

# Deal Pentecostal Church Training School

Reference Material

## Study 11 - The Breaking Bread

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Deal Pentecostal Church 69 Mill Hill, Deal, Kent. CT14 9EW

Tel: 01304 380131 - [www.dealpentecostal.co.uk](http://www.dealpentecostal.co.uk)

Email: [church@dealpentecostal.co.uk](mailto:church@dealpentecostal.co.uk)

## **Breaking of Bread**

Petts, David, *You'd Better Believe It*, Mattersey, Mattersey Hall, 1999, (Ch.14, *Breaking of Bread*, pp90-96).

On the evening before his crucifixion the Lord Jesus gathered his disciples together in a large upper room where at his instructions Peter and John had already prepared the Passover meal. While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and having blessed it, he broke it and distributed it to his disciples. He then took wine, gave thanks for it, and the cup was passed from one to the other. Concerning the bread he said, This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me. Concerning the wine he said, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you (Luke 22:19-20).

In simple obedience, the disciples ate the bread and drank the wine, and because he had told them to do so in remembrance of him, they continued to meet together for this purpose after his death. The observance came to be known as 'the breaking of bread' (Acts 2:42), 'the Lord's Supper' (1 Corinthians 11:20), and possibly 'the communion' (1 Corinthians 10:16, KJV). It has been practised in a variety of forms by the Christian Church ever since. It is one of the sad ironies of history, however, that the service which should demonstrate the unity of believers has been the point upon which the church has been most divided.

An examination of the various views is neither possible nor desirable within the scope of this book. The important thing is what the Bible teaches. We must not be content with the mere pronouncements and traditions of men; we must be satisfied only with the revelation of the Spirit of God himself through the pages of holy scripture. And as we examine the subject in the light of God's word, we discover the profound

yet simple truth as to why the service was ordained, and as to why it was ordained.

As we have already seen, the communion service was ordained by the Lord Jesus as a memorial or reminder of his death (Luke 22:19-20, 1 Corinthians 11:24-25). But it is more than a reminder. It is also a proclamation. Paul tells us that as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26).

The word here translated proclaim is usually translated preach in other parts of the New Testament, and so we see that as we gather around the Lord's table there is a very real sense in which we are preaching Christ crucified as we partake of the bread and wine. In so doing we are reminding ourselves of the merits of his death, but we are also reminding others. We proclaim to our fellow-Christians and to those who are not yet Christians the importance of Jesus' death for us. And there is a sense in which we also proclaim to the principalities and powers in the heavenly realms the manifold wisdom of God demonstrated at Calvary!

But the Lord's supper is also the sign of a new covenant. In Jeremiah 31:31-34 God promised that he would make a new covenant with the people of God whereby he would write his law in their hearts. These verses are quoted in the New Testament in Hebrews 8:8-12 where the Holy Spirit makes clear that Jeremiah's prophecy was fulfilled in Christ.

In this connection we need to remember that the Lord's supper is the Christian counterpart of the Jewish Passover (Luke 22:15) and as we eat we are reminded that Christ our Passover lamb has been sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The Feast of the Passover was a memorial of God's covenant with the children of Israel (Exodus 12:14). The communion service is the memorial of the new covenant which was

ratified by the shedding of the blood of Christ at Calvary (Matthew 26:28; 1Corinthians 11:25). As we take the cup we are reminded that we have entered into covenant relationship with God almighty. 'From the least to the greatest' of us, we know the Lord; he is our God and we are his people; he forgives our wickedness and remembers our sins no more (Hebrews 8:10-12). What a covenant! What a privilege!

But that is not all. In breaking bread together we are not only proclaiming Christ crucified and reminding ourselves of the blessings of the New Covenant, we are also sharing in a great act of fellowship. The bread and the wine are the communion of the body and blood of Christ (1Corinthians 10:16-17). The word 'communion' (Greek *koinonia*) conveys the idea of 'a sharing together in something with others'. The early disciples 'devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship (*koinonia*), to the breaking of bread and to prayer' (Acts 2:42).

The use of this word in the New Testament is a study in itself, revealing that the fellowship of the church is the joint participation in the blessings of Christ. The church is not just the sum total of individual Christians. It is a collective sharing in Christ. And as we break bread together we share collectively the benefits of his atoning death. We identify ourselves with the local assembly of believers and with that greater company which no one can number, the church universal, and with them rejoice in the blessings of Calvary. What a privilege it is to take communion. We remember and proclaim Jesus' death. We remind ourselves that we are God's covenant people. We collectively share in Christ himself.

### **How and when it should be observed**

Although there are brief accounts of the last supper in the Gospels it is in 1Corinthians 11 that we find the most

complete explanation of the ordinance. As we examine the second half of this chapter we discover that the Lord's supper took place when they gathered as a church (v.18 cf v.22). Of course there were no church buildings at the time, and we need to remember that the church is a body of people, not a building. This was a meal which believers shared when they came together as a church for worship and fellowship. This clearly distinguishes the Lord's supper from the ordinary meals which they ate at home (cf vv 22 and 24), and the idea, current in some circles, that the breaking of bread is simply Christians having a meal together is, therefore, shown to be unscriptural.

However, it does appear that they did eat and drink rather more than is normal in a modern church communion service (v.21), but it should be noticed that Paul does not commend them for that! It is probable that the taking of the bread and wine formed a part of what was known as the Agape or Love Feast, but this occasion was certainly not intended to be an excuse for eating or drinking too much (vv 21-22), nor was it merely to provide the fellowship which Christians enjoy when eating in one another's company. The specific purpose of the ordinance was the remembrance and proclamation of Christ's death (vv 24-26), self-examination (v.28) and fellowship (1Corinthians 10:16-21).

In the early chapters of Acts it seems that this was taking place daily (Acts 2:42, 46), but later it appears that a weekly observance of the ordinance became customary (Acts 20:7).

There is, however, no clear command in the New Testament as to how often we should break bread. We are simply told that when we do so we are to do so in remembrance of the Lord Jesus (1Corinthians 11:25) and that we are expected to 'come together' specifically for this purpose (vv 18, 20). It is

our privilege, but also our duty, to do so, in obedience to the command of our Lord Jesus Christ: Do this.

As we do so, we must examine ourselves lest we fail to discern the Lord's body (1Corinthians 11:27-30). These verses undoubtedly refer to the matter of bad relationships with other Christians (already referred to in verse 18-22) who also form part of the body of Christ. If we are to avoid the judgment of the Lord we must judge ourselves. We must confess our sins to him and put right what is wrong so that we may eat of the bread and drink of the cup. As we do so, we do well in our thinking to look back to the cross in remembrance, to look up to the throne where Jesus reigns, and to look forward to his return, for the ordinance is until he comes (v.26).

### **Who may participate**

In Acts 2:41-42 we read of those who devoted themselves to the breaking of bread'. These were those who had received the word and were baptised. On the basis of such verses some churches have precluded from the Lord's table fellow-Christians who have not been baptised, or who have not been baptised according to the traditions of their particular church. Some impose even more stringent conditions such as 'confirmation'.

In this connection, we need to remember, however, that when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ we not only received eternal life (John 6:47) but in John 1:12 we are told that we 'received him'. Jesus also refers to this conversion experience of receiving him as eating his flesh and drinking his blood (John 6:54). It is clear from the context that these verses do not refer to the communion service, but are used metaphorically to refer to our receiving Christ as Saviour at conversion. It is at the communion service, however, that we

remember how we have received Christ into our lives, how we have been made partakers of then divine nature, and by faith we feed on him who is the bread of life.

On these grounds, surely, it must be contended that all who have received Christ, whether baptised or not, may receive communion. However, it is difficult to understand how a person can wish to observe one of the ordinances of the Lord Jesus Christ without being willing to submit to the other! If we have received the word, let us be baptised. If we love him, we will keep his commandments. Baptism in water and attendance at the Lord's table are both commands of the Lord Jesus.

### **The Lord's Supper — Commemoration**

Cornwall, J., *Back to Basics*, Brentwood, Sharon Press, 1994, (Lord's Supper, pp90-92).

