having value, it served as a seal—a surety, a ratification—of that New Covenant or, putting it another way, it guaranteed that the New Covenant would be instituted in due time, in his future kingdom here on earth. The Apostle Paul, in Hebrews 9:19,20 and 7:22, comments on the sealing, by blood, of both the old Law Covenant as well as the New Covenant. He says, “When Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament [covenant] which God hath enjoined unto you.” “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament [covenant].”

The Apostle Paul could truly say, as recorded in Hebrews 9:22, that without the “shedding of blood,” there could be no “remission” of sins. How our minds should ever appreciate the full meaning of this—that we could have absolutely no standing before God if not for what Jesus accomplished on our behalf.

Let's look now at the more personal part of this cup. How is it appropriated to us? How is it personally affecting us? From one standpoint, we appropriated this cup to ourselves at consecration as we, through faith, accepted Jesus, receiving the merits of his sacrifice, and gave our all to the Heavenly Father. At that time, the value, the blood of Jesus was imputed to us. We became justified in God's sight. We took the "cup of salvation." (Ps. 116:13) John says, in Revelation 1:5, that Jesus "washed us from our sins in his own blood."

From another standpoint, our appropriation of the cup at consecration was only the beginning. Just as the Israelites in the type had to remain under the blood during the entire Passover night, we, too, must daily remain under Jesus' blood, wearing the "robe of righteousness" (Isa. 61:10), through all the experiences of the Christian walk. Jesus refers to this cup of experience both in reference to himself and to his church. Concerning himself, he said, as recorded in John 18:11, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" Concerning us, he asks, in Matthew 20:22, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" How do we answer these same questions? Have we been willing to drink of the 'cup' poured for us? Do we delight in any and all of the experiences God gives us? We must be able to answer, as Jesus did, unequivocally and zealously—yes! Only with this mind-set and attitude can we have this cup fully appropriated to us.

LOOKING BACK AND AHEAD

As we look back over the year past, it is likely that we have had both some successes, as well as

some failures, in appropriating the benefits symbolized in the body and blood of our Lord, and as represented by the emblems of which we will soon partake. It is important that we do as the Apostle Paul admonished in I Corinthians 11:28, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Let us remember that our worthiness to partake of these emblems, and our faithfulness in doing so, will not be measured so much by what we do the night of the Memorial, but by what we do the day following, and all the remaining days of our Christian walk.

As we look forward to another year in the school of Christ, let us each remember even more keenly the tremendous work that Jesus accomplished, and what it means to us. Finally, just as Jesus gave thanks before serving the bread and the cup to his disciples, may we also continually be thankful for all that has been done on our behalf, and soon on behalf of the entire world of mankind. "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."—II Cor. 9:15 ■

WEEKLY PRAYER MEETING TEXTS

APRIL 6—"If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf."—I Peter 4:16 (Z. '96-166 Hymn 106)

APRIL 13—"Except ye eat of the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you."—John 6:53 (Z. '99-51 Hymn 325)

APRIL 20—"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much."—Luke 16:10 (Z. '03-407 Hymn 277)

APRIL 27—"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."—Philippians 2:5 (Z. '02-265 Hymn 150)