

Partaking of the Lord's Memorial

"This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."

—Luke 22:19

ON THE EVENING THAT

Jesus was betrayed and on the same day in which he died, he sat in the upper room with his twelve disciples eating the lamb, which represented himself and his sacrifice. He knew that he was about to be put to death as the "Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) He was the "true bread from heaven," the bread of God which came down to give life to the world.—John 6:31-33

In a few hours, Jesus would be lifted up on the cross to die for the sins of the world, and to fulfill the Father's mission which he had come to do. The Father had determined the exact time for his sacrifice to be offered. Previously, when the Jews had come to lay hands upon him and put him to death they could not, because his hour was not yet come. He now willingly said, "My time is at hand."—Matt. 26:18

When our Lord instituted his Memorial Supper, it was the beginning of a new symbol. It was built

upon and related to the old Passover celebration observed by the Jewish people, although not a part of it. It was intended to be a commemoration, or memorial, of his death, and he wanted to demonstrate to his disciples the benefits of that sacrifice to them, and to all of the believers during the present Gospel Age.

THIS IS MY BODY

When the Passover supper was finished, Jesus took the bread and instituted a memorial of his own death as a substitute for the Passover lamb. It was a simple ceremony which would help to remind his followers of what he had done for them, and for the world. It also showed them that they would have the privilege of participating with him in the Divine program of salvation. As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to his disciples. It represented his flesh—his humanity—which was broken, or sacrificed, for us. Unless he had sacrificed himself for us, we could never have a resurrection from death to any future life. “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.”—I Cor. 11:24-26

Jesus was pointing out to his disciples that this memorial to his death should continue until the last member of his spiritual body is gathered together

with him in heaven. Therefore, “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”—vs. 28

We do not partake of the bread and the cup from fear, but from knowledge and love, gratefully and intelligently, for blessed are your enlightened minds through the Holy Spirit. We believe that this is now a new institution that should take the place of the former typical sacrifices that became obsolete when they were fulfilled. We are to examine our hearts, and motives, for none are worthy. We have this blessed privilege of partaking of these Memorial emblems by the love and grace of our Heavenly Father. This celebration with his disciples on the 14th day of Nisan had a new meaning, the loaf representing his flesh and the cup his blood. We trust in him and appreciate his sacrifice, and should gladly take of the Memorial as he instructed. It is appropriate to remember at what great cost redemption from sin and death was provided. Consider also the Heavenly Father’s love in giving his only begotten Son to suffer and to die. We also remember the great compassion that our Lord demonstrated during his earthly ministry.

IMPORTANCE OF THE ORDER

During the Memorial, as it was on that night with his disciples in the upper room, bread was first broken. We realize that the order or appropriateness of having the bread broken and passed to the disciples teaches us that only those who are now justified from sin by faith in the merit and sacrifice of the true and antitypical Lamb of God are invited to give up their justified humanity and

share in the afflictions of Christ during the present age, and the glories which will follow. Only those who symbolically eat his flesh, and drink his blood, dwell in him and he in them as members of his body. "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."—John 6:55,56

Partaking of the bread is a symbol representing the real love of God, and points to a more important feast. This is the appropriation of the merit of Christ that secures to the faithful eternal life through his shed blood. Thus by faith, accepting his finished sacrifice, and by a similar faith as instructed by him, we appropriate to ourselves all of the merits and perfections and rights which the man Christ Jesus possessed and laid down in death for us. In this way, we feed our hearts upon the bread of everlasting life. The bread, which God sent from heaven, is the true bread of which men will eat, and never die. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven." (John 6:51) It was necessary not only for our Lord to come down from heaven as 'bread,' but also necessary that he lay down his life in death. He sacrificed or gave his flesh for the life of the world, that all of the dead and dying race could have life.

