

AROUND
THE TABLE WITH
THE FATHER
AND
HIS FAMILY

AN ANNUAL DEVOTIONAL GUIDE WITH FIFTY
TWO MEDITATIONS FOR WEEKLY USE AS WE
GATHER AROUND THE LORD'S TABLE

By Shaun Kearney



TABLE OF CONTENTS WEEK BY WEEK

Foreword

Introduction

1. The Ordinance
2. The Altar the Table and the Sacrifice
3. An Incident or a Precedent
4. With Respect
5. Some Practical Issues
6. Come let us Sup with Him
7. Do 'this' in Remembrance of Me
8. This is My Body – This is My Blood
9. The New Covenant
10. Prepare the Passover
11. God is supposed to Love us?
12. Why are so many Saints Sick?
13. What Jesus didn't say
14. They sat down to Eat and Drink then rose up to Play
15. Let the Reality exceed the Imagery
16. Eating and Drinking New in the Kingdom
17. Our Daily Walk
18. Self Examination for Purification
19. Don't be a Worm
20. No particular time is stressed
21. Take time to Reflect
22. The Spirit by which we come
23. The Table the place of Intimacy
24. The Bread of His presence
25. Leaving our First Love
26. Discerning the Lord's Body
27. Discerning the Spiritual Body
28. An occasion to sing
29. We cannot Trifle with His Body
30. Christ appears on the Emmaus Road
31. Hidden Manna

32. True Koinonia
 33. That which I received of the Lord
 34. Was Breaking Bread just a meal?
 35. A question for Communicants
 36. A word to Parents
 37. Luke's Account 22: 14-27
 38. God's Food
 39. Forget not all His Benefits
 40. With His Stripes we are healed
 41. Melchisedek
 42. For the Remission of Sins
 43. Turn our eyes upon Jesus
 44. The Afirkomen
 45. Jehovah's Passover
 46. Take every man a Lamb
 47. Taken on the Tenth day
 48. Slain on the Fourteenth day
 49. Take the Blood
 50. When I see the Blood
 51. Ye shall eat the Flesh
 52. The ministry of Reconciliation
- Conclusion A Solemn Appeal

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FOREWORD

This book is important because it serves a useful purpose

It contains 52x5 minute exhortations for discussion and meditation around the Lord's Table.

This unique book is a rare treasure because its message is priceless. Christ is presented here in a way you may have never seen Him before. After you've read it you'll never be the same again.

The subject matter here offers a Godly solution for disenchanted members of the Body of Christ who presently exist among "manna-fed nomads" that wander from program to program in a wilderness inhabited by prosperous but powerless Western cultured Churches.

This book will greatly assist shepherds in Fellowships that observe the Lords Table regularly, but who often find it a challenge to keep its commemoration alive and fresh in the hearts and minds of the saints.

It is also an excellent tool for use in home and cell groups.



INTRODUCTION THE LAST SUPPER

Of all the great feasts of Israel, the Passover was the greatest and the first. It is the annual celebration of a turning point in Israel's history when, after four hundred years God miraculously brought them out of Egypt and took them to the promised land where they were to live as a free nation under his rule.

The Last Supper was instituted on the night of the Feast of Passover. For this reason it has great significance for every true believer in Christ. We call it the Last Supper, because it was the final meal shared by Jesus with His disciples before his crucifixion. The event is recorded in all four Gospels. It took place in an upper room shortly before they went out to the Garden of Gethsemane where He was betrayed and arrested. (Luke 22:8).

Without a clear understanding of this Feast we cannot fully appreciate what it means to take communion. So let's refresh our minds with regard to this important Old Testament event.

It was a commemorative of deliverance festival for the descendants of Abraham from bondage in Egypt under Pharaoh, to a new life under the protection of Jehovah. For Christians Israel's journey is a parabolic picture of our deliverance from spiritual bondage to a new beginning in Christ.

He brought them forth also with silver and gold: there was not one feeble person among their tribes. Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them. (Psalms 105:37-38 KJV)

There are immeasurable benefits today for those who observe the Table of the Lord as He commanded. For if under the shadow of better things to come there was not a "feeble one" among them, how much more shall this be true for those who come with clean hands and pure hearts.

WEEK ONE

THE ORDINANCE OF THE LORDS TABLE

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

“The Lord’s Table”, or “Communion” as it has variously been called, has regrettably been a source of bitter debate and division down through the course of Church History. Each of the four Gospels in particular the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, record the first Lord’s Supper. It is only briefly referred to in the Gospel of John. Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23; John 13:1-17

This ordinance was established by the Lord Jesus with the twelve apostles in Matthew 26:17-30. So important was this ordinance which the Lord established that, some years after His death, burial, resurrection, ascension and glorification, He saw fit to give special revelation and insight to the apostle Paul about His table which cannot be found in the four Gospels. The details are to be found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-34. Paul could say, “I have received of the Lord”, not of Peter, James or John, or other of the Twelve, but “of the Lord”. This was written to a Gentile Church, the Church at Corinth. The Book of Acts clearly shows that the early Church believers “**broke bread from house to house**” in the course of their fellowship gatherings (Acts 2:42-47).

When Paul was at Troas, during the course of the gathering they “**broke bread**” (Acts 20:1-12). The Gospels, Acts and the Epistles all confirm the practice of first century believers observing the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper. The tragedy that history reveals is the fact that the Lord’s Table which was meant to be a place of reflection love and unity quickly became a place of division and hatred. Denominations have been formed around this ordinance. Believers have been excommunicated from partaking of the table, being counted as heretics, as unholy and unworthy to partake of this sacred table.

Keen differences also exist as to the elements that should be used in the ordinance. Is ordinary bread permissible? Or a wafer biscuit, or only unleavened bread? Should alcoholic wine be used, or is only non-alcoholic wine or grape-juice acceptable? Or does it matter as to what kind of bread or drink is used? Should we serve it to unbelievers? Should believers meet in an exclusive setting for the purpose of partaking of communion without unbelievers present? Many are the views and reactions to these questions.

Another area of controversy concerning the Lord's Table has been the matter of "**the presence**".

For the Roman Catholic Church, the wafer and the cup becomes "the very body and blood" of the Lord Jesus Christ at the consecration of the Mass. They call this **transubstantiation**. They teach that during the consecration of the Mass when the priest elevates the Host (bread and the wine) a miracle takes place turning it into the literal body and blood of Christ under the appearance of bread and wine.

For the Lutheran Church, the Lord's Table, or the Communion has "the presence" in the bread and wine. It is the doctrine of **consubstantiation**. The Lutherans maintain that, after consecration of the elements, the body and blood of Christ are substantially present with the substance of the bread and wine. This is called consubstantiation."

The response to these beliefs by most other Protestant Churches is that the bread and the cup are simply mere symbols of the body and blood of the Lord and nothing more.

To counter the Catholic doctrine they maintain that there is nothing in the table of itself; it is simply a memorial service, reminding us of the death of the Lord.

Other movements in reactive response to these views have discarded the ordinance of the Lord's Table altogether. They feel that rather than having to deal with the controversies and differences, it is much simpler to see communion with Christ as an exercise of spiritual relationship with the Lord; without the necessity of any symbolic elements present.

Jesus said "do this in remembrance of me"; and Peter exhorted us to do it in Acts 2:42; and Paul instructed us years later to keep this ordinance.

The next matter to arise is the question of the **frequency** of the Lord's Table. How often should believers partake of the Table of the Lord?

Various denominations and churches partake only once a year, some every six months, some quarterly, or monthly. Numerous other Churches partake on a weekly basis, but this is not as common as it once was. Does the Bible have anything to say on the matter?

It is true that as long as the clergy are in control, and as long as they hold sway over almost everything, we will never receive those insights the Holy Spirit wants to give us as we celebrate the Table of the Lord. Without Holy Spirit illumination, the Communion has become a mere form, as have so many other things that are done in Church services. The blame for this rests squarely on the shoulders of the modern Pastor. Hindsight over many years has confirmed the truth of these things.

After I was saved I joined a Pentecostal Church where they celebrated the Lord's Table on a weekly basis. In my new church I would often hear the minister say: "Now there is nothing in the bread and the cup, so let's just look away to the Lord". Then he might add, "We simply do this in remembrance of the Him". As a former

Catholic one can understand my confused state of mind. If “there is nothing in it, then how could the Lord bless this “nothing”? It was no wonder that most believers got “nothing” out of it, when they are told there is “nothing” in it. If that’s the case why bother doing it? We can “remember the Lord” any time without going through this pointless exercise. Over the years the Lord has revived many spiritual insights into this ordinance. It is these that our attention is drawn towards in this modest effort.

Prayer: *We thank You Dear Lord for the revelation You have given us, as to Your person and purpose.*

WEEK TWO

THE ALTAR THE TABLE AND THE SACRIFICE

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

Reading: Lamentations 3:39-40 “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins? Or, murmur. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD” (KJV).

Has there ever been a century in history that commenced with such moral deviancy? What lies behind all this? One reason could be is that most attention is directed at symptoms but not causes, few people dig down deeply to the roots. Definitions are on a downward slide. What was deviant fifty years ago is now par for the course. Whatever became of “sin” as a word? Like everything else that would expose the cause of our present distresses, it has been downgraded to “indiscretion or short-coming” in the church, and to “crime” by society. I’m sure many of us can remember those infamous words by the US President; “I never had sex with that woman”.

God has left us in no doubt as to what the nature of our relationship with Him is founded on, 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, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, Gideon, Samuel and David, all these men, under varying circumstances raised 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 whoever, 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 to make your own decision about that. But one thing you cannot choose is 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 from. 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 ever built an altar. Until God separated them, Abraham could not move forward.

Prayer: *Lord who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. And may the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer. (Psalms 19:14 KJV)*



WEEK THREE

WAS IT AN INCIDENT OR A PRECEDENT?

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Was the master setting a ‘precedent’ or was it just an incident that took place on that fateful night before His shameful betrayal and death? Surely the answer to that question would be apparent to even a child? 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 involved in so much activity, they have muddled their 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 so blind, that like those in Laodicea 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 have we 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? Have we become so addicted to memorialising our ministries that we have forgotten that God is the central fact of Christianity? With so much emphasis on becoming successful it's no wonder Christians are frightened to put their dreams under the spotlight of His Word. We are offered 7 steps to this; 8 ways to that; how to achieve our goals; how to overcome a poverty syndrome; 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 us nothing material to perpetuate
His memory except bread and wine.**

Prayer: *Your ways Dear Lord are so practical and wise. Just two common elements bread and wine, (accessible even to the poorest) are all that is necessary for a repast to invite You to be the honoured guest at our Table.*

WEEK FOUR

WITH RESPECT

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Revelation 4:8-11 The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worshipped him.....saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

Honour to who honour is due:

Honour your father and your mother, as the Lord your God commanded you; that your days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with you, in the land which the Lord your God gives you. Deuteronomy 5:16.

