

The Lord's Supper

“This Do in Remembrance of Me”

By Shaun Kearney

MINISTRY PROFILE OF SHAUN T KEARNEY

In 1957 I went to Australia from New Zealand on a working vacation. My landlady at the time attended a crusade Oral Roberts was conducting in Sydney where she received Christ. Shortly afterwards as a result of her testimony she led myself and my future wife to Christ. We were married two months later and moved to New Zealand. In a very short time we became active in Christian service which involved Tent Evangelism and helping pioneer several churches. After ministering extensively in Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America the Lord led us with our five children, (four sons and one daughter) to the North side of Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand. There we began to pioneer a church that was to have a significant impact on the whole church nationally as well as the community at large. This growing body of believers known as “New Life Fellowship” (not the denomination) miraculously acquired a tract of land where a Convention Centre and facilities for a Bible College and Christian Campground were established.

This beautiful location with its own private beach became the scene of many wonderful Christian activities. It was the venue for many open conferences sponsored by the church for hungry Christians. Speakers from many parts of the world came there to minister to those that attended as they gathered from all over New Zealand, Australia, and from as far away as India, South East Asia and the South Pacific. Many ministers attended these gatherings from every mainline denomination to be challenged and blessed.

In 1980 the Kearney's went to the United States with their family. In 1987 they moved to Australia, and in 2006 move to New Zealand. Over the passed twelve years Brother Kearney has authored many books on the ‘Unstructured Church life’.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Foreword | 4 |
| God's supposed to love us, so what in the worlds wrong? | 7 |
| If God so loves His church why are so many saints sick? | 9 |
| Do we have a case to answer? | 13 |
| Matthew's account 26: 17-30 | 20 |
| We cannot trifle with His death | 27 |
| Luke's account 22: 14-27. | 29 |
| Four Cardinal Activities | 33 |
| Christ appears to two disciples on the Emmaus road | 39 |
| The place of intimacy | 41 |
| The Corinthian condition | 43 |
| The Altar the Table and the Sacrifice | 45 |
| God's Food | 48 |
| The purpose of the Lord's Supper | 50 |
| The type and the anti-type | 51 |
| Christ and His companions | 53 |
| A question for communicants | 61 |
| In remembrance | 63 |
| Jehovah's Passover | 69 |
| Judges and Kings | 74 |
| Two great Passovers | 75 |
| In retrospect | 79 |

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FOREWORD

In December 1998 our son-in-law passed away under tragic circumstances. We were 1000 miles away in another part of the country when we received the news. For the next 24 hours we drove non-stop from one end of the country to the other to be at her side. It was the start of a liberating spiritual journey that has never ceased.

On route to Australia after several months of ministry in the US we stopped over in New Zealand for the purpose of attending the wedding of our youngest son. During our stay a dinner was given in our honour commemorating our role as the founders of a church, and Christian campground that we had pioneered 25 years earlier. Only eight days after Michael's wedding Jeremy died. Initially we were stunned, and then deep sorrow took hold of us as we tried to come to terms with his death. Perplexed and distraught we said, "How could a thing like this have happened to our family." This hadn't happened to just anybody, Jeremy was a pastor's son; and Deborah a minister's daughter. Then questions began to fill our minds; "what could we have done that might have avoided this tragedy?" Two months later we resumed our journey to our home in Australia pledging to make ourselves available to Deborah and the girls until we were satisfied they were over the worst of their grief. As parents you don't expect to outlive your children. Sorrow and frustration, grief and tears were to be our constant companions for some months to come. When I arrived home I cancelled all our immediate ministry engagements.

Mercifully the first year passed quickly, but still I was trying to come to terms with what had befallen us. As a consequence I felt that in my present state of mind I needed some answers. I was yet to learn in reality, what I believed in theory, that often times there are no answers to our "whys." Frequently, just when one thinks one has a reasonably good explanation that is intellectually respectable, along comes a calamity that has neither rhyme nor reason. In seasons of sorrow intellectual brilliance never satisfies

emotional distress, only the comfort of the Holy Ghost can do that as he mends our broken Hearts. Most often in the midst of our pain we want answers, when what we really need is comfort; explanations can wait. At this time I had little to offer and so I avoided even considering the possibility of setting forth to travel and minister as we had done for the past ten years.

I had accepted several invitations in early 1999 for ministry in the US and Canada that I eventually decided to cancel. My reasons were simple; I was dry and empty and needed to be ministered to myself. Then in December 1999 I decided to call several of my friends, brethren that I have known for many years to invite them to come to our home in March 2000 for Holy Convocation for two days.

The purpose was to ask God if there was a reason for this avalanche of pain and suffering affecting the lives of so many of his children. We knew that the chief culprit was sin but wondered if there something we were missing in all our distress. In addition we would intercede for this sad state of affairs in the church. Our intention was not just to listen to sermons on the problems, but also to open our hearts to one another and confess our need. Perhaps He would be gracious to us, and show us what we could do, if indeed He wanted us to do anything other than fall on our faces and confess our utter helplessness. When the time came for us to go our separate ways, we all confessed that we had been greatly uplifted. Although we could not point to anything specific that we felt we had been instructed of the Lord to do, we agreed that we had made some progress during our time together, and that we should gather again in a few months time.

Two years and four months had now elapsed since that sad day in 1998 and now commitments I had for June and July 2000 were looming, but I was too disturbed and troubled in mind and spirit to believe that I could competently fulfil them. I kept asking myself "What did I have to give? Yet I knew I might cause offence if I were to cancel for a second time at such short notice. I began seeking the Lord earnestly for something fresh to minister to those who had invited me. Still the heavens seemed like brass and the silence was deafening. I

pleaded with the Lord not to send me without fresh manna; I knew I couldn't bring myself to just go through the motions preaching.

By now it was April and we were due to leave in a few weeks time so I was starting to panic. The only scriptures that kept coming to mind were the words of Paul in 1 Cor 11:30, "For this cause many of you are weak and sick and many sleep." One of the brothers had drawn our attention to this passage during our time together, and now those words kept coming back to haunt me. When I woke in the middle of the night they would be ringing in my ears, and when I prayed I couldn't put them out of my mind. Instead they grew increasingly louder. I am an early riser and one particular morning after praying alone I went back to our bedroom where Anne was praying. There I began to pour out my frustrations telling her that the only thing that seems to keep coming to me is 1 Cor 11:30. Excitedly she began to tell me how that God had been speaking to her about the Lord's Table for months from the same account. As Anne began to share what the Lord had been revealing to her, I knew instantly that He was speaking to me through her. Excitedly I began to seek His face to hear what He wanted to say to me.

Over the next few weeks I wept as I listened; then I began to write and rejoice as He touched my heart and opened the eyes of my understanding. It is our testimony that this book is the tale of a journey that commenced in sorrow and led to an encounter with Christ and the Cross in a new way. Since that day it has taken us further, and drawn us closer to Him than I could have ever imagined.

I wish to say that I have been walking with the Lord for over 44 years and during all that time the place of honour His Table is meant to have is the most important lesson He has taught me. It may be ignored, or even unintentionally neglected, but truth will always arise to make its claims upon us. And though for a season many may disregard his command to keep this memorial feast, God will always find a people who will joyfully embrace it. It has taken me a long time to realize this fact, but now I can say with one of old "that where once I was blind now I can see." There is only one constant element,

and that's Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Doctrines and programs come and go, and like fashions if you wait long enough they'll come around again reappearing under a different label, but Jesus Christ doesn't change, He is the same, yesterday, today and forever.

GOD IS SUPPOSED TO LOVE US SO WHAT IN THE WORLDS GONE WRONG?

God is supposed to love us. But our world seems to have gone crazy. Why is it so filled with war, poverty, disease, hate, and racism, loneliness, boredom, unemployment, psychological problems, perversion, rape, murder, divorce and suicide? These things overwhelm us; daily they fill the front pages of our newspapers and pour into our living rooms on television screens. Every day they shout at us. It seems in spite of our wealth, and affluence, or our educational system something is radically wrong. Millions of hurting people are crying right now. Many are saying, "The bottom has dropped out of my world." Maybe it's in the family, divorce and tension, difficulties and problems in the home or at work. Teenager suicide is on the increase. Why does a God of love allow all this?

The Bible says, "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." We have failed God, we have sinned, and now we are eating the fruit of going our own way. God created man to glorify Himself, and then God created woman. He gave the man and the woman a gift, the gift of free moral choice. Man and woman could love God, they could obey God, they could do what God says; or they could reject God. It was their choice. Then God said, "All the fruits in the whole world are yours to eat, but there's one tree I don't want you to eat of. If you do you will suffer and die." Then one day the Devil came into the garden in the form of a serpent. Yes there is a Devil. He is the force of evil in the world. We see evil everywhere. It invades our communities, it invades our homes, and it invades our hearts.

The scripture says "But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat." That's what the devil wanted them to do. He wanted to take over. So he went to Eve and challenged her with questions and she believed him. She took the fruit of that tree and gave it to her husband; they blamed each other, and then they blamed the serpent. They blamed everything but themselves. Adam

and Eve broke that bond between God and man. They disobeyed God. And from that moment we have all been disobeying God.

That disobedience is a disease called sin. It's a disease worse than cancer, worse than heart disease, worse than anything we can imagine. It breaks out into hate and greed and lust and immorality and racism. All these things come from the disease that we have inside ourselves. This sin is in every heart, in every life, in every family. The Bible says, "Sin is transgression of the law." And the Bible says, "The wages of sin is death." That means spiritual death, separation from God. So sin has to be dealt with. Our basic problems are not social; they're not in education. Our basic problem is sin in our hearts and in our lives. We are separated from God.

So we must own up to our sin so God can deal with it, because every sin and disobedience will be punished if it has not been confessed and forsaken. "He has appointed a day in which He will judge the world." He will not only judge the world and the nations but He will judge you and me. Someday you will have to give an account of how you responded to His son Jesus Christ. But there's good news. God is love. God is merciful and just. He is, gracious and kind, and because He is He did something for us in Jesus Christ. He sent His son to die on the cross for us. He laid the sins of the world, including yours and mine upon Him. To receive His gift of salvation we must first repent and confess our sins, and then receive Him as our personal sacrifice. John says "to as many as receive Him to them gave He power to become children of God." John 1:12.

Then you must believe that He received you when you received Him as your Saviour. To believe means unreservedly trust Him without reservation or fear. However even after a man comes to put his trust in God there seems to be an inconsistency between God's love and His suffering. Having been reconciled by His death we are told that we shall be saved by His life. Paul says "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more having been reconciled we shall be saved by His life." Romans 5:10-11.

Thanks be to God He has made every provision for us not only in the afterlife but right here and now as we shall see as we proceed through the pages of this book.

IF GOD SO LOVES HIS CHURCH, WHY ARE SO MANY SAINTS SICK?

As I reflect over years of service, pioneering, shepherding, travelling and the like, I have come to know many servants of God, some of whom are in full time ministry. Yet I have to rack my brain when I try to think of any who are not battling heartbreaking problems of one kind or another. The issue may be, the break up of a marriage that everyone thought was perfect, or an unmarried pregnant daughter; rebellious children on drugs, terminal illness of a loved one, or perhaps it's an unaccountable tragic death of a family member in their prime. My wife and I know what that is like. I hear constantly that drugs are just as big a problem in Christian schools as they are in the State system. Is this the way Christianity is meant to work? We know we have a better covenant established upon better promises yet something is wrong, because we are sick and our medicine won't cure us. We are constantly being told about great revivals in far away places where everything is perfect, only to find out later that it was mostly hype, innuendo, and untrue. We are encouraged to come and hear speakers from exotic locations who supposedly have the panacea for all our problems, only to hear later how they have fallen from grace. In spite of this some of us are still content to put our heads in the sand denying it's really that bad. We declare that The Kingdom of Heaven is righteousness, peace and joy, but these three things are in very short supply in the church. This is born out by the lack of their evidence in the lives of most Christians.

I know that Christ is the healer. My wife experienced His miraculous power when she was healed of paralysis caused by polio. During many years in the ministry I have seen countless numbers of people healed from all manner of sickness and disease by God's mighty power, but it goes much deeper than that. Because the fact of the matter is everyone isn't healed, no matter how much we fast and pray, and it's not for the lack of compassion or even the willingness to lay down our very own lives if it would help.

Sadly I watched a dear friend die of cancer recently, it was devastating. Even as I now I'm grieving in spirit over the death of a fine young Christian who left a wife and three young children after he lost his battle with cancer. It's easy at times like this to quote clichés and hyper-faith formulas. To say "he had no faith" is just a cop-out. It's unfair to just brush it off and blame the deceased. Many times I've heard Christians say, "Well maybe it was their time to go." Our youngest son Jonathan died he was only a baby but nothing will ever convince me it was his time to go. I know that one day we will go to him, but that's not the point here. I have known many wonderful brothers and sisters who have gone to be with the Lord, but I am not satisfied that in every case it was "their time to go".

These are grave and troubling matters that the church needs to address because they are the cause of much of our distress. When we first accepted Christ we came to Him alone. Our new birth was very personal, because we all came to the Father one at a time. But from the moment we took our first breath we became part of a family. From that point in time our lives are lived in communion with all His saints. New Testament life is a life of interdependence. It is to be experienced not only personally but also corporately. It was for this purpose we were created. When one member suffers we all suffer, and when one rejoices we all rejoice because we live for the body. Sadly however, that is not always the case, and when some rejoice others become jealous, and when they suffer we think it serves them right. This is not the way we are told to live. The body makes increase of itself by love. Paul said. "Beloved let us love one another for love is of God."

A Bible school student recently told me quite excitedly, that while the students were discussing different approaches on divine healing it was explained that some of the great healing evangelists used to experience peculiar physical manifestations, which indicated to them God's presence to heal. Oral Roberts (under whose ministry the lady who led us to Christ was saved) used to have a sensation in his hands. A blue light that could be seen to hover over people about to be healed attended the ministry of William Branham. There were many other healing Evangelists

whose ministries were accompanied by unusual phenomenon. It was said when these signs were attendant it released great faith and confidence that God was present to heal. I don't doubt that this was true. But as I listened and began to ponder I wondered if anyone told them that Smith-Wigglesworth the Apostle of faith, suffered pain for most of his life with gall and kidney stones. Or that his daughter Alice was a deaf in later life, and no matter how earnestly he prayed she never did get healed. Or that the Oral Roberts' eldest son Ronnie committed suicide all alone in a Motel room. These trials and tragedies are no respecters of persons. My heart aches for my brethren. None of us are immune to trouble. Yet it never ceases to amaze how we love to hear about preachers, whose ministries are accompanied by these strange manifestations, imagining they have the answer to our impotence.

