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James M. Tolle

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The  
Lord's  
Supper

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*A portrait in oils by a great artist may be viewed in different lights. To the utterly unartistic eye it may be esteemed or valued according to the cost of the frame, the paint, and the canvas. A farmer once exclaimed, when told of the value of a certain picture: "Why, I could paint all the fences and buildings on my farm at one-tenth of the amount." But the artistic eye sees in the picture beauties that fill his soul with rapturous delight. So to the unspiritual the Lord's Supper is mere bread and fruit of the vine, and so little of it that it is worthless. But the spiritual eye sees the portrait of Jesus, not only the bodily form, dying on the cross; but the loving heart of the Redeemer is laid bare to view as it is nowhere else.*

—J. C. Ferdinand Pittman



# The Lord's Supper

By James M. Tolle

**I**N AN UPPER ROOM of a house in Jerusalem on the night of His betrayal Jesus gathers His disciples around Him for the last time to partake of the passover feast. Behind this small company are approximately three and a half adventurous years of tender and intimate association. And now the beloved Master is soon to depart from His disciples. Already Judas, the traitorous disciple, has bargained with the chief priests for the Lord's betrayal. Jesus stands face to face with death; before Him are the sorrow of Gethsemane and the agonies of Calvary. He has told the disciples that "he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up" (Matthew 16:21). But they neither understand the wisdom nor the necessity of His death. They have envisioned Jesus as a potentate over an earthly kingdom. What is to become of them and their hopes if Jesus dies?

The hour of the passover has come, of that sacred feast which commemorates God's deliverance of the firstborn of Israel from the hand of the death angel. The old covenant, of which the passover is a part, is about ended; and soon a new covenant, ratified by the blood of Christ, is to be given. Jesus avails Himself of a symbol to forcefully teach the purpose of His death to the disciples and to instill within them hope and courage in view of His departure, a symbol which will continually be part of the new covenant to commemorate the salvation offered in it.

The Master's use of this symbol inaugurates the blessed feast, the Lord's supper. Four accounts of this event are presented in the divine word: Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19, 20; and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. The reader is urged to carefully study all four of these accounts, but for the sake of brevity only two are quoted here: "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it; and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins. But I say unto you, I shall not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:26-29).<sup>1</sup> "For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread; and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me. In like manner the cup, after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood: this do, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

In studying the foregoing accounts the reader is struck by the simplicity of the Lord's supper. How different is the feast as originated by Jesus from the gorgeous, pompous ceremonials with

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<sup>1</sup> The bread (loaf) mentioned in this citation was, in all probability, the unleavened bread of the passover feast which Jesus and the disciples were eating. The cup was taken after supper, according to Luke 22:20. That its content was the same as that used in the passover feast is not absolutely certain. The reference to the fruit of the vine is obviously to the juice or blood of the grape. It is infallibly safe now to use as the elements of the Lord's supper unleavened bread and the juice of the grape.

which an apostate church invested this commemorative supper. Let us humbly and reverently, with contrite hearts and open minds, investigate in the brief discussion at hand the simplicity and purity of New Testament teaching on the subject of the Lord's supper, clearly discerning the difference between the divine standard set forth for this ordinance and the dogmas and doctrines of men.

## DESIGNATIONS

How is the ordinance under consideration designated in the scriptures? Three terms are used: Lord's supper (1 Corinthians 11:20), breaking of bread (Acts 2:42; 20:7), and communion (1 Corinthians 10:16).

This ordinance is appropriately called the *Lord's supper* because of its divine origin, being inaugurated by Jesus himself. The partaking of a meal or feast under various circumstances is often referred to as *breaking of bread*; hence, this expression is properly applied to the supper or feast of the Lord. It is called a *communion* because it is a means whereby disciples of Christ participate or share in His spiritual blessings.

The term *Eucharist*, which is widely applied in the religious world to the Lord's supper, is from two words in the Greek: *eu*, well, good; and *charizesthai*, to show favor, from *charis*, favor, thanks. This is not an appellation used by any inspired writer and, therefore, was never intended by divine authority to designate the Lord's supper.

Another term extensively used to designate the Lord's supper is *sacrament*, which is derived from the Latin *sacramentum*, meaning oath, solemn engagement. This uninspired appellation is too vague and limited in its meaning to apply to the Lord's supper.

