

54. Commemorative Ordinances

“ON the fourteenth day of the month, at even, the Passover was celebrated, its solemn, impressive ceremonies commemorating the deliverance from bondage in Egypt, and pointing forward to the sacrifice that should deliver from the bondage of sin. When the Savior yielded up His life on Calvary, the significance of the Passover ceased, and the ordinance of the Lord’s supper was instituted as a memorial of the same event of which the Passover had been a type.” - PP 539.

“It would be well to spend a thoughtful hour each day reviewing the life of Christ from the manger to Calvary. We should take it point by point, and let the imagination vividly grasp each scene, especially the closing ones of His earthly life. By thus contemplating His teachings and sufferings, and the infinite sacrifice made by Him for the redemption of the race, we may strengthen our faith, quicken our love, and become more deeply imbued with the spirit which sustained our Savior. If we would be saved at last, we must all learn the lesson of penitence and faith at the foot of the cross.” - 4T 374.

SELECTED REFERENCES

PP 537-539; DA 642-651; 652-661; [9] Pages 393-399; [8] Article, “Lord’s Supper”; [12] Pages 93-101.

Memorize: 1 Corinthians 11:25, 26.

A. “THIS DO IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME.”

Read carefully the connected story: Mark 14:12-17; Luke 22:14-16; John 13:2-17; Mark 14:22-25; John 13:21-35.

“I saw that the angelic host were filled with amazement as they beheld the sufferings and death of the King of glory. But I saw that it was no marvel to them that the Lord of life and glory, He who filled all heaven with joy and splendor, should break the bands of death, and walk forth from His prison house a triumphant conqueror. Therefore, if either of these events should be commemorated by a day of rest, it is the crucifixion. But I saw that neither of these events was designed to alter or abrogate God’s law; on the contrary, they give the strongest proof of its immutability.

“Both of these important events have their memorials. By partaking of the Lord’s supper, the broken bread, and the fruit of the vine, we show forth the Lord’s death until He comes. The scenes of His sufferings and death are thus brought fresh to our minds. The resurrection of Christ is commemorated by our being buried with Him by baptism, and raised out of the watery grave, in likeness of His resurrection, to live in newness of life.” - EW 216, 217.

B. THE PREPARATORY SERVICE OF HUMILITY.

“His ministry was nearly completed; He had only a few more lessons to impart. And that they might never forget the humility of the pure and spotless Lamb of God, the great and efficacious Sacrifice for man humbled Himself to wash the feet of His disciples.” - 4T 374.

“When the disciples entered the supper room, their hearts were full of resentful feelings. Judas pressed next to Christ on the left side; John was on the right. If there was a highest place, Judas was determined to have it, and that place was thought to be next to Christ. And Judas was a traitor.

“Another cause of dissension had arisen. At a feast it was customary for a servant to wash the feet of the guests, and on this occasion preparation had been made for the service. The pitcher, the basin, and the towel were there in readiness for the feet washing, but no servant was present, and it was the disciples’ part to perform it. But each of the disciples, yielding to wounded pride, determined not to act the Part of a servant. All manifested a stoical unconcern, seeming unconscious that there was anything for them to do. By their silence they refused to humble themselves. . . .

“The disciples made no move toward serving one another. Jesus waited for a time to see what they would do. Then He, the divine Teacher, rose from the table. Laying aside the outer garment that would have impeded His movements, He took a towel, and girded Himself. With surprised interest the disciples looked on, and in silence waited to see what was to follow. ‘After that He pours water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded.’ This action opened the eyes of the disciples. Bitter shame and humiliation filled their hearts. They understood the unspoken rebuke, and saw themselves in altogether a new light.

“So Christ expressed His love for His disciples. . . . He had a full consciousness of His divinity; but He had laid aside His royal crown and kingly robes, and had taken the form of a servant. One of the last acts of His life on earth was to gird Himself as a servant, and perform a servant’s part. . . .

“Judas, in choosing his position at table, had tried to place himself first, and Christ as a servant served him first. John, toward whom Judas had felt so much bitterness, was left till the last. But John did not take this as a rebuke or slight. As the disciples watched Christ’s action, they were greatly moved.”