Are we looking for our solutions in the wrong places?

Let us consider His Body the Church. God is supposed to love his church, (and He does), so what in the church has gone wrong? The spiritual and physical condition of its members is a cause for alarm. Consider this; polls tell us that the statistics for all social disorders are as bad inside the church and in some cases worse than in society at large. In an article in "Morning Star" May 2000 on the Lord's Table, Rick Joyner states that according to hotel staff he had spoken to, more porno videos are rented during ministers' conferences than on any other occasion. If so many shepherds behave in this manner, then what hope do their flocks have?

There are presently 500,000 pornographic web sites available on line, and that number is increasing, fuelled as it is by an insatiable demand. It is conservatively estimated that 20% of the male population regularly logs on to adult sites. Christian marriages are failing at a high rate. We are losing our children in alarming numbers. Between High School and College, 50% of our youth drop out of church. No longer do they have any real interest in the faith of their parents. Futuristic prophecies of revivals and good times just around the corner abound, and these are being publicized as the answer to all our ills. General Practitioners are

reporting that 20% of patients coming to their surgeries are suffering from life threatening ailments, and that percentage is growing. These figures are the same for professing Christians as they are for unbelievers. Where are the Christian leaders that ought to be addressing these problems? Shouldn't we be looking to the Lord for answers to these conditions that swamping us?

For a number of years now conspiracy theories have been growing. Claims that "Big business and Government" are suppressing information that would alleviate much of the suffering in society abound. Rumours like "miracle drugs already exist for many diseases but we are being denied access to them" thrive. Should Christians get caught up in these kinds of theories? Some may be true, but do human agencies have the answers to what is basically a spiritual problem? It's human to look for someone to blame for our misery. Adam accused God; Eve accused the devil; we are all apt to look for scapegoats. Perhaps we should start looking for some clear reasons why some people get healed and others don't? Surely it's high time we began to examine the scriptures with open hearts and begin to respond to some clear admonitions.

"Could it be that we are missing something or have we substituted our ideas for His will, and a pulpit for His Table?"

There are four activities the early church was addicted too that are found in Acts 2:42. I would like to turn our attention to one in particular, the Lord's Supper. Instituted on the eve of His death He left us commandment to observe it often until he returns. Satan has hotly contested every truth that is necessary to our spiritual development and physical well-being and this one is no exception.

For many years now the observance of this holy ordinance has been so superficial and shallow that most saints have lacked discernment as to its physical and spiritual value. It is going to take humility beyond a pious attitude to right this wrong. But from our hearts we must all confess our sin and independence if we are to receive His forgiveness for our dreadful omission for years in this matter. Let us respond with thankful hearts and not decline our Saviour's summons to come to the table. Let us heed the words of

Mary when she said, "whatsoever He saith unto thee do it." We shall delight Him by coming oft to this blessed ordinance and so bring healing not only to ourselves, but also to so many that have suffered for so long. Dear ones let us hasten to accept Our Heavenly Saviour's most precious invitation.

DO WE HAVE A CASE TO ANSWER?

We are now going to direct our hearts and minds towards this sublime ordinance we call the “Lord’s Supper” which He gave to us His people “to observe” in remembrance of Him. Sadly today the table does not receive due honour, but has been relegated to a place of lesser importance behind sermons, programs and bible studies. Perhaps we are too apt to put our trust in charismatic leaders, eloquent speakers, miracle workers, and church growth programs, which promise much but rarely deliver. For years now we have been inundated with an ever-growing number of leadership Seminars. Churches have become addicted to the idea that what we need are more charismatic leaders to carry us forward in the new millennium. While majoring on *our* solutions to deep-seated problems, we have overlooked this most powerful ordinance given to the church, the “Table of the Lord.”

Hebrews 2:1 “Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it.”

We don’t become slothful overnight. “A little slumber, a little sleep, a little folding of the arms, so does our want come like an armed man.” The tendency to drift remains a constant threat to us all. We are not just referring to our salvation, but another important issue, the Lord’s Table. As I travelled the world for the past 20 years I have been appalled at the lack of respect church leaders have given this blessed ordinance in the life of the church. The role the Lord intended His Table to play in the life of every believer has been almost totally lost. Its importance is primary, and its expression of our love and obedience to Our Blessed Lord and Saviour is unparalleled.

If you think the price of obedience is high, then let me say without contradiction disobedience is far more expensive. To plead ignorance in regard to this command is not an excuse; and it is certainly not bliss. The purposes of this ordinance are well laid out and its benefits are immeasurable. The price we are paying for

our disregard in this matter is catastrophic. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth. God is merciful because it is part of His essential nature. But He is also true to His eternal purpose. And so He has determined to teach us His ways in order that we might be blessed.

It's time to ask some serious questions.

It is claimed that 20% of those gathered for any type of Christian gathering are involved in the vilest of sins too gross to mention. The percentage is unchanged whether they are lay members, or a gathering of preachers and clergy. As we cannot guarantee the Christian character of other people, the apostolic rule must remain: **“Let a man examine himself.”** We should all look well to the state of our own soul and say as David did, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

It's high time the church did some stocktaking of a spiritual nature and examined itself. Let the church leaders and preachers stand up and acknowledge their complicity in this matter, for much of the blame for ignoring the “Table of the Lord” can be laid at their door. Part of the reason may be attributed to their woeful ignorance. Regardless of whether it has been done intentionally or ignorantly, repentance is required for this sin of omission, and the place of the Lord's Table re-established within the life of God's people.

Prepare the Passover.

Mark 14:12-16. “And His disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as He had said unto them, and they made ready the Passover.”

At the original Passover kept by Israel in Egypt there was much preparation before the feast began. The lamb was taken on the tenth day, set apart until it was slain on the evening of the

fourteenth day. Inside the house the table was to be prepared, and the unleavened bread baked. The hyssop used for applying the blood upon the doorposts and lintel of the house was made ready and bitter herbs were there to be eaten with the lamb. When all had been prepared then the household was ready to eat the Passover. When Jesus came to fulfil the feast of Passover He directed the disciples to a man who had a large furnished upper room, a guest chamber. There they prepared the Passover. That night Jesus established the Lord's Supper, which now replaces the Jewish Passover. If the disciples needed to prepare the guest chamber for the Passover Supper, how much more should we prepare the guest chamber of our hearts to sup with Him?

The Lord is particular about proper preparation for fellowship with Him. Explicit instructions are found throughout the Old Testament with regard to the offerings of the Lord (Numbers 15:5, 6, 12). Forty-five chapters full of instructions were given to Moses for the Tabernacle of witness, God's habitation among them (Exodus 15:2). The Shewbread was prepared every Sabbath day; David prepared a place for the Ark in Zion. Solomon prepared a final resting-place for the Ark of the Covenant of God in the Temple (2 Chron 3:1). The Lord spoke to Israel many times of their need to prepare their hearts before Him. In coming to the Lord's Table, Paul calls us to prepare our hearts (1 Cor 11:28). We are told to examine ourselves so that we do not eat and drink unworthily of the body and blood of the Lord and thereby bring judgment upon ourselves. And so we must with diligence prepare our hearts as we come to His Supper Table.

- By confession of all known sin.
- By resolving wherever possible all conflict between any brother and ourselves.
- By coming with a pure heart in a spirit of love and adoration, remembering all that the Saviour has done for us.
- By coming in a spirit of expectation because He is just as surely here as He was on that first night with His disciples.

What a blessed privilege we have to come in this manner and to come often with our brothers and sisters in sweet communion with our blessed Saviour.

1 Corinthians 11:28. “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.”

There are two symbolical ordinances in the Christian Church, believers' baptism and the Lord's Supper. Sadly these have been misinterpreted, perverted, and abused. While many groups of Christians have given one or both of them up altogether, we believe that in this matter they have been disobedient according to the Word of God. Then there are those who while practicing some form of baptism place little importance on the Lord's command to observe His supper often, because it interferes with a program that suits them better than the Lord's command. The reason we must retain them is because our Lord Jesus Christ ordained them. In addition we desire to observe them exactly as He ordained them; as only in this way shall we find them instructive and edifying to our souls.

Baptism, by immersion of the believer in water, is the token of His death, burial, and resurrection with Christ. It sets forth the fellowship, which he has with his Lord as the apostle tells us. “Buried with Him in baptism, wherein also ye are raised with him.” Not that being plunged into the water confers any grace upon the person who is baptized, but it is the type, the emblem, and the instructive symbol of the new birth, which new birth consists in passing, by death and resurrection, into newness of life. We all know that we are only born once. A thing can only have one true beginning. Hence, baptism is never to be repeated. Once done, it is done forever.

The other ordinance is the Lord's Supper; and just as baptism typifies, and is the emblem of the new birth, so the Lord's Supper is the emblem of the spiritual feeding of that new life. Now, though a man is born only once, he eats to eat again, and drinks to drink again. Indeed, to eat and to drink often, are absolutely

necessary to the maintenance of our life. If we don't we shall find ourselves at death's door very quickly. Hence, the Supper of the Lord, representing, as it does, the spiritual feeding of the newborn life upon the body and blood of Christ, is oftentimes to be repeated. We find that the early Christians frequently and steadfastly broke bread together. It seems clear they did so almost every day. It's recorded by some of the early fathers that the first Christians seldom met together on any day of the week, without commemorating the death of Christ. Augustine mentions this; and he seems to have taught that, at least once in the week on that blessed day which celebrates the resurrection of our Lord, Christians should meet for the breaking of bread. I think that, the more frequently we meet for this purpose, the healthier we shall be.

The Holy Spirit specifies no particular time; we are not under any law, which binds us to only one particular time. Our Lord leaves it very much to our own loving hearts; but the words that Paul quotes, "This do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me," certainly imply that we should "do this" in remembrance of our dear Lord and Saviour more often than we do. A simple feast, even of bread and wine, often celebrated, could easily be liable to be trifled with and misapplied. Hence, as paradise of old was guarded by cherubim, with a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life, so also does this simple Supper of the Lord stand guarded with a flaming sword, of which this next verse is a portion:

"Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that Cup." With this thought in our minds, let us go once more to the text itself, and observe how we are called to examine ourselves before we come to the table of the Lord.

- Notice first, the necessity for this examination.
- Next let us see who is to examine whom?
- Then, the vital points of the examination.

- Lastly, the spirit in which we should come to the table after we have examined ourselves.

First the necessity for this examination:

The sense of that necessity will be very strongly impressed upon us if we remember that many have profaned the table of the Lord, and as a result many innocents have reaped what perhaps they themselves never sowed. Consequently we are required to examine ourselves **lest we should become the cause of someone else's pain and sorrow.**

It is not a converting ordinance, or a saving ordinance; it is a confirming ordinance and a comforting ordinance for those who are saved. It was never intended to save souls, it is more likely to be the means of condemning a soul rather than saving one, **for he that eats and drinks carelessly may in very deed, be eating and drinking condemnation to himself.**

Next we need to examine ourselves.

Perhaps in the past we may have come to this solemn feast without serious thought to the proper preparation of our hearts. I don't know how much chastisement God may have laid upon us as His church on that account, but of this I have no doubt that the apostle's words have been fulfilled often since his day, "For this cause many are weak and sickly **among you**, and many sleep."

The vital points in this examination.

This examination is necessary, because the purpose of this ordinance requires that we should be in a fit condition for its observance. What is the object of this ordinance? "This do in remembrance of me," says the Lord Jesus; but we cannot remember what we do not know. Then, how can we remember an unknown Christ? By coming to the communion table, we are showing that we do remember and believe that Christ lived and died to save sinners. The enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ have no interest in remembering Him, only His friends can do that and cherish His memory. If we love sin, and continue to live in sin,

what possible fellowship can we have with the holy Christ? Don't imagine that Jesus Christ is so anxious for us to attend that He doesn't mind if we come to His table with dirty hands and unclean hearts. If we come in that manner it will be at our most imminent peril. It can do us no good; but it will be a curse rather than a blessing. So, let us examine ourselves that we may go to the table of the Lord, and receive the benefits for which the ordinance was instituted.

The spirit by which we should come.

I was raised in a Catholic home. One of my sisters was a Nun and my youngest brother was also a member of a Religious Order. I know I speak for my generation when I say that no practicing Catholic would ever, not even for an instant, entertain the thought of approaching the priest to receive the Eucharist unless he was in a "state of grace." If need be, he would go to confession first to receive absolution for his sins and then only would he approach the altar and take the Blessed Sacrament. Neither would a Catholic go to confession and *not* make a clean breast of all known sin. To him it just wouldn't make sense to go to confess with the intention of deceiving and covering up.

Whatever we may feel about Catholicism the fact remains that my generation of Catholics had a holy respect for the Lord's Table. Not so in many Christian Churches, the Lord's Supper is either ignored, or given such scant attention that even where it is practiced the people come unprepared and so bring judgment upon themselves. Let us especially examine ourselves, for if we don't, we shall incur very severe penalties.

Let us take note again of these solemn words: "Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, (in an unfit state), shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

"Because we must know that there are among us, some, who, doubtless are partaking of the Lord's Supper unworthily." We have all known, to our great sorrow, some that have dared to

come to the communion table while harbouring an unforgiving spirit. “If a man says, I love God, but hates his brother, he is a liar: for he that loves not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

Who are we to examine?

Let a man examine himself. We cannot examine the heart of another; we cannot infallibly judge their life. How very often have we been deceived in these matters! If anyone were to suppose that a certificate of church-membership excuses him from the duty of personal self-examination, he is grievously mistaken. No friend, only you know what your secret thoughts are, and what your private actions are; and therefore it is to yourself that this duty is committed. “Examine yourself.”

How often when we come to God
We don't know what to say
'Cos our real self is a hidden self
And so we chat away
Amongst ourselves
As we talk to God
We keep Him distant, too,
For exposure is a fearful thing
Such an unsophisticated thing to do!
“Home grown Poems.” Natalie Joy Arnett.

MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT

Matthew 26:17—26.

“The disciples did as Jesus had appointed them to do, and they made ready the Passover. Now when the even was come, He sat down with the twelve. (I am not saying there is any binding law that makes evening the only time to commemorate this ordinance, but to make morning the regular time to observe it is certainly not when Christ and His disciples did in the word of God). And as they were eating He said, “Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I? And He answered and said; He that dips his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me. The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, thou hast said.”

