

# The Memorial Emblems

*“As often as ye eat  
this bread, and  
drink this cup, ye  
do shew the Lord’s  
death till he come.”*

*—I Corinthians  
11:26*

**GOD’S TRULY CONSE-**  
crated people throughout the  
world will join together this  
year on April 4th after sunset  
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: “I received from the Lord what also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me. In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (I Cor. 11:23-25, *English Standard Version*) The apostle then spoke the words of our opening text, saying that this annual observance is for the purpose of remembering our Lord’s death.

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' BODY**

When Jesus instituted the symbol of the bread, he told his disciples three things. First, he said that the bread represented his body; second, he invited them to eat of it; and third, he asked that they do this in remembrance of him. What did he mean when he said that the bread represented his 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 Israel's Passover in Egypt involved the slaying of an unblemished lamb, so Jesus is also spoken of as a "lamb without blemish and without spot." (Exod. 12:3-6; 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 symbolically partake of Jesus' 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 the death of his human 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 go into death. —I Pet. 3:18; Rev. 1:5

The psalmist stated prophetically concerning Jesus, “He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.” (Ps. 34:20) This, the Gospel of John corroborates, stating, “That the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.” (John 19:31-36) Indeed, no literal bone of Jesus’ body was broken, although “his visage was so marred more than any man” as his body, or human life, died upon Calvary’s cross. (Isa. 52:14) His life was voluntarily cut off, in order to fully take Adam’s place in death as the ransom price. It is in this sense, then, that Jesus’ body went into sacrificial death, 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 did Jesus’ body literally go into death on the cross, but it was offered in sacrifice and service during the three and a half years of his earthly ministry, as 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 for us and the keys to our growth and development as Christians. This is why Jesus used the symbol of bread to describe his body. Those things which emanated from his body continuously throughout his earthly ministry were, as Jesus described them, 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 here of eating his actual flesh or literally drinking his blood. These were merely symbols. Just as one would expect to receive life-giving nourishment from eating bread, so one would benefit from all the examples provided from the life of Jesus. We are to "eat" of him by speaking as he spoke, acting as he acted, thinking as he thought. This is what Jesus meant when he said, 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 Jesus says that it is those who "dwelleth in me" and "live by me" who partake of him as the 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 as 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.” Leaven is used here and elsewhere in the Bible to represent sin. (Matt. 16:11,12; Luke 12:1) Unleavened bread, on the other hand, 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 at the Memorial observance, in addition to remembering Jesus’ body going into death, 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 laid down in sacrifice 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 1:18,19, that we were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” John the Revelator similarly wrote that Jesus Christ “loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.”—Rev. 1:5

It is important to note the necessity of both parts of the transaction. Jesus' human life—the corresponding price—had to be given up, put to death, for the ransom to be provided. This by itself, though, was not sufficient. A dead Messiah could not restore the dead and dying race back to life. However, the value of his life as represented in the blood, if applied as payment into the hands of divine justice, could bring about the release of man from condemnation and provide the hope for his restoration to God.

We see that this is exactly what happened. Jesus, by his death, provided the ransom price. Upon his resurrection—accomplished by the mighty power of God—he held the value of that ransom in his possession, symbolically represented by his shed blood. Hence, he was able to initiate the process by which that value would be applied in the hands of God's justice, first on behalf of the church, and later on behalf of the remainder of mankind.—Rom. 3:23-26; 4:24,25; 5:18,19

In Luke 22:20, Jesus additionally said this cup represented “the new testament [Greek: covenant] in my blood.” Notice that only the cup, not the bread, is mentioned in this way. Jesus' body, which went into death, could do nothing relative to the New Covenant, but his blood could. Having value, Jesus' shed blood served as a seal—a surety or guarantee—of the New Covenant. Putting it another way, the shedding of his blood gave assurance that the New Covenant would be instituted in due time—that is, in his Messianic kingdom.

The Apostle Paul, in the book of Hebrews, 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]."—Heb. 9:19,20; 7:22

Thus, 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 us also examine 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, firstly, accepted Jesus through faith, thus receiving the merits of his sacrifice, and, secondly, gave our all to the Heavenly Father. (Rom. 12:1) At that time, the value of Jesus' shed blood was imputed to us. We became justified in God's sight. (Rom. 4:7,8,24,25) We took the "cup of salvation."—Ps. 116:13

From another standpoint, our appropriation of the cup at consecration was only the beginning. Just as the Israelites in Egypt 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 during this present nighttime

of sin in the world. (Exod. 12:12,13,22; Isa. 61:10) We may liken this to our cup of experience. Jesus referred to this cup both with reference to himself as well as to his church.

Concerning himself, Jesus said, as recorded in John 18:11, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" To us, he asks, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of?" (Matt 20:22) How do we answer these questions? Have we been willing to drink of the "cup" poured for us? Do we delight in any and all of the experiences God permits to come into our lives? We must be able to answer, as Jesus did, unequivocally and zealously—yes! Only with this mindset and attitude can we have our Lord's 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 shortcomings, in appropriating the benefits symbolized in the body and blood of our Lord, and as represented by the emblems of the bread and the cup of which we will soon partake. Therefore, it is of great importance 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 also that our worthiness to partake of these emblems, and our faithfulness in doing so, will not be measured merely by what we do the night of the Memorial, but by our thoughts, words, and actions each day of the ensuing year 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 has 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 be continually thankful for all that has been done on our behalf, and which soon will be done on behalf of the entire world of mankind. “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”—II Cor. 9:15 ■