

THE LORD'S SUPPER

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. And when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives." Matthew 26:26-30.

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance which is to be observed by and in His churches at stated intervals as determined by each individual church, inasmuch as the Scriptures do not specify how often it is to be observed.

I. Christ Instituted the Lord's Supper.

Regardless of how often it is celebrated, the Lord's Supper ought always to carry us back to its institution. For the little company of the Apostles it was a night of gloom. The week had opened amid hosannas; for a moment it had seemed as if the Saviour was to be the hero and the idol of the multitudes. But the acclaims died away. The bitter hostility of the rulers reasserted itself in a series of angry and crafty assaults. Soon the cry was heard, "Away with Him; Crucify Him. His blood be on us, and on our children."

As the events advanced it was quite evident that they were having a parting meeting. Christ spoke of Himself as departing, not on a temporary journey, but by a violent death. Then, He instituted the Lord's Supper in express recognition and for the everlasting remembrance of His death, of torture and violence, of agony and ignominy. "Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

II. Christ Commanded the Observance Of The Lord's Supper.

He said, "This do in remembrance of me." Luke 22:19. "This do" -- that is, do what I am doing. At least twenty-five years after our Lord instituted this supper the Corinthians Christians were exhorted to observe it. I Corinthians 11:24-26. It is to be inferred that Christ's command is as binding upon us as it was upon the early Apostles. His command, "This do," is plain and emphatic. Our obedience to it is a test of our faithfulness as servants of Christ.

Christians should observe the Lord's Supper because it is the dying wish of their best friend. You have memorials of loved ones from whom you are separated, but the one you cherish most is the one that brings out his picture in his most loving moment. You cherish it because it is like him, and if someone should mutilate it you would be grieved. How sacred to us is the gift of a dying friend! We do not allow unthinking persons to remark about it, or the hands of the unsympathetic to handle it. As one dear to us, setting out on a long journey and passing forever from the earth, puts in our hands his portrait, or something he has used, and is pleased to think we shall treasure it for his sake; so did our Lord, on the eve of His departure, institute this ordinance in order that His disciples might have a memento of Him. He wanted to leave something with them that would remind them of what He had done for them.

III. The Meaning of the Lord's Supper.

The Roman Catholic view, which is called transubstantiation, is that the bread and wine are changed into the actual body and blood of Jesus. This, they say, is done by the

priest who consecrates them. Each particle of bread and wine becomes the whole substance of Christ. Anyone partaking of the least particle receives the whole Christ. The laity are given the bread only; the priest partakes of both.

The Lutheran view, which is called consubstantiation, is that Christ is present in the bread and wine, and that those who partake thereof actually partake of Jesus' body and blood, which are somehow mingled with the bread and wine.

The New Testament teaches that the Lord's Supper is a memorial, and that alone, of the death of Christ for our sins. And this memorial is unique. It is emphatic in recalling the death of Christ. Other men are remembered by their philosophies or by their disciples. Their birthdays and the anniversaries of their accession to power are celebrated, but in this instance the dying hour of One is commemorated. Only one explanation of this fact can be made. Other men accomplished what they did by their lives, whereas, Christ wrought His great work for mankind by His death.

IV. Prerequisites To The Proper Observance Of The Lord's Supper.

1. Regeneration.
2. Scriptural Baptism.
3. Church Membership.

Since it is a church ordinance it must be observed by and in the church.

4. Doctrinal correctness.
5. An orderly walk.

V. How We Should Observe The Lord's Supper.

1. Frequently.
2. Regularly.
3. Humbly.
4. Reverently.
5. Gratefully.
6. Worthily.

Anyone who attempts to substitute a gospel of human fellowship for the scriptural observance of the Lord's Supper observes it in an unworthy manner. His Supper must ever be a remembrance of Him and not a feast of friends. Whoever partakes of the Lord's Supper in order to show his fellowship with any human being certainly perverts the Lord's Supper and fails to observe it worthily.

VI. The Purpose In Observing The Lord's Supper.

It is to keep in mind and commemorate our Lord's death. "This do in remembrance of me." It is also an opportunity to preach a sermon about our Saviour. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." The glorious gospel of God's grace in Christ can be proclaimed by public preaching, faithful teaching, sacred singing, printed pages, personal testimony and godly living. But all of us cannot engage in all of these methods. Therefore, it is encouraging to know that each of us can proclaim the gospel of Christ through the scriptural observance of the Lord's Supper. You may not be able to stand in a pulpit and preach God's Word to others, but as you sit around the Lord's table and partake of a bit of bread and a sip of the fruit of the vine you are thereby declaring the love of God and proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Saviour of men. You are announcing that only the Christ, Who gave His body to be broken and His blood to be shed, can save men. By your observance of this ordinance you become a silent but an impressive preacher of Christ crucified. As you correctly observe the Lord's Supper you emphasize three things: ---

1. The Christ of Yesterday.

His death is what is held up to us in the Supper. The New Testament makes more of His death than of anything else about Him. That Jesus died for us ought to be our

first thought when we awake in the morning; it ought to give purity to our thoughts, quality to our words, and tone to our actions throughout the day; and it ought to be gratefully remembered as we fall asleep at night. The Lord's Supper presents to us the Saviour in the act of our emancipation for we are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Precious doctrine of the atonement, the world's only hope.

2. The Christ of Today.

The Lord's Supper not only tells of what Christ has done for us, but also what He is doing in us. He Who once died for us now lives in us. The Supper symbolizes the fact that our spiritual life receives its nourishment from Christ. It signifies the dependence of the soul upon Christ for spiritual life and its nourishment.

3. The Christ of Tomorrow.

The Lord's Supper is a prophecy of a set event, the return of Christ to the earth. Every time we observe it we proclaim to the world that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming again according to His own promise. Until He returns, He certainly expects us to remember Him in the spirit of deep humility, grateful love, faithful obedience and joyous hope. Do not fail to proclaim the Christ of yesterday, the Christ of today, and the Christ of tomorrow by your observance of the Lord's Supper.