Just before Jesus went to the Garden where He would be arrested and quickly led through a mock trial and a hasty crucifixion, He instituted what we call The Lord's Supper. Some prefer to call it The Eucharist. After Jesus and His disciples had eaten their meal, Jesus broke bread and shared it, saying that this was His body that was being broken for them. He also shared the wine with them, calling it His blood that was shed for the remission of sins (See Matthew 26:26-29).

Lest they mistakenly think this was a one time event, He added, 'This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me (Luke 22:19). He set no schedule for such observances, but the early church observed it daily. Later this observance was simply part of all public worship services. In our present day, some groups of believers observe it every Sunday morning, some but once a month, and others are very sporadic in obeying this command of Christ.

That Jesus instituted this ceremony on the Jewish Passover is more than accidental or incidental. He was giving His followers a ritual of commemoration very similar to the Jewish Passover that applauded their deliverance from Egypt. Both ceremonies were commanded, constructive, commemorative, and celebrative. In the first Passover, the purpose of eating was twofold: First, it afforded complete identification with the victim — the Lamb. Second, it offered them strength for the coming journey. God is practical! It's time we were, too.

Similarly, Christians are instructed to eat of Christ, our "Paschal Lamb". Jesus told the Jewish leaders of His day, I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. (John 6:53-56).

As difficult as this passage is to interpret, it does teach that Jesus is the source of strength for our day to day living. Jesus called Himself the manna that Israel ate in the wilderness (see John 6:51). Later in the New Testament we read: We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first (Hebrews 3:14). Living the Christian life without the indwelling of Christ is not difficult — it is impossible. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

The Passover and the Lord's Supper are equally commemorative. Commemorations are opportunities for review, and review is the first law of learning. It is one thing to be introduced to truth; it is another to rehearse, review, and



re-examine that lesson until it is indelibly seated in our memories.

Commemorative review becomes an excellent way to introduce truth to another generation. God said through Moses: On that day tell your son, 'I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt (Exodus 13:8). Each generation needs to personally experience the truth that so deeply affected preceding generations. Our children need to experience the power in the blood of Jesus.

Commemorations are also opportunities for renewal. Past experience can become impotent to meet present problems unless they are renewed. Even taking marriage vows a second time can renew a marriage. Commemorations are not duplications of the original event. We cannot relive life, but we can do things that renew the preciousness of what we lived.

The Feast of Passover was not identical with the first Passover, nor is the Lord's Supper a re-enactment of the crucifixion. Both, however, are powerful reminders of a divine provision and work of the blood of Jesus.

The Passover and the Lord's Supper are deliberate celebrations. At the Passover Feast, while the lambs were being slaughtered and the blood thrown at the base of the altar, the Levites led the people in hymns of praise. They sang the Hallel, the words of which were Psalms 113-118. Every first line of a Psalm was repeated by the people. To each of the other lines they responded by saying, "Hallelujah" or "Praise the Lord".

Passover was a joyous time in spite of the slaughter, blood pouring, and blood stained garments of the sacrificers. It may seem crude and primitive to us, but it was God's provision for them. They rejoiced in their deliverance; past and present. To

many people, it was a repeated experience, and for others it was brand new. For all, it was joyous!

There was also joy at the institution of the Lord's Supper. It is true that Judas left on his mission of betrayal, and it is equally true that Peter did his bragging about protecting Jesus. But after Jesus proclaimed the truth about His death and resurrection, He led the disciples in singing a hymn — which would have been the Hallel. It was a hymn proclaiming victory: ...You are my God, and I will give thanks; you are my God, and I will exalt you. Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures for ever Psalm 118:28-29.

Similarly, the Lord's Supper should be observed with rejoicing and gladness. It should not become a funeral. It is a time of celebration and rejoicing. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:7). Why wouldn't we celebrate?

Charismatics and Pentecostals do not observe a "closed communion" that restricts participation to members of the local congregation. All who have received Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour are welcome to share in the commemoration of the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord.

## **Canty's "I Was Just Thinking".**

### **"Unworthy" eating and drinking**

Canty, G., [www.canty.org.uk](http://www.canty.org.uk), (*IWT 5, "Unworthy" eating and drinking*).

1 Corinthian 11: 27, 28. What lies behind this warning?

Paul talks about eating and even drunkenness at the Lord's Table. We hear it read nearly every week, but who really understands what it is all about? "When ye come together therefore in one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper (Greek dinner) for in eating everyone takes before other his

own supper, one is hungry and another is drunken. What, have you not houses to eat and to drink in? Wherefore, when you come together to eat, tarry one for another. Therefore if any man hunger, let him eat at home, that you come not together unto condemnation."

The reference was thought to refer to a 'love feast' like the old Methodists had. Obviously it refers to customs and practices of that day, not ours which needed regulating. It was the gross behaviour at this meal that called forth Paul's warning about eating and drinking unworthily, "not discerning the body", i.e. that the communion bread and wine had no meaning for them, only food. They should "eat at home".

The Corinthian church had both Jews and Gentiles and Paul could talk familiarly about the Passover. But Corinth was Roman, re-built by Rome after destruction and strong elements of Roman culture and customs were practised in a rare cosmopolitan atmosphere. Outside the church the Roman world was pagan with practices that would shock and bewilder us.

Eating together was a Roman custom. There were two types of dining. For some occasions people came together bringing their food. A different public meal was open with food provided for whoever came, perhaps a rich man's or government's charity meal. Romans talked about bread and circuses. The church formed its own area of social contact, and Roman type meals were part of church life. To eat and drink together was natural - to them, if not to us. However the Corinthian church was notoriously riddled with partisanship - the whole of 1Corinthians is about disunity. So rival church members adopted the Roman private dinner custom. Some came but the food was already eaten. They were not invited. Paul said they should 'tarry' one for another,

that is they should follow the open meal custom for all who came.

Paul's refers to Passover. The Lord's Table was instituted 'after supper', following the Passover meal. Eating at the Lord's table seemed to have been warranted by the Passover meal associated with the Lord's supper. Paul mentions 'the cup of blessing', the third cup which Jesus had taken 'after supper'.

Degrading behaviour, greed, even drunkenness at the Corinthians Communion service, brought Paul's warning about eating and drinking unworthily.

One hears this warning read to good Christian congregations today often with great solemnity, warning communicants to examine themselves. It produces introspective scrupulosity and anxiety. What good is that?

What is 'unworthy?' If I feel worthy then what has Christ's blood to do with me? Christ calls sinners, the unworthy. Many are worried in case they eat bread with some unknown sin in their lives. It is an oppression and I have known those who never took communion because such heavy stress had been laid upon the perfection needed for participation. If we are that fit, are we fit at all? The common failures of everyday life were not in mind in this Scripture, but gross hostility openly displayed by participants in the Passover-type meal at the Lord's Table.

Disciplined church members have been told to stay away from the Lord's Table for a few weeks. Instead the church should insist that erring members DON'T stay away. Where else but at the Table is there restoration, re-assurance, and cleansing?

Communion is a profound act of oneness - that is Paul's point. It is not a "help yourself" ordinance but for each to

bless another like Melchizedek blessing Abraham and offering him bread and wine. It should be ministered. Communion is both a physical and spiritual act, the very heart of our heart reaching out in desire to God. Servers are not mere handers-out, one hand in pocket, but should convey their sense of holy privilege bringing bread and wine in Christ's name. Don't you think so?

### **What happens when we take bread and wine?**

Canty, G., (*IWT 15, What happens when we take bread and wine?*)

It shocks me when a pastor invites people to come and help themselves to bread and wine from the table, like a smorgasbord or cafeteria. Jesus in the Gospels and the apostle in Corinthians treated it as a special ordinance, a holy moment of tremendous significance. The emblems should be ministered. Servers take over the role of Jesus in the upper room saying "Take this, eat, drink. It is me."

Never did any simple act provoke such controversy. Theology, metaphysics, even war have raged around the Lord's Table. Someone working towards a PhD asked me whether I followed the teaching of Luther, Calvin or Zwingli. For me, none. Whichever, it would amount to no more than a slight mental or imaginative difference, which is surely not the object.

