

In Remembrance of Christ

*“He took bread,
and gave thanks,
and brake it, and
gave unto them,
saying, This is my
body which is given
for you: this do in
remembrance of
me. Likewise also
the cup after
supper, saying,
This cup is the new
testament in my
blood, which is
shed for you.”*
—Luke 22:19,20

THE DATE THIS YEAR FOR the Memorial Supper is Thursday evening, April 14th, after sundown. It is the proper date on which to memorialize the death of Jesus, our Redeemer, being the anniversary of the day on which he was condemned to death and crucified nearly twenty centuries ago.

The Memorial Supper celebrated each year by dedicated Christians throughout the earth is associated with the Passover of Israel, established by God as recorded in Exodus 12:1-14. The Memorial is not a continuation of Israel's Passover, nor is it the fulfillment of the Passover. Jesus, by his sacrificial death as the “Lamb of God,” fulfilled the Passover picture. (John 1:29) Our Memorial celebration now is in commemoration of the death of Jesus, the greater Passover Lamb. The Apostle says, “Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Let us therefore celebrate the festival.”—I Cor. 5:7,8,
English Standard Version

The original Passover, kept by the Jews on the night before their liberation from Egypt, was closely associated with that deliverance. We similarly see that the sacrifice of Jesus, the “Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world,” makes possible the deliverance of all mankind from the enslavement of sin and death. In Israel’s first Passover celebration, it was the firstborn of each family who were in special danger of death. Their safety depended upon the protection of the blood of the sacrificed Passover lamb. Being thus protected from death, and later delivered, they became, represented in the Levitical tribe, the servants of the whole house of Israel.—Exod. 11:4-7; 12:12,13; Num. 3:11-13

During the present Christian age, we find that there is also a “firstborn” class who are in special danger of death, and who come under the protection of the blood of Jesus, the greater Passover Lamb. The Apostle Paul refers to this group as the “church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.” (Heb. 12:23) These, like the firstborn of Israel, are protected by the blood, and later delivered into the “glorious liberty of the children of God.” (Rom. 8:21) Together with Jesus, they will become the leaders of the people in the coming kingdom of God. Through its administration, all the families of the earth are finally to be delivered from sin and death, restored to the original perfection and life that was forfeited through the sin of our first parents.—Rom. 5:12,18,19; Luke 19:10; Acts 3:20-25

The condition upon which the firstborn class of this present age may thus be permitted to live and

reign with Christ and share with him in the future work of delivering mankind, is that they suffer and die with him. (Rom. 8:17; II Tim. 2:11,12) Jesus was led "to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth." Likewise, the church is said to be "killed all the day long," and "accounted as sheep for the slaughter." —Isa. 53:7; Rom. 8:36

WHAT WE KEEP IN REMEMBRANCE

From the foregoing summary of the thoughts associated with the Memorial Supper, we can see that first and foremost in our minds and hearts on this occasion should be the fact of the Heavenly Father's great love, as it was demonstrated in the gift of his only begotten Son. (John 3:16; II Cor. 9:15) Our appreciation of God's love should, indeed, be increased as we reflect upon what great cost was involved in the sending of his beloved Son to die on behalf of all mankind.

Our appreciation of Jesus should also be increased. While the Heavenly Father in his love sent his only Son, it is also true that our Lord gladly participated in this divine arrangement. The sentiments of his heart always were, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." (Ps. 40:7,8; Heb. 10:5-7) Our thankfulness to God and his Son, Jesus, for the great gift of redemption will be in proportion as we comprehend the fullness of all that is implied in such a wonderful provision for suffering and dying humanity.

To realize fully what the death of Jesus means should make us very humble, as it impresses upon our minds the fact of our own imperfect, undone condition. It should help us to realize that we have nothing of our own of which we can boast, nor with which

we can commend ourselves to the Lord and expect his favor. (Eph. 2:8,9) It should help us to understand more fully the vital significance of those well-known words of the hymn, "On Christ, the Solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand."

As we are reminded of our own imperfections and the necessity of coming under the covering of Jesus' blood, we should become more and more sympathetic toward others, especially toward our fellow brethren. It is great folly to criticize others because of their weaknesses, when, in fact, we are afflicted by similar, and possibly even greater, imperfections than those individuals whom we may be prone to judge and belittle.