Malachi 1:6 “If then I be a father, where is mine honour? And if I be a master, where is my fear saith the Lord of hosts?” (KJV)

Psalm 26:8 “Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where your honour dwells”. {*Heb.* of the tabernacle of thy honour} (KJV)

Sadly disrespect is a characteristic of the age in which we live, even among members of the body of Christ.

Throw me the “bread” cried one brother to another during the communion service, next thing the loaf flew through the air to reach the intended amid a chorus of chuckles. It certainly is great to be free? I do not question the love these brothers have for the Lord, but where is the respect and honour due HIS name?

In our efforts to “be cool” and shake off the shackles of orthodoxy, could it be that we have lost sight of the purpose for which this ordinance was inspired?

It is not our intention to scare people away from this feast of forgiveness and grace, but shouldn't we show due respect to the one it is supposed to honour?

To fulfil the apostolic injunction demands that we take time to tarry in His presence, to examine ourselves, and allow Him to speak to us individually; nobody else can do that for us. This should take place each time we come around the Table of the Lord. If we did, we would undoubtedly be a lot healthier spiritually, and physically.

The World takes time to observe and honour the passing of its dignitaries in politics and sport, while Anzac Day, and Memorial Day, and the birth of our respective nations are honoured by a day of celebration and rest.

The honour that is due to the King of Kings is not only a remembrance of His death, but should be an out flowing of love and adoration by the beneficiaries of His priceless sacrifice.

Prayer: *We humbly come into Your holy presence with clean hands and pure hearts today dear Lord, to say thank You once again for your great love and care.*

WEEK FIVE

LOOKING AT SOME PRACTICAL ISSUES

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

Who has the right to participate in communion? Every one that knows the Lord can “do this”. Where can we have it? You are not limited to doing in a church building. Many couples take it together in their homes. My wife and I seek to do so daily. You can do it in your home with your family, and, or your friends. At a picnic, in the open air! In the office at work! In fact He has promised to be anywhere that two or three are gathered together in His name. This is the basic building block of His community. If He is in the midst, then surely this is sufficient. He should be welcome in all our activities.

It’s not necessary for a member of the Clergy to be present. You don’t need to get their permission or anybody else’s for that matter. We have the Lord’s command and He has given us His authority and that overrules all else. We should do it “oft”, or at the least more than once in a while. It takes just two true hearts with two elements, (bread and wine) that’s all that’s necessary. Open your home, have an ‘Open Table’, by that I mean make it open to any member of the body of Christ who wishes to participate. That’s true “church in your house”.

What should we do when we come to the Table of the Lord?

The Apostolic injunction should always be to the forefront in our thinking. “Let a man examine himself and so let him eat”. More than mercy is found here; it’s an altar for reconciliation; for re-alignment in our lives. It’s a place where can we receive forgiveness for present sin; and grace to overcome in the future? It’s where we can find health and vitality for every area of our lives.

Self examination: We need to go back no further than to the last time we broke bread with the Lord. Any thing further back than this the

Holy Spirit will bring to our remembrance. We do not come to this Table to dredge up our past failures and confess the same old sins over and over again. We come with grateful hearts for His forgiveness, to remember His death for us; His triumph over Hell and the grave; His Majestic ascension into Heaven; and to commemorate the beginning of His glorious reign as He is seated at the Father's right hand.

There is no rule about whether the elements should be this or that But if alcoholic wine could be a stumbling block to any, it should not be used. A whole loaf; or a few simple unleavened crackers is all that's necessary for bread. The memorial of His great sacrifice, and the centrality of the reason for which He came is surely the purpose of this ordinance.

Galatians 6:14. KJV "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

Lighten up. It's not a funeral service. He rose again on the third day. And that's not all; He is coming again to take us to be with Him forever. Furthermore every time we break bread together we remind the principalities and powers their time is short, and that He is coming soon. And so we sing and give thanks with grateful hearts and happy expectation as we enjoy our hope.

Malachi 3:16-17 KJV "Then they that feared the Lord spoke often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, said the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spares his own son that serves him".

Prayer: *May we go about our business today with music in our hearts and songs of praise upon our lips as we remember your great love for us You truly are worthy to receive glory and honour.*

WEEK SIX

COME AND LET US SUP WITH HIM

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

Reading: Revelation 3:20 “Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me” KJV.

Every time we as believers gather together at the Lord’s Table, the Lord desires to share that supper, “the last supper” with us. There must be that hearing of His voice, and the opening of the door of our heart. He says to the bride in Song of Solomon 5:2: “Open to Me. The Lord, in speaking to the Church in Laodicea, promises the individual that He would come in to him and they would supper together. What a promise! It is personal and intimate fellowship and eating together. The Scriptures speak of three suppers, each of which point to the other.

1. The Passover Supper

For 1500 years the nation of Israel had celebrated the Passover Supper. It consisted of the body of the slain lamb, bitter herbs, and unleavened bread. In the original Passover, the blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the two side posts and the lintel of the door. The details are to be found in Exodus Chapter 12. This Passover Supper pointed forward to the Lord’s Supper.

2. The Lord’s Supper

Paul speaks of the Communion as partaking of the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20). Jesus asked the disciples to prepare the Passover Supper (Luke 22:7-13), and it was at this time that He established the Lord’s Supper.

For His time on earth, it was “the last supper”.

It consisted of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. The bread symbolized His broken body and the cup symbolized His shed blood. The Lord's Supper replaced the Passover Supper, for Jesus Himself became the true Passover lamb. He sacrificed His body and shed His blood on the cross. As the sinless Lamb of God, He experienced the bitterness of the wages of our sins. This Supper pointed forward to another supper that He will sit down with us to partake of when He returns; the marriage supper of the lamb.

3. The Marriage Supper

The apostle John tells us to be glad and rejoice, for the marriage of the lamb is come. Blessed are those who are called to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19:7-9). The Lamb of God is still the pre-eminent One. Christ will be joined to His bride, the church, and the Marriage Supper is the great reception which follows this Divine - wedding. What a supper that will be, when the redeemed of all ages gather around that heavenly table of the Lord!

The Passover Supper pointed forward to the Lord's Supper. This was a futuristic look. The Lord's Supper points back to the first Passover Supper. Our observance of that Last Supper points forward to His return, and to the marriage Supper of Christ and His Church. Let us that have ears hear His voice, open the door of our hearts and allow Him to come in and sup with us! It is the Lord's Supper!

Prayer: *How privileged we feel to be invited "oft" to this simple yet sublime feast. At great personal cost You have chosen us to freely take our place around Your Table. How grateful we are to sup together in the same manner that the disciples did on that first Passover night so long ago.*

WEEK SEVEN

DO ‘THIS’ IN REMEMBRANCE OF ME

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

Reading: Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11: 24-25 “This do in remembrance of Me.”

These words of our Lord are only to be found in Luke’s Gospel concerning the account of the Lord’s Supper. These are some of the Lord’s last words. The Last words of people about to die take on much significance. Most people like to think on the last words of someone they love, words spoken before their death.

“In those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sin every year” (Hebrews 10:3). The constant sacrifices of animals were a continual reminder to Israel of their sins. But by the New Covenant blood of Jesus, our sins and our iniquities are remembered no more (Heb 8:12; 10:17). As we partake of the Lord’s Table, there are many things to remember.

Jesus said: “But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name; He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26).

One of the great definitions of “remembrances” is as follows. It is bringing the power and reality of the past into the present. It is making the past events present realities! This is the ministry of the Holy Spirit; making past events present realities! It is not merely the effort of the mind endeavouring to project back to the past. It is the power of the Holy Spirit bringing the power of the past into the present!

As we depend on the ministry of the Holy Spirit, each time we take Communion, the Holy Spirit will bring to our remembrance the words which Jesus spoke, “Do this in remembrance of me!”

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.

“It’s not concerning every truth the Lord has appointed an ordinance to keep its memory 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 any would be so rash concerning that matter.

To those who claim Christ is their Master, but rarely obey this command.

Let me ask you, when did He give you special exemption from the observance of this ordinance? Don’t you think that if He thought it wise to ordain it, 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?”

It is the privilege of those who are saved to show their obedience to Christ and their love to Him by coming to his table. 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 ever 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 which I did for the good of your soul, mean so little to you?”

Exodus 28:29. “Whenever Aaron enters the Holy place he will bear the names of the sons of Israel over his heart”.

Prayer: *Father, my heart is full of gratitude for the ministry carried on by Jesus my great High priest. I thank You for Him who carries my name upon His heart as He stands before You to make intercession on my behalf. Today I remember the price He paid as I break bread and drink the cup in honour of His name.*



WEEK EIGHT

THIS IS MY BODY – THIS IS MY BLOOD

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

Reading: Matthew 26:26-29. “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread and said, this is My Body and He took the cup... saying, this is My Blood. It would be interesting to have some insight into the thoughts of the Twelve as they listened to the words of Jesus at this “last supper”. What did they think He meant when He spoke of the bread as His body and the cup as His blood?

Even though the disciples may not at that time, have understood the full significance of the Lord’s words, they at least understood the importance of the body and blood of the sacrifices and oblations of the Mosaic Covenant. The disciples did come to understand the significance of the Lord’s Table after His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to glory.

Israel had been given the laws concerning sacrifices and oblations that were to be offered upon God’s altar. Nothing was left to the mind or imagination of man. God Himself gave intricate particulars concerning that which was to be done with the body and blood of the sacrificial victims. The instructions are detailed in Leviticus, Chapters 1-7, as well as Numbers 18 and Leviticus 16. The offerings were fivefold, as seen here:

1. The Burnt Offering (Leviticus 1)
2. The Meal Offering (Leviticus 2)
3. The Peace Offering (Leviticus 3)
4. The Sin Offering (Leviticus 4)
5. The Trespass Offering (Leviticus 5).

The first three were “voluntary”. “The last two were compulsory”.

Generally speaking, the bodies of the burnt offering and peace offering were burnt on the altar of God. The blood was poured out at the base of the altar before God. The bodies of the sin and trespass offering were taken outside the camp. The blood was brought within the sanctuary veil, especially on the great Day of Atonement (Read also Hebrews 13:10-14). The disciples would have knowledge of these things of the law.