In holding to the inspired terms used to



designate this ordinance we can be sure that we are conveying to men its correct meaning, that we are "speaking as it were oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:11), and that our terminology is pleasing to God.

### A SYMBOLIC FEAST

The elements of the Lord's supper are symbolic. When Jesus declared in reference to the bread and fruit of the vine, "this is my body . . . this is my blood" (Matthew 26:26-28), His words could not possibly have been understood literally by the disciples to whom He was speaking; thus it was unnecessary for Him to make any explanation as to the meaning of this utterance. The disciples were matter-of-fact, observant men. They were fully aware that when Jesus spoke these words His blood was still coursing through His veins and His body was something quite different from the bread He held in His hands. To affirm that the disciples understood the words of Jesus in a literal sense as applying to His actual flesh and blood, is to accuse them of being childishly naive and credulous.

The expressions *this is my body* and *this is my blood* represent a figure of speech known as the metaphor, a comparison in which the likeness is implied rather than stated explicitly. This figure is a familiar usage in the Lord's teaching. Note the following examples:

1. "The seed is the word of God" (Luke 8:11). This quotation is part of the Master's explanation of the parable of the sower. The seed is not literally the word of God but is *like* or *represents* it.

2. "I am the door" (John 10:9). Jesus is saying here that He is *like* a door and not that he is literally a door.

3. "I am the vine and ye are the branches" (John 15:5). Jesus is *like* a vine, and the disciples are *like* branches.



And so we understand that when Jesus said, "this is my body . . . this is my blood," His words are not to be taken literally but figuratively: the bread and fruit of the vine symbolize (are *like* or *represent*) the Lord's body and blood.

### TRANSUBSTANTIATION

The Roman Catholic Church has given a literal meaning to the expression *this is my body* and *this is my blood*, teaching and practicing the doctrine known as *Transubstantiation* (from the Latin *trans*, across, over; and *substantia*, substance). This doctrine is officially defined in the *Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, Sess. XIII: "In the Eucharist are contained truly, really, and substantially the body and blood, together with soul and divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ, and consequently the whole Christ" (Canon 1). "The whole substance of the bread is converted into the body, and the whole substance of the wine into the blood" (Canon 2).

An attempt to justify Transubstantiation on the basis of the scriptures is the following Catholic explanation: "The Son of God took some of the bread and wine used at the table, divided the same into portions, and, by His Almighty Power, changed the same into His own living Person. He said: 'Take and eat; this is My Body . . . All of you drink of this, for this is My Blood of the new covenant.' (Matt. XXVI, 26-28). When Our Lord said: 'This is My Body' through His Almighty Power, the entire substance of the bread was changed into His body; and when He said: 'This is My blood' the entire substance of the wine was changed into His blood."<sup>2</sup>

The foregoing claim that the Lord changed the bread and cup into His body and blood is

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<sup>2</sup> J. F. Noll and L. J. Fallon, *Father Smith Instructs Jackson*, (Our Sunday Visitor, 1949—*Nihil Obstat*: T. E. Dillon), p. 150.

in no way substantiated by the actual scriptural text, as we have previously noted. The authors of this claim have plainly mishandled and misapplied the simple words of Jesus.

In further attempting to base the doctrine of Transubstantiation on the divine scriptures, Catholic apologists have used John 6:53, "Jesus therefore 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 not life in yourselves."

That Jesus was not directly or specifically referring here to the Lord's supper is evident from an examination of the passage in its context. The lesson of this verse, and those connected with it (54-59), was suggested by the occasion of the Lord on the previous day having fed four thousand persons with five barley loaves and two small fishes. When the multitude later followed Jesus into Capernaum, He reminded them that there was more important food they should seek after than literal bread; namely, the bread of life, which would be nourishment for their spiritual beings. "I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

That this bread of life is *not* the literal flesh and blood of Christ is apparent from the disciples' response to the words of verses 53-59 and the consequent explanation made by the Lord. Verse 60 reads, "Many therefore of his disciples, when they heard this, said, This is a hard saying; who can hear it?" Evidently these disciples were shocked at the thought of eating the actual flesh and drinking the actual blood of their Master. Such an idea was completely repugnant to them. They misunderstood the words of the Lord by giving to them a literal meaning. Jesus disabused the disciples' minds

of their misconception of His teaching by plainly declaring in verse 63 that the statement referring to the eating of His flesh and drinking His blood (verses 53-59) was used figuratively: "It is the spirit that giveth life; *the flesh profiteth nothing*: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life."