From the time of Augustine (4<sup>th</sup> Century) Christ was seen as present in the emblems spiritually. The ancient Catholic belief of transubstantiation was conceived 500 years later to match the age of superstition and the clamour for the mysterious and supernatural. After 1059 it became a dogma and priests claimed the power to transmute bread and wine into the real body and blood of Christ in the sacrifice of the Mass. Why they thought eating His actual flesh would benefit them I cannot imagine. Jesus said "The flesh counts for nothing."

John 6:63. Luther rejected the Catholic dogma as 'Aristotelian'. (Thomas Aquinas laid down the argument for transubstantiation from the teaching of Aristotle). Luther still believed Christ was physically present in the Eucharist. This is 'consubstantiation.' He argued that as Christ has a human body of flesh, it is in the flesh that He is present.

Calvin said also that Christ's body was present and received but spiritually, not actually. Then the Swiss reformer Zwingli denied any such metaphysical notions, saying Communion is only a symbolic act to remember Christ as absent.

What does happen is a matter of discussion and of differences in evangelical circles. The Pentecostals have no accepted definition and I am not the oracle to settle five centuries of debate.

Communion is accepted widely as a 'sacrament' and a 'means of grace', even in many evangelical churches but for me as a Pentecostal the whole subject takes on a deeper richness. The phrase 'a means of grace' is a common and easy phrase. But it is a weevil word corrupting beliefs. Grace was the centre of theology until the Pentecostals showed the work of God was by the Holy Spirit, not by any other emanation or force. The 'means of grace' meant ways to accumulate grace sufficient to give souls access to heaven, that is by religious acts, fasting, prayers and so on. Taking communion was particularly a good 'sacrament' a meritorious physical act conferring automatic effects.

Pentecostal thought, as I have known it for a lifetime, is that no physical act has any reward without the operation of faith. Salvation is by faith, not by any act, but faith must act to bring salvation. Bread and wine were important in Scripture from the day when Melchizedek the priest of Jerusalem brought bread and wine to Abraham, confirming God's promise of the

land to Abraham. As a tent dweller he could farm neither bread nor wine.

However, so much for that. I would like to make bread and wine more meaningful. Jesus is present, though not IN the emblems, but with us, where two or three gather in His name. We partake physically with faith, and benefit physically and spiritually.

When Jesus instituted this ordinance He was alive, and the disciples could not 'eat' Him or drink His blood. But communion is far more than a remembrance of Christ as Zwingli said. We partake of physical elements by faith and receive the physical and spiritual realities of Christ. The act is important. It is as close as anything could come to signify the physical realities of the Gospel. It is a truly Pentecostal act, our bodies receiving as well as our spirit.

At the Lord's Table, I open myself completely in surrender to God. I don't just eat, thinking that in some way it will do me good, any more than just the act of listening to sermons has any sacramental and automatic effect. I admit that listening to some sermons has been a trial of spiritual character, but merely hearing adds nothing to my heavenly grace banking account. Any religious rite must be joined with a conscious faith act.

It is precisely to ensure that we do draw near for physical and spiritual blessings that Jesus told us to do this and partake of bread and wine. As I eat, my eating becomes an act of my spirit to reach out to Jesus. Eating bread is so natural and simple, a child can eat. That is what it means, come simply, naturally to God who feeds us on the bread of heaven as we open our mouths and open our souls consciously to Him. I don't come merely for a new cleansing. I am cleansed already or I dare not come at all.

Some eat thoughtlessly assuming that the bread is holy and in a mysterious way they imbibe God. One of my church members would not let the birds eat the remaining crumbs from the communion table, but always ate it herself – with milk. But God is not to be manipulated automatically and helplessly by a piece of bread, Paul says Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, not by ritual. I myself think of Him as coming and coming as the everlastingly coming One, flooding my soul in a never ending stream of life. "Moment by moment I've life from above", that wonderful hymn says.

### **Ordinances - Breaking of Bread**

Lancaster, J, *The Ordinances*, Pentecostal Doctrine (Ed. Brewster, P.S.), 1976, (*The Lord's Supper*, pp85-90).

Various names have been given to the second ordinance. The title above comes from 1Corinthians 11:20, whereas the names "Holy Communion" and "Lord's Table" are derived from 1Corinthians 10:16,21. "Breaking of bread" is referred to in Acts 2:42. From the use of the terms "blessing" in 1Corinthians 10: 16 and "given thanks" (1Corinthians 11:24 cf. Matthew 26: 26, 27) the word "Eucharist" (thanksgiving) is also used by some. These different names indicate the various ideas that are associated with the ordinance.

As in the case of Baptism, there has been great discussion as to the meaning of the ordinance, from the extreme Roman view of Transubstantiation through varying shades of sacramental theology to Zwingli's view that the feast was simply a memorial. The Roman doctrine that the substance of the bread and wine are changed at the words of consecration into the substance of the body and blood of Christ need not detain us long. Its absurdity was never more effectively exposed than by the seventeen years old Lady Jane Grey



under interrogation by Dr. Feckenham. The learned doctor quoted Christ's own words and asked: "Doth He not say it is His body?" Lady Jane replied: "I grant He doth; and so He saith 'I am the Vine', 'I am the Door'; but He is never more the door nor the vine . . . God forbid that I should say that I eat the very natural body and blood of Christ, for then I should pluck away my redemption, or else there were two bodies or two Christs. One body was tormented on the cross, and if they then did eat another, then He had two bodies; or if His body were eaten then it were not broken on the cross; or if it were broken on the cross, it was not eaten of His disciples" (Foxe's Book of Martyrs).

Trying to pick one's way through the varied views of the Reformers and their descendants is rather like trying to untie a knot that has become almost fused together. Very often it is more a difference of emphasis than a real difference of doctrine that is the ground of discussion. Zwingli was anxious to avoid any suggestion of superstition in the sacrament, while Calvin and Luther seemed anxious to preserve the idea of the Lord's presence and active grace in it. It seems to the writer that there are valuable insights to be gained from each.

The actual Scriptural references to the Lord's Supper are surprisingly few. The three synoptic Gospels and 1 Corinthians 11:23-34 each give an account of the institution of the feast (Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20 being the gospel records). There are two references in Acts (2:42, 46; 20:7), and, apart from a reference to Christ as our Passover (1 Corinthians 5:7), only two others (in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11). In the light of this — and of our earlier comments about the absence of a sacramental emphasis in the Early Church — it is interesting to read Bishop Handley Moule's comment: "The Scripture, certainly is far more ample and

emphatic on Grace than on the Sacraments of Grace; on the efficacy of penitent faith directed with profound simplicity to God and Christ, rather than on that of the administration of divine ordinances" (Outlines of Christian Doctrine, page 238). In the symbolism of the Lord's Supper five leading ideas call for our attention.

**It is proclamation of the death of Christ** (1Cor.11:26).

The very actions of breaking bread and pouring out wine are eloquent reminders that what is celebrated is not merely that He is of our flesh and blood but that His body and blood were a sacrifice, that He "bore our sins in His own body on the tree" (1Peter 2:24). Thus, what the preaching of the Word does verbally, the ordinance does visually — it "clearly portrays Christ crucified" (Galatians 3:1 NIV). The Passover setting that Christ chose for its institution, with its reference to the substitutionary death of the lamb and the consequent redemption of Israel from death and bondage, provides the historical background against which the significance of the feast comes into focus. His body and blood, Christ said, were "given" for — on behalf of — His own and His blood was shed for the remission of sins. Thus, "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us" and we in sincerity and faith must keep the feast (1Corinthians 5:7,8).

**It is the ratification of the New Covenant.**

All four accounts of the last supper report Christ's reference to the "new covenant". The writer to the Hebrews has identified the nature of that new covenant (Hebrews 8:6-13; cf. Jeremiah 31:13f; Ezekiel 36:26, 27) and has stressed the necessity of the shedding of sacrificial blood to its establishment (Hebrews 9:14-23; 10:14f). The Lord's Supper is the declaration that, in the sacrificial death of Christ, the barrier to our fellowship with God has been removed and the

new covenant is now in force. It is perhaps here that the "giving" and "taking" come into focus and the more physical aspects of the feast have their significance. A covenant involves two parties, each of which must "set his hand" to the agreement, thus the offer of the bread and wine by the Lord and their acceptance by the disciple are outward acknowledgments of mutual acceptance. Nathaniel Micklem has pointed out that an action can be more effective than a word: "A handshake after a quarrel is not a mere sign, but a conveyance of reconciliation. Love may be declared in words but a kiss may be a deeper and more satisfactory conveyance" (Christian Thinking Today, page 170). In this sense, we may view the Lord's Supper as a fresh exchange of love between the Lord and His own, each new coming to the Lord's Table as another embrace between the Christ and His beloved Bride. Thus, each time we break bread and drink & the cup, we are taking it anew as the seal of His covenanting love and our acceptance.