The doom of the wicked is something far worse than non-existence, or Christ would not have said, concerning Judas Iscariot, “It had been good for that man if he had never been born.” This is especially true of all those who, having for a while walked with Christ, afterwards deny Him and betray Him. May all of us be kept from this terrible sin! May none of us ever betray our Master after all the fellowship we have had with Him! **It would be better to die for him than to deny Him;** and it would be better never to have been born than to have been in intimate association with Him, and then betray Him.

With a sorrowful gesture, He made it plain to His sad little circle of friends and followers that He knew all that was going to happen, and that Judas was the man who was going to turn traitor. This fact that their Lord had just told them, that one of the twelve, His closest companions, His bodyguards, His nearest and dearest friends, would betray Him was enough to make them sorrowful. “They were exceeding sorrowful.” “And began every one of them to say unto Him, Lord, is it I?” shows a beautiful trait in their character

that they did not suspect one another. But if they did suspect Judas they never said so, but each one asked, "Lord, is it I?" So the Jewish Passover melted away into the Lord's Supper. Indeed, so gently did the one dissolve into the other that we scarcely know whether this incident, relating to Judas Iscariot occurred during the Passover or Supper.

Vs 26. "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."

He took a piece of the bread which was provided for the Paschal feast, the ordinary unleavened bread, blessed it, and He broke it, and gave it to His disciples, and said to them, "Take, eat; this is my body." Not, of course, His literal body, which was there at the table, but this, was the emblem of His body about to be broken on the cross on the behalf of all His people.

Vs 27-28. "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."

Sin was brought prominently to their minds. They were becoming aware in a personal way of their own propensity to sin; and now they were to have a personal pledge concerning the pardon of sin: "For this is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

Vs 29. "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." It was a social feast with a touch of sadness for Jesus was about to go from them; still, it was a joyous celebration, closing with a hymn. At the Paschal feast, the Jews always sang Psalms 113 to 118. Probably our Lord sang all these through. At any rate, Christ and His apostles sang at least one hymn. I like to think of Him as leading the little company. Going to His death with a song upon His lips, his voice full of melody, and made sweeter than ever by the near approach of Gethsemane and Calvary. I think it's always appropriate

to sing whenever we come to the communion table after the fashion in which they sang that night:

Vs 30. “They sung a hymn, and went out to the Mount of Olives.”

Paul’s discourse to the Corinthians. To meet together only to follow some order of service is totally inadequate for our souls’ needs. Merely meeting together week by week to listen to a message delivered by a cleric and not to remember, and linger in all the solemnity that this ordinance demands is an insult to the one who instituted it and commanded that we observe it often. To forsake this means of grace is a major contributor of much that is wrong within the church. The Corinthians at least made some attempt to keep the command, even though they had to be chastised severely and receive correction for the manner in which they were observing it.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

“Next on my list of items to write you about is something else I cannot agree with. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together for your communion services. Everyone keeps telling me about the arguing that goes on in these meetings, and the divisions developing among you, and I can just about believe it. But I suppose you feel this is necessary so that you who are always right will become known and recognized! When you come together to eat, it isn’t the Lord’s Supper you are eating, but your own. For I am told that everyone hastily gobbles all the food he can without waiting to share with the others, so that one doesn’t get enough and goes hungry while another has too much to drink and gets drunk. What? Is this really true? Can’t you do your eating and drinking at home to avoid disgracing the church and shaming those who are poor and can bring no food? What am I supposed to say about these things? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly do not!”

For this is what the Lord Himself has said about His table. And I have passed it on to you before: That on the night when Judas betrayed Him, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks to God for it, He broke it and gave it to His disciples and said, “Take this and eat it. This is my body, which is given for you. Do this to remember me.” In the same way, He took the cup of wine after

supper, saying, "This cup is the new agreement between God and you that has been established and set in motion by my blood. Do this in remembrance of me whenever you drink it." For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you are retelling the message of the Lord's death for you. Do this until He comes again. So if anyone eats this bread and drinks from this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, he is guilty of sin against the body and the blood of the Lord. That is why a man should examine himself carefully before eating the bread and drinking from the cup. For if he eats the bread and drinks from the cup unworthily, not thinking about the body of Christ and what it means, he is eating and drinking God's judgment upon himself; for he is trifling with the death of Christ. That is why many of you are weak and sick, and some have even died. But if you carefully examine yourselves before eating you will not need to be judged and punished. Yet, when we are judged and punished by the Lord, it is so that we will not be condemned with the rest of the world. Dear brethren when you gather for the Lord's Supper, the communion service, wait for each other, if anyone is really hungry he should eat at home so that he won't bring punishment upon himself when you meet together. I'll talk to you about the other matters after I arrived."

**"As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup,
(Not have a meal as some suggest)
You do show forth the Lord's death till He comes."**

Let us take a closer look at what Paul has just said. These Corinthians fell into a great many errors. It was an unruly assembly, everyone did and said whatever they pleased; and they had no proper order or rule. Among other evils when they met together to observe the Lord's Supper, they brought their own food with them, thinking that eating thus together was keeping the sacred feast. So the rich feasted to the full, while the poor went without. "One is hungry, and another is drunk," says the apostle, and he tells them that this was not the correct way to observe the Lord's Supper. Yet it is evident the idea in their minds was that of feasting together. But they carried it to excess. One was hungry, and another was drunk, because they had turned the holy feast into a kind of disorderly banquet. There was nothing in their

conduct to indicate true Christian fellowship. The very meaning of the ordinance was lost in the fact that each one was feasting without thought or fear. Now the apostle tells them how the ordinance should be observed. "Haven't you got houses to eat and drink in" he asks. Each person bringing his or her own portion of bread and wine was not celebrating the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is not to be made an opportunity for eating and drinking in disorderly self-enjoyment. It is a hallowed and holy institution, setting forth the fellowship of true believers with one another, and with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul was an apostle, and although he had not been present at the institution of the Lord's Supper, he received special revelation concerning the way in which this ordinance is to be observed. "For I have received the Lord that which also I delivered unto you." The only thing to teach and then deliver to the people is that which a man first receives from God. Nothing is of authority in the Christian ministry unless we can say of it, "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you."

What scant and pathetic interest to the Lord's Supper is given in this day and age by some Christian brothers? When one considers the fact that the Lord himself instituted this supper "the same night in which He was betrayed," and then said "**this do**" and in so doing remember me, how ashamed we that ignore Him so, ought to be. God forbid that any of us would betray our Lord at the table. It would be the darkest night of our life should it ever be so. "The Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread and when He had given thanks, he broke 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 sipped, saying, his cup is the New Testament in my blood."

The Blood of the New Covenant.

What we are saying every time we break bread and drink the cup is that we are remembering the covenant. We are reaffirming our commitment and fidelity to him and one another. It would be nigh on impossible to come to the table consistently in the manner that

the Master commanded, and Paul instructed, and then falls away. There would be no lukewarm believers. Every Judas would either repent, or draw back, and go out into the night. Now let us read further what the apostle Paul writes concerning the Lord's Supper. It is a simple memorial festival that is all.

Vs 26-27. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come. Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord."

He shall be guilty with respect to that body which is represented by the bread, and with respect to that blood which is represented by the cup. See with what holy solemnity this meek feast is fenced and clothed. There is within it the Divine element which men who would trifle with it do so to their eternal ruin.

Vs 28-29. "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself not discerning the Lords body."

"Judgment" or "condemnation" is the word in the original.

"Damnation" is not a good translation; neither does it express the truth. He that eats and drinks unworthily condemns himself in so doing; he comes under judgment for that act. This is the kind of judgment that falls upon Christians if they come unworthily to the Lord's Table

Vs 30-32. "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Believers, who are rendered sick, or who even die, because of their offence against the Lord's ordinance, are not therefore condemned to hell. It is in order that they are not condemned with the world that God visits them. "When we" the people of God are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, **that we should not be condemned with the world.**"

Vs 33-34. “Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. **And if any man hunger, let him eat at home;** that ye **come not together unto condemnation.** And the rest will I set in order when I come.” By giving due attention to what Paul said, let us come worthily to the table of our Lord.

WE CANNOT TRIFLE WITH HIS DEATH

1 Corinthians 1:11-13 “Dear brothers, I beg you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let real harmony prevail so that there won't be splits in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. For some of those who live at Chloe's house have told me of your arguments and quarrels. Some of you are saying, “I am a follower of Paul,” while others say “they are for Apollos or for Peter; and some that they alone are the true followers of Christ. And so, in effect, you have broken Christ into many pieces.”

1 Corinthians 11:30-31 “For if he eats the bread and drinks from the cup unworthily, not thinking about the body of Christ and what it means, he is eating and drinking God's judgment upon himself; **for he is trifling with the death of Christ.** That is why many of you are weak and sick, and some have even died. But if you carefully examine yourselves before eating you will not need to be judged”

An important aspect with regard to life in general is that although we reap what we sow, it is also true that we just as surely reap what other people have sown. Women married to alcoholics have suffered painfully for no other reason than their partner was a drunkard. The children of their union are not exempt, but they too reap what they have not sown. Likewise a sinful church is a sick church physically and spiritually. We have many sick and painfully hurting brothers and sisters, who are reaping what they have not personally sown, but are suffering the consequences of our sick church, the body of Christ on earth. Many saints are sick because the church is sick. For this cause many are weak and sickly and many die prematurely. A weak church is a sick church; conversely a strong church is a healthy church.

There's no action without an equal and opposite reaction. The scriptures say, “The curse causeless will not come.” Judases can always be found among the ranks of the disciples, but the table of the Lord will reveal them. It is here that the merciful God gives

every Judas a chance to repent, but if he refuses, then let him go his own way. Traitors and unrepentant people are spots in our feasts.

Jude 1:11-12.

“Woe unto them! For they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core. These are **spots in your feasts of charity**, when they feast with you, **feeding themselves without fear**: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.”

We are weak as a body in our power to witness because of our carnality and sin. Paul beseeched us to walk worthy of our vocation, by struggling and endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace until we all come to the unity of faith. I was a shepherd for many years and so I got to know my people quite well. Yet in spite of how much counselling some of them received they remained unrepentant and indifferent to the damage their resentment and bitterness was causing them and their families. I have watched people who despised one another, shamelessly approach the Lord’s Table and partake. This is a very dangerous thing to do, because the consequences are serious.

During service I was taking there was a doctor present. Taking advantage of the situation I was impressed to ask her this question. “I have gangrene in my hand doctor, what should I do?” She replied, “You must get treatment immediately or you will lose your hand.” I answered, “What will happen if I just ignore it, will it go away?” She responded, “Definitely not, it will almost certainly kill you.”

Jeremiah 8:21-22. “I weep for the hurt of my people; I stand amazed, silent, and dumb with grief. Is there no medicine in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why doesn’t God do something? Why doesn’t he help?”

Dear ones Christ the Balm of Gilead has helped. The Great Physician has provided a table for us in this wilderness of sin, grief and sickness. He is seated there waiting for us to come to His memorial and break bread together. Let us joyfully accept His

gracious invitation to come as His table guests to receive from His hands the benefits that surely abound there.

LUKE'S ACCOUNT 22: 14-27

In veiled words He speaks of the traitor.

“But, behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table. And truly the Son of man goeth, as it was determined: but woe unto that man by whom He is betrayed! And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.” Luke 22: 21-27.

In Matthew's account they became exceedingly sorrowful at the news and began to say “Is it I.” And so the following account is hard to imagine yet it is accurate and true, and is most certainly there for our consideration - “And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest.”

It is sad to think that the disciples would stoop to such a thing in the light of all that was taking place that night. His body hasn't even been laid to rest and yet here they are squabbling over positions and power.

What an hour to have strife. At the very time that they should have been concerned about Christ and His sufferings we see this ugly incident. What did they care about His sufferings? Moods seemed to swing that night between sorrow and grasping for power and authority. To have strife was bad enough, but to have so little concern over Him, and to be seen striving over who is going to take over after He died is a disgrace.

How often we have seen the same devilish spirit manifested in religious circles over position, power and authority. Christ taught on this subject time and again in His earthly pilgrimage; will we ever learn the lessons that Jesus taught?

Matthew 18:1-4. Christ tells disciples to be humble as a little child. A child is an imitator, a listener, a learner and a servant, rather than an authority figure, or a teacher or one that commands. “At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say

unto you, except ye are converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.”

The Great Servant addresses this recurring problem once again. Luke 22:25-27. “And He said unto them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. ***But ye shall not be so:*** but he that is greatest among you let him be as the younger; (a child) and he that is chief, as he that doth serve. For whether is greater, he that sits at meat, or he that serves? Is not he that sits at meat? But I am among you as he that serves.”

This is forever His answer to this power grabbing attitude that is still plaguing the church and holding on to numerous pulpits. Many leadership conferences are quite sickening affairs, and much of what is taught is geared towards the man and his ministry.

“The strength and power of human leadership has been as destructive to those that have exercised it as it has been to those who have come under it. It has been one of the greatest hindrances of our going on with the Lord.”

- Man’s standard of greatness is to be served; God’s is to serve.
- Man’s standard is to get; God’s is to give.
- Man’s standard is to take; God’s is to lay it down.
- Man’s is to exalt himself; God’s to humble oneself.
- Failure to obey God’s principles caused Lucifer to elevate himself the consequences of which will eventually destroy him.

“It was at the last Passover that Christ washed the Disciples' feet, exhorting them to humility and charity.”

John 13:1-7.

And (the preparations for) supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands,

and that He was come from God, and went to God; He rises from supper, and laid aside His garments; and took a towel, and girded Himself. After that He poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith He was girded. Then cometh He to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto Him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto Him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

There's a place of new beginnings
A place to start again
A place of understanding help
A place to bring our pain
A place for disappointments,
Shattered dreams and shrivelled hopes.
There's a place just off the fast lane
Or as you hurtle slippery slopes.
This place is not a mystic dream,
Ideology or ideal;
For at the cross of Calvary
Christ's identification with us is for real
Natalie Joy Arnett.

"The first duty in life is to be as artificial as possible,"
"What the second duty is, no one has yet discovered."
(Selected.)



FOUR CARDINAL ACTIVITIES Acts 2: 42.