How do men eat the flesh and drink the blood of Christ, thereby receiving the bread of life? By accepting His words and bearing them out in the issues of their lives. This is the Lord's explanation of John 6:53-59 and is the *final* and *only* meaning he intends to convey. To give any other meaning is presumption and folly. Carefully read Matthew 4:4.

*The doctrine of Transubstantiation is not based on the New Testament, the authority of Christ.*

### THE MASS

An outgrowth of the doctrine of Transubstantiation is the Roman Catholic *Sacrifice of the Mass*. An official statement of this dogma is presented by James Cardinal Gibbons, "The Sacrifice of the Mass is the consecration of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, and the oblation of this body and blood to God, by the ministry of the Priest, for a perpetual memorial of Christ's sacrifice on the cross, both having the same victim and High Priest—Jesus Christ."<sup>3</sup>

The Lord's supper is never expressly called a sacrifice in the New Testament. The only way in which it can be considered in this light is in the actual act of the Christian partaking of it. But in this sense all other acts of worship and service the Christian engages in are sacrifices: praying, singing, giving, and so forth. "Through him then let us offer up a *sacrifice* of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of the lips

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<sup>3</sup> *The Faith of Our Fathers*, (P. J. Kenedy and Sons, New York, 1917), p. 254.



which make confession to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such *sacrifices* God is well pleased" (Hebrews 13:15, 16). Cf. 1 Peter 2:5. The entire service of the Christian is his sacrifice to God, even as his body is given to God as a "living sacrifice" (Romans 12:1).

No references in the New Testament even remotely suggests that the elements of the Lord's supper are to be used as a sacrifice to God separate and apart from the actual act of the Christian partaking of them.<sup>4</sup>

The offering of the Sacrifice of the Mass by the priests of the Roman Catholic Church contradicts the teaching of the Hebrew letter, which presents Jesus as completing the sacrificial offering of His body once and for all when He died on Calvary's tree. "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself" (Hebrews 7:26, 27). Read also Hebrews 9:25, 26, 28; 10:9-14.

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<sup>4</sup> The *Didache of the Apostles*, an ancient document of Jewish or Palestinian *Christianity*, is used by Catholics to supposedly prove the Sacrifice of the Mass as being of divine origin: "And on each Lord's Day of the Lord by ye gathered together and break bread and give thanks, after confessing your transgression, that our *sacrifice* may be pure. And let none that hath a difference with his fellow come together with you until they be reconciled, that our *Sacrifice* be not defiled. For this is that which is spoken by the Lord (Mal. 1:1). In every place and time offer me a pure sacrifice: For I am a great King, saith the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the Gentiles." (Quoted in M. F. Sadler, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians*, p. 187) This statement, whatever it may teach, cannot be accepted *per se* as divine truth in that it was written by uninspired men. But, in fact, nothing is expressed here to affirm that the ordinance of breaking of bread involves a sacrifice apart from the actual partaking of the elements in the celebration of the Lord's supper. The Sacrifice of the Mass cannot be adduced from the *Didache of the Apostles*.



*There is no scriptural basis whatever for the Roman Catholic Sacrifice of the Mass.*

### **A MEMORIAL FEAST**

Men are seemingly forever prone to forget the outstanding events of the past, even those which have especially been of great blessing to them. It is this fact that lies behind all the monuments and memorials men have ever created.

The picture one treasures of his deceased mother is a constant reminder of the blessings and joy received from her unselfish and gracious deeds of love and devotion while she lived, and it serves to keep the image of her blessed countenance forever fresh and alive in the heart. The tombstone placed over a grave serves to call to remembrance the life of some loved one, friend, or famous personality.

The greatest event in the history of the world was the sacrificial offering of the Saviour's body and the shedding of His precious blood on Calvary's cross in order to redeem man from the bondage of sin. This event is the central theme of the gospel. Paul declared, "for I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

To the end that the disciples of Christ, those who have been benefited by this most significant of all events, may have an abiding memorial to keep fresh in their minds the death and suffering of the Savior for their sins, Jesus has left no statutes or personal relics of himself; only the simple feast, the Lord's supper, which is indeed the world's greatest monument to commemorate the world's greatest event. In connection with partaking of the bread and fruit of the vine Jesus said, "This do in remembrance of me" (1 Corinthians 11:24, 25). The eating of the bread reminds the Christian of the body which was slain for him, and the drinking of the fruit of the vine recalls to his

mind the blood which was shed for his sins. The Savior knew how men would be tempted to forget Him; He, therefore, appointed the ordinance of the Lord's supper as an impressive means by which His sweet memory should always be kept alive in the hearts of His followers.

