

no part with Me.”

This act on the part of Christ was performed not only for the purpose of impressing upon the minds of His disciples the virtue and grace of true humility; it was not only for the purpose of rebuking their pride and self-seeking and their envy of one another; but it was also for the purpose of setting in the church a new ordinance that would be symbolic of the fact that the blood of Christ can keep the Christian clean by its continual application to the life of him whose trust is in Jesus. In this way only would men and women become prepared to sit at the Lord's table. After performing this service Jesus announced to His disciples: “I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” John 13: 15.

Each Man a Priest

But why did not Jesus meet the situation by commanding His disciples to each wash his own feet in preparation for the Lord's supper? We answer: Because in such an act there would have been no service typical of the work of Jesus.

No man can save himself. No individual can cleanse his own soul from sin's guilt. This work must be done for him by another. In carrying out this holy ordinance in the church, each member thus ministering to his brother would become a personal representative of Jesus. As he applied the symbolic cleansing water to his brother's feet, he would proclaim, in that act, once again the old, old story that only through the application of the blood of Christ can the guilt of sin be removed from the soul. Thus, each member of the church upon earth would in turn become a priest to his brethren.

The Lord's Supper

As soon as this service was performed, Jesus again seated Himself at the Passover table, and there proceeded to institute the additional ordinance that is now commonly called the Lord's supper. The record says:

“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to His disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is My body. 'And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” Matt. 26: 26-28.

Already Jesus was living in the very shadow of death. In a few short hours He would be taken by the mob to be reviled, persecuted, and slain. His body was to be broken by the nails and the spear. His blood was to be spilled upon the ground. All this was to be endured, not because of any cause for death in Him, but for the remission of the sins of others. It was for them that He was permitting these things to be done to Him By His stripes, they were to find healing. By His death, life was to be made available to them. His death was to be entirely substitutionary.

Jesus desired to place in the church an ordinance that would be symbolic of the very sufferings He must endure on man's behalf. As His followers would meet from time to time and break the unleavened bread and crush it between their teeth, they would have before them a vivid reminder of the agony and woe that Jesus passed through on their behalf on Calvary in order to atone for their sins. The breaking of the bread would symbolize the piercing of His hands, feet, and side, as He suffered death at the hands of His enemies. The drinking of the wine (unfermented grape juice) would symbolize the flowing forth of His blood from His broken body, as it was shed for the remission of sins. Of the institution of this ordinance the Apostle Paul has written:

“For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He, come.” I Cor. 11: 23-26.

Just as the offering of the blood of animals, looking forward to Christ's redemptive work on the cross, was to continue until His first advent, so these new ordinances, commemorating His death, were to be in the church until He should come the second time. “This do you ... in remembrance of Me.” As His followers gather at the Lord's table and partake of these emblems, they show “the Lord's

death till He come.

Only those who wholly reject the provisions made for their redemption through the glorious work of the atonement can lightly regard these sacred ordinances of Christ's church upon earth. Those whose faith in Him is strong will see in these provisions a means of demonstrating that faith in His power to save by coming often to the fountain for cleansing and purity. They will rejoice over every opportunity of surrounding the Lord's table to meditate upon His eternal love, which led Him to pour out His life for their redemption, and to testify of their full acceptance of the provisions of the atonement by partaking of the emblems of His humiliation and sacrificial death.

An Example

Jesus made it clear that the ordinances which He instituted on that memorable evening in the Jerusalem upper room were to be accepted as examples, and were to be repeated by the church during the years that would intervene between His ascension and His coming again.

Concerning the bread and wine He said: "This do you.... For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He come." I Cor. 11: 25, 26.

It was left to the church to determine the exact intervals when they would meet and celebrate this ordinance, but the intervals were to be of sufficient frequency to serve as a constant reminder of the Lord's sufferings on behalf of sinners. No particular day of the week was designated upon which these ordinances were to be celebrated. Jesus instituted them on Thursday night at the close of the Passover supper. No doubt, however, the most fitting time for the observance by the church is the Sabbath day, when God's people are accustomed to gather for divine worship.

Concerning the ordinance of humiliation and cleansing, Jesus said:

"Know you what I have done to you? You call Me Master and Lord; and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and, Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, happy are you if you do them." John 13: 12-17.