Jesus' body was nailed to the cross, outside the camp of Judaism. Jesus' blood was poured out in sacrifice for our sins in His death. But because His body and blood were both incorruptible, in His ascension, Jesus' body and blood are now in heaven. His sacrifice abolished all animal sacrifices. God, the Father, no longer accepts the body and blood of animal sacrifices. John the Baptist said: Behold, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29, 36). The Father said: This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased (Matt 3:17).

How grateful we can be that the body and blood of Jesus is a perfect sacrifice for sin and sins, which the body and blood of animals could never be, although they were ordained of God.

In the Old Testament, the blood of animals only covered sin, but could never cleanse sin (Leviticus 17:11). In the New Testament, the blood of Jesus does not cover sin, but it cleanses sin (1 John 1:7; Revelation 1:5). This is the power of the New Covenant in "My blood".

As we take the bread we understand more clearly His words "This is My Body broken for you. And as we drink from the cup we understand more clearly His words, "This is My Blood of the New Covenant". Let us eat and drink and be thankful for His supreme sacrifice!

Prayer: *You came and voluntarily laid Your life down for us. No one took it from You; but You willingly offered it up by the eternal Spirit for us, we just want to say to You today that we are grateful.*

WEEK NINE

THE NEW COVENANT

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Matt 26:26-27; “This is My blood of the New Covenant”.

The nation of Israel was familiar with the whole concept of covenant. The making of and entering into covenant was a very sacred and solemn act. Most nations of antiquity had some form of covenant making. God Himself is a covenant-making and a covenant-keeping God. We can think of the covenant with Adam, His covenant with Noah, His covenant with Abraham, His covenants with Israel, with David and others.

There are various ways in which tribes of different nations entered covenant. One of the most common ways was this. Each of the persons would “cut the covenant” by cutting their flesh (like the arm), and mingling their bloods together. They made promises to each other. All that each had belonged to the other if and when ever such would be needed. They became blood-brothers. For any one to break the covenant, it meant death. Native American Indians would hold their wrists aloft to show those they encountered that they were in covenant relationships with many others, and so their enemies were warned, if you harm me you will have to answer to my covenant brothers.

When God made covenant with Abraham, He “made” (lit.; “cut the covenant”) a covenant by sacrifice. In Genesis 15 we see how God told Abraham to take certain sacrifices; a heifer, a ram, a goat and a dove and pigeon. God told Abraham to divide the animals in two, but not the birds. At evening time, God caused a burning lamp to pass between the pieces of the sacrifice as God Himself made promises to Abraham. The making of the covenant was on the basis of sacrifice;

the body and blood of the sacrificial victims. God has indeed kept His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He is a covenant-making and a covenant-keeping God.

When Jesus said to the Twelve, “This is My blood of the New Covenant, they understood in a certain measure the importance of covenant as a covenant people. When Jesus said these words, it was in fulfilment of the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:31-34.

Jeremiah foretold the fact that the days would come when the Lord would make a NEW Covenant with the House of Israel and House of Judah.

Jesus, at the Communion Table, established the New Covenant or New Testament in His own body and blood. We are no longer under the Old or Mosaic Covenant. We are under the New Covenant. We are a covenant people. We are in covenantal relationship with God through Christ, and also with one another. As we partake of the bread and cup, we are partaking of a covenant table. Let us be like our Lord. Let us keep covenant with the Lord and with one another. Let us not be covenant-breakers (Romans 1:31), as those who know not the Lord Jesus.

Through the New Covenant, and the blood of Jesus, we are blood brothers and sisters. We are the blood related family of God. What a privilege, what a joy to be a New Covenant believer in a New Covenant Church with a New Covenant Saviour! Let us keep covenant in true love, faith and obedience to Christ and His Church!

Prayer: *Dear Father I claim from You the fulfilment of Your New Covenant promise, that You would write Your Law upon my heart, and remember my sins and iniquities no more. How wonderful to hear You say; thy faith has saved thee, go and sin no more!*

WEEK TEN

PREPARE THE PASSOVER

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: 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 Corinthians 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 us.
- 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. May our hearts ever be prepared to meet with our blessed Lord and Saviour?

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

Prayer: *Teach us O Lord not only to bear our cross but to love Your cross. And as we take it up and carry it, may we come to know that it actually carries those who carry it.*

WEEK ELEVEN

GOD IS SUPPOSED TO LOVE US SO WHAT ON EARTH'S GONE WRONG?

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: John 3:16. 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, 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 shall 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 on, 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.

Prayer: *Give us hearts that understand, and grant us grace to embrace the love You have for each one of us, and all your creation.*

WEEK TWELVE

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

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND THE SON

Reading: 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?”

As I reflect over years of service, pioneering, shepherding, and travelling 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, a loved one with terminal illness, or perhaps it was 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

often in short supply. This is born out by the lack of their evidence in the lives of so many 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 now I am still grieving over the death of a fine young Christian who left a wife and three young children after he lost his battle against cancer. It's convenient at times like this to quote clichés and hyper-faith formulas and say "he had no faith", and just brush it off by blaming the deceased. Many times I've heard Christians say, "Well maybe it was their time to go." Our youngest son died when only a baby, nothing will ever convince me it was his time to go. I know that one day we shall go to him, but that's not the point here. I have known many dear 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 need to be addressed because they are the cause of much of our distress. As we continue to read these devotional essays I pray that God will open our hearts and minds to see His perfect provision for our spiritual dilemma.

Prayer: *Dear Lord Jesus, give us second sight we beseech thee. Help us to remove the beam out of our eyes so that we may see more clearly to walk on a higher-plane with thee and one another.*

WEEK THIRTEEN

WHAT JESUS DIDN'T SAY

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: (Luke 2: 50, RSV; John 4: 34-35, Phillips; John 10: 6, RSV; John 21: 17b-23, NIV; Acts 1: 7-8, RSV)

They did not understand the saying which he spoke to them. Jesus said to them, 'My food is doing the will of him who sent me, and finishing the work he has given me. Don't you say, "Four months more and then comes the harvest"? But I tell you to open your eyes and look at the fields; they are gleaming white, all ready for harvest!' This allegory Jesus used with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' He said, 'Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you.' Jesus said, 'Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.' Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, 'Follow me!' Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. . . . When Peter saw him he asked, 'Lord, what about him?' Jesus answered, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.' Because of this the rumour spread that John would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, 'If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?'

He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority but you shall be my witnesses.'

There were many times when Jesus' followers misunderstood him. Worse, there is evidence that they developed their own beliefs, theories and practices around their misunderstanding. Then they reinforced their errors by claiming that they were acting by his word and with his authority and blessing. Such claims have blighted the church in every period of history, including the present. We are probably all guilty of it to some extent.

After Peter had renewed his confession of love for Jesus, he became curious about what Jesus had in store for others, so he enquired about John. Jesus replied, 'If John lives on until I come again, what business is that of yours?' That was the fact. But it didn't take long for the simple, direct word of Jesus to be woven into a theory about the second coming. The rumour spread that John would not die before Jesus came!

So when John was turning ninety, speculation grew and the air was filled with anticipation of the Lord's return! Some left their crops. Others deserted their families and neglected their houses. So the Gospel writer felt it was high time to set the record straight. 'Jesus did not say that John would not die,' He said only that if John lives on until I come, 'what business is that of yours?'

Such beliefs may be held sincerely but that makes them all the more damaging. Apartheid was held by many sincere people as a divinely ordained order of society. This kind of thing usually happens when Law is exalted above love, and doctrine above relationships, and orthodoxy is mistaken for faith. Christianity is not about speculation and theory. It is about loving relationship, obedience and real life.

One reason we go off on 'tangents' is because it avoids real issues. Although it may be done unwittingly, it still side steps the call to 'follow me' and the costly demands on self to discipleship. We take a word of Jesus, and rationalize it to our satisfaction. In hindsight we can see what it has led to throughout history, inquisitions and the

proliferation of cults. Each claims the authority of the divine word. So off they flew to Toronto, and Pensacola?

But Jesus relentlessly brings us back to the issue, as he did with Peter. When the first disciples wanted to speculate about the time for the kingdom to come he said bluntly, ‘It isn’t for you to worry about times and seasons. These are set by the Father’s authority. Here’s the real issue — you are to be witnesses to me. Here, first, then beyond. We must not build on what Jesus didn’t say. We know what he did say to Peter and what he has said to us, that is — ‘Follow me’!

Prayer: *Lord set me free from making wrong evaluations. How easily we latch onto things that are none of our concern. O Lord, help us to build on what Jesus **did** say i.e. “follow me”. Today we come to break bread in remembrance of You, not just because You told us too, but because we delight to Thy will.*



WEEK FOURTEEN

THEY SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK AND THEN ROSE UP TO PLAY

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND SON

Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:7 Verses 1-7. KJV “Neither be idolaters, as were some of them, as it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play...”

It is in connection and the context of Communion that Paul exhorts the Corinthian believers not to be like their forefathers in their evil ways. Paul tells the Corinthians that the things which happened to Israel were for types and examples to us and are written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the age are come Vs 6, 11.

It is especially in the Corinthian Epistle that Paul covers much of Israel’s experience with God. He, in several interpretative verses, deals with whole chapters of Exodus and Numbers as he uses them in admonition to the believers.

1. In 1 Corinthians 5 Paul speaks of Christ being our Passover lamb, sacrificed for us. He also speaks of keeping the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This summarizes Exodus Chapters 12-13.

2. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-2 Paul speaks of Israel being baptized in the cloud and in the sea in the baptism of a whole nation. These are interpretative verses covering Exodus Chapters 13-14 where Israel passed through the Red Sea and was led by the cloud of the Holy Spirit.

3. In 1 Corinthians 10:3-4 Paul speaks of the manna which fell from heaven and the waters which came from the smitten rock. He speaks of these things as spiritual meat and spiritual drink. These interpretative verses cover Exodus Chapters 16-17.

But now Paul states that with many of these Israelites, God was not well pleased. They were overthrown in the Wilderness. Jude 5 speaks

of it as “saved...and then destroyed”. Paul reminds the Corinthians that these were examples that they should not lust after evil things as Israel did.

The first example of warning is about idolatry. “Do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, the people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play. Here Paul deals with Exodus Chapters 32-33 on the golden calf idolatry. The warning is clear.