No greater calamity could befall the Christian than to forget Him, the Great Benefactor, Jesus Christ; for he who forgets the death and suffering of Christ will also forget the purging from his old sins and will, consequently, fail to live faithfully to the Lord's will. Cf. 2 Peter 1: 5-11.

*Feast divine, all else surpassing,  
Precious blood for you and me,  
While we sup, Christ gently whispers:  
"Do this in my memory."*

TILLIT S. TEDDLIE

### A COMMUNION FEAST

*"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ?"* (1 Corinthians 10:16).

The word *communion* is from the Greek *kononia*, meaning fellowship, participation, association, intimacy. Just how is the partaking of the cup and bread a fellowship with or participation in the blood and body of Christ? In this communion feast are the literal, actual blood and body of Jesus received, or do the participants simply have fellowship with and participate in the *spiritual blessings* of the blood and body?

In the context of 1 Corinthians 10:16 the writer is cautioning Christians to abstain from all association with idolatry. The paragraph in which the text is found begins with verse 14, "Wherefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry." Then in verses 19-21 a contrast is drawn be-

tween the feasts associated with idolatrous worship and the feast honoring the Lord: "What say I then? that a thing sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons, and not to God: and I would not that ye should have *communion with demons*. Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot partake of the table of the Lord, and the table of demons." Paul avers here that partaking of the table of demons or idols is communion with demons, just as he declares in verse 16 that partaking of the Lord's supper is communion of the blood and body of Christ. But does he mean by this that when people participated in the feasts associated with idols, their communion with demons was the literal devouring of demons? Certainly not! Their eating of things sacrificed to idols was communion with demons in the sense of their having fellowship with the evil and licentiousness associated with demons. So it is that when Christians eat of the bread and drink of the cup in the Lord's supper, they do not literally devour the Savior; but they participate in and have fellowship with the blessings of His body and blood.

Men share in the blessing of Christ's body and blood not only by participating in the communion feast but also by keeping all the ordinances of the Lord. The Christian's soul is always nourished when he obeys any part of the Lord's will. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word* that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). Cf. Matthew 5:6 and John 6:63.

1 John 1:6, 7 says, "If we say that we have fellowship (*koinonian*) with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all



sin." The word for fellowship in this citation is the same in the Greek as *communion* in 1 Corinthians 10:16. To enjoy this fellowship or communion with the Lord, which includes the blessing of cleansing from sin by His blood, John affirms that we must not walk in darkness but in the light. But to walk in the light is to follow the Lord's will, to participate not only in the Lord's supper but to keep all the divine commandments and ordinances.

The preceding comments are not meant to minimize in any way the great importance of the communion Christians enjoy of the blood and body of Christ in partaking of the Lord's supper. Truly there is no more intimate fellowship men have with the sacrifice of Jesus Christ than in the communion feast. *It is impossible for any child of God to walk in the light who forsakes himself from the gathering of the saints around the Lord's table to commemorate the death of the Savior, and to walk in darkness is to be without the blessings of His blood and body.*

When one remembers his Lord in partaking of the bread and cup, not only does he receive rich blessings from the act itself, but he also gains moral and spiritual strength to walk faithfully in the path of duty and to keep *all* the commandments and precepts of Christ. In this fullest sense the Lord's supper is a communion of the body and blood of Christ; for it gives us a powerful impetus to walk continually in the light, every hour of every day, so that we may perpetually have full and complete fellowship with the manifold blessings of our Savior

