

We Are All One Body

“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? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.”
—I Corinthians 10:16,17

IN THIS SCRIPTURE, THE Apostle Paul speaks of the Christ as one composite body with many members. We learn from God’s Word that the body of Christ will number 144,000 when the heavenly call has been fully completed at the close of this present Gospel Age. (Rev. 14:1) Paul uses the word ‘communion’ which has been translated from a Greek word that means ‘to share or to participate’ in a certain goal. It thus points to the common partnership in our Lord’s death in which he has invited us to share. Those who will be remembering his death this year will be privileged to eat and drink of the emblems that he gave us. This year the Lord’s people will gather for this occasion on Sunday evening, April 17, 2011. It is a great joy to once again partake

of the Memorial supper that our dear Lord Jesus instituted nearly two thousand years ago.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

We echo the words that the Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Corinth in connection with the significance of this solemn annual observance. He told them, "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."—I Cor. 11:23-26

As we participate in this Memorial celebration, we will be partaking of two symbolic emblems—the unleavened bread and the cup, or fruit of the vine. In order to appreciate the true and deeper meaning of this Memorial observance, we must understand the true meaning of the emblems themselves, and also how they relate to our partaking of them.

THE BROKEN LOAF

When Jesus chose to use the broken loaf, he explained to his disciples that the bread would represent his body that was broken for them. He invited them to eat of it and told them that they were to do this in remembrance of his death each year. His body represented his perfect human life that he was to lay down in sacrifice as a corresponding

price to redeem Adam and his posterity from the penalty of death. As the typical Passover lamb of the Israelites involved the slaying of an unblemished lamb, so Jesus is also spoken of as the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29) The Apostle Peter said that Jesus was the “lamb without blemish and without spot.” (I Pet. 1:19) We also read that Jesus was the “Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.”—Rev 13:8

As the bread was broken, 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 his broken body that we have a relationship with God. A living Jesus in the flesh, even though perfect, could not accomplish our redemption. He had to die as a perfect human being, and his body had to be broken in death.

HE KEEPETH ALL HIS BONES

In prophetic terms, the Psalmist David wrote, “The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.” (Ps. 34:18-20) David’s prophecy spoke figuratively of Jesus’ death, and that his body, or perfect humanity, would be voluntarily broken to fully take Adam’s place as the ransom price for the human family. It is in this sense that Jesus’ body had to be broken in death, and not as a result of any disease, weakness, or imperfection

that had come upon him. None of these fleshly causes of death applied when our Lord died.

In John's gospel, we read the account of Jesus' death and the fulfillment of David's prophetic words. "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation [day], that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken."—John 19:31-36

Jesus' body was figuratively broken in his death on the cross. It was also broken during the entire three and a half years of his earthly ministry, during which time he continuously poured out his life through his preaching and in the wonderful miracles he performed. His entire life was a perfect example of total dedication to the will of his Heavenly Father. His ministry became life-sustaining food for us, and is the key to our spiritual growth and development as New Creatures in Christ Jesus.

BREAD FROM HEAVEN

The Master more than once used the symbol of bread to illustrate his broken body. He explained,

“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. 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.”—John 6:51-57

Just as we would expect to receive life-giving nourishment from eating bread, so would we also benefit from the example provided from the life of Jesus. We are to eat of him by speaking, acting, and thinking as he did. The Apostle Paul relates this symbol of the bread to the development of the New Creature as exemplified in Jesus. He admonished, “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: 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.”—I Cor. 5:7,8

‘Unleavened bread’ signifies that which sanctifies and separates us from the fallen tendencies of the flesh and the world. When we partake of the bread, in addition to remembering Jesus’ broken body, we are also renewing our covenant of sacrifice

and our commitment to the great work of sanctification during our walk in newness of life. We are appropriating to ourselves the benefits of that which was accomplished during our Lord's earthly ministry.