- Israel had been delivered from Egypt by the body and blood of the Passover lamb. So had the Corinthian believers in Christ. So have we.
- Israel had been baptized in the Red Sea. So the Corinthians had been water baptized. So have we.
- Israel had been baptised in the cloud. So the Corinthians had been baptized in the Holy Spirit. So have we.
- Israel had been partakers of the manna and the waters; spiritual food and spiritual drink. So had the Corinthians partaken of Christ? So have we.
- But now, Israel falls into an idolatrous feast, eating and drinking and playing at this golden calf festival. The word “play” in both Hebrew and Greek means “to laugh outright in merriment or scorn.

So Paul warns the Corinthians - and us - that it is possible, like Israel, to participate in the blessings of God, and then lapse into idolatry and death (1 Corinthians 5:11; 10:14). After we, as believers, eat and drink of the Lord’s Table, what do we rise up to do? Are there idols in our lives that need to be thrown down, destroyed, so that Jesus can be truly Lord alone? Do we “eat and drink” and then “rise up to play” with the things of this idolatrous world system? This is the challenge in this word of Paul at Communion time! May we “eat and drink” and “rise up to serve the true and living God” and be separate from an idolatrous world system!

Prayer: *May we never take for granted Thy provision for us as we journey through this barren wilderness to Canaan.*

WEEK FIFTEEN

LET THE REALITY EXCEED THE IMAGERY

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: John 6:48-51. “I am the bread of life, your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread which cometh down out of heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eats of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world”.

The above quotation by Jesus had been preceded by the miraculous feeding of the 5000 which was an object lesson on what He was about to teach. The multitude had followed Him for 3 days and was faint for the lack of bread. The disciples seeing the condition asked Jesus to send them away to which Jesus responded, “give ye them to eat”. Finding a lad with five loaves and two small fishes they brought them to Jesus. He took them in His hands, blessed them and divided them and proceeded to give them to the disciples, who in turn fed them to the multitude until all were filled.

There are just two symbolical ordinances in the Christian Church, believers’ baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Sadly both have been misinterpreted, perverted, and abused. While many groups have given one or both of them up altogether, we believe that in this matter they have been disobedient to the Word of God. 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.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper typifies, and 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.

Hebrews 4:16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

Hebrews 10:18-20 now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

Vs 63 "It is the spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing: the words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, are life".

Prayer: *Lord we thank You for the boldness we have to come into Your presence with exceeding joy; and the boldness that You have given us to stand tall not only in this present hour but also on that great day when all men shall stand before You. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as He is, so are we in this world. 1 John 4:17 KJV.*

WEEK SIXTEEN

EATING & DRINKING WITH HIM NEW IN THE KINGDOM

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Mark 14:22-25 “And as they were eating, he took bread, and when he had blessed, he broke it, and gave to them, and said, Take ye: this is my body. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave to them: and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Verily I say unto you, I shall no more drink of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it with you new in the kingdom of God”.

Jesus had been eating and drinking with them physically for years but during the “last supper” he told the disciples that He would not eat and drink again with them until He did so in the Kingdom. He did so several times after His resurrection with His disciples.

Acts 10:40-41 Him God raised up the third day, and showed him openly; not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before of God, even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead.

The unbelieving world never saw Jesus after His resurrection but His disciples saw Him on several occasions in His post resurrection body, and each time He ate and drank with them in His spiritual body. He had communion with them. He was known unto the disciples on the Emmaus road (Luke 24:28-35) in the breaking of the bread. Later in the same day He ate with the eleven. He ate with the disciples at the seaside. They knew this was the risen Christ. What was He doing? He was fulfilling His promise to them that when He came into His kingdom He would eat with them.

In the absolute truest sense Jesus is in His Kingdom now, and we can be sure that every time we partake of the bread – His broken body - and the cup - His precious blood, He is present with us.

Prayer: *How wonderful to know that where two or three are gathered together in Your name there You are in the midst. Truly our fellowship today around the table is with You Father and Your precious Son Jesus Christ.*



WEEK SEVENTEEN

OUR DAILY WALK

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND SON

Reading: Psalm 116: 13.

“I will take the cup of Salvation and call upon the name of the Lord”.

“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 covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins” Matthew 26: 27 28.

Every Christian disciple should partake of the Lord’s Supper. It is a Sacrament. In the days of the Roman republic, the youths were brought to the altar and sworn to serve their country to the death. So our participation in Communion is our oath of allegiance to our King. It is a proclamation, or confession, of our faith. We bear witness to the death of Christ as our hope of forgiveness and salvation. We testify our desire to put His cross and grave between us and the world. It is also a bond of Christian union.

It is a Pledge of the Covenant. The Death of the Cross was God’s sign and seal to the new covenant, the provisions of which are found in Heb 8: 6. “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises”.

When we drink the wine it is as though we said: “Remember thy Covenant.” Let us all, and especially to the young disciple, draw near and take the bread and wine, and meditate deeply and reverently on that supreme Gift which demands our self-giving. “What shall I render unto the Lord? I will take the cup of salvation, I will pay my vows” (Ps. 116: 13, 14).

The idiom used in this Psalm is remarkable: “I will take the cup of salvation.” When we enquire what salvation, we read in v16 “Thou hast loosed my bonds”; and we are reminded of Rev 1: 5, “Unto Him that loved us, and loosed us from our sins by His blood”. Where once we were tied and bound by our sins and sinful habits, Our Lord looses us by His cross.

Notice how triumphantly the Psalmist avows his loyalty to his Heavenly Master. Again, and yet again he avows: “O Lord, truly I am thy servant. I am thy servant.” And we also are the servants or bond-slaves of Jesus Christ. When asked what “the sacrifices of thanksgiving” are, we reply: Firstly the sacrifice of ourselves (Rom 12:1); next the sacrifice of our praise and then the sacrifice of our gifts (Heb 8: 15, 16) offered cheerfully and not grudgingly because of all we owe to Him. So let us come to the altar of God, let us never cease to live and praise and serve him.

Prayer: *We pray that as we eat and drink, we shall be strengthened with all power in the inner man to do whatever You have given us to do. In so doing may we show forth Your life. May the spirit of worship pervade every act of our daily lives?*

WEEK EIGHTEEN

SELF EXAMINATION FOR PURIFICATION

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND SON

Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:20-21 “When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's Supper, for in eating every one takes before another his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunk Vs 34 And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation”.

1 Corinthians 11:27 “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, but let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup”. Vs 31 “For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged, and the rest will I set in order when I come”.

In Corinthians chapter 10 we see how the members in general and their leaders in particular had to be responsible for the church's purity refusing to admit unbelievers as part of the committed body, and judging sin among Christians. They were to clear out the yeast of malice and wickedness from the house of God just as Jews used to go through their houses and throw out any remaining yeast before the Passover.

In this respect it is virtually impossible for this cleansing to happen in the modern church because firstly not all churches celebrate the Lord's Supper. The Lord's command in this regard has been largely ignored, either by design or through the ignorance of their leaders.

Secondly only known sin can be dealt with. For the most part we are all taken on trust, for no person can know with certainty the heart

of another brother or sister. In these matters we have often been greatly deceived. Even in marriage partners have betrayed one another. Many a Judas has infiltrated the ranks of true hearts.

And so there is also a personal aspect to the judgment which God requires of us. ‘Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord,’ as Paul points out. Therefore, he continues, ‘a man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup’ (1 Corinthians 11:27-28). Why, because by exercising proper self-judgment, he will avoid the judgment of God (v3 1).

Prayer: *May we always remember that the apostolic rule (“Let a man examine himself”) applies to each one of us whenever we meet to break bread and drink the cup together. In that way it will always be to us “A cup of blessing”.*

WEEK NINETEEN

DON'T BE A WORM

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND SON

Reading: Romans 8:1-2 “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death”.

What does self-examination mean? First of all let us see once and for all what it **doesn't** mean: It doesn't mean that I should be saying to myself, 'I'm a wretched sinner'; utterly unworthy of the love of God. Therefore I'll humbly sit back and let the bread and the wine pass by, because if I partake of them I will call down God's judgment upon myself.

The worm mentality can be a deterrent to the celebration of the covenant meal if we allow it. It is usually the result of ignorance, or wrong teaching, or a combination of both. Certainly, we respect the commandments as the expression of God's will for us, but we remember that 'by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law of sin and death so that we can live in the kingdom by a new and living way. Not in the old way by a 'written code' Romans 7:6.

There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus Romans 8:1. So why would we come cringing into God's presence when we have been justified by faith through our Lord Jesus Christ Romans 5:1? Far from cringing, we should approach the throne of grace with thanksgiving and confidence in our hearts Hebrews 4:16.

My little children let us not love in word, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him; for if our heart condemns us, God is greater than

our heart, and knows all things. Beloved, if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. 1 John 3:18-21. Of course I'm unworthy! We all are. But the gospel message is that Jesus Christ has put to our account His worthiness as a gift due to His saving grace. Having received 'God's abundant provision and the gift of righteousness' let us come boldly to His Table Romans 5:17.

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” Hebrews 10:22.

Far from keeping away from Him we have been encouraged to draw near often, and what better place is there than to this memorial table where He awaits our coming as a father who longs for the company of His family. At this point some might throw up their hands protesting that this is promoting justification while ignoring sanctification. We need to understand clearly the difference between our righteous standing before God and our present imperfect state. I appreciate what has been called 'the standing paradox of sanctification' — that the more Christlike we become, the more we realize remains in us still to be conformed to his image. But that realization, far from being a cause for us to draw back, is meant to spur us on. Doesn't the Master say that the state of those that hunger and thirst after righteousness is a “blessed one”?

“Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as he is, and every man that has this hope in him **purifies himself**, even as He is pure” 1 John 3:2-3. Why would the Lord instruct us to come to His Table as dear friends “off” if all He wanted to do was chastise us”?

Prayer: *Psalm 23 Thank you Lord for this Table that You have furnished for us in the presence of our enemies. While they may but look upon it, we come to partake of it as invited guests. Truly our cup runneth over.*

WEEK TWENTY

NO PARTICULAR TIME IS STRESSED BUT THE MANNER OF ITS OBSERVENCE IS

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

1 Cor 11:26 “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, you show the Lord's death till he come”. As Oft – daily (Acts 2:46), weekly (Acts 20:7), or anytime you do this you show the Lord’s death until He comes again.

The Holy Spirit specifies no particular time, and we are under no specific law, which binds us to only one particular time even though the original was observed in the evening. Our Lord leaves it very much up to us to observe it as suits an occasion; 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 Lord and Saviour more often than we do. A simple feast, even of bread and wine, often celebrated, could easily become treated with casual disrespect and misapplied. Consequently 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 severe caution which we shall now look at.