### COMMUNION UNDER ONE KIND

The Roman Catholic Church does not permit its so-called *lay* members to partake of the cup. This practice, called *Communion Under One Kind*, was first officially decreed at the Council



of Constance, convoked in 1414 at the instance of the emperor Sigismund by Pope John XXIII. Session 13 of this council states: "Whereas, in several parts of the world, some have rashly presumed to assert that all Christians ought to receive the holy sacrament of the eucharist under both species of bread and wine, and that also after supper, or not fasting, contrary to the laudable custom of the church, justly approved of, which they damnably endeavor to reprobate as sacrilegious; hence it is that this holy general Council of Constance, assembled by the Holy Ghost to provide for the salvation of the faithful against *this error*, declares, decrees, and defines, that although Christ did after supper institute this holy sacrament and administered it to his disciples in *both kinds*, of bread and wine, yet this withstanding, the laudable authority of the sacred canons, and the approved custom of the church hath fixed and doth fix, that this sacrament ought not to be consecrated after supper, nor received by the faithful, except by fasting. And as this custom, for the purpose of avoiding certain dangers and scandals, has been rationally introduced, and that, *although this sacrament was received by the faithful under both kinds in the primitive church*, it was afterward received in both kinds by the officiating priests, and by the people under the species of bread only, it being believed most certainly, and nothing doubted that the entire body and blood of Christ are really contained as well under the species of bread as of wine; this, therefore, being approved, it is now made a law."

The reader will carefully observe that the decree of the Council of Constance, although making a law of communion under one kind for the *laity* of the Roman Catholic Church, plainly admits that the practice of the primitive church was of Christians receiving both the bread and the cup, even as was ordained by Jesus Christ.

This is an inadvertent admission that the doctrine of Communion Under One Kind is of human and not of divine origin and that the Roman Catholic Church has departed from the practice of the primitive church. "But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men" (Matthew 15:9).

James Cardinal Gibbons offers the following definition of Communion Under One Kind: The church teaches Christ is contained whole and entire under each species; so that whoever communicates under the form of bread and wine receives not a mutilated Sacrament or a divided Savior, but shares in the whole Sacrament as fully as if he participated in both forms. Hence, the layman who receives the consecrated Bread partakes as copiously of the body and blood of Christ as the officiating Priest, who receives both consecrated elements."<sup>5</sup>

If partaking of the bread be a communion both of the body and blood of Christ, as Catholic dogma affirms, why did Paul make such a distinction between the bread and cup in 1 Corinthians 10:16, defining one as a communion of the body of Christ, and the other as a communion of His blood, this same distinction being made by Christ in the inauguration of the supper? If the disciples of Jesus enjoyed communion of both His body and blood by receiving the bread, what need was there in giving them the cup and calling it the new covenant in His blood (Luke 22:20)?

Suffice it to say, the bread represents but one thing: the body of Christ; and the cup also represents but one thing: the blood of Christ. This is as the Lord ordained it: "Jesus took bread . . . and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup . . . and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant . . ."

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<sup>5</sup>Gibbons, *op. cit.*, p. 245.

(Matthew 26:26-28). In the Lord's supper one communes of the body of Christ by partaking of the bread, but only by partaking of the cup can communion of the blood of Christ be realized. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

### A PROCLAMATION

*"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come"* (1 Corinthians 11:26).

The Lord's supper is *retrospective* in that it points back to Calvary. When saints partake of the bread and cup, they are impressively proclaiming to the world the solemn and sublime fact that the broken body and shed blood of Jesus was given on the cross for the sins of the world. This is a sermon that every faithful Christian can preach.

When the passover was enjoined upon God's people, the Israelites, they were told that in years to come when their children asked them the meaning of this feast, they were to relate the story of the slain paschal lamb and God's deliverance of their forefathers from death and bondage. Read Exodus 13:7-10. Thus it is with the Lord's supper. When Christians receive the bread and cup, thanking God for this glorious blessing and privilege, and teaching men the meaning of these emblems, they are bearing testimony concerning the Lamb of God, who was offered for deliverance from the bondage of sin to all who believe and obey Him.

The child of God by participating in the communion service is not only teaching the *fact* of the Savior's death for the sins of men, but he is also publicly confessing his firm *belief* in this fact. Surely, this is a confession that all faithful Christians take unspeakable joy in making,



even as they do in verbally acknowledging that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

The Lord's supper is *prospective* in that it proclaims the fact that Jesus is coming again: ". . . ye proclaim the Lord's death *till he come.*" The second coming of Christ is a cardinal doctrine of the New Testament. "And while they were looking steadfastly into heaven as he went, behold two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? *this Jesus, who was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven*" (Acts 1:10, 11). See John 5:28, 29; 14:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; 2 Peter 3:4-10; and so forth. The Lord's supper is a constant reminder to the Christian that the Lord has promised to return.