Apostles' doctrine, Koinonia, Breaking bread, and Prayer

Recently I was part of a group of twelve concerned brothers and sisters who gathered together for a "Holy Convocation" for two days. It came about as a result of our genuine concern over the sad state of affairs in the church. We talked, shared, and poured out our hearts to God and one another to see what He would have us do, if indeed He wanted us to do anything other than pray.

Some interesting things came out of that gathering in our home showing how diverse our thinking was. This is not to say it was divisive or unfruitful, in fact it was just the opposite. We all confessed that we had received a great deal of instruction and encouragement from the Lord as we shared together.

It was pointed out reliably that the problems plaguing our society are just as evident in the church. Christian marriages fail at a rate that is 6% higher than society at large; 50% of children brought up in the church leave it for the fast life as soon as they finish high school. Drugs and promiscuous sex is rife at every level, including the ministry. A question put forward by one of our number went something like this. "If it is in fact true that these conditions exist, and we have every reason to believe they do because in many cases that has been reinforced by personal experience, then what is the answer?" We were then invited to contribute anything that might assist in finding a solution.

The following responses came from sincere concerned saints who felt deeply about our seeming powerlessness in the face of this onslaught. Their comebacks offered quite a range of suggestions and were as follows. One was to summons ministers in positions of authority to become serious and start preaching against sin and unrighteousness, and not to tolerate these conditions even for an instant. Another suggested that we need to speak out, like the prophets of old, and expose sin through the gifts of the spirit, and in particular the word of knowledge. Another believed that an outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the dry church such as has been

happening these past few years via the renewal in Toronto and Pensacola needed to continue and go much deeper. Next we heard that according to prophesy, God is about to move throughout the earth to fully restore the Church, and that before the eyes of an unbelieving world He will manifest His glory through His people by signs and wonders and miracles; then suddenly and speedily wind everything up. In the meantime there is nothing we can do but wait and pray. Another said that we need to see Apostles and Prophets restored to the church to set things in order; righteous men with divine authority that will prepare the church for one last great visitation before the coming of the Lord. These were sincere attempts by men and women with honest and caring hearts, but none of the answers, true as they could be, struck a chord in my heart, moreover I had heard them all before and was not convinced that all or any of them were the complete answer. Undiscouraged we determined to meet again in the not too distant future.

It has since become apparent to me that we had overlooked the most significant event that Christ ever called us as His friends to do, and to do “oft”. And of all the imperatives in the word to His saints this is by far the most urgent. A friend enthusiastically told me recently, he had just completed an exhaustive search for all the questions Jesus ever asked and discovered that there were several hundred. He said, “It stands to reason that He must have had a purpose in asking them, therefore they deserved an answer.” I heartily agreed. Then I suggested that another exercise that could bear much fruit would be to find, and then respond to the **imperatives of Christ**, those things that Christ considered critical, urgent, pressing, crucial, necessary, and important. Of these, to come to the Lord’s Table to remember Him in the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup is the most important without contradiction. It is an inescapable fact that He told us to do it and keep doing it “until He comes.” 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Acts 2:42 cannot be interpreted in any other way. “Breaking of bread” is to observe the Lord’s Table.

The imperative mood expresses a command to the hearer to perform a certain action by the order and authority of the one

commanding. Thus, "This Do in remembrance of me" (I Corinthians 11: 24) is **not an "invitation"**, but an absolute command requiring full obedience on the part of all hearers.

It is as imperative as the command to "Repent" or "Be baptized". In spite of this clear command, those in charge still choose to "Do as they please."

In this day and age with servants of the Lord (in some cases without their master's permission) involved in so much activity, we have muddled our way from one project to another. Servants should not be taking matters into their own hands; it's not their privilege. Servants should just serve, and do what they are told, and nothing else. The servant's prayer is, "what wilt **thou** have **me** to do." His response is, "**do this.**" We need a theology before we should even think about methodology.

All the while His people are so busy with their plans, that they can't see Him standing at the door knocking. (Revelation 3:21). Dear ones, He wants to have "supper with us." Are we Laodiceans so blind that we cannot see that?

The first thing Adam did after he fell was to hide from the Lord. We may not be hiding consciously, but we have hidden from His table, because sitting down to eat and drink with Him is far too threatening and serious a matter by reason of it being the place of accountability. We have become addicted to memorialising our ministries and have forgotten that God is the central fact of Christianity. With so much emphasis on becoming successful it's no wonder Christians are frightened of putting their dreams under the spotlight of the Word. We are offered 7 steps to this; 8 ways to achieve our goals; how to overcome a poverty mentality; the way to financial freedom; overcoming our fears; how to become a dynamic leader; maximizing our potential; using our faith to acquire things. Our hearts have taken root in things. Things have become necessary to us in all aspects of life. God's gifts now take the place of God. This was never His intention.

He has called us to die to self. To die without building memorials to ourselves, to die without worrying how we should be remembered. Jesus the first born, the pattern son, wrote no autobiography; left no physical headquarters; never built a Bible College, or ever wrote a song. He left nothing material to perpetrate His memory except bread and wine. Paul said it's no longer I that liveth, but Christ lives in me. To exchange our life for His we have to die first.

The Apostles' doctrine.

It's almost impossible to separate these four cardinal activities, as they blend into each other. The Apostles' doctrine came from the things that Jesus spoke to them for three and a half years; and those special forty days prior to his ascension (Acts 1:3); and continued to speak to them by the Spirit afterwards. They had no bibles; they were receiving revelation from the Holy Spirit that was to become our Bible. It centred on the Lord's Table, breaking bread and drinking from the cup. It was a life where righteousness, peace and joy prevailed. It was not something that they had to strive to reach up for, but something they had been given to do in memoriam by the Saviour at that final Passover feast.

Koinonia: The heart and “nub” of experiencing Him.

Koinonia is such a precious word. A word we are more familiar with is “fellowship,” which sad to say seems to have lost much of its potency in these days; but koinonia means far more than our limited view of it. Where there is no emphasis on koinonia, church life has become a spectator religion with professionals monopolizing the ministry. This is the failure of western culture Christianity. Individualism is the order of the day. The koinonia of the early church was not like this. Neither were they a bunch of misfits just “hanging out” together swapping stories about the harm that may have been done by the iron hand of callous leadership. (As a matter of fact if we have truly walked with God it can't do us any harm at all but rather good). Neither were they a group of introverts who considered themselves to be the “select of the elect,” the inner circle who alone were privy to the deep things of God. There's nothing deeper or more profound than Jesus Christ and Him crucified to save us. Their Koinonia was

rich and purposeful. It rejoiced in worshipping Him in the beauty of holiness. It was absorbed in knowing Christ in the communion of saints around His table.

1 Corinthians 1:9.

“God is faithful by whom we were called into the fellowship (koinonia) of his son Jesus Christ.” Koinonia is something that we have been called into.

1 Corinthians 10: 15-16.

“I speak as to wise men, judge what I say.” The cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the (koinonia) communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the (koinonia) communion of the body of Christ.”

True Koinonia will always concern itself with the Lord’s Table. You cannot fully function as a believer if you do not recognize this fact. The Christian life to be lived as He intended must be lived in fellowship with the Lord and with one another. Individually we seek to grow through our personal relationship with Christ, but to be part of the body requires us to come into fellowship with other believers. God’s ultimate purpose is to have a people that express His character and glory. Living in koinonia is how individual believers become connected to the body where each member takes his place, and without interference learns to become a functioning member. May God deliver His people from all forms of religious manipulation and control?

This then was the hub of their koinonia as it centred upon Christ and two elements on the table. It surrounded the table of the Lord where they broke bread and drank the cup. True koinonia will regularly include bread and wine. They did it to remember Him as oft as they came together. It kept their hearts pure and transparent towards each other. The whole nature of koinonia demands plurality, the need to be dependent upon Christ and one another. God is not calling individuals for His name’s sake, but a people. He began by choosing twelve men, not one, and He has been building on that foundation ever since.

Breaking of bread

Lets us be quite certain that the term “breaking bread” as it is referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: and in Acts 2:42, is not referring to having a meal together as some would have us to believe.

I Corinthians 11:20-24.

When you come together to eat it isn't the Lord's Supper you are eating but your own.” “Can't you do your eating and drinking at home” says Paul. The act of remembering the Lord's death by the means of the elements, of bread and wine are for a spiritual purpose, not physical nourishment. It may have followed a meal and may still do so, but the sole purpose of communion is for self-examination and gratitude, where I remember what He did for me that fateful night, and worship the Father for His matchless gift. It is most definitely not “giving thanks by saying grace” before eating a hearty meal.

The purpose of prayer.

At the final Passover they sang together and prayed. Oh how powerfully they learned to pray in the days that followed His death and resurrection as they continued steadfastly in koinonia. Oh how wonderfully God answered those prayers. The purpose of prayer is to pave the way for kingdom activity outside of the agape circle. In fact prayer was the only dynamic that concerned itself in anything outside of koinonia. And when they prayed, the Holy Spirit responded, and doors began to open, and things were shaken to their very foundations.

Acts 16:25-26.

“And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed.”

Acts 4:31.

“And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spoke the word of God with boldness”.

Ephesians 6: 18-19.

“Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit; And for me also that freedom of utterance may be given me.”

CHRIST APPEARS ON THE EMMAUS ROAD

Luke 24:13-29.

“And, behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs. And it came to pass, that, while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were veiled so they should not know Him. And He said unto them, what manner of communications are these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?”

“And the one whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto Him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days? And He said unto them, what things? And they said unto Him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people: And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and have crucified Him. But we trusted that it had been He, which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done. Yea and certain women also of our company astonished us, which were early at the sepulchre and when they found not His body came to us saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that He was alive. And certain of them went to the sepulchre and found it as the women had said but Him they saw not.

“Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in **all the scriptures** the things concerning Himself.”

“And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and He made as though He would have gone further. But they constrained Him, saying, abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it

came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them.”

And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight. And they said one to another. Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures? And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon.

Two men are on the Emmaus road. Saddened and discouraged by recent events they journey on. Then Jesus draws alongside but they fail to recognize Him. Only a few days earlier they were with Him and watched as He laid down His dear life for them, but now He is a stranger to them. Oh how their hearts burned within them as this foreigner talked with them in the way. And as He makes as though He would pass on they constrain Him to lodge with them because the day is far spent, and so He went in and tarried with them.

Luke 24:30-31. “And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, **He took bread and He blessed it and He brake it,** (Don’t those words sound familiar?) And then gave it to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him.”

Vs 33-35 “And they rose up the same hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying the Lord has risen indeed and has appeared to Simon.”

“And they told what things were done in the way, **and how He was known of them in breaking of bread.**”

THE TABLE THE PLACE OF INTIMACY

You will find it difficult to have intimacy with Christ through prayer alone. I'm grateful for the telephone when I'm away from my wife, but it just isn't the same as when we are in each other's presence. Nor will you ever have it solely through the study of the word. You may have a burning heart experience as did the hearts of those disciples on the Emmaus road, but that's not intimacy, because they never knew Him, in fact they didn't even recognize who they were talking to.

You can repent until you are blue in the face and still not find intimacy. There is a place and one alone, where we must come with sensitive spirits and hungry hearts. The place where the covenant was ratified with the blood of the sacrifice of our blessed Redeemer and memorialised by a table furnished with bread and wine. It's a place where we examine our hearts and remember His great love wherein He loved us unto death. They knew Him not, even though He had spent many hours that day expounding the scriptures of *all* the prophets concerning Himself.

Thankfully our relationship is not an academic one, for then, only the clever could know Him. So not until He took bread and blessed it were their eyes opened; then they knew Him. Oh the intimacy of knowing Him. Adam, we read knew his wife and she conceived. This word "know" speaks of intimacy. John in his gospel says, "This is eternal life that we might know Him". John 17:3. "The Lord knoweth them that are His" 1 Tim 2:19. And again Paul said, "That I might know Him and the fellowship, (koinonia) of His sufferings" Phil 3:10. The early church were more than just dedicated to the love feast, they were addicted to it, daily breaking bread from house to house Acts 2:46.

In less than 65 years after the glorious day of Pentecost, the corrupting influence of leaven could be seen actively at work throughout the church. And so John is instructed to write from Patmos to the seven churches in Asia Minor. Leaven is the first

step towards apostasy, the abandonment of the true faith. “A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”

Revelation 2:4-5.

To the church at Ephesus write; “Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast **left** thy first love, (protos agape). Remember therefore from whence thou art **fallen**, and repent, **and do** the first works, (**first acts**); or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” What was the first act? Was it not an act intended to memorialise the covenant that He ratified a day later with His blood? Wasn’t it His atoning sacrifice?

This church had not just grown cold, nor had it lost its first love, it had left it, departed from it. It was a wilful decision. It matters not whether they were ignorant with regard to what they had done, the fact is they had turned about face and walked away from it. They had fallen. This was a serious moral failure.

What had they left? What had they walked away from? They had turned their back on, and put behind them the “Love feasts”, the feasts of charity. Make no mistake about what this church had left dear ones, they had forsaken and departed from the remembrance feast of the Lord’s Supper. As a consequence their lampstand, (light), and oil, (the anointing), would be removed unless they repented. This is the primary reason that so many churches are powerless, dead, cold and lifeless, and so many servants are blind, ignorant and backslidden.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8.

“Therefore let us keep the feast (agape love) not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Remember says the Lord from whence thou art fallen. It’s not an indiscretion; it’s a sin of the worst kind. Repent, have a change of mind and heart attitude and “**do**” the first works.” To repent is insufficient unless you follow through and do. It’s referring to the love feast that they had every day, or at least once a week.

THE CORINTHIAN CONDITION

The epistles of Paul to the Corinthian church are so applicable to conditions in the church today that they have sometimes been referred to as the charismatic epistles.

The Corinthian were unready for the solid teaching of Paul.

1 Corinthians 3:1-4. “And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were unable to bear it neither are ye now. For ye are yet carnal; for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos, are ye not carnal?”

Purging out (leaven) an incestuous person among them.

These words of Paul could be written to almost any present day church and not be out of place.

1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

“It is reported commonly that there is **fornication** among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that has done this deed **might be taken away from among you**. For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, **to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus**. Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven will leaven the whole lump?”

The church must purge itself of the contamination of leaven.

“Purge out the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us:

Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. I wrote unto you in an epistle not to keep company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortionists, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, **if any man that is called a brother** be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one **no not even to eat.**”

“For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? **Do not ye judge them that are within?** But those that are without God judges. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” Here a person is called leaven.

