

The Lord's Supper

As Christ came to the last hours before His crucifixion He stood at the point of transition from the ancient Jewish economy to the Christian economy. For centuries Jewish life had centered in the sanctuary and the temple services. Temple sacrifices and services had pointed to some phase of the coming Messiah's ministry. Now the One prophesied had been revealed; and the true sacrifice, which all others had foreshadowed, was about to be made. Type was meeting antitype. The ancient economy would pass away, and a new one would take its place.

At this point Christ introduced a new ordinance to be celebrated by His followers in commemoration of His death and in anticipation of His promised return. Following Paul's example, we call it "the Lord's Supper." 1 Corinthians 11:20.

Closely associated with the Lord's Supper was Christ's service to the disciples when He washed their feet. We shall study first the foot washing and its implications, and afterward the Lord's Supper. The sequence of events during the gathering is discussed in the "Supplementary Material" at the end of this chapter.

I. As a Servant

Christ lived to serve. His whole ministry was marked by acts of kindness, blessing, and loving service. But the Saviour never rose higher in service than when at the close of His earthly ministry He washed the feet of twelve men who had not yet learned the lesson of unselfish service. °Read the story as it is recorded in John 13:2-17. Select verses that—

- (1) Indicate that as He served the Twelve, Jesus was aware of His divinity.
- (2) Give evidence that the foot washing had greater significance than as an act of humility or a lesson in unselfishness.
- (3) Show how Christ emphasized to the disciples that they should recognize His lordship despite His humble service.
- (4) Indicate that Christ's act did not accomplish the same objective for all of the Twelve.

(5) Give evidence that this incident was intended to serve as an example for the disciples of Christ to follow later.

See *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, on these verses.

See also quoted portions and references in footnote 1.¹

°Describe what this rite, which now serves as preparation for the Communion service, should mean to the individual Seventh-day Adventist. What spiritual loss is sustained if one absents himself from the preparatory service? Can you see any connection between the cleansing involved in the foot washing and that in baptism? In what condition of life and attitude of mind can one approach the Communion service following the preparation? John 13:10. How is the foot washing related to humility, cleansing, and service?

II. "In Remembrance of Me"

The best-known and most concise description of what took place at the first Communion service is found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Paul was not present when the first service was celebrated, but by inspiration he was directed to establish the ordinance in the churches. 1 Corinthians 11:23. °Read Paul's account, and then fill in details about the occasion from:

*Mark 14:12-17

*John 13:2-17

*John 13:21-35

*Luke 22:14-26

*Mark 14:22-25

There are at least six things that should be noted about the Lord's Supper from the texts cited:

- (1) The event it commemorates.
- (2) Until what time the ordinance will be observed.
- (3) What Christ intends to accomplish through the ordinance.

¹ See *The Desire of Ages*, pages 642-651.

Early Writings, pages 116:2 to 117:1.

The S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 5, pp. 1138, 1139.

"Humility is an active principle growing out of a thorough consciousness of God's great love, and will always show itself by the way in which it works. By taking part in the ordinance of feet washing we show that we are willing to perform this act of humility. We are doing the very thing Christ did, but this is not to be talked of as an act of humiliation. It is an act which symbolizes the condition of the mind and heart."—Ellen G. White, quoted in *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1139 (Letter 210, 1899).

"The performance of the ordinance of humility calls for self-examination. The noble principles of the soul are strengthened on every such occasion. Christ lives in us, and this draws heart to heart. We are led to love as brethren, to be kind, tender, courteous in daily service, having hearts that can feel another's woe."—*Ibid.*

- (4) What must be done in order to eat and drink worthily.
 (5) The appropriateness of bread and wine as symbols of Christ's body and blood.

(6) The blessings involved in partaking worthily in the Communion service. 1 Corinthians 10:16, 17.

°After studying the preceding texts and the quotations referred to in the footnotes, write a paragraph describing the spiritual significance of (1) the ordinance of foot washing, and (2) the Lord's Supper.²

TOPICS FOR STUDY AND DISCUSSION

1. What should you visualize taking place for your benefit and the benefit of others the next time you join in the preparatory service of foot washing?

2. How is the Lord's Supper related to the Passover observed by the Jews? 1 Corinthians 5:7

3. In what ways is the Lord's Supper related to the new covenant?

4. What is involved in eating and drinking unworthily of the Communion bread and wine?

5. Although John 6 is not dealing with the Lord's Supper, it throws light on the symbolism Jesus used in instituting the supper. Study John 6:31-35, 41-63, and see what is revealed that forms a background for understanding the symbolic Communion service.

6. How often should the Lord's Supper be celebrated? On what basis do some partake daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, or yearly?

SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIAL

1. *Sequence of events.* Jesus and the Twelve were celebrating the Passover. There were several phases to the celebration, and we do not know at just what point in the service Jesus chose to interrupt the ancient service and institute the new-covenant memorial service. Nor does the Bible anywhere outline the exact sequence of events involved in instituting the ordinances of preparation and Communion. Following is a composite of passages outlining what seems to have been the order of events in establishing the new service.

The discussion of the betrayal is a key to the order of events. Luke 22:17-23 indicates that this discussion took place after the bread and wine were taken. John 13 shows that the discussion took place after the foot washing and that Judas left immediately afterward. John 13:21-30. These two events, to fit together, must have come in this order: (1) foot washing, (2) bread and wine, (3) discussion of betrayal, (4) Judas's exit. Trace the events through the following texts. See if you can find additional information that will either confirm or correct the suggestions made.