“Solemnly Christ said to Peter, ‘If I wash thee not, thou has no part with Me.’ The service which Peter refused was the type of a higher cleansing. Christ had come to wash the heart from the stain of sin. In refusing to allow Christ to wash his feet, Peter was refusing the higher cleansing included in the lower. He was really rejecting his Lord. It is not humiliating to the Master to allow Him to work for our purification. The truest humility is to receive with thankful heart any provision made in our behalf, and with earnestness do service for Christ. . . .

“With the spirit they then had, not one of them was prepared for communion with Christ. Until brought into a state of humility and love, they were not prepared to partake of the paschal supper, or to share in the memorial service which Christ was about to institute. Their hearts must be cleansed. Pride and self-seeking create dissension and hatred, but all this Jesus washed away in washing their feet.

“In His life and lessons, Christ has given a perfect exemplification of the unselfish ministry which has its origin in God. God does not live for Himself. . . . This ideal of ministry God has committed to His Son. Jesus was given to stand at the head of humanity, that by His example He might teach what it means to minister. His whole life was under a law of service. He served all, ministered to all. Thus He lived the law of God, and by His example showed how we are to obey it. . . .

“More was meant than the washing of the feet of guests to remove the dust of travel. Christ was here instituting a religious service. By the act of our Lord this humiliating ceremony was made a consecrated ordinance. . . . It was to be observed by the disciples, that they might ever keep in mind His lessons of humility and service. This ordinance is Christ’s appointed Preparation for the sacramental service. While pride, variance, and strife for supremacy are cherished, the heart cannot enter into fellowship with Christ. We are not prepared to receive the communion of His body and His blood. Therefore it was that Jesus appointed the memorial of His humiliation to be first observed.” - DA 644-650.

C. THE LORD’S SUPPER.

1. Its introduction and purpose. 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 5:7,11.

“Christ was standing at the point of transition between two economies and their two great festivals. He, the spotless Lamb of God, was about to present Himself as a sin offering, and He would thus bring to an end the system of types and ceremonies that for four thousand years had pointed to His death. As He ate the Passover with His disciples, He instituted in its place the service that was to be the memorial of His great sacrifice. The national festival of the Jews was to pass away forever. The service which Christ established was to be observed by His followers in all lands and through all ages. . . .

“The ordinance of the Lord’s supper was given to commemorate the great deliverance wrought out as the result of the death of Christ. Till He shall come the second time in power and glory, this ordinance is to be celebrated. It is the means by which His great work for us is to be kept fresh in our minds.” - DA 652, 653.

2. Importance of attendance.

“Christ’s example forbids exclusiveness at the Lord’s supper. It is true that open sin excludes the guilty. This the Holy Spirit plainly teaches. 1 Corinthians 5:11. But beyond this none are to pass judgment. God has not left it with men to say who shall present themselves on these occasions. For who can read the heart? Who can distinguish the tares from the wheat? ‘Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.’”

“When believers assemble to celebrate the ordinances, there are present messengers unseen by human eyes These unseen visitants are present on every such occasion. There are witnesses present who were present when Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and of Judas. More than human eyes beheld the scene.

“None should exclude themselves from the communion because some who are unworthy may be present. [He who washed the feet of Judas, longs to wash every heart from the stain of sin.] Every disciple is called upon to participate publicly, and thus bear witness that he accepts Christ as a personal Savior. It is at these, His own appointments, that Christ meets His people, and energizes them by His presence. Hearts

and hands that are unworthy may even administer the ordinance, yet Christ is there to minister to His children. All who conic with their faith fixed upon Him will be greatly blessed. All who neglect these seasons of divine privilege will suffer loss. Of them it may appropriately be said, 'You are not all clean.' " - DA 656.

3. The seal of the new covenant applied to the heart.

"In partaking with His disciples of the bread and wine, Christ pledged Himself to them as their Redeemer. He committed to them the new covenant, by which all who receive Him become children of God and joint heirs with Christ. By this covenant every blessing that heaven could bestow for this life and the life to come was theirs. This covenant deed was to be ratified with the blood of Christ. And the administration of the sacrament was to keep before the disciples the infinite sacrifice made for each of them individually as a part of the great whole of fallen humanity." - DA 656-659.