The end of the Lord in all His dealings with us is to restore. But when a person who is called a brother refuses to repent, then the whole fellowship must take action and put that person outside of the church to allow God to deal with them in order that they might come to repentance and be restored to fellowship once again.

The terms used in this epistle with regard to “keeping the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” and “not to eat” are obviously referring to the elemental symbols of the Lord’s Supper.

“Christians who derive their strength from hype served up at spurious Leadership Seminars won’t help the present crisis in Christianity.

But worshippers who draw their strength by feeding on the lamb, and who know how to use the sword of the Spirit will.”

THE ALTAR, THE SACRIFICE AND THE TABLE

God has left us in no doubt as to what the nature of our relationship with Him is founded upon, when He said in Psalm 50:1, “gather my people together those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.” Sacrifice is central to everything we possess and all we do. We approach God through the sacrifice of His Son and all business with God is transacted around this holy theme. This is the only acceptable method to God.

Every offering pointed forward to the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ. The lives of the patriarchs and Israel revolved around the altar of sacrifice. Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; Moses, Joshua, Gideon and Samuel, and David also; all these men, under varying circumstances raised up altars. They turned times of tragic sorrow, or great joy; of victory or defeat into opportunities for raising an altar. If they had sinned or been overcome they always returned to the altar. These men were always building altars, and so also should we, for we too have an altar. Hebrews 13:10 “We have an altar, where they have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle.” An altar stood for the benefits of the sacrifices. In Christianity, as well as being a place to meet with God it stands for the benefits of the death of Christ. It also goes on to compare the sacrifice of animals to that of Christ; the animals being burnt without the camp, prefigures Christ being crucified outside the gates of Jerusalem. From Moses time careful instructions were given for the raising of private altars. It was not just ceremonial; it was central to everything. Today the Mosaic ritual has been superseded, that is, all except that which the altar symbolizes. The essential element that the altar symbolized has remained.

When they built an altar what did it mean? At the altar they “got back to God.” As they watched the fire devour the sacrifice they “thought about what they were doing”- slaying the sacrifice for the readjustment of spiritual things; to make a new beginning; to worship Him for making it possible. It was made of common stuff, earth and stones. Just bread and wine is all it takes. It speaks

of the availability of God to whomever, wherever, whenever. Neither race nor creed nor station in life could deny any man. The entire altar speaks of, and points to the covenant memorial feast of the Lord's Supper.

- It was a meeting place between God and man.
- It expresses our belief in God.
- It is an admission of our need for God.

It is a place where God listens and answers the human heart in its great need. You don't have to come. You can choose and make your own decision about that. But one thing you cannot do, is choose the consequences of your decision.

- It shows when we come to Him of our desire for Him.
- It demonstrates our submission to God.

It was where they drew their strength. They ate, they fed, and they feasted on and were sustained by the offering. It typified the atonement through Jesus Christ and the remembrance feast He instituted with two elements, bread and wine John 6:53-58. In every case after the altar was restored there was advancement. And everywhere that there was advancement and progress the presence of an altar was found. One of the first signs of revival was the repairing of altars and erecting new ones. When the altars were used they were times of prosperity, 1 Corinthians 10:13. Any blessing, any prosperity even though it comes from God and was intended for me, (and God most certainly does want to bless me) that does not lead me to erect an altar of acknowledgement and thanksgiving will eventually harm me.

There is no record that Lot built an altar, because every altar means sacrifice. And so God separated Abraham from Lot. Just as God gave strict instructions for the building of altars, so too has He given strict guidelines in regard to how we must approach 'this table' of examination and remembrance. When Adam and Eve sinned God banished them from the Garden. Then, lest they also put forth their hand and take and eat of the tree of life and live forever in their sinful state, He placed Cherubims by a flaming sword to protect the way to the tree of life.

Genesis 3:22-24.

“And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: **and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever.** Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden to till the ground from whence he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed at the east of the Garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”

The consequences had Adam partaken of the tree of life are too terrible to contemplate. We must never forget that this remembrance Supper that we are called to commemorate is a feast with consequences. Just as surely as God ordered cherubim with a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life, so too has He given explicit instructions by which we are to come.

There is a way of approach to the place where we remember with thankful hearts His atoning sacrifice. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart, and hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity not sworn deceitfully”. So also must we approach the Lord’s Table? We come to examine ourselves, to settle accounts with God and with one another. It is here that we are readjusted and find grace to help in times of need. It is here that our souls are refreshed. The consequences are not just negative but positively glorious, strengthening and healing; so we can say with the psalmist “you have prepared a table for me in the presence of my enemies; you have anointed my head with oil; and my cup runs over.”

Think of those words, **“in the presence of my enemies.” It’s a table for “me”, where “my” cup runs over.** Every enemy is silenced here, and not only dumbfounded, but defeated. It’s the place of healing, miracles, and restoration.

GOD'S FOOD

Leviticus 21:6. "Present the offerings made to the Lord by fire, the food of their God." Here God identified the offerings of the priests as His food, not that God needed actual meat and grain to eat, but it pointed to His claim on the sacrifice. The satisfaction He sought ascended to Him through the obedience of prescribed worship laid down in the Tabernacle sacrifices. He wanted worship. As often as His people expected to eat, God expected His portion of the sacrifice. If this is what He requested under the "Shadow of better things to come", how much more He desires it from us this side of the cross.

Picture if you will the priest taking the sacrifice and slaying it. Then he divides it according to God's command to Moses. Ascending as a sweet smelling savour as it burned with fire the Lord consumes his portion. The priests' portion is roasted upon the altar and then consumed. Thus God is satisfied and the priesthood is sustained by the same sacrifice. All the work at the altar pictured God's work in Christ. The implied message is clear; God wants to be richly rewarded with worship. It is like food to Him. He wants it lovingly prepared; constantly remembered; generously and gratefully offered. Nothing but Christ satisfies Him.

We also must feed on Him.

John 6: 53, 63. "Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. It is the spirit that comes alive, the flesh profits nothing, the words that I speak unto you are spirit and they are life."

Since the cross no better food than Christ can be found for God's servants because He is the essential ingredient that makes true worship possible. Those who commune with God know the value of Jesus flesh and blood. Sadly we often offer Him a plate filled with things He never ordered; such as a sermon and song service where no table is present. Adulterated food will not do for God. What the Father seeks is a church that is consumed with

loving gratitude for the Son of His love that offered Himself by the Eternal Spirit unto God for our salvation.

1 John 1:3. “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

Real fellowship implies much more than just sharing our lives with one another. **Our fellowship is also with the Father and the Son.** It must include them in fact. How can this become a reality in our lives? It has been made possible through the Father’s unspeakable gift to us, His beloved Son in whom He is well pleased, memorialised often with bread and wine by a grateful church. Fellowship that does not lead us to worship the Father thus misses the mark. “The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him” John 4: 23.

Old Testament saints understood that sacrifice was central to worship, and it is wrong to assume that Christian worship is any different. Although our Lord Jesus made one final sacrifice for sins never to be repeated, we are to offer what Peter calls spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Christ Jesus. This can only be done when one’s whole attention is focused upon God’s unspeakable gift around a table with two elements, bread and wine, as we are lost in wonder, love and praise.

Hebrews 13:15. “By Him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.”

When we worship or pray in the Spirit two things happen. Jesus is being exalted, and we are being ushered into another environment. The law of displacement in physics tells us that when you fill a container with water it displaces what was there before. Worship Him and He becomes the focus of our attention. He has given us His attention all our lives and even before, but in worship He gets ours. This sets up His throne in our midst and brings a response by a Spirit empowered word. John 6:63. With

the high praises of God in our mouth and a two edged sword in our hand let us go to Him. Psalm 149:6; Colossians 3: 1-2.

THE PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 Corinthians 11: 26.

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till He comes.”

It seems clear to me that we should come to the Lord’s Table often. When the apostle says, in our text, “As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup,” and our Lord said when instituting the ordinance, “This do ye, as oft as ye drink it in remembrance of me.” I am not saying that their words absolutely teach that we should always come to the table of communion whenever we meet; but I do think they give us a strong indication that, if we wish to walk in the light we shall observe this supper often. A few times in the year can hardly be called “**oft**” or thought to be sufficient.

In the early Church, it is possible that they broke bread every day; the expression “breaking bread from house to house” seems to signify that. From the records preserved in the Acts of the Apostles, it appears that, when the saints came together on the first day of the week, they usually broke bread. If there were any rule as to the time for the observance of this ordinance, it surely is every Lord’s Day. At any rate, let it be often. Shamefully, the opportunity is afforded to us so seldom in church services in this day and age. Let us not, as some, keep away for long periods from the table; but, since our Lord has instituted this supper as a needful reminder of His death, we should see to it that we celebrate it often. Do it in your homes with other believers if need be, but don’t neglect it

Christ’s sacrifice is complete and perfect. “It is finished” the dying Sufferer of Calvary cried out, that we may know He has not paid the price in part, but He has paid it in full. If the sacrifice were not finished, there would be nothing to celebrate. But it is complete, and in so doing we declare it and show it by spreading a feast, to which His servants may come, and rejoice with exceeding joy.

THE TYPE AND THE ANTI-TYPE

At the very first Passover recorded in Ex 12: the Israelites stood with their loins girt, shoes on their feet and their staves in their hand. Why was that? God had predicted to Moses, “I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, I will smite the firstborn of man and beast, I will execute judgment against the gods of Egypt, and when I see the blood of the lamb upon your houses I will pass over you.” They were to eat it in haste, because at midnight they were to depart from Egypt where they had been in bondage four hundred years. So must we when first we come to Christ. We must eat it in haste, our loins girt and our staff in our hand.

But this is not how the disciples ate the Lord’s Supper.

They were reclining in the easiest posture possible. It was a most solemn supper, but it was a supper. It was the ordinary meal consecrated by the Lord to the great purpose of setting forth His death; and to make us kneel to receive it is to my mind, to take away a great part of the teaching of it. We should sit at the communion as easily as we possibly can, just as we would at our own table. Why? Because “we who have believed do enter into rest;” and part of the teaching of the Lord’s Supper is that now, in Christ, we have perfect peace, and we rest in Him as we feed upon Him. That first night they waited in hope, but now we can look back in faith and love for He of whom every Passover foreshadowed has come. He completed the work and could say, “Father I have finished the work you have given me to do.”

This ordinance is now a feast, not a subject of pity, but a theme for delight. And once more, beloved, when we come to the Lord’s Table to show Christ’s death, we show it as the bond of Christian union. The point of union among Christians is the death of the Lord Jesus Christ. I doubt that we will ever get all believers to agree concerning water baptism. But, concerning our Lord’s death, all who are truly His people are agreed. If we are in Him, we rejoice in that grand foundation truth, “that Christ died for our

sins according to the Scriptures,” and we delight to think that, by His death, He has redeemed us from death.

A special token for its remembrance. Why the Lord has taken such pains to stress this truth? There are many important truths in the Bible, and every truth should be embraced and kept. Yet there are many doctrines we firmly believe; but they have no special tokens for their remembrance.

“But it’s not concerning every truth that the Lord has appointed an ordinance to keep the memory of it alive”

Only Christ’s death is set forth by this memorial supper. It has been said, “But if we have communion on a regular basis it will just become a ritual.” Familiarity breeds contempt seems to be their motto. Perhaps we could dispense with the habit of taking up tithes and offerings in case this also becomes a ritual. I doubt that pastors will be so rash concerning that matter.

You who claim Christ as Master but rarely obey this command.

Let me ask you, when did He ever give you special exemption from the observance of this ordinance? Don’t you think that if He thought it wise to ordain this ordinance, you would be wise to observe it? Did He institute it in order that you might neglect it? Has He instituted any ordinance, which it is correct for His people to ignore? Do you know how much you have lost through not coming to the Table? You may say that it isn’t necessary for our salvation. That’s true, and you know as well as I do that you shouldn’t come to communion if you thought it would save you, because **none** are invited to come who are not **already** saved. But it is necessary for a lot of other things. Which would you prefer to hear Him say? “Well done thou good and faithful servant,” or, “Couldn’t you have done that little thing to please me?”

Do you think that you could look Him in the face and say, “My Lord, I know you instituted this ordinance to be observed in remembrance of Calvary, but I never really gave it much thought?” Do you think you will hear Him say “well done good and faithful servant,” or will He look upon you and say, “I never asked much of

you, it was only a small thing, am I that repulsive? Does that what I did for the good of your soul, mean so little to you?" One ought to question the state of their heart if it means so little to them.

CHRIST AND HIS COMPANIONS

Luke 22: 14. “And when the hour was come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him.” There are only two outward ordinances in Christianity and they are very simple, yet both have been tampered with and trivialized. One is baptism, the other sacred institution the Lord’s Supper, which like believers’ baptism is simplicity itself. It consists of bread broken, and wine poured out, these provisions being eaten and drunk at a festival. It is a delightful picture of the sufferings of Christ for us and of the fellowship, which the saints have with one another, and with Him. As for the table it is the very emblem of fellowship in all nations, for what expresses fellowship better than surrounding a table, and eating and drinking together? The Bible alone is our authority; none may turn from it. Ecclesiastes says, “I counsel thee to keep the King’s commandment;” we would add to this advice the words of Mary when at the marriage of Cana she said, “Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it.”

At the first celebration of the Lord’s Supper there was no “altar” in that large upper room. There was a table with bread and wine upon it, but no altar. Jesus and His friends did not kneel before it; they all sat down, probably in the Oriental manner by partially reclining. Now He who ordained this supper knew how it ought to be observed and it would be quite correct to assume that the first celebration of it was the model for all others. So rest assured that the right way of coming to this communion is to assemble around a table, and to sit or recline while we eat and drink together of bread and wine in remembrance of our Lord. While we see the Saviour sitting down with His twelve apostles, let us ask ourselves firstly what did this make them? Then, secondly, what did this imply? And, thirdly, what more may we legitimately infer from it? First, then, we see the Master, the Lord, the King sitting down at the table to eat and drink with His twelve apostles, what did this make them? It made them dear friends. How did this come about?

It commenced when He said unto them, “Follow me.”

That is to say they were drawn to Him convinced that He was the Messiah, and so they became His followers. Followers may be a great

distance from their leader, and enjoy little or no intercourse with him, for the leader may be quite unapproachable by the common members of his band. In the case of these disciples, their following was unusually close, for their Master was very accepting; but, still, their intercourse was not always of the most intimate kind at first, and therefore it was to be some years before He called them to such a festival as this supper.