### **It is the focal point of fellowship with Christ.**

Our Lord's words in Luke 22:15 reveal the yearning of His heart towards His own: "I have eagerly desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer" (NIV). The whole atmosphere of the upper room is redolent with Christ's love for His disciples (John 13:1), a love which not only desires to eat with them and minister to them in the washing of their feet, but also looks forward to the day when He will feast again with them in His Father's kingdom (Matthew 26:29). Thus, the Lord's Table speaks of "togetherness"; it is the ((communion of the blood of Christ" (1Corinthians 10:16). It is significant that the word for "communion" here is the great New Testament word for "fellowship" (koinonia). Our common meal together with Him speaks of the fact that we

are "in this together" — that is to say, His death is for us and by faith we are reckoned to be crucified with Him. We are participants in His body and blood because we are one with Him through grace on His part and faith on ours. The bread and wine that He offers us each time we come to the Table not only signify an event in which we were once united, but also a continuing relationship.

In one of his letters, the saintly Samuel Rutherford wrote of Communion: "which is one of our feast days, wherein our well- beloved Jesus rejoiceth and is merry with His friends". Could there be anything greater than to satisfy His desire in this, to sit at His Table and exchange a loving look across the broken bread with the Man with pierced hands and with "eyes majestic after death"?

### **It proclaims the fellowship of the Church.**

Paul's use of *koinonia* in 1Corinthians 10:16,17 refers not only to our fellowship with Christ but also to what we enjoy as fellow-believers. The loaf that is before us speaks not only of the body offered on the tree, but also of the Body of Christ, "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all" (Ephesians 1:23), in other words, the Church. So it is that we "being many are one bread, and one body". Being partakers of Christ makes us one in Him. We are not only members of Christ, but also "members one of another" (Romans 12:4, 5 cf. 1Corinthians 12:12f). Our "togetherness" is therefore not an individualistic "my Lord and I" relationship, but an unavoidable solidarity with all the members of the Body. It is significant that Paul's instructions about the Lord's Supper are given in the wider context of the "common meals" of the Christians. It seems clear from verses 20, 21 that the ordinance was observed during a meal to which the believers brought their own food, sometimes known as the "love-feast"

(see Jude 12 RSV). Though things had gone sadly wrong at Corinth, the idea was a good one since it underlined the importance of the corporate life of the Church. Against this background the words of Paul "not discerning the Lord's body" (1Corinthians 11:29) are considered by many scholars to refer to the Church rather than to Christ's physical body. Holy Communion thus points not only backward to the cross and upward to the ascended Lord, but outward to my brothers and sisters in Christ with whom I form one loaf and one body and to whose well-being I am therefore inextricably committed.

### **It announces the eschatological purpose of God.**

Both at the moment of its institution and in Paul's subsequent exposition, the Lord's Supper points to the future. Amid the gathering shadows in the upper room, the Saviour looked forward to the day when He would celebrate ultimate victory in the kingdom of God. Paul does not miss that note, but echoes it softly in the words "till He come". Hence, as Godet puts it, "the Holy Communion is like a bridge thrown across the period of actual separation . . . between the past presence of Christ on the earth and His future presence when He returns . . . it is the means which the love of Jesus has designed to fill the void that the visible retirement of her Spouse has actually left for the Bride". But He is coming to fetch her, and the gleam in the cup seems to reflect the light of that coming dawn.

The Lord's Supper thus embraces every dimension. It looks backward to the cross, upward to the throne of God, outward to the fellowship of saints and forward to the coming of the King, and so it becomes the focal point where grace encounters faith and assures us that past, present and future

are held in the mighty hand that breaks the bread and pours the wine.

To such a feast only the pure in heart may come. Only the man who by faith is one with Christ has the right to share in this "communion of the blood of Christ". But this is not all. The believer is warned that he may bring condemnation (krima) and consequently the chastisement of God upon himself if he partakes unworthily (1Corinthians 11:27-32). This solemn passage is a reminder of the seriousness with which God views the table and is a rebuke to the casual way in which Holy Communion is sometimes conducted. In our desire to avoid formalism we must never lapse into carelessness. This is Holy Communion, a sacred encounter with God.

Three things are essential to our approach to the breaking of bread.

**There must be self-examination** (v.28).

The word "examine" used here is used to describe the testing of metals-and suggests thorough analysis.

**There must be a "discerning of the Lord's body"** (v. 29).

The word means "to distinguish between" or "to separate". In other words, we are to regard this feast as "a thing apart", something special, to which we come with due reverence. Many scholars believe that here the term "body" (the prefix, "Lord's"; is not in the original) refers to the Church. To "discern" the body would then mean to take account of the fellowship of believers and to ensure that our relationships within the body are right.

**Then, we are do this "in remembrance" of Christ** (v. 24).

The word means an active "calling to mind" and suggests an attitude in which the mind is seeking to focus upon Christ. This is no casual repetition of a rite, but the concentration of

all the spiritual faculties on communion with Christ.

No-one can examine the New Testament teaching on the Lord's Supper without feeling that he is standing on holy ground. This is no after-thought tacked on at the end of a service, no routine repetition of something which needs to be "done" every Sunday, but rather a sacred trysting-place with Christ to which we come with humble, penitent hearts and thoughtful minds. There is need for quiet self-examination and reflection, undisturbed by the singing of choruses or even the exercise of the gifts of the Spirit, when the heart can truly feed upon Christ. Only then is He truly "made known in the breaking of bread".

## **The Church Family Meal**

Paul S Fermor

The Church Family Meal, often called "Communion", is an integral part of our Church's life. We are to eat the bread and drink the wine in remembrance of Jesus (Luke 22:19; 1Cor.11:25). When we do this, we proclaim Jesus death and anticipate His return (1Cor.11:26). By participating in the meal we also declare that Jesus, the Lamb of God, is with us - Emmanuel (Matt.1:23). He is not only in heaven but also in our heart (Rom.10:8-10; Is.57:15).

To eat "unworthily" or in an "unworthy manner" (1Cor.11:27), is to eat without "recognizing" (or deciding, discerning, make ... distinctions, having misgivings about, taking issue with) the body of Christ (vs29). The bread and wine represents Christ's Body which is now visible as the Church. Respecting (honouring) Jesus Christ and His Family is everything!

## **So who can eat the Family Meal?**

Because the Communion meal was instigated at the Passover meal, I believe that the Passover instructions are helpful.

*The Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "These are the regulations for the Passover: No foreigner is to eat of it." ...An alien living among you who wants to celebrate the Lord's Passover must have all the males in his household circumcised; then he may take part like one born in the land. No uncircumcised male may eat of it Exodus 12: 43-48.*

“Foreigners” and “uncircumcised” refer to non-Jews. In New Covenant terms, this means the unconverted person - regardless of national identity, as Paul explains in Eph.2:11-22: *Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men) - remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ ...Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow-citizens with God's people and members of God's household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.*

The Communion meal is meant for Believers and our Church has “an open table” policy where any Believer is welcome to share the Communion meal with us. Because salvation faith in Jesus Christ is personal, simple and spiritual, we are not normally in a position to judge whether someone has no faith at all. We would usually give a simple explanation of the meal and follow the Biblical principle found in 1Cor.11:28: *“A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup”.*



We do not expect people (either children or adults) to understand everything about salvation but we do expect them to have had an explanation! *And when your children ask you, "What does this ceremony mean to you?" then tell them... Exodus 12:26-27.* Our Church actively encourages families to participate in the Family Communion Meal on the understanding that children's faith and behaviour are the responsibility of their parents.