This examination is necessary as Paul explains 1 Corinthians 11:

“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 think once more on the text itself, and observe how we are called to examine ourselves as we come to the table of the Lord.

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 condemn a soul than to save one, because he that eats and drinks carelessly may be eating and drinking to his own hurt.

Perhaps in the past we may have come to this solemn feast without serious thought to the proper preparation of our hearts. It is anyone's guess as to how much God has chastised His people 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".

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 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.

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. 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.

Prayer: *How wonderful is our Saviours love. He had no tears for His own grief, but shed great drops of blood for ours. Thank You for taking my sins and sorrows and making them yours.*

WEEK TWENTY ONE

TAKE TIME TO REFLECT.

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND SON

Reading: Luke 22:19 “And he took bread, and gave thanks, and broke it, and gave unto them, saying, this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. May we never fall into a casual familiarity with the bread which betokens his body, or an over-casualness about the death of Christ, who ‘bore our sins in his body on the tree’ (1 Peter 2:24). We need to take into account the awesome cost by which we were redeemed from slavery and death, and reconciled to God by the death of the Saviour. To reflect on the following can be a help.

Reflect on Gethsemane where He sweated great drops of blood.

Reflect on His betrayal and arrest in the garden.

Reflect on His mock trial with no man to speak on His behalf.

Reflect on how He walked the winepress of God’s wrath alone.

Reflect on the stripes on His back, and the crown of thorns on His head.

Reflect on His nail pierced hands and feet.

Reflect on His being forsaken of God when made sin for us.

Reflect on His cruel and agonizing death on the cross.

Reflect on His willing obedience to the Father’s will to send Him to the cross.

Reflect on His promise to eat and drink with us new in the Kingdom.

Reflect on His last words to the dying and repentant thief.

Reflect on His triumphant resurrection.

Reflect on His glorious ascension with His firstfruits.

Reflect on how all power has been given unto Him in Heaven and in Earth.

Remember how He ever lives to make intercession for us.

Prayer: *Lest we forget Gethsemane*
 Lest we forget Thine agony
 Lest we forget Thy love for us
 Lead us to Calvary



WEEK TWENTY TWO

THE SPIRIT BY WHICH WE COME

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND SON

In a ‘State of Grace’.

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. It might have fooled his confessor, but not God.

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 such scant attention is paid to it 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”.

How grievous it is when there are those among us, who doubtless are partaking of the Lord’s Supper unworthily.” To our great sorrow

some have dared to come to the communion table while harbouring an unforgiving spirit. “If a man says, I love God, and hate 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 foolish enough 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.”

Prayer:

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, by Natalie Joy Arnett.

WEEK TWENTY THREE

THE TABLE THE PLACE OF INTIMACY

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Luke 23: 33-35 KJV “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.**”

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 together. 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 spent many hours that day expounding scriptures from all the prophets that referred to His death.

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 knows 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.

Prayer: *This is my story this is my song, praising my Saviour all the day long.*

WEEK TWENTY FOUR

THE BREAD OF HIS PRESENCE

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Exodus 25:23-30 “the table of shewbread”.

In this passage of Scripture we have the command of the Lord to Moses for the making of the Table of Shewbread. We find that the bread for the Table was prepared every Sabbath day (Numbers 4:7; 1 Kings 7:48; 1 Chronicles 9:32; 23:29).

The Table upon which the Shewbread was placed was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold. It was placed here each week on the Sabbath day. The shewbread is properly translated “The Bread of His Presence”, or, more literally, “The Presence Bread”.

This bread had been in the Sanctuary of the Lord, in His Tabernacle, His dwelling place, for seven days. In His Presence, the bread did not become stale or dry, but it stayed fresh. It was undoubtedly impregnated richly with fragrance from the Golden Altar where evening and morning the officiating priest burned incense. It was indeed “The Presence Bread”. It could only be eaten by the priesthood after it had been in the Presence of the Lord for seven days.

The Shewbread symbolized the Lord God as their diet, just as a sample of the manna which fell from heaven during the forty years of the Wilderness journeying was placed in the in the Ark of the Covenant, as a memorial of their food supply. The Lord wanted to teach His people, Israel, that “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God” (Deuteronomy 8:2-3). God’s word is bread and believers are sustained by its life giving qualities.

The Shewbread represented the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, the Bread of Life, which came down from heaven, of which a man may eat thereof and not die (John 6).

Jesus is the Bread of Life. Jesus is the Bread of Heaven. Jesus is the embodiment and fulfilment of the Table of Shewbread. He is the Bread of God's Presence. Everywhere He went, He was "The Presence Bread". The fullness of Divine life and food was in Him. If anyone hungered after eternal realities, they could come and

This symbol finds its fullest expression, in the Table of the Lord - the Lord's Supper. The bread on the Table is "The Presence Bread".

How many of the people of God can testify as they partook of the Lord's Table, they knew His Presence in the breaking of the bread. As we believer-priests come in faith and obedience to His Table, may we always be fully aware of the nearness of His presence as we partake of the bread and the cup. "Where two or three are gathered together (in harmony together), there I AM in the midst of them" (Matthew 18:20).

In the Tabernacle God commanded that the "Shewbread" (Bread of His Presence) should always be eaten by the priests alone. None other were to touch it. It was holy unto the Lord. It was Jehovah revealed as the Bread of Life. His very Presence and His very life were in it. It was "the living bread" indeed!

Paul says, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till He come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). In other words He is "the show-bread".

Prayer: *How privileged we are dear Lord to be able to come with our brothers and sisters to eat and drink together. And as we do we sense Your Holy presence with us at the Table.*

WEEK TWENTY FIVE

LEAVING OUR FIRST LOVE

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Revelation 2:4-5. KJV 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?

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.”

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.

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.

1 Corinthians 5:7-8. “Therefore let us keep the (agape) feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

Remember 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.”

Prayer: *I cannot conceive coming together to worship You Lord without accepting Your invitation to eat and drink together.*

WEEK TWENTY SIX

DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: 1 Corinthians 11: 27 KJV

“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. 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 Lord's body.”

What does it mean to discern the Lord's body?

Every time we as believers gather together to take communion it is vitally important we understand what it is to truly discern the Lord's body.

What does this mean? Paul shows there are two aspects to the Lord's body.

One is His physical body. The other is His spiritual body the Church.

For our meditation let us take discerning His Physical Body first.

As we meditate upon the Scriptures, we find that the first aspect of discerning is His physical body. When Jesus took bread, and said to His disciples, “Take, eat, this is My body broken for you”, Jesus was referring to His physical body that was to be crucified. That body which was born of a virgin especially prepared for His incarnation that one day would be crucified. When He came into the world, He said, Sacrifice and offering you did not want, but a body have you prepared Me O God (Hebrews 10:5-6). It was in that body He took our sins.

Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness 1 Peter 2:24.

In that body He took our sicknesses and our diseases and died in our stead. And it is by His stripes we are healed (Isaiah 53).

In discerning His physical body, we discern that Jesus took our sins, our sicknesses, our diseases and our death. There is forgiveness, healing, health and wholeness and life in the body of Jesus, broken for us.

How many believers have been the poorer for their failure to discern this aspect of the Lord's body? How many see the Lord's Table only as a memorial service. But discerning the Lord's body is to have spiritual insight into all that Jesus suffered for us. How much His people have been robbed of because of their failure to see all He provided. Let us come in full assurance of His love for us, and receive from Him all He has provided. "Drink ye, and eat ye all of it". That includes healing.

Prayer: *How proud You rightly are of Your Son who finished the work You gave Him to do. We want You to know how much we appreciate His unselfish act that has provided for us this priceless gift of Salvation, procured at such great price. You are worthy to receive praise and worship for all You have done for us.*

King of my life I crown thee now
Thine shall the glory be
Lest I forget Thy love for me
Lead me to Calvary

WEEK TWENTY SEVEN

DISCERNING THE LORD'S SPIRITUAL BODY

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Discerning His Spiritual Body.

The other aspect of discerning the Lord's body has to do with the Church. Paul says the Church is the body of Christ. He tells the Corinthians that "we being many are one bread, and one body, for we are all partakers of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17).

Paul reminds the Corinthians that they are members one of another, members of the one body, the spiritual body of Christ.

It is evident that the Corinthian believers - as many believers today - were not discerning the Lord's body, the Church. It was for this cause many were sick, many weakly, and some even died prematurely for not discerning the Lord's body in His members. It is not just for the want of failing to discern the Lord's physical body that we are chastised, but for carnal attitudes towards our brothers and sisters who are members of His body.

At Corinth there was criticism, backbiting, jealousies, schisms, party spirit, personality groups, and law suits with brothers, strife, envies, immorality and a host of other carnalities. How could they truly discern the Lord's body in His members with such sin in their hearts?

The same is true today. As we come to the Lord's Table, we need to examine ourselves, making sure that we have no unresolved conflicts with any members of the body of Christ. There must be love and acceptance of one another as we gather to partake of His Table.

To “discern” means “to have spiritual insight into; perception into; proper judgment”.

As we think of the Lord’s physical body, and as we think of His spiritual body, the Church, and truly discern the Lord’s body, we can receive healing, strength and Divine life through His broken body and shed blood. This is what it means “to fully discern the Lord’s body!”

The person who eats and drinks unworthily brings judgment not only on himself but can seriously affect other members of the body.

God doesn’t change, so we are liable to similar penalties today if we indulge in similar vices. For our own instruction and safety therefore, let us examine our hearts before Him.

Prayer: *“Forgive us our trespasses O Lord, and help us to forgive those that have trespassed against us, and so deliver us from the consequences of an evil and unforgiving heart”.*

WEEK TWENTY EIGHT

AN OCCASION TO SING

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: 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 that Jesus partook of in company with His disciples before He went alone 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 to plunge; yet He had them sing “a hymn.” How amazing it is that on such an occasion He sang; and even more remarkable that they all sang.

Let us dwell a while on this fact that Jesus sang at such a time as this. What can we draw from this? If ever there was ever a time when it would have been natural and consistent with the gloominess 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 time when He might have withdrawn in solitude 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.”

During Passover, it was usual to sing the 113th Psalm and the following five Psalms called the “Hallel”. The first commences with “Praise ye the Lord!” 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. 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 shown 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. O 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 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 would see you hanging on a cross as a convicted criminal dying; 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 you 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. Others sing when things are at their brightest, but you sang on the darkest night. While others anticipate with cheerfulness some honour about to be bestowed on them, you had a song upon your lips when shame, pain and death were to be your portion.