On the evening of the first Memorial Supper, instituted by the Master himself, there was one present, Judas, who had it in his heart to betray the Lord. It is appropriate, therefore, that as we approach the time of this year's Memorial celebration, each one of the consecrated should examine his own heart carefully, to make sure that he is not, by judging and condemning, betraying one of the Lord's brethren.—I Cor. 11:27,28

In the Israelites' Passover, they were commanded to have their houses free of all leaven, or yeast. As we memorialize the death of the Lamb of God, it is important that we have our hearts cleansed from the leaven of sin. May we indeed thus examine ourselves to be certain that our hearts are filled with love and sympathy toward all, and with readiness to lay down our lives for the brethren.—I Cor. 5:7,8; John 15:12,13

A TRUE EXPRESSION OF LOVE

In the thirteenth chapter of 1st Corinthians, the Apostle Paul enumerates a number of characteristics

of love, among which is his statement that love “seeketh not her own.” (vs. 5) We see this particular characteristic of the Master’s love on display at the time he instituted the original Memorial. It was the love that does not seek its own which impelled Jesus to make the supreme sacrifice on behalf of the church and the world. It was this love also that enabled him to address the betrayer, Judas, as “friend.” (Matt. 26:47-50) Jesus had done no wrong for which he should suffer. He was always righteous, just, and in harmony with his Father’s will. Yet he willingly surrendered to his accusers and permitted himself, not only to be betrayed, but also to be crucified. Here was the ultimate example of how divine love seeks not its own.

It is fitting, as we remember the death of our Redeemer and seek to understand better the motive which prompted this supreme sacrifice, that we examine our own heart for the purpose of making sure that it is filled with true love that “seeketh not” its own. Such an examination is made possible by noting our attitude toward those whom we feel may have wronged us in some way. Do we have the spirit of retaliation? Do we desire to pay back in kind? Do we feel that justice demands the wrongs of others must be publicly exposed and punished? On the other hand, is the love that fills our heart so wholly like that of the Master’s love that we are willing to forego the demands of strict justice and, by seeking not our own, to lay down our lives in the interests of all, even those who have trespassed against us?

The chief motivating power of sin is selfishness. Hence, as we endeavor to cleanse our hearts from the leaven of sin in order that we may participate in

the Memorial Supper acceptably, it is well that we take note of the extent to which our thoughts, words and deeds are prompted by self-interest, rather than by the desire to know and do the Father's will. Self-interest may manifest itself along various lines. For example, it might be a desire for comfort, pleasure, health, wealth, having our own way, or ambition. If we find such areas of weakness, there is no better time to rededicate ourselves to the doing of God's will than when we memorialize the death of Jesus, our Redeemer. In so doing, it should be in full realization of the fact that by putting away self-interest and carrying out God's will, we too, like Jesus, will be led in the ways of service and sacrifice on behalf of others.

THE BREAD AND THE CUP

Jesus and his disciples were gathered in the "upper room" to eat the Passover meal. Apparently, it was at the close of this that the Master took some of the unleavened bread, and some of the fruit of the vine that remained, and instituted the Memorial Supper. (Luke 22:7-15; Matt. 26:26-29) He took the bread and after blessing and breaking it, he gave it to his disciples, and said, "Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you." (I Cor. 11:24) The Master meant that this bread symbolically represented his body, and in partaking of it the disciples were saying that they gladly appropriated to themselves the life that was made possible through the sacrifice of Jesus' humanity.

Earlier in his earthly ministry, Jesus stated, "Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life." Then he added, "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.” The disciples found it very difficult to comprehend the significance of these words and said among themselves, “This is an hard saying; who can hear it?”—John 6:54-56,60

When Jesus noted the difficulties the disciples experienced, he offered a word of explanation. “It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.” (vs. 63) This was Jesus’ way of explaining that he did not mean the disciples were to eat his literal flesh and drink his literal blood, for this, he says, “profiteth nothing.” Rather, his explanation indicates that the way in which his followers eat his flesh and drink his blood is by obedience to his life-giving words. Obedience to the words of Jesus means the recognition of our own imperfections and the necessity of his redemptive work on our behalf. Furthermore, it implies a full dedication to do God’s will, which means that we will accept the invitation to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Jesus.—Matt. 16:24