"The cup is the parchment deed, as it were, on which My new covenant, or last will, is written and sealed, making over to you all blessings here and hereafter. It is ratified by My blood, 'not by the blood of goats and calves.' Hebrews 9:12. The old sacrifices brought sins continually to remembrance. Hebrews 10:1, 3. The Lord's supper brings to remembrance Christ and His sacrifice once for all for the full and final remission of sins. ... That the Lord's supper is in remembrance of Him, implies that He is bodily absent though spiritually present. The fact that we not only show the Lord's death in the supper, but eat and drink the pledges of it, could only be understood by the Jews, accustomed to such feasts after propitiatory sacrifices, as implying our personal appropriation therein of the benefits of that death." - Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's Commentary, page 285.

"Our Lord says, Under conviction of sin, remember that I died for you. When oppressed and persecuted and afflicted for My sake and the gospel's, remember My love, so great that for you I gave My life. When your duties appear stern and severe, and your burdens too heavy to bear, remember that for your sake I endured the cross, despising the shame. When your heart shrinks from the trying ordeal, remember that your Redeemer lives to make intercession for you." - DA 659.

"Our senses need to be quickened to lay hold of the mystery of godliness. It is the privilege of all to comprehend, far more than we do, the expiatory sufferings of Christ. . . . To the cross of Calvary, bearing a dying Savior, we must look. Our eternal interests demand that we show faith in Christ." - DA 660.

4. Receiving the life of Christ within us.

'Who so eats My flesh and drinks My blood hath eternal life.' It is by receiving the life for us poured out on Calvary's cross, that we can live the life of holiness. And this life we receive by receiving His word, by doing those things which He has commanded. Thus we become one with Him. . . . As faith contemplates our Lord's great sacrifice, the soul assimilates the spiritual life of Christ. That soul will receive spiritual strength from every communion. The service forms a living connection by which the believer is bound up with Christ, and thus bound up with the Father. In a special sense it forms a connection between dependent human beings and God." - DA 660, 661.

"Christ must dwell in your hearts, as the blood is in the body, and circulate there as a vitalizing power." - 7T 189.

The Israelites were taught that the blood was to be held in special sacredness, for the "life is in the blood;" "it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul." Leviticus 17:11. By the emblem of unfermented wine we take to ourselves by faith that blood of Christ which justifies us and sanctifies us. 1 John 1:7. It thus becomes the life of Christ within the heart. We are to continue that life of Christ, not our own. Galatians 2:20.

We live no longer subject to evil habits, or the lusts of a carnal nature, but are free from all bondage-free from sin as well as our sins. Sin no longer reigns.

"Only through the blood of the Crucified One is there cleansing from sin. His grace alone can enable us to resist and subdue the tendencies of our fallen nature." - 8T 291. "The youth have not realized that freedom and light can be retained only through self-denial and constant watchfulness and prayer, with a continual reliance upon the merits of the blood of Christ." - 4T 625.

D. "THEY ... SUNG A HYMN"-PSALM.

Matthew 26:30, margin.

"He instituted that blessed and precious memorial of the Lord's supper for the church, by which they were to keep Him in mind till He should come again. This new memorial of the Savior, a pledge that

He would come again, was to be regarded by the church as a season of joy, blessing, and appreciation of the great gift of the Lord Jesus, who gave His life a willing sacrifice. . . .

“After this cup was finished and the bread distributed, the ‘Hallel’ was sung. This ‘Hallel’ explains the expression that after they had sung a hymn (margin, psalm) they went out. The ‘Hallel’ consisted of a number of psalms. (Psalms 115 to 118.)”-F. C. Gilbert, in “Practical Lessons,” pages 502, 503.

KEY TEXTS

Matthew 26:26-30

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

John 13:14-17

1 Corinthians 5:7, 8

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

1. Why is foot washing still a necessary part of the church ordinances?
2. What four facts are we especially to remember?
3. What benefit comes to the soul in sincerely receiving Christ by public acts of witness to a living faith?
4. Of what sin is one guilty who wantonly absents himself from the Lord’s table?
5. How only may one be accounted worthy to partake? Who is to judge?

TEST QUESTIONS

Answer With Ample Bible Proof

1. Was the Lord’s supper to supersede the Passover?
2. Was the church directly commanded to observe the ordinance of humility?
3. What are the merits of the atonement brought to view in the emblems?
4. Did Christ express His desire as to the memorials of His resurrection? What of Sunday and Easter?
5. What deep spiritual thoughts should the Lord’s supper impress upon the heart?