Prayer: *We come today with songs of gladness and to welcome You into our midst dear Lord. Accept the fruit of our lips, as we give thanks to Your name.*

WEEK TWENTY NINE

WE CANNOT TRIFLE WITH HIS DEATH

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: 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 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 spouse was a drunkard. Their children 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 their church is sick. For this cause many are weak and sickly and many die prematurely. A weak fellowship is a sick one; conversely a strong fellowship is a healthy one.

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. 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, **feasting without fear**."

The body in general is weak in its power to witness because of 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 got to know my people quite well. Yet in spite of counselling some 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.

At a service I was taking a Doctor was 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 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."

Prayer: *When we forgive one another we know that we are on the right track, and can then assure our hearts before You. Please help us O lord to walk in loving harmony together, that You may be glorified.*

WEEK THIRTY

CHRIST APPEARS ON THE EMMAUS ROAD

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: 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 clouded that 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?”

“**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 break 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.”

Prayer: *We want to know You Lord, not just about You.*

WEEK THIRTY ONE

HIDDEN MANNA

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Revelation 2:17 “He that has an ear to hear let him hear, what the Spirit says to the Churches. To him that overcomes will I give to eat of the hidden manna.

The Church at Pergamos is given this great promise by the Lord. The one who hears what the Spirit is saying, the one who overcomes the evils that need to be repented of in Pergamos, that one is promised “hidden manna”. What is the hidden manna of which the Lord speaks? The children of Israel were very familiar with Manna, which means “What is it?” It fell from heaven for forty years in the Wilderness wanderings; from Mt Sinai to the Promised Land. Exodus Chapter 16, along with other Scriptures provides for us the details.

The manna was bread from heaven (Exodus 16:15; Nehemiah 9:20; John 6:31). Moses never did call it “Manna”; he said this is the bread the Lord has sent. The manna was white in colour (Exodus 16:31). It was round in shape (Exodus 16:14).

It was small in size (Exodus 16:14). It tasted like fresh oil and honey (Exodus 16:31). (Num 11:8). It fell with the dew in the night (Numbers 11:9). They had to “go outside their tents” to gather it fresh every morning except on the Sabbath. They had to gather a double portion on the sixth day. Except for the Sabbath it could not be kept over until the next day because stale manna bred worms. It was called angel’s food (Psalm 78:24-25).

It taught Israel to live by the Word of God, not just the daily bread (Deuteronomy 8:3, 4). The manna ceased the day after Israel entered the Promised Land. (Joshua 5:12).

Jesus Himself is the True Manna who came from heaven. He is the Bread of Life. All the things said about the manna find their spiritual significance and fulfilment in Him (John 6). As believers, we can eat and drink of Him. Paul speaks of the manna from heaven as “spiritual food”, and the waters from the rock as “spiritual drink” (1 Corinthians 10:3-4).

But here Jesus promises to give the overcomers “hidden manna” to eat. What is that? In Exodus 16:33-36 the Lord told Moses to tell Aaron to take a pot of manna and place it in the Ark of the Covenant as a testimony for their future generations. This manna remained there for many years until the Ark of God was placed in the temple (Hebrews 9:4 with 1 Kings 8:9).

The manna in the Ark was hidden from the eyes of man, but seen by the Lord.

The manna in the desert became corruptible if any Israelite did not eat it on the daily basis (Exodus 16:19-26). But the manna in the Ark remained incorruptible as long as it was in the Presence of the Lord and His glory. It was indeed “hidden manna”.

The true “hidden manna” is found in the Lord Jesus Christ, which a man may eat thereof and not die. Eating of the hidden manna is to eat of Jesus, to receive eternal life. He is the sinless One, the incorruptible One. He is the eternal One. To him who overcomes is promised that eternal life which alone is found in Jesus.

Every time we partake of the Table of the Lord, the bread which is His body it points to that “hidden manna” that is found in Him alone. We eat and drink by faith until He comes. He Himself is the “hidden manna”, unseen to our eyes on the throne of God. We know He is there because He lives in the power of an endless life which He imparts to us as we eat and drink of Him at His Table.

Prayer: *You are the bread of life, the substance of which the manna in the wilderness was but a shadow. We partake today with grateful hearts.*

WEEK THIRTY TWO

TRUE KOINONIA

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: 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”.

1 Corinthians 1:9. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord”. We have been called into “Koinonia”.

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.

To a Greek, Koinonia is social intercourse. It’s that thing that brings about intimacy. You cannot have a marriage without it. Marriage consists of the consummation of intimacy. What kind of a marriage would you have without intimacy, or you only came together once a quarter? When we come to the Lord’s Table we are building intimacy. The first thing that begins to happen when a marriage begins to fall apart is that any intimacy ceases. Christ refers to Himself as the bridegroom.

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 some 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.

The hub of their koinonia was Christ. The ordinance was designed to acknowledge His person with bread and wine. It kept their hearts pure and transparent towards Him and each other. The whole nature of koinonia demands plurality, the need to be dependent upon Christ and one another. God is not only calling individuals for His name’s sake, but a people also. He began by choosing twelve men, not one, and He has been building on that foundation ever since.

Prayer: *He brought me to His banqueting House and His banner over me was love. Song of Songs 2:4. You have done so much for us; we can never repay the ransom price of our souls. But there is one thing we can do, and we do it freely; we give You our love.*

WEEK THIRTY THREE

THAT WHICH I RECEIVED OF THE LORD

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:23-24 KJV “For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me”.

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 of the Lord, not from Peter, James, or John, or any of the original Twelve that which also I delivered unto you.” The only thing to teach and deliver to the people is what 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.”

The Lord established His Table with the Twelve as the Gospels clearly show. But there was something especially significant about the Table that, although not of the original Twelve, the Lord Jesus saw fit to give special revelation to Paul about that Table.

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures. And He was buried and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen...” (1 Corinthians 15:3-5). In this Paul sets out the Gospel very clearly:

1. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures
2. Christ was buried
3. Christ rose from the dead the third day according to the Scriptures
4. Christ was seen

So Paul received of the Lord the details of the Lord's Supper. How Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it and gave it to His disciples. He told His disciples to do this in remembrance of Him. Jesus likewise took the cup, saying, this cup is the New Covenant in His blood, and to drink it in remembrance of Him.

That which Paul received, he also delivered to the Corinthian Gentles. The Lord's Table was not for the Jews only but also for Gentiles. The Gospel was for both Jews and Gentiles who believed in Christ.

If the Lord's Table was only to be in the Gospels, and for believing Jews, then there was no need for the Lord Jesus to deliver it to Paul to write to a Gentile Church! It is the Lord's Table and it is for all believers, Jews or Gentiles, at all times, everywhere! Paul could only deliver that which he received of the Lord!

It is Paul who receives the greatest insight into the Lord's Table and writes about it to the Corinthian Church. If we did not have the Corinthian Epistle, we would not have the insight, understanding and significance of the Lord's Table that we have.

In 1 Corinthians 11:26 he continues to write: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do proclaim the Lord's death till He come".

It is "this bread" and "this cup" that makes the Lord's Table so important and full of significance, because it is the Lord's body (the bread), and the Lord's blood (the cup) of which we partake.

At the Table we look back - to His death. At the Table we look up - do this in remembrance of Me. At the Table we look forward - until He comes!

We look backward to His cross. We look upward to His throne. We look forward to His glory! How grateful we are that Paul received revelation from the Lord concerning His Table, and delivered it to the

Corinthian Church and to believers of all times and generations. We can only deliver to others what we have received of the Lord. Let us receive of His broken body, His precious blood, that we may deliver the good news of the Gospel to others who do not know the Christ of God!

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.

Prayer: *May we never ignore You. Or worse still; God forbid that any of us would betray You at the table. It would be the darkest night of our life if we ever did.*



WEEK THIRTY FOUR

WAS BREAKING BREAD JUST REFERRING TO A MEAL?

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: I Corinthians 11:20-24. It seems quite clear that the term “breaking bread” as it is referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: and as recorded in Acts 2:42, is not just referring to having a meal together as some infer. “When you come together to eat it isn’t the Lords 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 these two elements, bread and wine are for a spiritual purpose, not physical nourishment. It may have followed a meal and may still do so, but the 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.

It says in Acts 2:46-47 that every day they devoted themselves to meeting together in the Temple Courts, and to the Breaking of Bread at their homes, **while** they partook of their food in simple-hearted gladness, praising God, and winning the good-will of all the people, and the Lord daily added to their company those who were in the path of Salvation.

The early Church often had “love-feasts” in their homes in which they shared a common meal and then concluded with the Lord’s Supper. Jude speaks of these as “feasts of charity” (Jude 12).

It was generally spoken of as “the breaking of bread”. “They broke bread, including the Lord’s Supper” (Acts 2:46-47). We see this when Paul was passing through Troas how the disciples came together on the first day of the week to “break bread” (Acts 20:7).

It was always a significant occasion when people ate bread at the Table. It was significant of relationship and covenant. It was a sharing together, a mutual fellowship and partnership. Jacob offered sacrifice upon the mount and then called his brethren to eat bread and “they did eat bread” (Genesis 31:54; 43:25 also and Exodus 18:12).

In Passover, Israel was to eat unleavened bread for seven days. This was called the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Exodus 12:15-20).

The Aaronic Priesthood ate bread before the Lord also (Leviticus 8:31; 24:6, 8). It was called “the bread of God” (Leviticus 24: 7-8).

In the Corinthian Church, the “love-feasts” had degenerated into selfish indulgences by those who had plenty to eat and drink. The poor went without. Some of the richer people actually got drunk at these “love-feasts”. Paul reproved them. He asked them, have you not got houses to eat and drink in, or do you despise the Church (God’s house) by such behaviour? He said when they behaved like this, this was not the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20-22, 23-34). It was out of this disorder that Paul gave instructions for the celebration of the Table of the Lord.

How important it is for believers to realize that “breaking bread” together signifies relationship, sharing, participation, fellowship, and covenant! Each belongs to the other. Judas broke bread with Jesus and the Eleven but then lifted up his heel against his Lord (John 13:18; Psalm 41:9). Jesus quoted David’s Psalm saying: “He that ate bread with Me has lifted up his heel against Me”.