THE CUP

Jesus told his disciples what the cup symbolized when he instituted the Memorial supper. "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

In this scripture, the Master explained that the cup represented the 'blood of the new testament,' or the New Covenant. Only the cup is mentioned in this connection because his broken body could do nothing relative to the New Covenant. Having merit, the blood served as the seal, or ratification, of the New Covenant. It guaranteed that the New Covenant would be instituted at the designated time when his future kingdom here on earth will be established.

The bread represented Jesus' body broken for three and a half years culminating on the cross, and the cup represented the value, or merit, of that life which was represented in the blood—"With the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." (I Pet. 1:19) It is important to note the necessity of both parts of the transaction. Jesus' body—the corresponding price—had

to be broken and put to death for the ransom to be provided. However, this by itself was not sufficient because a dead Messiah could not restore the race to perfection. The value of that life, as represented in the blood, needed to be applied as payment into the hands of justice in order to bring release to the human family from condemnation. It provided hope for man's restoration to God.

APPLICATION OF THE BLOOD

By his death, Jesus provided the ransom price. By his resurrection, the merit of that ransom was demonstrated and he was able to initiate the process by which that value would be applied. It was first applied on behalf of the members of the Christ during this present Gospel Age, and later it will be applied on behalf of the whole sin-sick world under the administration of Christ's future kingdom.

The Apostle Paul pointed to the sealing by blood of both the old Law Covenant as well as the New Covenant. He said, "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 which God hath enjoined unto you." (Heb. 9:19,20) "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better [new] testament."—chap. 7:22

We would have no standing before our Heavenly Father if it were not for Jesus who accomplished that standing on our behalf. While explaining the type in his letter to the Hebrews, Paul emphasized the realization of that standing and the importance

of the blood sacrifice. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission [of sin]." (Heb. 9:22) He further explained that the first application of the blood took place on behalf of the Christ during this present Gospel Age. "It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."—vss. 23,24

APPROPRIATING THE CUP

We appropriated the significance of the cup to ourselves at the time we made our consecration to God. Through faith, we accepted Jesus and received the merits of his sacrifice. At that time, the merit, or true value, of Jesus' blood was imputed to us and we were justified in God's sight. The psalmist wrote, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD." (Ps. 116:12,13) "Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."—Rev. 1:5,6

However, our appropriation of the cup at the time of our consecration was only the first step in our consecrated life. Just as the Israelites in the type

had to remain under the blood during the entire Passover night, we, too, must remain continually under Jesus' blood through all the experiences of our walk in newness of life. We also receive Christ's robe of righteousness. "I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels."—Isa. 61:10

THE CUP OF EXPERIENCE

Jesus referred to this cup of experience both in reference to himself, and to the members of his church. Concerning himself, he said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:11) Concerning us, he asks, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?"—Mark 10:38

We must be willing to drink of the cup that our loving Heavenly Father has poured for us, and delight in all of the experiences he sees fit to give us for our spiritual development and growth as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. We must be able to answer even as Jesus did and have the same attitude of heart devotion to God. By doing so, we will have the cup fully appropriated to us.

EXAMINING OURSELVES

We should solemnly consider the benefits that are symbolized in the body and blood of our dear Lord Jesus. They are represented by the emblems which he instituted during that last night of his

earthly life in the upper room with his disciples. The Apostle Paul admonishes, “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”—I Cor. 11:27,28

Let us remember that our worthiness to partake of these emblems and our faithfulness in so doing is not only to be measured by our partaking of the emblems on the night of the Memorial, but by all of the remaining days of our Christian walk in newness of life. “We are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.”—Rom. 6:4,5

As we look forward to another year in the school of Christ, let us each remember the work that Jesus accomplished and what it means to us. As Jesus gave thanks before serving the bread and the cup to his disciples, may we also continue to be thankful for all that has been done on our behalf, and all that will soon be made manifest to the entire world of mankind.

ONE BODY IN CHRIST

We are all one body in Christ Jesus. “As we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.”—Rom. 12:4,5 ■