Obedience to the Master’s words, by which we appropriate to ourselves his broken body and shed blood, means that we, like him, will be willing to lay down our lives in service and sacrifice. (Rom. 12:1) This is the only condition upon which anyone can receive life during the present Gospel Age. Jesus made this plain when he said, “Whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”—Matt. 16:25

This was the Master’s way of expressing the thought later explained by the Apostle Paul when he said that we have the privilege of being baptized

into Jesus' death—"planted together in the likeness of his death." Being planted together in the likeness of his death, we have the hope of being "in the likeness of his resurrection." We die with him in order that we may live with him. We suffer with him in order that we may reign with him.—Rom. 6:3-5; II Tim. 2:11,12

Thus seen, it is clear that when we partake of the Memorial emblems of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine, it symbolizes that we are accepting God's gift on our behalf. In addition, we recognize the only proper response to this gift of redemption through Christ at the present time is the presenting of ourselves to God in consecration, taking up our cross, and following the Master in all aspects of our life—in thought, word and deed.

THE BLOOD OF THE NEW COVENANT

As we have already noted, on the morning following the death of the Passover lamb in Egypt, all Israel was delivered. This represents the deliverance of all mankind from sin and death, which follows the passing over of the "church of the firstborn" during the nighttime of this Gospel Age. It is important, therefore, that in remembering the death of Jesus, we keep in mind that the salvation and exaltation of the "firstborn" class is not the completion of the divine plan and purpose. We should remember that the death and resurrection of Jesus, as well as of the church, who come forth in the "first resurrection," are leading up to the deliverance of all mankind during God's kingdom. (I Cor. 15:20; Rev. 20:6) The Apostle Paul states, "We know that all the rest of creation has been groaning with the pains of

childbirth up to the present time, ... eagerly awaiting the revelation of God's children."—Rom. 8:22,19, *International Standard Version*

When instituting the Memorial of his impending death, Jesus reminded his disciples of the provision that was being made, not only for them, but also for the world. He said of the cup, which contained the fruit of the vine, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood." (Luke 22:20, *Young's Literal Translation*) This is a reference to the promise of the New Covenant that will be made during the Messianic kingdom, by means of which the whole world is yet to become reconciled to God.—Jer. 31:31-34; Acts 15:14-17

It is appropriate that Jesus should refer to the cup as symbolizing the blood of the New Covenant. The fact that the making of a New Covenant is necessary and is to be accomplished by means of Jesus' shed blood, implies that those with whom it is to be made are presently alienated from God. At the time Jesus uttered these words, both the nation of Israel, as well as the entire world, were alienated from God because of sin. The same is still true today. The only means by which the penalty for sin can be set aside is through the redemptive work of Christ. His blood, therefore, guarantees the future institution of this New Covenant, by which Israel and people of all nations may be recovered and blessed.

Thus, we understand that Jesus' blood has a twofold benefit. First, it is the source of life for the church, and that which makes possible her acceptable sacrifice during the present Gospel Age. Second, it is also his blood which makes possible the blessings of everlasting life which will later be offered to the world of mankind in general. (I Pet. 1:18-20; I John

1:7; Col. 1:19,20) The Apostle John clearly explains the matter, stating that Jesus “is an atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.”—I John 2:2, *Weymouth New Testament*

Blessed we will be if, when we partake of the Memorial Supper in 2022, we have in mind these unselfish viewpoints. It is a remembrance, first of all, of God’s gift of love on behalf of all mankind. It also reminds us of the great privilege we have of unselfishly sharing at the present time in service and sacrifice in the ministry of Christ, and in preparation for the work of the next age. Finally, we should keep in mind that through the sacrifice of Jesus and the church the blessings of restitution will finally be administered to a dying world. In brief, we memorialize this threefold manifestation of the great principle of divine love. It is this love that God himself demonstrated; love which Jesus further exemplified; and love which should be filling our hearts. This same divine love will ultimately manifest itself in the blessing of all the families of the earth.

All those who recognize their need of the redemptive work of Christ, and have made a full consecration of themselves to do the Father’s will, are invited to partake of the Memorial Supper. These, indeed, should participate, and thus renew their vows of consecration. Being reminded thereof, each should resolve afresh to be faithful, even unto death. Therefore, let us “run with patience the race that is set before us, 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. 12:1,2 ■