### **Communion is remembering Jesus through the simple meal of bread and wine**

*1Cor.10:16-17 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*

### **Communion reminds us of Jesus death:**

*1Cor.11:23-25 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

### **The bread represents Jesus Body**

*1Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.*

### **The wine represents Jesus Blood**

*Rev.1:5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,*

*Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!*

## **Communion reminds us of God's New Covenant:**

*Matt.26:26-28 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the [new] covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins*

**The New Covenant is an agreement or contract made between God & Man (Jesus), which is sealed (brought into effect) by Jesus blood.**

Unlike the previous covenant which didn't work when people failed to keep the conditions, this new covenant guarantees forgiveness of sins:

*Heb.8:8-12 "The time is coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not remain faithful to my covenant, and I turned away from them, declares the Lord. This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbour, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." [Jer.31:31-34]*

## **Communion is holy and not to be taken casually:**

*1 Cor. 11:27-31 Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number*

*of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.*

### **Communion is for Believers:**

*Acts 2:42-47 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.*

### **Communion proclaims Jesus death until He returns:**

*1Cor.11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*

### **Communion is “Fellowship” or “Partnership” with God**

See other uses of the word “communion” *koinônia*:  
fellowship, partnership, participation

*Phil.1:5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, Luke 5:10 and so were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, Simon's partners.*

*1Cor.1:9 God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.*

*1Cor.10:16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ?*

‘Communion’ was at the heart of the Reformation and was where the real division came. All the Reformers were agreed in rejecting the doctrine of ‘Mass’ because it re-enacted Christ’s single sacrifice. They also rejected the Catholic concept of ‘transubstantiation’ as “an unscriptural piece of priestly magic.” Transubstantiation is the belief that the

'substance' (the reality within the bread and the wine) is 'transformed' into the substance of the body and blood of Christ (Real Presence) leaving only the 'accidents' (or superficial properties - what you could see, touch or taste) unchanged.

Luther taught 'consubstantiation' – the belief that although there is no change in the substance of the emblems, the actual body and blood of Jesus co-exists with the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper.

Zwingli, however, went much further and taught that Communion was symbolic and that the partaking of the emblems was a memorial (my view). Its spiritual value is in obeying God's instructions to eat and drink, not in the meal itself.

Calvin, who took a middle ground, taught that although there is no 'Real Presence' and the substance of the emblems is unchanged, there is a 'spiritual reception' of Christ by faith in the act of Communion, thus making the Communion meal a "sacrament".

## **Sacrament**

*(Below is an extract from Study 6 Water Baptism of Believers)*

The traditional definition of sacrament is "an act (usually a formal religious ceremony) that confers specific grace on those who receive it".

A sacrament, as defined in Hexam's Concise Dictionary of Religion is "a Rite in which God is uniquely active." Augustine of Hippo defined a Christian sacrament as "a visible sign of an invisible reality." The Anglican Book of Common Prayer speaks of them as "an outward and visible sign of an inward and invisible Grace." Examples of sacraments would be Baptism and the Mass." Therefore a sacrament is a religious symbol or ritual which conveys divine grace, blessing, or sanctity upon the believer who participates

in it - a tangible symbol which represents an intangible reality. As defined above, an example would be baptism in water, representing (and conveying) the grace of the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Forgiveness of Sins, and membership into the Church. Anointing with holy anointing oil is another example which is often synonymous with receiving the Holy Spirit and salvation as mentioned in James 5:14. Another way of looking at Sacraments is that they are an external and physical sign of the conferral of Sanctifying Grace.

Throughout the Christian faith views concerning which rites are sacramental, that is conferring sanctifying grace, and what it means for an external act to be sacramental vary widely. Other religious traditions also have what might be called "sacraments" in a sense, though not necessarily according to the Christian meaning of the term.

In the majority of Western Christianity, the generally accepted definition of a sacrament is that it is an outward sign that conveys an inward, spiritual grace through Christ. Christian churches, denominations, and sects are divided regarding the number and operation of the sacraments. Sacraments are generally held to have been instituted by Jesus Christ, although in some cases this point is debated. They are usually administered by the clergy to a recipient or recipients, and are generally understood to involve visible and invisible components. The invisible component (manifested inwardly) is understood to be brought about by the action of the Holy Spirit, God's grace working in the sacrament's participants, while the visible (or outward) component entails the use of such things as water, oil, and bread and wine that is blessed or consecrated; the laying-on-of-hands; or a particularly significant covenant that is marked by a public benediction

(such as with marriage or absolution of sin in the reconciliation of a penitent).

The two most widely accepted sacraments are Baptism and the Eucharist (or Lord's Supper). However the traditional Seven Sacraments of the Catholic Church or divine mysteries are listed as the following:

1. Baptism
2. Confirmation (Chrismation in the Orthodox tradition)
3. Holy Orders or Ordination
4. The Eucharist, Mass or Lord's Supper
5. Reconciliation of a Penitent (Confession)
6. Anointing of the Sick or Extreme Unction
7. Matrimony

In the Anglican tradition, the sacerdotal function (administration of the Sacraments) is assigned to clergy in the three orders of ministry: bishops, priests and deacons. Anglicans hold to the principle of *ex opere operato* with respect to the efficacy of the sacraments *vis-a-vis* the presider and his or her administration thereof. Article XXVI of the Thirty-nine Articles (entitled Of the unworthiness of ministers which hinders not the effect of the Sacrament) states that the "ministration of the Word and Sacraments" is not done in the name of the one performing the sacerdotal function, "neither is the effect of Christ's ordinance taken away by their wickedness," since the sacraments have their effect "because of Christ's intention and promise, although they be ministered by evil men."

Baptists and Pentecostals, among other Christian denominations, use the word ordinance, rather than sacrament because of certain sacerdotal ideas connected, in their view, with the word sacrament. These churches argue

that the word ordinance points to the ordaining authority of Christ which lies behind the practice.

*<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sacrament>*

Although many churches accept Communion as a Sacrament, the Bible is clear that it is only faith which can convey an inward, spiritual grace:

*Romans 4:3 What does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness."*

It is not the ritual of "Communion" but faith expressed in the act of obedience that imparts the spiritual "credit" or value. The New Covenant is a heart issue not a legal document like the Old Covenant

*(P.S.F.)*

## **Agape**

*International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia Vol. 1*

### **1. The Name And The Thing:**

The name Agape or "love-feast," as an expression denoting the brotherly common meals of the early church, though of constant use and in the postcanonical literature from the time of Ignatius onward, is found in the New Testament only in Jude 1:12 and in 2 Peter 2:13 according to a very doubtful reading. For the existence of the Christian common meal, however, we have abundant New Testament evidence. The "breaking of bread" practiced by the primitive community in Jerusalem according to Acts 2:42,46 must certainly be interpreted in the light of Pauline usage (1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:24) as referring to the ceremonial act of the Lord's Supper. But the added clause in 2:46, "they took there food with gladness and singleness of heart," implies that a social meal was connected in some way with this ceremonial act. Paul's references to the abuses that had sprung up in the Corinthian

church at the meetings for the observance of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-22,33,34) make it evident that in Corinth as in Jerusalem the celebration of the rite was associated with participation in a meal of a more general character. And in one of the "we" sections of Acts (20:11) where Luke is giving personal testimony as to the manner in which the Lord's Supper was observed by Paul in a church of his own founding, we find the breaking of bread associated with and yet distinguished from an eating of food, in a manner which makes it natural to conclude that in Troas, as in Jerusalem and Corinth, Christians when they met together on the first day of the week were accustomed to partake of a common meal. The fact that the name Agape or love-feast used in Jude 1:12 (Revised Version) is found early in the 2nd century and often afterward as a technical expression for the religious common meals of the church puts the meaning of Jude's reference beyond doubt.

## ***2. Origin Of The Agape:***

So far as the Jerusalem community was concerned, the common meal appears to have sprung out of the koinonia or communion that characterized the first days of the Christian church (compare Acts 1:14; 2:1 etc.). The religious meals familiar to Jews — the Passover being the great type — would make it natural in Jerusalem to give expression by means of table fellowship to the sense of brotherhood, and the community of goods practiced by the infant church (Acts 2:44; 4:32) would readily take the particular form of a common table at which the wants of the poor were supplied out of the abundance of the rich (Acts 6:1 ff). The presence of the Agape in the Greek church of Corinth was no doubt due to the initiative of Paul, who would hand on the observances associated with the Lord's Supper just as he had



received them from the earlier disciples; but participation in a social meal would commend itself very easily to men familiar with the common meals that formed a regular part of the procedure at meetings of those religious clubs and associations which were so numerous at that time throughout the Greek-Roman world.