LEAVEN PICTURES SIN

The bread which our Lord broke on that night was unleavened. Leaven represents corruption and sin because it is an element of decay, therefore it is a type, or picture, for sin. It also represents the decay and death which sin works in mankind. The

unleavened bread shows that our Lord was free from sin, as a lamb without blemish and without spot. "Such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." (Heb. 7:26) He was a perfect and willing sacrifice, and was brought as a lamb to the slaughter and he opened not his mouth.—Isa. 53:7

In our own lives, we must "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us." (I Cor. 5:7) We must strive to rid ourselves of malice, anger, hatred, and anything that would take us away from service to God. We are to understand what it cost our Lord Jesus, as far as his physical and mental suffering are concerned, to be the Redeemer of the world of mankind. We should also recall the example of Divine love and compassion for the sin-cursed race that has been shown to us. We should have a renewed determination to be faithful in carrying out the terms of our own consecration to do God's will. Paul wrote, "Consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds."—Heb. 12:3

Our mind can be a battleground, and our fight a difficult one. We fight against the old mind, and the ways of the old man, including the flesh's resistance to sacrifice. If we continue to trust in the true and living God, we have a complete renewing of our minds, a strengthening to prepare us to go on each day and to know and do the will of God. "The trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with

fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”—I Pet. 1:7

BITTER HERBS

On the night of the Passover celebration, the children of Israel were instructed to eat “bitter herbs.” (Exod. 12:8) This represents the bitter experiences and trials that the Heavenly Father permits to come upon his consecrated people during the present Gospel Age. These experiences help to wean us from fleshly interests and provide us with increased appetite to further feed upon the lamb and the unleavened bread of Truth. The entire household of faith during the present Gospel Age feeds on the unleavened bread of Truth, mingled with the bitter herbs of trial and testing. Our Lord’s followers partake of the bitter herbs of persecution in accord with the Master’s own words, that the servant is not above his master. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.”—II Tim. 3:12

We are told to have the mind of Christ, for, if we do this, we will gain strength to follow in his footsteps. We read, “Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously.” (I Pet. 2:23) He gave his all in service to his Father, and to his sheep, his followers. He lived his life by example; he helped and encouraged. Each one of us should desire as his followers to be as the saints, to be conformed to the image of God’s Son. Those whom he calls he then justifies, and those he will also glorify. They are, “elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through

sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.” (I Pet. 1:2) He has set us apart, and has called us to a heavenly calling. We must strive to fulfill our vows of consecration, and complete the giving of our own living sacrifice.

THE FRUIT OF THE VINE

“He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” (Matt. 26:27-29) He took the cup, and invited his disciples and followers to partake of the fruit of the vine, of his blood, the cup representing death.

The crushing of the grapes, the wine or the juice of grapes, represents his blood. His life was willingly poured out, and in turn he was inviting them to also partake with him. It represents a cup of shame, sorrow, and self-denial on behalf of others, and implies the giving of all there is to give. It is a cup of sacrifice even unto death, and symbolizes our Lord’s death and sacrifice of his earthly rights. He gave thanks, which showed the joy that he had in giving his life, and that he accepted all the sufferings which the breaking of the bread and the crushing of the grapes implied. He gave it to them, which shows that only his called ones—the little flock—are invited to participate with him. Christ symbolically gave them the privilege of sharing in his sufferings.

Our Lord told them, ‘Drink ye all of it,’ which was his invitation to the disciples to share with him in the cup. Jesus’ shed blood was the ransom price for all, but the act of handing the cup to his disciples and asking them to drink was an invitation to them. It was the invitation to participate with him in the sacrifice of earthly life, interests, hopes, aims, and ambitions. It would eventually require the giving of everything that they had to give. All who would sit with him in his throne must drink of this same cup of self-denial, self-sacrifice, and must be immersed into his death—be willing to give their all in laying down their lives. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.”—Rom. 8:16,17

CUP OF BLESSING

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (I Cor. 10:16) The ‘cup’ represents the sacrificed life of our Lord, and the ‘bread’ represents his body. This is pointing out to us that we being many members are one loaf, and have communion, or a common union, with our Lord, and with one another. We are all partakers of that one body, as expressed by Paul. “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” (Col. 1:27) This emphasizes the thought of unity, the oneness of the church with each other and with their Lord. We should be very thankful for the wonderful opportunity that we have been

given to share in his cup, and to be “baptized into his death.” (Rom. 6:3) It should inspire each one to complete their vows of consecration, and strive to be faithful to their calling. All of the members of the one loaf have pledged to be broken, that they may share in life-giving power and influence to others. This will ultimately lead to the opportunity for the world of mankind to live on a restored and perfect earth forever. They will feed on the bread of life, and drink of the water of Truth freely.