They began where we all must begin, by following. If we cannot enter as yet into closer association with our Lord, we may, at least, know His voice by his Spirit, and follow Him as the sheep follow the shepherd. The most important way of following Him is to **trust** Him, and then diligently to imitate His example. If we start here we shall make a good beginning, and it will end well. For those who walk with Him today, shall reign with Him hereafter. Those who tread in His footsteps shall sit with Him on His throne.

They next became to be His disciples.

A man may have been a follower for some time and yet still not be a disciple. A follower may follow blindly, and hear a great deal which he does not understand; **but when he becomes a disciple, his Master instructs him, and leads him into truth.** To explain, to expound, to solve problems, to clear away doubts, and to make truth easy to understand is the office of a teacher among His disciples. Now, it's a blessed thing for followers to become disciples, but still disciples are not necessarily so intimate with their Master as to sit and eat with Him. You may have many pupils yet not invite them into your homes. If Jesus had only called us to be His disciples and nothing more than this, we should have had cause for great thankfulness. If we had been allowed to sit at His feet, and had never been invited to share the memorial feast we ought to have been profoundly grateful: But now that He has favoured us with a higher place, let us never be unfaithful to our calling. Let us daily learn of Jesus, let us search the Bible to see what it was that He taught us, and then, by the aid of His Holy Spirit, let us walk worthy of our vocation.

Next they were given the honour of becoming His servants.

Now that the chosen ones had become the Lord's disciples, the next step was to become His **servants**, which is a promotion, since the disciple may be but a child, but the servant has responsibility and strength. He has received some measure of training and now has something to offer in service. His is a position of trust. Their Master gave them power to preach the gospel and gifts to exercise. Their joy was great when they returned from service to their master assisting in setting up His kingdom. What a privilege He affords us, and though our service may at times seem difficult because of our lack of faith, yet we should be thankful that we have been called into His service at all. It is better to be a servant of Christ than to be the greatest of men, and remain a slave to your own lusts. His yoke is easy, and His burden is light. The servant of such a Master should rejoice in his calling; yet there is more.

The faithful servant now becomes a friend.

Towards the close of His life the Master revealed yet a closer relationship with His disciples, when He uttered words like these: "Henceforth I call you not servants, for the servant knows not what his lord doeth, but I have called you **friends**. For all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." This is a great promotion. Friends enjoy much familiarity with each other. **The friend is told what the servant need not know.** The friend enjoys a communion to which the mere servant, disciple, or follower is not granted. May we know this higher intimacy, this prized bond of kinship! May we never be content with anything less than our Master's friendship! "He that hath friends must show himself friendly." But to keep Christ's friendship, we must befriend His cause, His truth, and His people. He is a Friend that loves at all times, if you would enjoy His friendship, be loyal to Him.

Note that, on the night before His Passion, our Lord led His friends a step beyond ordinary friendship. The mere follower does not sit at table with his leader. The disciple does not claim to be of the same rank as his master. The servant is not entertained at the same table with his lord. The befriended one is not always invited to be a guest; but here the Lord Jesus made His chosen ones to be His companions, **He raises them up to sit with Him**

at the same table, to eat of the same bread, and drink of the same cup with Himself. From that position He has never reduced them; they were representative men, and where the Lord placed them, He has placed all His saints permanently. The entire Lord's believing people are sitting, by sacred privilege and calling, at the same table with Jesus, for "truly, our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." He has come into our hearts, and He sups with us and we with Him; we are His table-companions and shall eat bread with Him in the kingdom of God.

So now lets move on to ask, what did this fellowship around the table imply? It implied, first of all, **mutual fidelity and trust.** This solemn eating and drinking together was a pledge to one another. This must have been clearly understood, or otherwise there would have been no weight in the statement, "**He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up His heel against me.**" Did not this mean that, **because** Judas had eaten bread with his Lord he was bound not to betray Him, or to lift up his heel against Him? **This was the seal of an implied covenant; having eaten together, they were under bond to be faithful to one another.** There is no other place on earth where true unity can be displayed like it should be, except among saints who have gathered with one another in Holy Communion to meet with their Lord.

The Master never plays the Judas. Sadly there's many a Judas among the ranks of the disciples in the modern church. There is nothing traitorous in the Lord. He is not only able to keep that which we have committed to Him, but He is faithful, and will do it. He will be faithful, not only as to the great matter of His death, but also to every promise He has made. Know of a certainty that your Master would not have asked you to His table to eat bread with Him if He intended to desert you.

He has received us as His honoured guests, and fed us upon His choicest meat, and in so doing is saying to all of us, "I will never leave you, come what may. In every trial of depression and temptation, I will be at your right hand, so that you shall not be moved, and to the very last one of you I shall prove my faith-

fulness.” But there’s mutuality in this table, and we shall never understand this supper unless we remind ourselves of the faithfulness due from us to Him; for the feast is communal, and the pledge mutual. In eating with Him we are pledging our fidelity to the Crucified one. Let us keep our pledge alive. I trust that in our hearts we have never gone so far as to lift up our heel against Him, but rather we have always honoured Him, as we should? May we always behave, as guests should? Can we remember His love for us, and put our love to Him side by side with it, without being ashamed? May our hearts have true fidelity to the one who so deserves it? May our hearts never wander from Him, or our zeal suffer decline! Remember that as we eat and drink together we are pledging our fidelity to each other as well as to our Lord. Judas would have been a traitor if he had only betrayed Peter or John; so, when we come to the table let us remember we must be true to each other. All bickering and jealousy must cease, and truth and affection rule in every heart.

If you hear any speak against those with whom you have communed, reckon that, as you have eaten bread with them, you are bound to defend their reputations. If any railing accusation is raised against any brother in Christ, reckon that his character is as dear to you as your own. May our relationships be maintained with integrity and love? Ye are members one of another; see that ye love each other with pure hearts fervently. Drinking the same cup, eating the same bread, shows to the world a token, which I trust, is not a lie. As it shows Christ’s faithfulness to us, so let it just as really exemplify our faithfulness to Christ, and to one another.

Eating and drinking together was a token of **mutual confidence**. By sitting there together, they voluntarily avowed their confidence in each other. Those disciples trusted their Master, they knew He would never mislead or deceive them. They trusted each other also, for when they were told that one of them would betray their Lord, they never suspected their brother, but each one said, “**Lord, is it I?**” They had much confidence in one another, and the Lord Jesus placed great confidence in them by treating them as His friends. He had even trusted them with the great secret of His coming sufferings and death.

There was not only a lot of love but also a lot of trust around that table that night. In my walk with many others I have found from time to time some souls that will never let you near their hearts. They can talk about doctrines, plans and programs, but never about the intimacies that expose any vulnerability. Theirs is a sad and lonely existence in the middle of a crowd of disciples. I have known many such disciples.

When we gather around this table let brotherly love be the hallmark of our fellowship. What benefit could there be if a spirit of suspicion and distrust was present? Suspicion is the death of fellowship. The moment one Christian imagines that another thinks badly of him, though there may not be a shred of evidence in that thought, yet straightaway the root of bitterness is planted. Let us believe that each of our brethren deserves to be trusted more than we do. Turn your suspicions within, and if you must suspect someone, suspect yourself. But when you meet with those that you are in regular communion with at this table, say to yourself, "If such can deceive me, and I know that's quite possible, then I'll be content to be imposed upon rather than to perpetually mistrust my fellow-Christians."

No priority order can be found in the seating arrangements.

If the General Superintendent of almost any denomination you would care to nominate had handled the seating arrangements, matters might have been different. He probably would have placed Peter at the right hand of Christ and himself on the left, with the other apostles in graduated positions according to his preferences; but all that we know about their order is this. John sat next to the Saviour and leaned upon His bosom, and that Peter sat a good way off this seems certain, because he "beckoned" unto John. John 13: 24, 25. Had he sat next to Him, he would have whispered to Him, but the fact that he beckoned seems to indicate he must have been some way down the table. We believe however that there was no one place any better than the other in the arrangement of the guests, but that they sat there in sacred equality, "One is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren." Let us feel then, when coming to the table that we are linked in ties of sacred relationship with Jesus Christ, who is

exalted in heaven, and that through Him our relationship with our fellow-Christians is very near and intimate.

Oh, that brotherly love was more real! The very word “brother” has come to be a common term, a trivial piece of hypocrisy, as well it may, for it is often used flippantly and in many cases means very little, but it ought to mean something. We have no right to come to that table unless we really feel that those who are washed in Jesus’ blood have a claim upon the love of our hearts, and our pocketbooks also if we are able when they are in need. Are we to live together for ever in heaven, and yet show no affection for one another here below? It is our Master’s new command that we love one another; will we disregard it? This is the badge that identifies us as true Christians. “By this shall all men know that you are my disciples,” (not because you wear a gold chain with a cross around your neck), “but if you have love one to another.”

There is no distinction in the food at this meal.

What does this mean? What He eats, they eat, what He drinks, they drink. The diet was the same. Finally on this point, the feast at **one table** indicated affection and familiarity. Men at mealtime are often more talkative than elsewhere thus revealing their thoughts more readily. If you want to know a man, go to his home, sit at his table where he relaxes and becomes himself. Now, the Lord Jesus Christ sat at the table with His disciples. It was a meal where intimate intercourse ruled for at least a couple of hours. I am afraid that many times we have come to this table and gone away again without having had communion with Christ or our brethren. It had just been an empty formality, and nothing more. How wonderful it would be if saints would once again come to His table in every place on every occasion and begin to enjoy communion with Christ and one another that they have ever known. It is quite possible to only eat the bread and drink the wine, and lose the meaning of it. We need to guard against it becoming a dead form. There is so much that we can learn from this table at which Jesus sat with His disciples if we will let it.

After the apostles had gone to glory was there to be any alteration to the way the Lord’s Supper was to be celebrated? I don’t believe so. Believers were to do this in remembrance of their Lord **until he shall**

come. There was no command for a change when the first apostles were all gone from the Church. No, it was to be the same, just bread and wine and us all surrounding the table, until the Lord came. We gather there in the equality of all saints. There is a difference in office, there is a difference in miraculous gift, and there are great differences of growth in grace; but still, in the household of God, all saints whether apostles, prophets, teachers, elders, deacons or sheep, all as equals, eat at one table. There is but one bread; there is but one juice of the vine here.

There is only one place on earth that those words, so proudly proclaimed can ever be more than a dream, **“Liberty, Equality, Justice and Fraternity.”** You can only have them where Jesus is Lord. Not in a republic, but in the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, where all rule and dominion are vested in Him, and all of us willingly acknowledge Him as our glorious Head, and all we are brethren. Another strong inference is that the wants of the Church in all ages will be the same, and the supplies for the Church’s wants will never vary. **Everything we need is on the table.** The same provisions are upon it, nothing more than bread for food, nothing less than wine for drink. The Church will always want the same food, the same Christ, the same gospel. We do not need traitors who tell us that we are to shape our gospel to suit the new millennium! Who would have us tone down the everlasting truth that shall outlive the sun, and moon, and stars, to accommodate the new society with a watered down theology?

2 Corinthians 10: 3-6. “That truth which of old was mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds is mighty still, for the destruction, demolishing, casting down, destroying, and refuting of every argument that tries to alter the truth.”

The Church needs the doctrines of grace today as much as when Paul preached them. But it also needs to cry out against the lies of the enemy that are destroying the lives of so many of God’s people. The truth must be preached with all the authority of scripture today as much as has ever been against the lies and hypocrisy that are being propagated from so many pulpits. This truth also demonstrates that Christ brought all His disciples into the position of table-companions, as a prophecy that this shall be

the portion of all His people forever. In heaven, there cannot be less of privilege than on earth. It cannot be that, in the celestial state, believers will be degraded from what they have been below. If they have been His table-companions down here, what shall they be in heaven above? Table-companions still and blessed are they that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God. “Many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of God,” and the Lord Jesus shall be at the head of the table.

A QUESTION FOR COMMUNICANTS

What mean ye by this service? Exodus 12: 20.

In things of a spiritual nature everything must be understood. That which is un-spiritual and ritualistic, contents itself with outward form. Under the Jewish dispensation there was a very strong tendency in that direction; but it was kept to some extent in check. In Christianity this tendency must not be tolerated at all. We need to know the meaning of what we do otherwise why bother. We do not believe the following is sufficient; when a man was asked what he believed replied, "I believe what the Church believes." "But what does the church believe?" "The church believes what I believe." "Well, but what do you and the church believe?" "We both believe the same thing." He couldn't explain what he did believe. We believe such ignorant confessions are useless, and not the language of faith. Faith knows what she believes and can give a reason for the hope that is within her with meekness and fear.

Exodus 12:25-28.

Concerning the Passover, the young people among the Jews were encouraged to ask their parents this question, "What mean ye by this service?" Our children should be encouraged to ask such questions. In this chapter from which this text is drawn, the parents are taught how to answer their children. Always be ready to tell your children what the ordinances of the gospel mean. Explain baptism to them; and the Lord's Supper to them; and above all explain the gospel to them in words they cannot misunderstand. Explain that great mystery about how sin is forgiven, and how we can become children of God? I think it would be wise for us to ask ourselves first and then the question we propose. "What mean ye by this service"? By whatever name men may call it by the final focus must always be the Memorial of His sacrifice and what it means; but first a word to parents. Fathers and Mothers, this feast is not refreshment stand for your children. You should not for a moment allow them to snatch the bread or take the cup as so often happens in many Christian assemblies. This kind of behaviour is particularly prevalent among some groups of believers.

This supper is first of all a Memorial.

If you want to keep something in mind from generation to generation, you may attempt it in many ways. We observe special times, referring to them as Red-letter days, like as Christmas Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, etc. You may erect a monument or a statue to it; or you could engrave a record of it on a brass plaque in a church. You may write it upon marble. There are many ways of preserving memorials, but this is a memorial with a difference. For it is not a record of some ones life, but their DEATH. Most memorials are erected to remember the lives of individuals, but not this one, for if He did not die, we would have perished. A living Christ will not suffice, the Lamb must die, that we might live!

Can you imagine what would happen if the President of the United States announced that the government was going to discontinue the observance of "Independence Day?" What would the people have to say about that? Well we have something far more important to remember than the birth of a nation. It can be seen that among the populous at large that one of the best ways of remembering a fact is to have some ceremony connected with it which is frequently performed, so as to keep its memory alive.