The second coming of Christ is inseparably connected with His first advent, for the coming of the Lord to die for sinners would be meaningless and futile were He not to return to judge all men and to receive unto Himself His faithful ones. Hence, it would be useless to proclaim the death of Christ in the communion service without at the same time to declare His coming again.

Since the Lord's supper points to the second coming of Jesus, it is to be perpetuated and observed to the end of time. It is to be observed in every generation and in every place where there are God's children until the Lord shall return. When Jesus comes again, the necessity of the observance of the supper shall be ended. Then no longer will men need a reminder of the Master, for when faith gives way to sight they shall see Him as He is.

### A SYMBOL OF UNITY

*"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread*



*which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread*" (1 Corinthians 10:16, 17).

The *one* bread of the Lord's supper symbolizes the *one* body or church of Christ. Although the church is made up of many members, Christians, it is, nevertheless, an integrated, single, unified organization, even as the human body consists of many members but is a single, harmonious, integrated whole. "But now hath God set the members each one of them in the body, even as it pleased him. And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now they are many members, but one body" (1 Corinthians 12:18-20). Read Colossians 1:18 and Ephesians 5:23.

The *one* bread is a perpetual reminder that the Lord established only *one* body (Ephesians 4:4), and that this *one* body is the *one* true church, Christ's church (Colossians 1:18 and Matthew 16:18). Jesus prayed for unity: "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us: that the world may believe that thou didst send me" (John 17:20, 21). Religious division is forthrightly condemned in the apostles' teaching: "Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10). Cf. Romans 15:5, 6; 16:17; and 1 Corinthians 3:2-5. The person who favors religious division cannot possibly appreciate the true meaning of the Lord's supper and the symbol of unity represented by the *one* bread.

Had the members of the church in Corinth shown a humble, reverent attitude in their par-

taking of the supper, they would not have been guilty of the shameful factionalism prevalent among them. See 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 11:17-22.

When faithful, loyal Christians rightly partake of the communion feast, receiving the *one* bread and the fruit of the vine, they are declaring the oneness of the body of Christ, the church, and are making an ardent plea to all men guilty of practicing religious division to depart from this sin and, by loyalty to God's word, to give "diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:3).

### WHO ARE TO COMMUNE?

*"And I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom . . ."* (Luke 22:29, 30).

The Lord's table, at which is partaken the Lord's supper, is in the Lord's kingdom; hence, only citizens of this kingdom have the right and privilege of communion.

Paul declared that "the saints and faithful brethren in Christ" (Colossians 1:2) were in the Lord's kingdom: "who delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love" (Colossians 1:13). In the next verse citizens of the Lord's kingdom are described as enjoying redemption in Christ: "in whom we have our redemption, the forgiveness of our sins" (Colossians 1:14). In Ephesians 1:7 Paul affirms that redemption in Christ is affected by means of His blood: "in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace." We conclude from these references that those in the kingdom of the Lord, who are privileged to commune with the Master in partaking of His supper, are individuals who are in Christ and enjoy redemption through His blood.

But how do men get into Christ? By being baptized. "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27). In order to be scripturally baptized, people must believe in Christ and repent of their sins. See Mark 16:15, 16 and Acts 2:38. Individuals who are baptized into Christ enjoy the cleansing from sin through His blood. Cf. Acts 2:38; Matthew 26:28; and Romans 6:3-5.

*Only baptized, penitent believers are cleansed from their past sins by the blood of Christ, are in Christ and His kingdom (wherein is the Lord's table), and, therefore, have the right and privilege to partake of the Lord's supper.<sup>6</sup>*

Since the Lord's supper is to be partaken in remembrance of the body and blood of Jesus given for the sins of men, it is obvious that only those who have appropriated the blessing of salvation offered by this sublime sacrifice can truly commune with the Lord and show forth His death till He come.

It is not the right of those in Christ's kingdom to judge as to the fitness of any man to partake of the supper; but it is their responsibility to impress upon men's minds, as opportunity affords, the New Testament teaching as to whom are qualified to eat and drink at the Lord's table. They must plainly declare that unbaptized people are not citizens of the Lord's kingdom and, therefore, manifest a meaningless gesture in partaking of the bread and cup, not truly communing of the body and blood of Christ.