To partake of these emblems—the bread and the cup—is a way of reaffirming our vow of consecration when we responded to the call, “My son, give me thine heart.” (Prov. 23:26) It is the desire of his footstep followers to remember him, to be broken with him, and with all of the fellow members of the body of Christ. They love their Master, and are willing to show their devotion to him in following his words. “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.”—I Cor. 11:26

May we all continue to remember our Lord’s sacrifice in the days ahead, remembering that he has “called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (I Pet. 2:9) He called you out from the world, and invited you to be “taught of God.” (John 6:45) He desires you to be faithful in matters great and small, and wants you to continue to keep your thoughts and motives pure, “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.”—Heb. 12:2

EXAMINE YOURSELF

The Memorial season is an appropriate time to reexamine our commitment to our loving Heavenly

Father. Are we living up to our privileges of sacrifice as faithfully as we first intended when we began the journey on the narrow way, or are we unwittingly taking an easier way? As we consider Jesus at this special time of the year and throughout the following year, we will all want to make sure that we are among those who continue to voluntarily keep their sacrifice on the altar. This should be done regardless of the cost to us in terms of inconvenience, weariness, misunderstanding, or suffering. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Rom. 12:1) We must endure to the end, and only then will we receive the great salvation. It will take a lifetime of dedication to God to complete. "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise." (Heb. 10:36) "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him."—James 1:12

Those who participate in this Memorial of our Lord's death should be as those expressed in the Apostle's words, "If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us."—Rom. 8:17,18

Those who assemble themselves together should be guided by these terms and conditions: 1) Faith in the blood; and 2) Consecration to the Lord, and to his service, even unto death. This is a serious matter and one that should not be taken lightly. We

have a warning about avoiding a careless celebration, for it is not a feast, it is a solemn memorial.—I Cor. 11:27,28

RECOGNIZING OUR NEED FOR REDEMPTION

As we partake of these emblems—the unleavened bread representing his broken body, and the cup representing his shed blood—we are saying to one another and to the Lord that we are in need of his sacrifice. We are showing that we fully understand that he died for us, and that his was a ‘living sacrifice.’ It was done on our behalf so that we could receive life through him, for we know that he died to take away the sins of the world. We recognize that our Father is the Father of lights, and is loving and merciful. He gave us the wonderful gift of his only begotten Son that through him, and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit, we may share in dispensing wonderful blessings to the human family under the administration of Christ’s future kingdom.

We recall the words, “I am the light of the world.” (John 9:5) Jesus also said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” (chap. 14:6) He teaches us, “Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” (Eph. 5:8) To these, old things are passed away and all things become new. We thus have new hopes, aims, and ambitions, having become lovers of truth and righteousness, purity, and goodness. We read, “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”—John 6:54

Let all who would celebrate our Lord’s death have in their hearts and minds the merits of his sacrifice

and of his life. As we partake of the loaf and the cup may we remember our dear Lord Jesus and our brethren on the night of the Memorial Supper. Being his yokefellows, we desire to continue to lay down our lives in service to our Heavenly Father, his beloved Son, and our brethren. It is both a privilege and a pleasure to memorialize the laying down of his life, and to confess it before each other and before the Lord. We should fully realize by the grace of God, and through his Holy Spirit, what these Memorial emblems represented on that night in which our Lord Jesus was betrayed and gave his perfect human life as the antitypical Passover lamb.