### ***3. Relation To The Eucharist:***

In the opinion of the great majority of scholars the Agape was a meal at which not only bread and wine but all kinds of viands were used, a meal which had the double purpose of satisfying hunger and thirst and giving expression to the sense of Christian brotherhood. At the end of this feast, bread and wine were taken according to the Lord's command, and after thanksgiving to God were eaten and drunk in remembrance of Christ and as a special means of communion with the Lord Himself and through Him with one another. The Agape was thus related to the Eucharist as Christ's last Passover to the Christian rite which He grafted upon it. It preceded and led up to the Eucharist, and was quite distinct from it. In opposition to this view it has been strongly urged by some modern critical scholars that in the apostolic age the Lord's Supper was not distinguished from the Agape, but that the Agape itself from beginning to end was the Lord's Supper which was held in memory of Jesus. It seems fatal to such an idea, however, that while Paul makes it quite evident that bread and wine were the only elements of the memorial rite instituted by Jesus (1 Corinthians 11:23-29), the abuses which had come to prevail at the social gatherings of the Corinthian church would have been impossible in the case of a meal consisting only of bread and wine (compare 1 Corinthians 11:21,33 f) Moreover, unless the Eucharist in the apostolic age had been discriminated from the common meal, it would

be difficult to explain how at a later period the two could be found diverging from each other so completely.

#### ***4. Separation From The Eucharist:***

In the Didache (circa 100 AD) there is no sign as yet of any separation. The direction that the second Eucharistic prayer should be offered “after being filled” appears to imply that a regular meal had immediately preceded the observance of the sacrament. In the Ignatian Epistles (circa 110 AD) the Lord’s Supper and the Agape are still found in combination. It has sometimes been assumed that Pliny’s letter to Trajan (circa 112 AD) proves that the separation had already taken place, for he speaks of two meetings of the Christians in Bithynia, one before the dawn at which they bound themselves by a “sacramentum” or oath to do no kind of crime, and another at a later hour when they partook of food of an ordinary and harmless character. But as the word “sacramentum” cannot be taken here as necessarily or even probably referring to the Lord’s Supper, the evidence of this passage is of little weight. When we come to Justin Martyr (circa 150 AD) we find that in his account of church worship he does not mention the Agape at all, but speaks of the Eucharist as following a service which consisted of the reading of Scripture, prayers and exhortation; so that by his time the separation must have taken place. Tertullian (circa 200 AD) testifies to the continued existence of the Agape, but shows clearly that in the church of the West the Eucharist was no longer associated with it. In the East the connection appears to have been longer maintained, but by and by the severance became universal; and though the Agape continued for long to maintain itself as a social function of the church, it gradually passed out of existence or was preserved only as a feast of charity for the poor.

### ***5. Reasons For The Separation:***

Various influences appear to have cooperated in this direction. Trajan's enforcement of the old law against clubs may have had something to do with it (compare Pliny as above), but a stronger influence probably came from the rise of a popular suspicion that the evening meals of the church were scenes of licentious revelry and even of crime. The actual abuses which already meet us in the apostolic age (1Corinthians 11:20 ff; Jude 1:12), and which would tend to multiply as the church grew in numbers and came into closer contact with the heathen world, might suggest the advisability of separating the two observances. But the strongest influence of all would come from the growth of the ceremonial and sacerdotal spirit by which Christ's simple institution was slowly turned into a mysterious priestly sacrifice. To Christ Himself it had seemed natural and fitting to institute the Supper at the close of a social meal. But when this memorial Supper had been transformed into a repetition of the sacrifice of Calvary by the action of the ministering priest, the ascetic idea became natural that the Eucharist ought to be received fasting, and that it would be sacrilegious to link it on to the observances of an ordinary social meal.

J. C. Lambert

### **Our Need One of Another**

*Donald Gee, Edinburgh, Scotland, in the Stone Church, Sept. 6, 1929  
Published: The Latter Rain Evangel January 1930*

There is another thing I am finding out and that is that it is healthy to meet one with. another, because people who go off by themselves easily get side-tracked and have peculiar ideas, There is no church good enough for some people and they have to meet in a little' room by themselves. We are all the

better for meeting with one another even though we are not such a jug of cream as some are. Stephen Jeffries, that flaming Welsh evangelist, went to the town of Bedford where Bunyan wrote his Pilgrim's Progress while locked up in jail. While Stephen Jeffries was there he learned of a man who was very critical. He belonged to a certain people who were very strict over doctrine and the breaking of bread. If you do not agree with them in doctrine they will not break bread with you. In this town there were about sixty who belonged to this church, and after awhile they didn't agree on a little matter and they split. Then there were only thirty. Then those thirty did not agree and they split again and there were only ten left.

Then, the story goes, those ten did not agree on doctrine, and there were three left. At last this dear man was all by himself. When Stephen Jeffries heard of it he said, "Poor fellow, if there is another split they will have to have an inquest."

Oh these people who do not see their need of one another! I know some teachers and preachers who shut themselves away and refuse to check up their ideas with their brethren, and they nearly all become schismatics. I believe we preachers and teachers ourselves need to keep in the middle of the road. Whenever I write an important article or publish a booklet I submit it to four or five of my brethren, and I give them a free hand. It is the only way to keep safe.

It is just the same with people who are on the prophetic line and have visions. You know the Book says, "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge." There are some who shut themselves away and have visions and dreams-they do not become schismatics but fanatics. But the Book says here, "From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth." How we need each other! A gifted Apollos, mighty in the Scriptures,

needs a humble Priscilla and Aquilla, to explain unto him the way more perfectly.

One of the most beautiful instances in the Bible is the story of the humble spirit that could learn from the humble tent-maker and his wife.

## **The Breaking Of Bread**

Watchman Nee, **“Assembling Together”**, Basic Lesson Series—  
Volume 3, Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc. New York 1973  
Lesson 21

*Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? 1Cor.10:16 22*

*For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many*

*among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. 1Cor.11:23-33*

In this chapter we will consider the matter of the Lord's table or the Lord's supper.

## **The Supper Instituted by the Lord**

Let us first see how the Lord instituted the supper. This is one supper which all the children of God in the church must attend. It was set up by the Lord Jesus on the night before His death. Since He was crucified the next day, this was His last night on earth and also His last supper with His disciples. Although He still ate after His resurrection, this nevertheless was His last supper, for a resurrected man can either eat or not, as he chooses.

How did this last supper come about? The Jews keep a festival called the Passover which commemorates their deliverance by God from slavery in Egypt. God commanded them to prepare a lamb for each house and in the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month they were to kill the lamb and put its blood on the two side-posts and on the lintel. They should eat the flesh on that night with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. After they came out of Egypt, they were ordered to keep the feast each year as a remembrance. So, to the Jews the paschal lamb is something retrospective. Because of God's great deliverance, they recall that great event every year.

It so happened that the night before the death of the Lord Jesus coincided with the eating of the paschal lamb. There was nothing special in His taking the paschal lamb with the disciples, for it was simply keeping the feast of the Passover.

But immediately afterwards, the Lord established His own supper, thus implying that He desires us to partake of His supper even as the Jews eat the paschal lamb.

As we compare these two, we see that the Israelites keep the Passover because they were delivered out of Egypt, and that God's children today partake of the Lord's table because they too have been delivered. The Israelites had a lamb; we too have the Lamb whom God appointed. We have today been saved from the world, delivered from the power of Satan, and become wholly God's. We keep this feast as the Jews kept the Passover.

### ***1. Supper Is A Family Meal***

What does supper signify? Why do we call it the Lord's supper? It is a worldwide custom that supper is especially considered a family meal. At lunch, the members of the family often cannot assemble together. In the land of Judea at noontime, some of the family would be shepherding, some fishing, and some tilling. Most of them would eat their lunch outside, for it would be impossible to go home. So lunch is not a family meal. Neither is breakfast a family meal for at that time people are thinking of the day's work instead of the rest afterward. Other than those who are sick, people usually take their breakfast hastily. Supper, however, is the most special of the three daily meals, for at that meal the whole family, young and old, gathers together to eat.