### MANNER OF PARTAKING

*"Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy man-*

<sup>6</sup>Justin Martyr, who wrote about forty years after the death of the Apostle John, declared in *The First Apology of Justin*, Chapter LXVI (*Ante-Nicene Fathers*, p. 185), ". . . no one is allowed to partake but the man who believes that the things which we teach are true, and who has been washed with the washing that is for the remission of sins, and unto regeneration, and who is living as Christ has enjoined."



ner, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:27, 28).

This quotation is from the Revised Version. The expression *in an unworthy manner* defines the meaning of *unworthily*, the rendering of the Common Version. *Unworthily* is an adverb and not an adjective, as some have supposed and does not designate a person's spiritual state, his qualification to commune, but rather his *manner* of partaking.

It is certainly true, though, that one's *manner* of partaking will be determined by his basic spiritual attitudes and activities. An incorrect life cannot produce a correct *manner* of communion. The person who hates and mistreats his fellow men, who is impenitent in reference to his sins, who manifests irreverence toward God in his daily conduct, will hardly be able to approach the Lord's table in an acceptable manner. How could anyone possibly remember reverently and appreciatively the Lord's sacrifice for the sins of the world, and at the same time harbor in his heart rancor, hatred, and impenitence?

In the context of 1 Corinthians 11:27, 28, we observe that members of the church in Corinth had changed the Lord's supper into an ordinary feast to satisfy the appetite of the physical man. *They failed to discern the body and blood of Christ.* Their irreverent manner was the result of their degraded spiritual condition. An ugly party spirit was present among them, as we previously noted (1 Corinthians 1:12, 13; 3:1-4; 11:18); fornication was being practiced (1 Corinthians 5:1); and brethren were going to law against brethren (1 Corinthians 6:1-8). Such a terrible spiritual state could only produce a spirit of irreverence toward the Lord's supper.

We are not to conclude that the Lord demands perfection as the necessary qualification for proper observance of the supper. A sense of unworthiness in the individual is essential; for such an attitude is expressive of a humble, contrite spirit—an absolute requisite for loving remembrance of the body and blood of Jesus. “Even so ye also, when ye shall have done all the things that are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which it was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).

Let the faithful Christian approach the Lord's table with the realization that he is struggling diligently to live a life of righteousness, of love toward both God and man. Let him feel a deep sense of remorse, shame, and penitence for the sins he has committed. Then let him partake of the bread and cup with his entire mind concentrated in love and adoration upon that which is represented by these emblems, the body and blood of Christ. Let him understand that the communion he is enjoying is of the blessings of the sacrifice of the Savior. Let him feel in his heart deep and abiding appreciation for the light and joy that have come into his life through the forgiveness and justification afforded by Calvary. Surely such reverent, serious, and loving partaking of the Lord's supper can only be pleasing to God and spiritually uplifting to the participant.

*“Shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord”*—To treat profanely the bread, the emblem of the Lord's broken body, is to treat profanely the body itself; and, in like manner, the fruit of the vine, the symbol of His blood. Those therefore, who treat profanely the symbols of the Lord's body and blood are united in spirit with those who put Him to death. They are *guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*. Cf. Hebrews 6:6. Indeed, it is a fearful thing to partake of the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner!

“*But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup*”—Before a person can partake of the Lord’s supper in a worthy manner, he must first *prove* himself. The word *prove* is from the Greek *dokimazo*. This was the technical word used in classical Greek for putting money to the test to find out whether it is genuine or not. In the *proving* demanded of the text, the individual is to put himself to the test to find out whether or not his motives and attitudes in approaching the Lord’s table are genuine and sincere. He is to examine himself candidly and carefully to find out whether or not he is in such a state of seriousness, reverence, and devotion as to be able to worthily eat the bread and drink the cup.

In preparing himself for participation in the communion service, the Christian is afforded a splendid opportunity for self-examination, a close scrutiny of his entire spiritual state. In commenting on this thought, Albert Barnes effectively states, “Let him search and see if he have the proper qualifications—if he has knowledge to discern the Lord’s body; if he has true repentance for his sins; true faith in the Lord Jesus; and a sincere desire to live the life of a Christian, and to be like the Son of God, and be saved by the merit of his blood. Let him examine himself, and see whether he have the right feelings of a communicant, and can approach the table in a proper manner . . . This examination should be minute and particular. It should extend to the words, the thoughts, the feelings, the conduct. We should inquire whether in our family and in our business; whether among Christians, and with the world, we have lived the life of a Christian. We should examine our private thoughts; our habits of secret prayer, and of searching the Scriptures. Our examination should be directed to the inquiry whether we are gaining the vic-



tory over our besetting sins, and becoming more and more conformed to the Saviour. It should, in short, extend to all our Christian character; and everything which goes to make up or mar that character should be the subject of faithful and honest examination.”<sup>7</sup>

## RESULTS OF UNWORTHY MANNER

“*For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body*” (1 Corinthians 11:29).

