

“Let Us Keep the Feast”

“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 Corinthians 5:8*

GOD’S CONSECRATED

people will soon join together once again to partake of the Memorial supper that Jesus instituted nearly two thousand years ago. In partaking of the Memorial, we demonstrate our faith and obedience to the Lord. We show our obedience in that we are fulfilling his expressed will, that we do this in remembrance of him. (I Cor. 11:23-26) Faith is also demonstrated because we understand the meaning of the Memorial as it pertains to our consecrated life.

We see, first of all, that the Memorial the Lord instituted with his disciples emphasized that the old Mosaic ceremony, or type, was coming to an end and the greater fulfillment, or antitype, was to begin, represented in the sacrifice of Jesus on Calvary’s cross. It is manifest, therefore, that we should see a correspondence of meaning between

the symbolism of the Old Testament type and the New Testament antitype, as represented in the “bread” and “cup.”

PASSOVER TYPE AND ANTITYPE

In Exodus chapter 12, a record of the typical Passover is given: “And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house: And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats: And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire. And thus shall ye eat it; with your

loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's passover. ... And this day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever."—Exod. 12:1-11,14

Calling attention to the basic significance of Israel's Passover, we understand that the lamb without blemish mentioned in verse 5 represents Jesus, "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners," the "Lamb of God," who was "slain from the foundation of the world." (Heb. 7:26; John 1:29; Rev. 13:8) The blood and flesh of the lamb were dealt with separately in the typical picture. The blood was sprinkled on the lintels and door posts of each house in order to protect the firstborn from death. This signifies how the blood of Jesus poured out on the cross provided merit that is being applied on behalf of the firstborns of this present Gospel Age—the spiritual Israelites who are dwelling in the house of the Lord during this night time of sin and death. Being under the blood, they are free from the Adamic condemnation of death. (Rom. 8:1,2; I John 1:7) All others of the human family remain at the present time under the death sentence, as represented by the firstborn of Egypt.

During the Passover night in Egypt, the Israelites protected the firstborn with the blood on the doorposts. Then, remaining in their houses, they roasted the flesh of the lamb and ate it throughout the night with unleavened bread. Looking at the fulfillment, we see that the merit, or value, of Jesus' blood was first sprinkled on behalf of the "church

of the firstborn.” (Heb. 12:23) This was done at the beginning of the Gospel Age “night” when Christ “entered ... into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.” (Heb. 9:24) The blood was applied once at the beginning of the age and all the Lord’s body members must appropriate to themselves the benefits of the one application. This we do by faith.

In the Passover picture, the Israelites ate the flesh of the lamb throughout the night. Jesus so instructed his followers to eat of his flesh. “This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die.” (John 6:50) Later in this same chapter Jesus indicates that he is not speaking of his literal flesh being eaten, but that we eat of his flesh symbolically by feeding upon his words, the Word of Truth. “The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (vs. 63) His flesh was emblematic of the Truth because the words of life, the Gospel of salvation that he preached for three and one half years, was the direct cause of his sacrificial death, the literal death of his flesh on the cross.

THE MEMORIAL INSTITUTED

Looking further in the New Testament we see an added correspondence between the Passover and the Memorial of our Lord’s death. The day before his death, Jesus instructed his disciples to obtain a “large upper room,” in which they would prepare for the Passover. (Mark 14:12-16) Having done so they gathered together, and as they were eating, “Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat;

this is my body. And 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 [Greek: covenant], 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. And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."—Matt. 26:26-30

We should think of the "upper room" that was prepared for this occasion as signifying how we have been called to rise above the world and its cares, desires, and vexations. The Apostle Paul states that God has "made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:6) The eleven disciples seated with Jesus in the upper room, Judas Iscariot having departed, represent the entire church of the Gospel Age. These all, by faith, are symbolically dwelling in the upper room with the Lord, not just on the evening of the Memorial, but every day of their consecrated life, partaking of, and appropriating, the benefits signified by the bread and the cup.

BENEFITS OF JESUS' SACRIFICIAL DEATH

The sacrificial death of Jesus is pictured in both the bread and the cup, but we see more than this. These two emblems represent the two benefits that accrue to us as a direct result of his one sacrificial death. The cup represents the value, or merit, of his shed blood, and the bread symbolizes the Word of Truth which came forth from him as spiritual food. The cup points back to the blood of the paschal lamb that was sprinkled on the lintels and

doorposts, and the bread corresponds to the flesh of the paschal lamb which was eaten during the Passover night in Egypt.

In this one sacrifice, Jesus chose to show how it provided two distinct benefits to his footstep followers. The merit was represented in the blood of that sacrifice, and the word of truth was represented in the flesh of that same sacrifice, just as it was represented in the blood and the flesh of the one Passover lamb in Egypt. Therefore, the cup we partake of represents the redeeming value of our Lord's sacrifice. Jesus said that his blood would be "shed for many for the remission of sins." (Matt. 26:28) This merit was provided in an instant when his life expired on the cross, and was made available after his resurrection on the third day by the mighty power of God.

THE BREAD OF LIFE

As the bread of life, the laying down of Jesus' life began at Jordan, and for three and one half years he "brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (II Tim. 1:10) He preached the Gospel message to all those with whom he came in contact. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. ... It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:48-50,63) We see how Jesus made the association. He was the Word, the mouthpiece of God, and his words brought life.