Prayer: *Each time we break bread together demands our loyalty to the Lord and to each other. This is the significance of “breaking bread” together! May it indeed be a Love-feast; love for the Lord and for one another John 13: 33-34.*

WEEK THIRTY FIVE

A QUESTION FOR COMMUNICANTS

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

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

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 allowed to creep in at all. We need to know the purpose behind what we do otherwise why bother. We do not believe the following example 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 that ignorant confessions such as these are useless, and not the language of faith. Paul could say, "I know whom I have believed and am there persuaded". Faith knows what she believes, and can give a reason for the hope that is within her with meekness and fear.

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 abolish the observance of “Independence Day”; or our Prime Minister decided to abolish Anzac Day? What would the people have to say about that? They would probably throw him or her out of office, and rightly so. Well we have something far more important to remember than the birth of a nation. It can be seen 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.”

Prayer: *We appreciate Lord that Your death for us was more than just an event; but that it was the way by which we might come to know You in a personal way. We are so glad You became obedient even unto death, that we might enjoy life and fellowship together.*

WEEK THIRTY SIX

A WORD TO PARENTS

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: 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 and the Lord’s Supper to them; and above all explain the gospel to them in words they cannot misunderstand. Explain what that great mystery whereby we are saved is, how sin is forgiven, and how we can become children of God? I think it would be profitable to ask ourselves, and then answer the question we propose.

What does it mean?

It means many things; but first a word to parents. Fathers and Mothers, this feast is not refreshment stand where your children can take a drink and have a snack. You should never, not even 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. We may feel the historic churches may have been remiss in many things but in this matter of disrespect for the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper they have not been guilty.

An opportunity not to be lost:

And when your son asks you saying, what does this observance mean and the manner in which we do this? Then you shall say unto your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand: And the Lord showed signs and

wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes: And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he swore unto our fathers. And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to obey and honour Him for our good always, that he might keep us. And it shall be our righteousness if we observe to keep these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us. (KJV)

Prayer:

Lord we take full responsibility for teaching our children all about You and why You came. Forgive us for passing this responsibility on to other people in the church.

WEEK THIRTY SEVEN

LUKE'S ACCOUNT 22:14-27

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Luke 22: 21-27. In veiled words He speaks of the traitor. “But, behold, the hand of him that betrays me is with me on the table. And they began to enquire among themselves, which of them it was that should do this thing.” 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? 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.

The Great Servant addresses this recurring problem once again.

Luke 22:25-27 “And he said to them, the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table? But I am among you as one who serves”.

This is forever His answer to this power grabbing attitude that is 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 most destructive to those that have exercised it as well as those who have come under it. It has been one of the greatest hindrances of their 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 Passover that Christ washed His disciples' feet, exhorting them to humility”.

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 arose 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 He came to Peter: and Peter said unto Him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet? Jesus answered and said unto Him, What I do you don't understand now; but you shall know hereafter.”

Prayer: 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.

WEEK THIRTY EIGHT

GOD'S FOOD

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: 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, who offered Himself by the Eternal Spirit unto God for our salvation.

Prayer: *As we consecrate ourselves afresh today dear Lord, may our lives arise like incense of a sweet smelling savour to You. The words of Paul ring in our ears; "I beseech you brethren by the mercies of God that you present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God", he reminds us that it is the most sensible thing we can do, in contrast to the worship of idols; which is certainly not a very smart thing to do.*

WEEK THIRTY NINE

FORGET NOT ALL OF HIS BENEFITS

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Psalm 103:1-5, and Psalm 116:12-14. Here the Psalmist tells us to: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits”. We are to (1) Bless the Lord with all our soul, and (2) Forget not all His benefits. After this twofold exhortation, David lists five benefits the Lord has given us.

1. Who forgives all your iniquities; Forgiveness of all our iniquities is the first benefit. We must not forget it.
2. Who heals all your diseases. Healing of all our diseases is the next benefit. We must not forget it.
3. Who redeems your life from destruction! Redemption from destruction is another benefit we are not to forget.
4. Who crowns you with loving kindness and tender mercies. The crown of the Lord’s Loving-kindness and His tender mercies are benefits we must not forget.
5. Who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle?

As the mother eagle feeds into the mouth of the young eagles, and their strength is renewed, so the Lord does to His saints. This is the fifth benefit not to be forgotten.

It is so easy and so human to forget the Lord’s benefits. When we forget His benefits, we fail to bless the Lord. “Bless the Lord” and “Forget not” are David’s words to us in this Psalm.

Israel forgot God’s works and wonder in Egypt (Psalm 78:11; 106:13, 21). Instead of blessing the Lord, they murmured continually against the Lord. We are either blessing or murmuring! It depends on whether

we forget or remember His benefits towards us. In the Table of the Lord, as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we bless the Lord; we remember His benefits towards us. It is through His broken body and shed blood that all these benefits come to us. Forgiveness of sin, healing of sickness, salvation from destruction are benefits of the atonement.

Here at the table we remember His loving kindness towards us. We remember His tender mercies. Here our mouth is filled with good things.

The broken body and shed blood of the Lord Jesus. Here we find satisfaction. Here we renew our strength as the eagle. They that wait on the Lord shall exchange their weakness for His strength and mount up on wings like eagles. Here we can run and not be weary; we can walk and not faint (Isaiah 40:28-31).

In response to David's word to "Bless the Lord" and "Forget not His benefits" - what shall we do?

Psalms 116:12-14 tells us! "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call on the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord in the presence of His people".

At the Table we bless the Lord. We forget not all His benefits towards us. We take the cup of salvation in His precious blood. We call upon the name of the Lord, in and through the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. We pay our vows, like Jacob paid his vow of tithes, to the Lord (Genesis 28:20-22). This is done in the presence of His people.

Prayer: *We add our chorus of hallelujahs to the psalmists when we read his words, "Bless the Lord O my soul and ALL that is within me... Forget not ALL His benefits! As we eat and drink as we bless Your Holy name!*

WEEK FORTY

WITH HIS STRIPES WE ARE HEALED

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Isaiah 53:4-5.

“But He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed”.

Isaiah 53 is undoubtedly the most important Messianic chapter in the whole of the Old Testament. It is full of detail. It is highly unlikely that an eye witness account would ever be as thorough. The details in this chapter are many and all point to the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross.

1. He bore our grief.
2. He carried our sorrows.
3. He was wounded for our transgressions.
4. He was bruised for our iniquities.
5. He was chastised for our peace.
6. With His stripes we are healed.

All that Jesus suffered on the cross was for us. In fulfilment of Isaiah’s prophecy, Matthew shows how Jesus healed the sick; spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally.

“When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with devils: and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses” (Matthew 8:16-17).

Peter also quotes from the prophet Isaiah, saying, “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

It is clear that Isaiah, Matthew and Peter all point out the truth that Jesus died for our sins and sicknesses. There is provision for healing in the atoning work of Jesus, both spiritual and physical healing for mankind.

Jesus died for our sins, our transgressions, our iniquities. Through Him there is forgiveness of sins. Jesus also died for our infirmities, our grief, our sorrows, our sicknesses. Through Him there is healing. Isaiah says we are healed. Peter says we were healed. Jesus came to redeem the whole man; spirit, soul and body.

As we partake of the bread, His broken body, and as we partake of the cup, His shed blood, we remember these things. “Bless the Lord O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name. Who forgives all your iniquities and heals all your diseases...” (Psalm 103:1-3).

His blood deals with our sins, our transgressions, our iniquities. His body deals with our grief, our sicknesses and diseases. Forgiveness and healing are ours in Christ. When Jesus comes again, the fullness of all that He did for us at Calvary will be manifested in us. Sin will be eradicated, root and fruit. Sickness will be gone for ever as we receive a body like unto His glorious body (Philippians 3:21). Each time we eat and drink, we are partaking in faith of the firstfruits of our full inheritance in Christ!

Prayer: Jesus infallibly interprets the prophet Isaiah in Matthew 8:17 KJV *“That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our **sicknesses**. I ask you to place Your healing hand upon us today and make us whole.*

WEEK FORTY ONE

MELCHISEDEK

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Genesis 14:17-20 with Hebrews 7:1-7. “Melchisedek ...King of Righteousness, after that, King of Peace...” There are three portions of Scripture which deal with the mysterious visitation of Melchisedek. These are found in Genesis, Psalm 110; and Hebrews. Melchisedek met Abraham Genesis 12-13 after his battle and victory over the kings of the surrounding nations.

Something to consider about this mysterious person is his name. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that Melchisedek means “King of Righteousness” and after that, “King of Peace”. ‘Melchi’ means King, ‘Zedek’ means Righteousness, and ‘Salem’ Peace.

It was Melchisedek who ministered bread and wine to Abraham suggesting he was greater than Abraham. It pointed to the Communion Table that the Lord Jesus established with His disciples so many years later.

Abraham is the “father of all who believe” (Romans 4:16). Any person belonging to Christ is also the seed of Abraham Galatians 3:16, 29.

The important lesson for believers here is that Abraham was a man of faith. Before receiving the bread and the wine - symbolic of the body and blood of Jesus - Abraham met the King of Righteousness and King of Peace. Melchisedek was not merely “a righteous king”, or a “peaceful king”. He was KING of Righteousness and KING of Peace. Jesus is Melchisedek! He only is the King of Righteousness and King of Peace. And because Jesus is King of Righteousness and King of Peace, His kingdom is like the King. The kingdom of God is (1) Righteousness, (2) Peace and (3) Joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans

14:17). In Him, “Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other” (Psalm 85:10). Those who know not Christ are described by Paul in Romans 3:

“There is none righteous, no, not one... and the way of peace they have not known”.

But, for the believer, those who have accepted Jesus as Lord and Saviour, He is their righteousness and their peace. Two of His redemptive names are “Jehovah Tsidekenu” - The Lord our Righteousness, and, Jehovah Shalom - The Lord our Peace (Jeremiah 23:6; Judges 6:24).

The believer is born again, born into the kingdom of God and knows experientially righteousness and peace. For good measure, there is also joy in the Holy Spirit. Righteousness, peace and joy! It is always in that order. If one is not in right standing with God, or his brother and sister, one loses peace, and if there is loss of peace, there is loss of joy.

As we come to the Table, and receive the bread and the cup, we come to Jesus, made a High Priest after the order of Melchisedek. We come in righteousness - in right standing with God and other believers. We come in peace - peace with God and other believers. The end result is joy as we receive the bread and the cup from Jesus, King of Righteousness and King of Peace, even our heavenly Melchisedek!