The judgment referred to in this passage, cited from the Revised Version, is not that of eternal condemnation, as is implied by the rendering of *damnation* in the Common Version. In fact, verse 32 affirms that this judgment is visited upon God’s children in order to keep them from being condemned: “But when we are *judged*, we are chastened of the Lord, *that we may not be condemned with the world.*” This judgment, chastening of the Lord, is temporal punishment—and so verse 30. Cf. Hebrews 12:5.

However, we are not to conclude that no danger of eternal condemnation exists for those who treat profanely the Lord’s supper. Whether the chastisement or judgment of the Father helps a disobedient child depends solely upon the willingness of the child to be helped; thus the needful injunction of Hebrews 12:5, “My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art reprovèd of him.” This verse clearly presupposes that God’s children *can* treat lightly His chastening and faint when they are reprovèd of Him, and to do so is to follow a course eventually leading to everlasting condemnation. Cf. Hebrews 10:26-31; 12:14-17.

*Whenever any child of God irreverently par-*

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<sup>7</sup>Notes on the First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians, (Harper and Brothers, New York, 1859), p. 237.

takes of the Lord's supper, he is placing his soul in jeopardy of being eternally lost.

### WHEN TO COMMUNE

"And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them . . ." (Acts 20:7).

This verse is the only one in the New Testament which deals with the time of communion; but the information it presents is sufficient in answer to the question, "When shall Christians commune?"

The reader will note that the passage says, "*the* first day of the week . . ." How many times yearly does *the* first day of the week come? Fifty-two. When Christians meet together *each* first day of the week (Sunday) to break bread, fifty-two times yearly, they are meeting on *the* first day of the week, according to the example presented in Acts 20:7.

In answer to the argument made that this verse does not literally say, "*every* first day of the week," reference is made to Exodus 20:8, "Remember *the* sabbath day, to keep it holy." True, this statement does not expressly say *every* sabbath day, but *every* is the meaning conveyed by the use of the definite article before the word sabbath. The faithful Jew kept *the* sabbath day holy fifty-two times yearly in obedience to the commandment of God, even as faithful Christians meet together fifty-two times yearly to break bread.

The first day of the week is unique in the new dispensation in that it is the day on which the Lord was resurrected. It is the day on which the early Christians, following apostolic authority, were accustomed to assemble for worship. Cf. Acts 20:7 and 1 Corinthians 16:1, 2. Is it not inconsistent and incongruous for Christians to meet fifty-two times yearly to remember the resurrection of the Lord but only

annually or semi-annually or quarterly to commemorate His death?

The testimony of leading religious scholars concurs that the practice of the primitive church was weekly participation in the communion service:

Augustus Neander (Lutheran), *History of the Christian Religion and Church*, Vol. I, p. 332: "As we have already remarked, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was still held to constitute an essential part of divine worship every Sunday, as appears from Justin Martyr (A.D. 150). . . ."

Thomas Scott (Presbyterian), *Commentary on Acts 20:7*: "This ordinance (the Lord's supper) seems to have been administered every Lord's day: and probably no professed Christian absented themselves . . ."

A. C. Hervey (Episcopalian), *Commentary on Acts 20:7*: (Pulpit Commentary): "This also is an important example of weekly communion as the practice of the first Christians."

P. Doddridge (Congregationalist), *Notes on Acts 20:7*: "It is well known the Primitive Christians administered the Eucharist (the Lord's supper) every Lord's Day."

R. A. Torrey (late president of the Moody Bible Institute), quoted in S. M. Martin, *Thirty Years on the Firing Line*, p. 136: "It is true that I personally believe that the Lord's supper ought to be partaken of every Lord's Day, and have said so in the church, and presume have said so in the lecture-room."

The practice of weekly communion is infallibly safe and is in keeping with the inspired example set forth in Acts 20:7. *Let every faithful child of God meet with his brethren every first day of the week and partake of the bread and fruit of the vine in loving remembrance of the broken body and shed blood of Him who died for us.*



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