Turning our thoughts to something infinitely higher, I cannot conceive of a better method of keeping the death of Christ alive in our minds than to meet together to break bread, and partake of the fruit of the vine in memory of His death. Other facts may be forgotten; this one never can be. And at the very least every week believers should meet together for the breaking of bread in remembrance of Christ's cross and passion, His precious death and burial. So that those great facts can never pass out of mind Jesus said to His disciples, "This do in remembrance of me."

When we come to this table it is **to remember an absent Friend**. Jesus has gone away. When parting from dear friends we often exchange gifts that say to us, "When you see this remember me." Most of us have treasured photographs that we display prominently to remind us of some one dear who is perhaps far away

and out of sight, but not out of mind. You come to the table then to remember you're absent Friend.

IN REMEMBRANCE

1 Corinthians 11: 24, 25. “This do in remembrance of me. This do ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.” Nothing is ordered to be done here except to break bread and eat of it, and pour out wine, and drink of it; and these two things are to be done in remembrance of Christ. He has not even laid down any rule with regard to the posture that is to be assumed by communicants. I have no doubt whatever that the disciples were reclining around the supper-table in the usual Oriental manner, but Christ does not say that we must do this or that and the next thing for the right observance of the ordinance. Nothing appears to be really essential, to the right celebration of this supper by believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, but just the following. “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 ye as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.”

How very little there is here of anything that smacks of ostentation! And yet, mark you; there is a certain instruction, with regard to the spiritual part of the Lord’s Supper, which is not left to anybody’s choice. It is essential; it is the very soul and marrow of the ordinance that we should remember Christ in it: **“This do in remembrance of me.”** The external order may vary in certain respects, but the internal essence must be there, else you will have nothing but dead formalism and you will have lost the very life and soul of the whole ordinance.

Again and again our Saviour says, ‘This do in remembrance of me’. To remember Christ, then, is the main point for the correct observance of this ordinance. And as we gather around the Lord’s Table other memories will come, but they must not be allowed to crowd out the primary focus: “This do in remembrance of me.” Jesus Christ attracts us; and is unlike Moses whose glory repelled. He is the good Shepherd who delights to hold the lambs in His bosom. Isaiah 40:11. He loves to have men about Him, for His delights still are, as they ever have been, with the sons of men.

These ordinances are a link between the spirituality of our faith and materialism. Let us remember that God has not cast aside materialism as a thing that cannot be used. He did curse the earth once, and it still brings forth thorns and thistles: but He does not mean it to remain under the curse always. There will come a time when there shall be a new heaven and a new earth literally; and here, where sin has triumphed, grace shall reign. Believers here are still in the body, but Paul's words are as true today as when he wrote them, "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost, which is in you?" These very bodies of ours may sleep in the dust for a while, but they shall rise again from the grave. And in our flesh shall we see God, and our body as well as our spirit shall enjoy an eternity of bliss with our Saviour in His body as well as in His spirit in His great triumph. Of course, it will not be such flesh as it now is, for flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; but, still, it will be the same body, though it will have undergone a wonderful change. So I thank God for the two ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they teach me that nothing is common or unclean. They sanctify the rivers to me; they sanctify my daily bread to me. I do not feel like a Hindu holy man in a world where everything might pollute me, but like a Christian, in a world where Christ has lived and in a position in which everything may be sanctified if my heart is right before Him.

This symbolic festival is especially important because Jesus appointed it. **He would never have appointed a needless ceremony because He was and is no lover of useless ceremony.** He never wrote a directive giving instructions as to how to celebrate various religious occasions. So as He has ordained this memorial, He must have known that we needed it because of our forgetfulness. And we may be quite sure that, as He has ordained it, He will make it answer the ends for which He instituted it. Experience has taught many of us how valuable this ordinance is. I can bear witness that many times when I have searched and found little food for my own soul I have found it at the communion table.

It is clear, from our Lord's command that attendance at this ordinance is binding upon all Christians. This **"do"; not "this look at,"** but **"this do"** in remembrance of me. Many a servant with a soiled testimony would have kept himself unspotted and found the grace he so sorely needed had he often come to the table. To neglect this ordinance appointed by Christ would be a disastrous example for others to follow. Don't imagine for a moment that neglect on your part is no big deal. You are not only poorer for not doing it, but disobedient as well to our Lord's command. The observance of this ordinance will not save you; and if you're not already saved, you've no right to partake of it; but if you are saved, and if you have really believed in Jesus, He says to you, "this do in remembrance of me."

This memorial of Christ is also a happy one. What Christ ordained as a memorial of His death is a feast, not a funeral. It's not for singing mournful dirges over His dead body, or to go to a graveside to weep. That might be a memorial in the minds of some, but we have a better and happier one. It is very significant that after supper, they sang. Singing would seem out of place, but not here. Oh, yes, singing! **Joy becomes a feast** and joyful gratitude is to attend our recollection of the woes of Jesus. The position they occupied at the Lord's Table suggests that Christ meant us to be comfortable and happy. There's not even a hint of kneeling. Did He intend us to stand then? Absolutely not, that's ridiculous. Look at how the Lord's Supper was originally received? The guests reclined around the table, leaning their heads in each other's bosoms. It was the posture of the feaster in Oriental nations.

Let us contrast it with the first Passover in Egypt. There they stood, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and with their staves in their hands. They were about to leave Egypt to go into the wilderness that night, and so they must eat it in haste. In contrast mark the Passover in Jerusalem that we have been called to witness and memorialise. "This do in remembrance of me." It is a feast where we are to be perfectly at ease because now we have passed through the wilderness. We who have believed have

entered into rest; our Passover has been eaten. We no longer keep the feast with uncertainty and fear. The destroying angel has passed over us. We are out of Egypt, we have passed through the wilderness and entered into Canaan, and though the Canaanite is still in the land, we shall drive him out. It is the Lord's Supper of rest, and joy, because "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." It is a happy memorial. Joy is becoming and it should be on the face of every one who comes to partake of this table.

It was an occasion to sing.

Matthew 26: 30. "And when they had sung a hymn, they went out unto the Mount of Olives." The occasion on which these words were spoken was the last meal of which Jesus partook in company with His disciples before He went from them to His scandalous trial and His shameful death. It was His farewell supper before a bitter parting and yet they sing. He was on the brink of that great depth of misery into which He was about to plunge; yet He had them sing "a hymn." How amazing it is that He could sing on such an occasion.

Let us dwell a while on the fact that Jesus sang at such a time as this. What can we draw from this? It reminds us that, "the joy of the Lord is our strength." His example instructs us to sing even when the last solemn hour is come, and all the gloom of death is gathering around you. If ever there ever a time when it would have been natural and consistent with the gravity of the occasion for the Saviour to have lowered His head upon the table and burst into a flood of tears it was then. Or, if ever there was a season when He might have withdrawn from all company, and gone into a fit of depression, protesting His coming struggle in sighs and groans, it was just then. "But no, He sings a hymn." During His entire ministry He never failed to respond to a cry for help. Now when His hour comes, when even the nearest and dearest friends don't understand, our glorious Jesus lifts up His voice to sing. How wonderful, how marvellous, and my song shall ever be, how wonderful, how marvellous is my Saviour's love for me."

Christianity of which Jesus is the Head and those who have embraced it are able to sing in the very face of death.

During Passover, it was usual to sing the hundred and thirteenth and the five following Psalms called the “Hallel”. The first commences with “Praise ye the Lord!” Or “Hallelujah”! The hundred and fifteenth and the three following, were usually sung as the closing song of the Passover. There are some parts of Psalm 118 that are so “messianic” that surely He would have known to whom they referred as they flowed from His blessed lips. Note vs. 22, 23, 24. Particularly observe those words near the end of the Psalm and imagine that you hear the Lord Himself singing them. God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. “Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. Oh give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good: for His mercy endures forever.” Because this was the settled custom of Israel to recite or sing these Psalms, our Lord Jesus Christ did the same; for He would leave nothing unfinished. Just as when He went down into the waters of baptism and said, “Thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness.” So when sitting at the table He also seemed to say; thus it becomes us to fulfil all righteousness; therefore let us sing unto the Lord, as God’s people in past ages have done.

I think it is safe to suggest another reason. That the singing of a hymn at the supper showed how complete His submission to His Father was? If you knew that in a few hours you would be led away to be mocked, despised, scourged and falsely accused, and that tomorrow’s sun would see you as a convicted criminal hanging, dying upon a cross; do you think that you could sing after your last meal? I doubt it, unless you were fortified with more than natural courage so that your soul could say, “Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.” Now He, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, is well able to succour us in our hour of trial. Hebrews 9:14.

Blessed Jesus, how completely and perfectly consecrated you were. That whereas other men sing when the day is bright, you sang on the darkest night. While other men act cheerfully when honour awaits them, you had a song upon your holy lips when shame, spitting, and death were to be your portion. The Master does not go forth to the agony in the garden with a cowed and trembling spirit all bowed and crushed in the dust, but He advances to the conflict like a man full of purpose and strength. The victim is not taken as a worn-out ox that has long borne the yoke, but as the firstling in the fullness of His strength. He goes forth to the slaughter, with His glorious undaunted spirit steadfast and firm within Him, glad to suffer for His people's sake, and for His Father's glory.



JEHOVAH'S PASSOVER

The Passover was the beginning of months.

Passover was Israel's foundational institution. It marked the commencement of their history as a nation, and as a people in special relationship with Jehovah. That night in Egypt was never to be forgotten by them. The terrors of it were to be rehearsed in the ears of their children from generation to generation. Can you imagine that night? The angel of Jehovah was sweeping through the land of Egypt from one end to the other with the sword of death in his hand. Every house was visited. Wherever a home was found

without a bloodstained door it was bereaved of its first-born. Every stable and every herd was robbed of its choicest and best. One deep united wail rose up from the earth and ascended to heaven. Jehovah is vindicated, as He manifested His superiority over all the gods of the Egyptians and over the power and glory of men. This awesome story has a living message for us today. God was acting in His judicial capacity as an avenger of sin. Pharaoh and his people had been in open defiance of God. In spite of plague after plague they still refused to let Israel go. But even divine longsuffering has its limits.

Every man to take a Lamb. Ten plagues in all fell upon Egypt. From seven of them the captives were markedly exempt. When their oppressors were enveloped in darkness that could be felt, they had light in their dwellings. When the deadly murrain destroyed the cattle of the Egyptians (Ex 9:3), the cattle of the Israelites escaped unharmed. When the hail wrought havoc with the crops of one people, the crops of the other were untouched. The captives were spared from all afflictions from which their tormentors suffered. Thus did Jehovah openly signify the difference between those that were His and those who were not. But when the moment came that the angel of death must be sent through the land, invading the homes of all who transgressed the divine will, Israel could be exempt no longer. However favoured these people might be because of the divine sovereignty of grace they were sinners like all others (Ezekiel 20:5-9). If therefore they were to be spared some righteous ground for this must be discovered. This is why the lamb was appointed. Instructions for the lamb were very explicit. “Speak unto all the congregation of Israel saying, in the tenth day of the month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers a lamb for a house. (Ex 12: 3.) “All the congregation” of Israel was addressed, and “every man” was to take a lamb. Neither character nor position in life counted for anything in the presence of the judgment of God. In insisting upon a lamb Jehovah was thinking of Christ. 1 Cor 5:7 put this beyond dispute. “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”

Taken on the Tenth Day. It is a remarkable fact that Passover month was from that time forward to become the first month of the year to Israel, yet the lamb was not to be slain on the first day of that month. This is what we read in Exodus 12:3; “Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, in the tenth day of the month they shall take to them every man a lamb.” Ten days were to run their course before the victim was chosen carefully from the flock to be killed. Numbers have divine significance in scripture every observant reader has come to realize, enough to say that “ten” represents the full measure of human responsibility. We have Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:1-17, ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, ten pounds in Luke 19:13, and ten days of the feast of blowing of trumpets calling Israel to the “day of atonement.” The ten days of Exodus 12: 3 speak to us therefore of the ages of responsibility, which ran their course ere God sent forth His beloved Son to be the Lamb of God, to take away the sins of the world.

Slain on the fourteenth day. The lamb was taken out from among the sheep, or the goats, on the tenth day, but was not to be slain until the fourteenth day. Under this arrangement the victim was under the scrutiny of those for whom its blood was to be shed. For nearly four years the Lord carried out His public ministry. Prior to this we see only fleeting references to Him in the Word. He did not go to Calvary immediately after He appeared in public though He was always moving steadfastly in that direction from the time that John baptized Him. During three and a half years of ministry He lived in the face of hostile criticism. All the facts of His life were fully known as He moved amongst people. How His enemies would have loved to find a flaw in Him. But He was God’s holy one, the Lamb without blemish. At the end His judge had to say “I find no fault in Him” John 19:6. His enemies finally had to bribe men to commit perjury in order to convict Him in their court Mark 14:55-60. His spotless life proclaimed His fitness to die in atonement for our sins.

Kill it in the evening. Death is everywhere stamped upon this chapter. “The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening” Exodus 12:6. Nothing less, than death could

satisfy the claims of God to turn away the approaching destruction. The lamb must die and innocent blood must be shed if the guilty are to be spared. A living lamb will not suffice; a living Christ could not save us. The value of His presence on earth was immeasurable, but He must die before He could be the Saviour of the lost. "I am the living bread which came down from heaven, if any man eat of this bread he shall live forever, and the bread that I shall give him is my flesh which I give for the life of the world." (John 6:51). May we add to this His words to Nicodemus. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:14-15). Happy is the man who can say; "The Saviour died for me." Upon that one the sword of judgment can never fall. The whole assembly killed "It". Thousands of lambs were slain that night but in the mind of God there was but "One." To Him every sacrifice pointed.

Take the Blood. For the first time blood is mentioned in connection with man's deliverance and blessing. From this point forward to the end of the Book the doctrine of blood atonement stands out. Only by blood and by blood alone can men be saved. Various steps were made perfectly clear for God's people. It was not enough to kill the lamb, or preserve the blood in a basin; it must be sprinkled upon the lintel and doorposts of the house. The meaning is plain enough for us today. The blood must be applied to our hearts and lives.