### ***2. Supper Excludes The Thought Of Work***

Having finished a day's work, people no longer think of the work before them; rather, they are occupied with the thought of rest. Supper is the time when the whole family gathers together and eats at leisure after the day's work is done. In instituting His own supper, our Lord desired His people throughout the earth to see that this is, indeed, a family meal

in God's house. It does not include any idea of work. It just sets forth the thought of rest. During breakfast and lunch, one's mind is always occupied with work; but by supper, everything has been done. One is prepared to retire after eating. God's children should gather and partake of the Lord's supper with a similar inward sentiment.

## **Dual Meaning of the Lord's Supper**

### ***1. Remember The Lord***

The basic thought of the Lord's supper is to remember the Lord. The Lord Himself says, "*Do this in remembrance of me*" (1 Cor.11:24b). He knows how very forgetful we are. Do not think that because we have received such an abundance of grace and experienced such a wonderful redemption that we will never be able to forget. Let me warn you that men such as we, are most forgetful. For this reason, the Lord especially desires us both to remember Him and to remember what He has done for us.

The Lord wants us to remember Him not only because we are so forgetful, but also because He needs our memory. In other words, He does not want us to forget Him. The Lord is so great and so transcendent that He could let us forget Him and not be bothered by it. Yet He says, "This do in remembrance of me," thus revealing how condescending He is in desiring our remembrance.

That the Lord wants us to remember Him fully is an expression of His love. It is the demand of love, not of greatness. So far as His greatness is concerned, He can afford to be forgotten by us. But His love insists that we remember Him. If we do not remember Him, we will suffer great loss. If we do not remember Him often and keep the redemption of the Lord always before us, we will easily be conformed to the world and become contentious toward the children of God.



Thus we not only need to remember Him, but are profited by so doing. It is a means by which we may receive the grace of the Lord.

In connection with the Lord's desire for us to remember Him, there is another point worth noticing: as the Lord formerly humbled Himself in order to be our Saviour, so today He humbles Himself in asking for our remembrance. As once He condescended to save us, so today He condescends to ask for our hearts. He wishes us to remember Him as long as we live on earth. He wants us to live before Him and remember Him week after week. Thus we derive much spiritual benefit.

### **Disassociates you from the world**

One cardinal value in remembering the Lord lies in the fact that the world will not be able to exert its influence continuously upon you. If every few days you remember how the Lord died for you and received you, let me tell you the world will have no place in you. Since my Lord suffered death here in the world, what have I to say? If they had not killed my Lord, there might still be some ground for them to talk with me. But now that they have already killed my Lord and His death is exhibited before me, I have nothing more to say and no way to communicate with the world. I cannot have any fellowship with it. This is one of the prime benefits of the breaking of bread.

### **Dispels division**

Remembering the Lord has another spiritual value: it makes strife and contention and division impossible among God's children. When you are reminded of how you have been saved by grace and you find another person with you who is likewise reminded, you are both one before the Lord. When you contemplate how the Lord Jesus forgave the myriads of your sins and you see another brother coming to the supper

who has also been bought and redeemed by the precious blood, how can you bring in anything to separate you from him? How can you divide God's children? For the past nearly two thousand years, many controversies among God's children have been settled at the Lord's supper. Many unforgiven things, even things unforgivable, and many lifelong hatreds have disappeared at the Lord's table, for it is impossible not to forgive when, in remembering the Lord, you are reminded of how you have been saved and forgiven. Can you be forgiven your debt of ten thousand talents (£10,000,000) by the Lord and yet grab another servant by the throat demanding payment for a hundred shillings (£5) (see Matt. 18:4-35)?

### **Enlarges your heart**

Another advantage in remembering the Lord is that each one who remembers Him will quite naturally have his heart enlarged to embrace all children of God. It is but natural to see that all who are redeemed by the Lord's blood are the beloved of the Lord; therefore they are also the delight of my heart. If we are all in the Lord, can there be jealousy, reviling and unforgivingness? How can you continue in strife with the brother or sister who sits next to you at the Lord's supper? What right do you have to demand anything of your brother when you recall how many of your sins have been forgiven? If you insist on strife, jealousy, and an unforgiving spirit, you will not be able to remember the Lord.

Every time we gather to remember the Lord, we are bidden to review His love once more. We should re-examine the corruption of the world and the judgment upon it. We should renew the conviction that all the redeemed are beloved of the Lord. Every time we remember the Lord, we review His love, how He loved us and gave Himself for us. In love, He

descended to hades for us. The world has already been judged, for it crucified our Lord. But all of God's children are our delight, because they have all been bought by the Lord's blood. How can we hate them? How can we harbour any thought of hate?

All that we have mentioned above is included in the meaning of remembering the Lord. The first and foremost significance of the Lord's supper is, "This do in remembrance of me." Let us further point out that it is absolutely impossible for us to remember one whom we do not know or of whom we have no experience. For us to remember a person or an event presumes that we have a personal knowledge of him or of it. So, when the Lord commands us to remember Him, He is merely reminding those of us who have already met Him at Calvary and have received grace from Him. We come to remember all that He has done for us. Like the Jews remembering the Passover, we consider in retrospect. Because we have come out of Egypt, therefore we come together to remember this fact. To remember is to look back.

## ***2. Proclaim The Lord's Death***

The Lord's supper has a second meaning. This is found in 1 Corinthians 11:26: "*For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.*" We need to proclaim or exhibit the Lord's death that all may see.

What causes people to be idle or unfruitful? It is that they have forgotten the cleansing of their former sins (see 2 Pet. 1:8-9: *For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is short-sighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins*). For this reason the Lord calls us to remember Him, saying, "So long as you live on earth, you must love Me and

constantly remember Me. Remember that the cup is My shed blood and the bread My broken body." This refers to our experience, and this must come first. Afterward we have the teaching that the cup and the bread exhibit the death of the Lord.

Why do the cup and the bread represent the Lord's death? Because the blood is in the flesh. So when blood and flesh are separated, it means death. Today the blood and the flesh are separated, for the blood is in the cup while the flesh is in the bread. When one looks at the wine in the cup, he sees the blood. Likewise, when he looks at the bread, he sees the flesh. Thus he does not need to be told that His Lord has died for him. As he notices that the blood is no longer in the flesh, he realizes that death has come. Must the Lord tell you that He has died for you? No, He only needs to say, "Drink the cup and eat the bread," for these proclaim His death. Blood here and flesh there—this speaks of death.

What do the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup signify? The Old Testament informs us clearly that the bread was made of grain. The same word was used when the Lord told the Israelites that after they entered into Canaan they would eat the old grain of the land. In looking at the bread, you see that the grain has been crushed. In looking at the cup, you see that the grape has been pressed. In this crushed grain and this pressed grape, you see death. Hence the Lord says, eat the bread and drink the cup.

Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it is but one grain. Likewise, unless a grain of wheat is crushed, it remains a grain and cannot be made into bread. Unless a cluster of grapes is pressed, there will be no wine. The Lord, speaking through Paul, says that as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you are proclaiming His death. If the grain

wanted to preserve itself whole, there would not be any bread; if the grape insisted on keeping itself intact, there would not be any wine. It is only as you eat the crushed grain and the pressed grape that you proclaim the Lord's death.

From a human standpoint, God has left nothing on the earth other than the cross. The work of the cross is finished but the sign of the cross remains. Indeed, many today have forgotten the cross, but not the believers. To them, the cross is something forever remembered. Every Lord's day we see in the Lord's supper the cross of the Son of God exhibited in the church. This suggests that though we may forget everything else, we must remember the fact of our Lord's death for us.

Suppose you bring your parents, children, or relatives who do not know the Lord to the gathering for the breaking of bread. Seeing such a meeting for the first time, they invariably will ask, "What is the meaning of the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup?" You answer, "The cup represents the blood and the bread the flesh. Since the blood and the flesh are separated, this is death." To those unbelievers who come to the meeting, you point out that in so doing you exhibit the Lord's death.