The Apostle Paul relates the symbol of the bread to the development of the Christian character exemplified in Jesus, saying, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed: Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." (I Cor. 5:7,8, *English Standard Version*) Leaven is used in the Bible to represent sin. (Matt. 16:6,11,12; Luke 12:1) Unleavened bread, on the contrary, signifies that which sanctifies 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 and his words, 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 SYMBOL OF THE CUP

When our Lord instituted the Memorial the scriptural account states, "Then taking a cup, and giving thanks, he gave it to them, saying, Drink all of you out of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, that which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins." (Matt. 26:27,28, *The Emphatic Diaglott*) Just as Israel's firstborns were under the blood during the Passover night in Egypt, so the church, as they partake of the fruit of the vine, demonstrate their faith in the precious blood of Christ which has justified and cleansed them from sin. So long as such are appropriating unto themselves the merit of his sacrifice they will then be able to properly eat of the "unleavened bread of sincerity and

truth.” The bread of Truth will continue to nourish the New Creature only so long as the blood of sprinkling continues to cover the old fleshly creature. Both the bread and the cup are thus necessary to convey the full import of our standing with God through his Son, Christ Jesus. One part without the other would not be sufficient.

How is the cup 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, gave our all to the Heavenly Father, and received the merits of Jesus’ sacrifice. At that time the redemptive value of Jesus blood was imputed to us. We became justified in God’s sight by Jesus’ blood. (Rom. 5:8,9) We took “the cup of salvation.” (Ps. 116:13) Jesus “washed us from our sins in his own blood.” —Rev. 1:5

From another standpoint, our appropriation of the cup at consecration was only the beginning. Just as the Israelites had to remain under the blood during the entire Passover night, we too must daily remain under Jesus’ blood, wearing the “robe of righteousness” through all the experiences of the Christian walk. (Isa. 61:10) Concerning himself Jesus said, as recorded in John 18:11, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” How do we answer the same question? 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 mindset and attitude can we fully have this cup appropriated to us.

PARTAKING AS ONE BODY

As we partake of the Memorial emblems we should also have in mind the unity of the body of Christ, of which we are individual members. The Apostle Paul refers to this unity, or common participation, that we have in the blood and flesh of Jesus in I Corinthians 10:16,17. Here he states that even though we are many members, nevertheless God looks upon us as one body, one unit, because we all partake of the one cup and the one bread—represented in Jesus, our Passover lamb. The apostle says, according to the *Revised Standard Version*, “The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ?” As members of the one body, we have a common union, or equal participation, in the merit of his supreme sacrifice as represented in the cup. We appropriate it to ourselves by faith. Paul continues, “The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.”—*RSV*, See also *The Emphatic Diaglott*, *New English Translation* and *New International Version*

Paul’s words in the above verses do not mean that somehow we become a part of the cup and part of the bread—symbols which Jesus said represent only his blood and his body. Another example of how “communion” is used elsewhere is in II Corinthians 13:14, which speaks of “the communion of the Holy Spirit.” Here again the thought is of equal or common access, but certainly not of somehow becoming part of the Holy Spirit. It is true also that the church is spoken of as “wheat” in the Lord’s parables, but we should not relate this to

the “bread” symbol of the Memorial. We should be careful not to mix these pictures and symbols.

The Scriptures also refer to a cup of experience, as Jesus stated, “Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of? Ye shall drink indeed of my cup.” (Matt. 20:22,23) Although these relate to our daily faithfulness to the Lord, they are not references specifically to the Memorial cup. In fact, there are many cups in the Bible: cup of cold water; cup of God’s wrath; cup of sorrow; cup of joy; cup of suffering; and others. All these have significance, but they are separate from the special meaning symbolized by the Memorial cup.

Referring again to I Corinthians 10:17, the apostle is suggesting here that we know we are all of the one body because we are all feeding upon the same loaf. “For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” (Matt. 24:28) How beautifully this was pictured at the first Memorial—the Lord Jesus breaking bread, passing it to the disciples, representing the church, and saying “take, eat, this is my body.”

EXAMINING OURSELVES

Our Lord has been breaking the bread of Truth for all those who have been so privileged to be in the “upper room,” feeding at the table of the Lord. It is well to keep in mind that this blessed privilege of commemorating the death of Jesus is conditional, and unless we meet those conditions we may partake unworthily. Although the sin-offering feature of God’s plan is not directly shown in the Memorial emblems, it nevertheless relates to the conditions we must meet to partake worthily.

We must consider carefully our vows of consecration and renew our efforts to walk faithfully in the Master's footsteps of suffering and self-sacrifice, remembering that only if we suffer with him will we be accounted worthy to share in his glory. (Rom. 8:16,17) Sacrificing the flesh and its interests is an essential part of this process. We ask the Lord to help us in this, and many times he answers by providing severe tests and allowing difficult trials to come upon us. It is well for us at this Memorial season to take stock of ourselves and to wear the whole Christian armor in the great battle of overcoming the flesh, its desires and weaknesses.—Eph. 6:10-18

Looking back over the year past it is likely that we have had both some successes as well as failures in appropriating the benefits symbolized in the body and blood of our Lord and 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 also remember that our worthiness to partake of these emblems and our faithfulness in doing so will not be measured simply by what we do the night of the Memorial celebration, but by what we do all the remaining days of our Christian walk.

THANKS BE TO GOD

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. Just as Jesus gave thanks before instituting these emblems, 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

We recall our Lord’s words, “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. 26:29) If faithful, we will have the blessed privilege of sharing with our Lord in the work of applying the merits of his sacrifice on behalf of all mankind, as well as in the blessed work of restoring health, happiness and life to all the willing and obedient under the New Covenant. Let us, therefore, keep the feast “in full assurance of faith.”—Heb. 10:22 ■