When I See the Blood. "I will pass **through** the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast. And against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment. I am Jehovah. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are, **and when I see the blood** I will pass over you. The plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt." Exodus 12:12-13. That we are accepted in the beloved is everything. Of ourselves we are undone, and so the Father looks for the blood of His perfect Lamb.

I will pass over you. Jehovah "passing through" is one thing, but

Jehovah “passing over” is quite another. What does this mean? Isaiah 31:5 “As the birds flying, so will the Lord of Hosts defend Jerusalem, defending also He will deliver it, and passing over He will preserve it.” He will protect and deliver it; He will pass over and preserve it. The language is expressive, it’s meaning unmistakable. The idea is of a mother bird hovering over her nest, anxiously watching it, and keeping guard over her young. This is what Jehovah promised to do in Egypt that night for all who in obedience and faith sprinkled the blood upon their houses.

Ye shall eat the Flesh. The blood having been sprinkled the lamb was now cooked and eaten. It was not to be eaten raw, but roasted with fire, symbolic of His holiness. Then eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. Eating suggests appropriation and application, (John 6:51-57). The bitter herbs are suggestive of my shameful part as I in some measure enter into the awful judgment that fell upon the sin bearer. Anything that remained was to be destroyed in the morning, teaching us that atonement is not a progressive but a completed thing. It is not in the process of being accomplished; it has been done, completely for all eternity.

For a Memorial. That night in Egypt was to be kept in perpetual remembrance by the people of Israel. That it might never be forgotten the Passover was to be observed annually as a feast throughout their generations. “Ye shall keep it a feast by ordinance forever” Ex 12: 14. There is a dangerous tendency in the human heart to forget in matters relating to God. We tend to remember the things we should forget, and forget the things we should remember. How often in Deuteronomy was Moses to say words like these; “Beware lest thou forget” and “Take heed that you remember.” One mark of a backslider according to the apostle is, “his having forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (2 Pet 1:9). It is here that the Lord’s Supper comes into mind. The Lord’s Supper differs somewhat from the Passover in that it was not a mere memorial of a great deliverance, but a remembrance of the **person** who wrought the deliverance for us. He was coming to the end of His course and about to undergo the supreme agony of Calvary. Only by His death could atonement be made and

salvation becomes possible for sinful men. Yet even One so divinely unique as He, and a sacrifice so perfect would be in danger of being forgotten by His own. And so accordingly He gave to His disciples, first the bread and then the cup, saying, "This do in remembrance of me."



JUDGES AND KINGS

People who ignore history often find themselves reliving it. 1 Corinthians 10:13. The history of Israel after the deaths of Moses and Joshua was a very sorrowful one indeed. Had Israel continued on with what Joshua had started when they first entered the land all would have been well, but the flesh can never be trusted. Accordingly the book of Judges is a distressful story of failure. Repeatedly Israel turned their back on Jehovah and worshipped idols, and just as frequently He delivered them into the hands of their enemies.

The book of Judges not only tells of repeated failures; but it also tells us of several spiritual revivals in the mercy of God. From time to time men of faith were raised up such as Gideon but sadly they were few and far between. Under King David came the greatest revival of them all to that point in time. Everything was in ruins when Jehovah took him from the sheep folds, and made him King over his people. The priesthood was corrupt and spiritually bankrupt. The king of the peoples choice, Saul, had been slain and the excellent Jonathan with him. "Then the Lord awakened as a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine" (Psalm 78:65). In David at Mount Zion He gave Israel a new start in grace and favour. At long last the Ark was back in Jerusalem among God's people. It was a time of great joy and jubilation.

The ordinance of King David to bring back the Ark is found in 1 Chron 15: 22-28. However the effects of this like every revival were temporary and purely transient.

Shortly after the house that Solomon built was dedicated and God in all His glory came down for the King and all the people to witness, and although His visible presence was in the midst it wasn't long before they went a whoring after idols. Solomon who commenced his reign with such promise would soon rebuild the "high places" and through his wives allow idolatry to be re-established in Israel. After the kingdom had been divided there was

a revival under Jehoshaphat, but like all its predecessors it too was short lived.

TWO GREAT PASSOVERS

Two great commemorative Passovers are recorded in the Old Testament. The first was during the reign of King Hezekiah; the second during King Josiah's reign. Let us now see what instruction we can receive from the Lord, with regard to the restoration of these two Passovers by these two Kings. Hezekiah's was the first Passover to be kept in Jerusalem since the division of the Kingdom after the death of Solomon 260 years before 2 Chron 30:5, 26. There were many shortcomings in its observance, for which Hezekiah humbly sought the pardon of Jehovah (2 Chron 30: 18-20). But it was a great revival.

The Passover is kept under King Josiah.

One hundred years had passed since Hezekiah's revival. None of the kings of Israel had kept such a Passover as Josiah did. There had in fact never been a Passover kept like it since the days of Samuel the prophet. Josiah was careful that everything should be done in strict accordance with the written word. It was during this period, the thirteenth year of Josiah's reign that Jeremiah commenced his ministry (Jeremiah 1: 2).

Josiah's activities are powerfully instructive. 2 Chron 34:3-7.

At the age of 16 Josiah turned to God. For the next four years he became increasingly aware of the conditions around him. His position as king made him feel that it wasn't sufficient to get his personal life in right standing with God, but he felt also that he must purge the land of its abominations and lead the people back to God. It is not our duty in this day and age to go around with axes and hammers to destroy everything that is hateful to God as Josiah did. The lord will deal with all this in due course. Our present duty is twofold. Firstly to get ourselves right by testing all our ways and associations by the written word of God. Secondly to use our influence to help others return to the true paths. This can be accomplished in many different ways, such as public ministry and

writing. Bold testimony is called for in regions where the truth is most needed.

How far I wonder are we prepared to move out from the warm shelter of the institution we might have founded for our ministry. We have made life within our ghettos very comfortable places to dwell in. Let us note that Josiah began by purging Judah of its “high places.” (2 Timothy 2:20-21). The high places were an expression of the **self-will** of people who were under the binding influence of Satan. God would choose His own centre for worship. He always has and always will. And there the tribes of Israel were to bring their sacrifices and offerings. Shiloh in Ephraim was Jehovah’s first dwelling place (Jeremiah 7:12). Later He chose Zion (Psalm 78:60-68). During the years of confusion after the Ark fell into the hands of the Philistines, even pious people worshipped at “high places.” Samuel did this (1 Samuel 9:12-25). But such practices became sin after the Temple was built and filled with the cloud of Jehovah’s presence. It is difficult to imagine, that after all that Solomon had experienced of God, he would lead the way in that great sin when he built high places for Chemosh and for all the gods of his pagan wives. (1 Kings 11:1-8).

Turning to ourselves, have we learned to be obedient in all things to the word of God, or are we merely offering lip service, in particular, to the subject of this book? We seem to have taken matters into our own hands in this day and age when it comes to how we worship; where we worship; and who we wish to listen to, and who we don’t. The wonderful blessings that Christ will afford are largely unknown by people who choose such a course.

Surely He has not left us to our own devices in matters so sacred and important! He, who was so precise even down to the smallest details of service and worship connected with His earthly people, is not indifferent in His dealings with His heavenly saints! Surely He has spoken! Are we willing in the spirit of humility to search His Holy Word with care and ask Him for grace to obey what’s written regardless of the cost? Our answer can be found in this most profound yet simple conversation that took place at a

well between the Lord and a Samaritan woman in John 4:21-24. His pointed and most heart-searching words should make us all feel the seriousness about having to do with God. She desired to learn from Him where God could be found, for there was much controversy concerning this subject. Her fathers had for centuries worshipped on Mount Gerizim, but the Jews had argued that in Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship. She was stating her difficulty to the one who could best answer it. Here standing before her was one who had come from Heaven to lead willing hearts into sweeter communion than had ever been known. He said, "Women believe me." Oh that we would be willing to believe every word that comes from His gracious lips. Instead many listen to the voices of the religious and follow them blindly. "Woman believe me, the hour cometh when you shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem, worship the Father."

The day for religious material centres is past. Those who point to one and speak of it as the "house of God" are two thousand years behind the times in their thoughts. God, now being revealed as "Father," will be satisfied with nothing but worship from the overflowing hearts of those who are in conscious relationship with Him as His children. "Worship in spirit and truth" is what He desires, and "the Father seeks such to worship Him."

Choreographed and rehearsed musicals are no substitute for true worship. Expensive décor and ritualistic services are an offence to Him, for they are relics of Paganism and Judaism. Any simple building, even a humble home will suffice as meeting places for God's saints during the Christian era. The true rallying centre is indicated in Matthew 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." It is not saying that gatherings must be limited to two or three, but it is saying beware of the "high places" where true koinonia around a simple table, with bread and wine upon it is disregarded. Every place where He has been snubbed and replaced by some contrived religious service, revolving around a personality in a pulpit, must change. We may not be called upon to destroy them as Josiah did in his day; but it is our bounden duty to return, and to be obedient

to all things in the Word of God. I draw your attention once again to the purpose of this book. “Do this in remembrance of me.” Are you doing it? Do you do it “oft”? Will you continue to do it “until He comes”?

Josiah lived in the twilight of Israel’s national history. We too are living in the late evening of the history of the church. For Israel the time for judgment and destruction and banishment was near. For the church a great shaking is near. He who is pure and Holy will shortly spew out of His mouth the unreal portion that profess to be Christians and are not (Revelation 3:22). The fruitless branches will be cut out of God’s olive tree. (Romans 10:22).



IN RETROSPECT

Some of you may be thinking after reading through all that has been recorded that some of the claims made here are perhaps a little too strong, in particular where reference was made to many saints who have been weakened, and in some cases even died, because of wilful sin in the body of Christ, the church. In closing allow me to draw to our attention to an incident in the life of the Israel, “The Church in the wilderness.”

Joshua 22:20. “Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on **all** the congregation of Israel, and that man perished **not alone** in his iniquity.” This passage refers to that day when 3000 men suffered an embarrassing defeat at the hands of a small force belonging to the king of Ai. The account is recorded in Joshua 7. Although only one man sinned, the consequences of his trespass had far reaching effects upon the whole nation of Israel, as we shall see. Joshua knew nothing of Achan’s treachery as they took counsel together to attack Ai. Yet their best laid plans were to mean nothing because Joshua 7:1 states, “The Children of Israel committed a trespass in the accursed thing.” Not all of them sinned, but one man did commit a trespass bringing disgrace upon **all** the people of Israel.

Joshua 6:18 “Keep yourselves from the accursed thing lest **you** become accursed **and make the camp of Israel a curse and trouble it.**” As a result of Achan’s sin the anger of the Lord was kindled against all Israel. An “accused thing” was anything ordered to be destroyed, devoted to destruction. In the case of Jericho everything was to be utterly destroyed, only the silver the gold, and vessels of brass and iron” were to be spared, they were then consecrated unto the Lord and placed in the Lord’s treasury vs. 19. All the best intentions of the leaders will not avert the tragedy that is about to unfold. And so they made their preparations to take the city vs. 2–5, but it would be to no avail, for they were shamefully defeated. “Therefore they could not stand before their enemies because they were accursed Vs 12.”

Joshua 23:10 “And the men of Ai smote them.” About thirty-six men died in the first assault. Then they chased the remainder and continued to smite more of them vs. 5, and so great fear fell upon all the people.

This tragedy never would have occurred if all of Israel had stayed free from sin. One man’s trespass brought about this defeat and caused the death of more than thirty-six men of war. That day many women in Israel became widows and their children fatherless. Joshua and the elders rent their garments and lay all day until even upon their faces before the Ark of the Covenant. As they sought the Lord as to why this had befallen them Joshua began to cry and to protest to God. His complaint sounds very similar to the murmuring of Israel at the waters of Marah. How often we attend seminars looking for answers to our problems, and cures for our ailments while refusing to consider the sin factor. The Lord’s response was short and to the point and should have been obvious to Joshua from the first. “Why are you lying upon your faces Joshua?” “Stand on your feet; Israel has sinned!” Neither prayer meetings nor fasting will resolve this problem.

Vs 13 “You can’t stand before your enemies until you take away the accursed thing from among you.” He that covers his sin will not prosper — if I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me — that your prayers be not hindered — Israel had sinned and so must be judged and cleansed. So they began to trace the sin to the culprit. How long it took to find him among two million people we don’t know, but it would have probably taken several days. During all that time the culprit, Achan, could have come forward and acknowledged his sin. Instead he continued to cover it up until it was too late for him to come forward to receive mercy as provided for under the law of the “trespass offering.”

Leviticus 5:1-6. Under this law any person who was aware of sin and kept silent by failing to report it to the elders was adjudged an accessory to the crime. I believe it would have been impossible for Achan to hide in his tent what he had stolen from the Lord and

keep the knowledge of his sin a secret from every member of his family. They were in collusion with him without a doubt, and for this they would perish with him also.

Joshua 22:20. “Did not Achan the son of Zerah commit a trespass in the accursed thing, and wrath fell on **all** the congregation of Israel, and that man perished **not alone** in his iniquity.”

These were the three things stolen by Achan, a goodly Babylonian garment; 200 shekels of silver; and a wedge of gold weighing 50 shekels are suggestive by their very nature. Over the years we have witnessed a growing emphasis on silver and gold by many pastors for no good purpose, and we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg. Sadly, too much preaching has revolved around materialism. Is it any wonder that the church is going nowhere when the place where the real culprit ‘sin’ can be dealt with is shamefully ignored? The remedy is not difficult to find. All that it requires is for us to humble ourselves and return to the centrality of the cross to meet with Christ and each other around two elements, bread and wine. If this were done often, then all would be well. The supremacy of the “Table” in our gatherings cannot be challenged. It is paramount that we recognize this fact, for it is here that we can find grace to help us to make life changes; and so the Lord awaits us at His table. He is unwilling to expose sin in His children and so gives them space to repent first.

“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat.”

“Do I expect those systems to change that depend largely upon the three things that Achan stole?” Sadly, no I don’t, I’m not that foolish. Is that then a good enough reason not to speak out? I think not. One thing we can do is to encourage each another to break bread in our homes with our families and with Christian friends. We should do it, and do it “oft” in remembrance of Him to whom we owe our all. Under no circumstances should we allow anyone or anything to prevent us from meeting with Him at this feast that He has prepared and invited us to attend. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, there “I AM” in the midst. This is the Church. Christ in the midst of His people.

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An in-depth look at some practices that have no scriptural foundation, but are nothing more than traditions and customs

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