We not only must go out to preach the gospel, gather people in to hear the glad tidings, and have the word preached by those who are gifted, but we also must let the Lord's table proclaim the good news. It is a great thing if we can convince people that what is placed before them is not a ritual but an exhibition of the Lord's death.

We must proclaim this death until the Lord comes again. I like this thought for it associates the supper with the Lord's return. I wonder if you appreciate the supper. Supper is the last meal of the day. Daily I take my supper; the Lord's supper

I take weekly. The night is dark and the day has yet to dawn. For these two thousand years, the church has never eaten breakfast. She has been and still is only taking supper, the last meal. Till He comes, the night remains dark. But soon the day shall dawn, and no one will need to eat supper again. Who eats supper in the early morning? Soon we shall see the Lord face to face. Remembrance will be lost in sight. We will see Him whom we love.

May we see from the beginning that in remembering the Lord we are remembering the Lord's death. This will naturally turn our eyes toward the kingdom, toward the day when we will go to be with the Lord. The cross always leads us to His return; it invariably ends in glory. No one can remember the Lord's death without lifting up his head, without saying, "Lord, I want to see Your face." When the day comes that we do see His face, all things (including this remembrance) shall pass away. So, in remembering the Lord, we exhibit His death till He come. Today we have nothing to do but to wait for His return.

### **Meaning of the Lord's Table**

1 Corinthians 11 speaks of the Lord's supper with its dual meaning of remembering the Lord and exhibiting the Lord's death. Chapter 10 of the same book, however, speaks of it as the Lord's table. Though the subject is the same, yet two different designations are used. Like the Lord's supper, the Lord's table also has a double meaning. *"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."* (vv. 16-17). Here the table carries a double significance: first communion, then oneness.

## **1. Communion**

The first and primary meaning of the Lord's table is communion. "*the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation (communion) in the blood of Christ?*" As 1 Corinthians 11 delves into the relationship of the believer with the Lord, so 1Cor.10 deals with relationships among believers. The former (chapter 11) does not touch upon our mutual relationships; it merely stresses remembering the Lord and proclaiming the Lord's death till He come. The latter (chapter 10), nevertheless emphasizes the communion of the blood of Christ.

Notice that the cup of blessing which we bless is singular in number. We all drink out of the same cup; therefore it demonstrates the sense of communion. Unless people are very intimate, they will not drink from the same cup. That so many of God's children drink from the same cup, fully attests to the communion aspect of the Lord's table.

In chapter 11 our eyes are focused on the Lord, but in chapter 10 we see our brethren. We see them in the cup. The cup is for drinking, and we all drink of the same cup. In so doing we have communion with all of God's children. Let us be careful to not lose sight of this aspect.

## **2. Oneness**

The second meaning of the Lord's table is oneness. "*Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.*" (v. 17). In this we can see at once that all the children of God are one. The bread of chapter 11 and that of chapter 10 have different emphases. Whereas in chapter 11 the Lord says, "*This is my body which is for you. . . .*" (v. 24), thus making reference to the bread as His physical body, in chapter 10 the verse reads, "*We, who are many, are one loaf, one body,*" this time suggesting that the church is the bread.

Even as we need to learn before the Lord the various meanings of the Lord's table as remembrance, exhibition, and communion, so also we must learn its meaning as oneness. All God's children are as one as the bread is one. We have only one loaf; each believer breaks of it a piece. If it were possible to gather all the broken pieces, we could restore that one loaf of bread. The bread scattered among many would still be one loaf if the pieces were reunited. Physically, after the bread is broken and eaten, it cannot be recovered. But spiritually, we are yet one in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit gives Christ to us; yet Christ is still in the Holy Spirit. What has been distributed is the bread, but in the Holy Spirit we are still one and have never been divided. So in the breaking of bread, we confess that the children of God are one. This bread signifies the oneness of the church of God.

The basic problem with the Lord's table lies in the bread. As God's children gather together to break bread, if the bread only represents themselves, it is too small; it should not be broken. The bread must stand for the whole church, including all the children of God on earth as well as those in your particular locality. Hence, it testifies to the oneness of all the children of God.

### **Some Practical Problems**

We have shown brothers and sisters that the meaning of the breaking of bread is twofold: vertically, it is remembering the Lord and proclaiming His death till He come; horizontally, it is communion with all God's children and oneness with them. Since all God's children are redeemed by the precious blood and are included in the bread, we ought to have our hearts enlarged each time we break the bread. Many though we are, yet we are one bread. At no time should we harbour the desire to exclude any brother or any certain group of



Christians from the bread. Let me tell you, with the bread it is impossible for you to be a small person.

### **The Principle Of Receiving**

How, then, do we receive people to the table of the Lord? Remember, we are not the hosts; we are at best but ushers. This is the Lord's supper, the Lord's table, not ours. We have no authority whatsoever over the Lord's table. We are privileged to eat the bread and drink the cup, but we cannot withhold it from others. We cannot forbid any of the blood-redeemed ones from coming to the Lord's table. We have no authority to refuse it to anyone. We cannot refuse those whom the Lord has received, nor can we reject those who belong to the Lord. We can only refuse those whom the Lord refuses or those who do not belong to Him. The Lord only refuses those who do not belong to Him or those who yet remain in sin. Since their communion with the Lord is already interrupted, we, too, do not have fellowship with them. But let us take note that we are the Lord's and have no authority to exercise other than that which the Lord exercises.

Every time we break the bread, we should think of all those who have received grace. We should not think only of those brothers and sisters whom we personally know. If those gathered at the table in one place refuse to have fellowship with God's children in other places, they are too exclusive.

We hope the hearts of brothers and sisters in every place will be so enlarged that they can embrace all the children of God. To stand on the ground of the church is not to discriminate against any of God's children, as if some were welcome and others not. Every time we come to the Lord's table, we are enabled to see Him once more; thus our hearts are enlarged once again to include all the children of God. The heart is a great mystery. It does not expand by itself; rather it tends to

become narrowed by the least bit of carelessness. Its natural inclination is to contract, not to expand. But at the time of remembering the Lord, our hearts should be expanded.

## **Things to Watch**

Finally, we would like to mention a few more things which we should notice at the breaking of bread.

### ***1. Only Blessing And Thanksgiving, No Asking***

In this meeting a special situation exists. We come as those who have been washed by the blood of the Lord—not as those asking for His cleansing. We come as those who have the Lord as our life—not as those asking Him to give us life. Therefore, in such a meeting there is only thanksgiving, no asking. "*The cup of blessing which we bless*"—we bless what the Lord has already blessed. So the proper note in this meeting is to give thanks, to thank and praise the Lord. It is not the time to ask or plead for anything. Nor is it a time to gather to hear a message. We come for one thing—to remember the Lord; therefore neither prayer nor preaching is proper. It may be allowable to speak briefly on things which have a direct bearing on the Lord Himself, but all other kinds of preaching will only interfere. That which is normal for the meeting is praise and thanks. This is true in chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians as well as in chapter 11.

### ***2. On The First Day Of The Week***

When the Lord instituted the supper, He exhorted us to do it often. After resurrection, He broke bread with the two disciples in Emmaus on the first day of the week (Lk. 24:1, 30). The early church also broke bread on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). There is sufficient example in the church and in the Word of God to show that the breaking of bread should be done on the first day of the week. The Passover

comes only once a year, but the breaking of bread comes once every week. Our Lord is not dead but alive; therefore we remember Him on the resurrection day. The first day of the week is indeed a very special day for the church.

### **3. In A Worthy Manner**

*"Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognising the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself."* (1 Cor. 11:27-29). It is extremely important that we eat and drink worthily. This does not refer to the person's own worthiness but to the way in which he partakes. A person's worthiness is already taken care of in his being redeemed by the precious blood. If he is not the Lord's, he cannot have any part in the Lord's table. But some who are the Lord's may eat in an unworthy manner; that is, they may receive the bread casually without discerning the Lord's body.

Therefore we exhort young believers to receive the bread respectfully. You are qualified before God to come, but you are asked by the Lord to examine yourself. You must discern that this is the Lord's body. Hence you cannot take it lightly. You must receive it in a manner worthy of the Lord's body. Since the Lord gives His blood and His flesh to you, you need to receive them respectfully. No one but a fool would despise what God has given to him.