- (1) John 13:1-4
 (2) Matthew 26:26
 (3) Mark 14:22
 (4) John 13:21
 (5) Luke 22:19, 20
 (6) Luke 22:21
 (7) John 13:25
 (8) Luke 22:23
 (9) John 13:27

2. *Additional information.* For further explanation regarding the preparatory and Communion services, see *The S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1028-1030; vol. 6, pp. 760-767.

The words of Jesus, "Take, eat; this is My body" (Matthew 26:26), have been subject to various interpretations through the centuries. The major historical interpretations are the Roman Catholic, the Lutheran, the Zwinglian, and the Calvinistic.

Roman Catholic. This view is often called transubstantiation, which means that the bread and wine are converted by divine power into the actual body and blood of Christ. This new substance is thought to be hidden from observation under the appearance of the bread and wine. In the celebration of the mass the priest speaks the words which are said to bring about this transformation. Thus the mass becomes the very heart of Catholic worship. The view is well summarized in *Catholic Belief*, by Joseph Faà di Bruno, 5th ed., pp. 68, 69 (italics his):

"The Holy Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Jesus Christ under the outward appearances of bread and wine.

"This Sacrament surpasses in excellence all the other Sacraments, because under the *appearances* of bread and wine, and under *each* of these appearances, or species, that is to say, under the species of bread and under the species of wine, this most Blessed Sacrament contains *truly, really, and substantially*, though not perceptibly to our senses, nor with their natural accidents, the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, together with His Soul and Divinity, which can never be separated from His Body and Blood."

Lutheran. Luther's view is called consubstantiation, which means that the body of Christ is really and substantially present "in, with, and under" the Lord's Supper. Rather than the bread and wine being changed into the body and blood of Christ, it is believed that His presence is manifested in these elements.

Zwinglian. Zwingli interpreted "this is" to mean "this stands for" or "this signifies" My body. The concept is that the bread and wine constitute a symbolic memorial of the suffering and death of Christ. If Christ is present, He is present only to the eye of faith. In the Lord's Supper, those who partake confess their faith and express what that faith means to them, and do so in memory of Christ's death. This view is held by a large section of Protestantism.

Calvinist. Calvin's view was closer to Luther's than to Zwingli's. With Luther he held that Christ is truly present in the Lord's Supper, and he emphasized the mystic union of Christ with the believer. The central idea is that through the Holy Spirit the communicant comes in spiritual contact with the entire person of Christ and that he is thus fed unto life eternal.

The *Church Manual* of Seventh-day Adventists states the church's position

² See *The Desire of Ages*, pages 652-661.

briefly: "The ordinance of the Lord's Supper commemorates the Saviour's death; and participation by members of the body is essential to Christian growth and fellowship."—1951 ed., p. 55.

In *The Desire of Ages*, pages 660, 661, Ellen G. White comments: "'He that eateth My flesh,' He [Christ] says, 'and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.'" John 6:56, 57. To the holy Communion this scripture in a special sense applies. 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.

"As we receive the bread and wine symbolizing Christ's broken body and spilled blood, we in imagination join in the scene of Communion in the upper chamber. We seem to be passing through the garden consecrated by the agony of Him who bore the sins of the world. We witness the struggle by which our reconciliation with God was obtained. Christ is set forth crucified among us.

"Looking upon the crucified Redeemer, we more fully comprehend the magnitude and meaning of the sacrifice made by the Majesty of heaven. The plan of salvation is glorified before us, and the thought of Calvary awakens living and sacred emotions in our hearts. . . . He who beholds the Saviour's matchless love will be elevated in thought, purified in heart, transformed in character."

The bread and wine are regarded as symbols commemorating Christ's sacrifice for us. The eating is an expression of faith in the Saviour who died for us and who will return according to His promise. The benefit from the Lord's Supper comes to the individual through the Holy Spirit as He impresses more fully on the heart the meaning of Calvary and leads the believer into a closer relation with the Saviour.

Essentials for Christian Living

Among the essentials God has given to help develop the Christian life, four stand out. These are Bible study, prayer, Christian fellowship, and Christian witnessing. Each occupies an important place in perfecting character, and each can be a blessing to other persons as well as to the Christian who participates in them.

I. Bible Study

In chapter 5 we discussed briefly some methods of Bible study. In the present chapter we will not again cover what was dealt with there. We will notice, however, what Bible study can contribute to Christian living and growth.

The following texts suggest results and benefits to be gained from Bible study. The verses do not always state particular results as such, but they help us to see what can be accomplished through knowledge of the Scriptures.¹ Group the texts under the suggested general headings. The Scriptures—

- (1) Reveal truth leading to salvation.
- (2) Test all teachings.
- (3) Reveal how God deals with men.
- (4) Testify regarding Christ.
- (5) Provide guidance and power for Christian living and growth.
- (6) Give hope to the Christian.

*Psalm 119:105, 130	*Acts 17:11	*Romans 15:4
Daniel 10:21	Acts 18:28	Romans 16:25, 26
*Luke 24:27	*Romans 4:3	2 Timothy 3:16
*John 5:39	*Romans 10:17	James 2:8
John 17:17	Romans 11:2	

¹ See *Education*, pages 123-127.
Education, pages 185-192.
Selected Messages, b. 1, pp. 359:1 to 360:0.
Selected Messages, b. 1, pp. 242-245.
The Great Controversy, pages 593-602.
Counsels to Teachers, pages 438-452.
The Desire of Ages, page 123:3, 4.