Prayer: *How grateful we are that You are our Great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for us. As we come today we offer unto You the sacrifice of praise, which is the fruit of our lips giving thanks for Your undying love for us. It's so good to be in Your presence.*

WEEK FORTY TWO

FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Matthew 26:26-28.

“This is My blood of the New Covenant, shed for the remission of sins.... As the disciples were gathered together around the table of the Lord to keep the Passover; Jesus took the bread and the cup. The bread speaks of His broken body. The cup speaks of His precious blood. As Jesus held the cup, He made the pronouncement: “This is My blood of the New Covenant”. He included in this word the real reason for His blood being shed, and that was, “shed for the remission of sins”.

What a precious word is this: “Remission”. John the Baptist preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3).

The knowledge of salvation comes by the remission of sins (Luke 1:77). Repentance always precedes remission of sins, as the Scriptures show. Jesus told His disciples that “repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations” (Luke 24:47).

Peter on the day of Pentecost told the people: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Faith is also involved because it is through His name that, whosoever believes on Him will receive remission of sins (Acts 10:43).

Paul tells us that Jesus is God’s propitiation (God’s mercy-seat). As we have faith in His blood, there is remission of sins (Romans 3:25). And the writer to the Hebrews tells us that without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22).

“Remission” is pardon, deliverance, forgiveness, liberty! “Remission” means “to send away”. It is release from punishment due to a crime.

One of the greatest illustrations of this word and its meaning is in Leviticus 16 and the ceremonies of the Day of Atonement. Two goats were chosen on this special day of reconciliation: the Lord’s goat and the Scapegoat. The Lord’s goat was slain; its body was taken outside the camp. Its blood was taken within the veil of the sanctuary. The other goat, called the Scapegoat, was sent away into the wilderness bearing the sins of the people to a land uninhabited. It was brought to the door of the Tabernacle, where the High Priest laid his hands on its head, confessing the sins of the people over it. He placed his hands on the head of the goat as he confessed “ALL the iniquities, ALL the transgressions and ALL the sins over the Scapegoat (Leviticus 16:2 1-22). Then the goat was sent away into a land not inhabited bearing the sins of Israel upon it.

Israel knew that the Lord’s goat had shed its blood and been accepted; and that the Scapegoat bearing their sins was sent away.

As we break bread and drink the cup, we remember that Jesus shed His blood in death (as the Lord’s goat), yet He did this for the remission of sins (the Scapegoat, sent away) of our sins. We come in repentance and faith and with hearts overflowing to Jesus for the blood of the New Covenant shed for the remission of sins - my sins, your sins! Let us drink in remembrance of Him and be thankful. What peace and assurance in our hearts to know that Jesus died for our sins, and our sins have been remitted - sent away - never to be remembered any more (Micah 7:19; Jeremiah 31:31-34).

Prayer: *Father, I see how much the shedding of blood means to You. When I see the blood I will pass over you. Help me to understand more clearly and deeply the truth that without the shedding of blood there is no remission for sins.*

WEEK FORTY THREE

TURNING OUR EYES UPON JESUS

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Hebrews 12:1-2.

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God”.

Coming to the Table of the Lord, we should be found “looking unto Jesus”. The Scriptures speak much of the importance of looking unto Jesus, fixing our gaze, our eyes, our attention upon Him.

1. Numbers 12:8-9 - When the Israelites were bitten by the serpents, the Lord commanded Moses to lift up the serpent of brass on the pole. The Gospel word was spoken. All who turned from themselves and looked in faith and obedience were healed of the serpent’s poison and death.

2. John 3:14-16 - Jesus confirmed the word of Moses. “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth on Him should not perish, but have eternal life”. To believe is to look in faith and obedience to Jesus, made sin for us.

3. Isaiah 45:22 - “Look unto Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth. For I am God and there is none else”. There is life for a look at the crucified One. There is salvation for all the ends of the earth, for all nations, if they will but look in faith and obedience to Him who died to save them.

As we come to the Table let us look unto Jesus.

A. Let us look back: When we look back to Calvary we find our Great Saviour purchasing our Great salvation.

B. Let us look up: And as we do we shall see Christ our great High Priest making intercession for us, living in the power of an endless life for us, as He sits on the right hand of the Father in heaven.

C. Let us look forward: We know that Christ will return again the second time in power and glory, as our glorious King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

In these days there are so many things to look at and to distract our attention from Jesus. There is need of constant reminders to keep looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith!

The Psalmist says “They looked unto Him and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed” (Psalm 34:5). John says: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; for the life was manifested and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life...” 1 John 1:1-2.

It is a fact of life that one becomes like what he continually gazes upon. As believers gaze continually upon the Lord Jesus, we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord 2 Corinthians 3:18.

Prayer: *Today as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we would turn our eyes upon Jesus, and as we look full into His wonderful face, may the things of earth grow dim, in the light of His glory and grace.*

WEEK FORTY FOUR

THE AFIRKOMEN

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Matt 13:33; Luke 13:21. “Abraham hastened into the tent unto Sarah, and said, Make ready three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.” Genesis 18:6.

The Orthodox Jew observes an unusual custom in the keeping of the Passover Feast called the Afirkomen, or the eating of the unleavened cakes at the Paschal Feast. There may be some variations but the custom is basically like this. The custom seems to be founded in the visit to Abraham and Sarah and the preparation of the three measures of fine meal for the three Angelic visitors! This visit was for the purpose of proclaiming the birth of Isaac.

This is the manner in which they observe it. “A portion of meal is taken and mixed together without leaven. This dough is then divided into three cakes and baked. When the feast is spread the cakes are brought to the table. The first one is laid on the table and a piece of cloth placed over. The second or middle cake is placed upon the first cake, and also covered with a piece of cloth. Then the third cake is placed on top of the previous two and covered with a white cloth in the usual manner. Three glasses of wine are then placed on the Table, while another glass of wine on the corner of the Table nearest the door. At the given signal, the master of the house rises, takes the first glass of wine and passes it around the Table that all may sip from it. Then he takes the middle cake from between the other two. He breaks it, and hides it out of sight. He returns to the table and together they drink the remaining two glasses of wine. As they drink the third glass of wine he brings from its hiding place the broken pieces of the middle cake, which is then eaten together with the other two cakes”.

It is a very simple and beautiful custom. For the Jew who does not know Christ there is no insight into its significance of what he does. For the believer, the significance is obvious.

1. The three pieces of unleavened bread signify the eternal Godhead; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The fullness of the Godhead becomes the food of the soul. It also speaks of the three days and nights of Calvary Colossians 2:9; Matthew 28:19-20.

2. The central piece that is broken, and then hidden from sight, speaks of the Lord Jesus, who is the central person in the eternal Godhead. He was broken for us. He is now hidden from human view. One wonders if Jesus did this significant act when He took the bread, saying, “This is My body broken for us. Eat in remembrance of Me, for I will not eat or drink again until I do it in the kingdom”. It speaks of His crucifixion and resurrection Mark 8:31.

3. The cups of wine pointed to His blood, the blood of the New Covenant outpoured.

4. The fourth cup, which was for Elijah. The door was open should He come. This pointed to the Lord’s coming again the second time. His coming is unknown but eminent! Though the Jewish custom may vary, the truth for believers is evident.

Jesus was the lamb hidden from the foundation of the world. Jesus was slain in the appointed time. The bread and the cup remind us always of His death, burial and resurrection and His coming again. Though the symbols pass away, the truths remain in our hearts. He is the broken One. He is the crucified One, the central One in the Godhead. He is the living One. He is the coming One. He is the One to whom we will gather in the air. Until that day, we do this in remembrance of Him, for in Him is the fullness of the Godhead bodily Colossians 1:19; 2:9.

Prayer: *You have blessed the Bread of Life to us today as surely as You blessed the loaves beside the Sea. So we pray let all bondage cease, and fetters fall, as we find our peace in You our all.*

WEEK FORTY FIVE

JEHOVAH'S PASSOVER

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Readings: Exodus 12:2 KJV “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you”.

Numbers 10:10 KJV “Also in the day of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace offerings; that they may be to you for a memorial before your God: I am the LORD your God”.

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 long suffering has its limits.

Prayer: *Lord Jesus every thing You did while here on earth had me in mind. You resisted every temptation, and overcame every conflict so I could trust in You to do the same in me.*



WEEK FORTY SIX

TAKE EVERY MAN A LAMB

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

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 Corinthians 5:7 put this beyond dispute. "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us."

Prayer: *How safe You made Israel in Egypt, when all around them judgment was falling. We revel in Christ's power to deliver us daily from all evil, and in that final hour to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. What a mighty deliverance You have wrought for all who have put their trust in Thee.*

WEEK FORTY SEVEN

TAKEN ON THE TENTH DAY

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

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.

Prayer: *As we look back in hindsight we marvel at how perfectly Israel’s deliverance was planned and executed. We thank You that in like manner nothing was left to chance with regard to our mighty deliverance from the hand of him that was stronger than us. And today we acknowledge that we are fully persuaded that You will perfect everything that concerns us. We salute You O Lord of Hosts. Truly Thou art worthy of honour and praise.*

WEEK FORTY EIGHT

SLAIN ON THE FOURTEENTH DAY

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Exodus 12:6. Death is everywhere stamped upon this chapter. “The whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening”.

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. God waited for 4000 years before He sent His Son. 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 but He was 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.

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.

John 6:51. “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”.

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.

Prayer: *As I look back and imagine that night, I realise that I would have been one of those who cried “away with Him, I will not have Him to rule over me”. Truly Your love overmastered me until I became Your willing bond slave; I would not have it any other way.*

WEEK FORTY NINE

TAKE THE BLOOD

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Hebrews 13:20-21 KJV

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, 21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”.

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.

There is healing in the body and blood (of Christ). Under the Law the priesthood were allowed to eat the Shewbread, but they were forbidden to drink the Blood altogether. Under Grace we are commanded to eat and drink BOTH!

If the Shewbread in the Tabernacle was declared to be the “Bread of His PRESENCE,” how much more is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ to us the “Bread of His Presence” at the Supper Table?

In like manner Jehovah declared the life of the flesh was in the blood; this was revealed at Calvary in the blood of the Lord Jesus? So when we partake of these holy emblems in faith; and drink in the life of the Saviour, shall we not be made every whit whole?

Healing for the body as we discern the body and blood is very definitely taught in the Scriptures.

Dear Lord, please help me, and personalise these words to me.

John 6:53-56 NKJV. Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him".

Prayer: *Gracious God, I can never thank You enough for the New Covenant sealed with your precious blood, by which we sinners can come boldly into your holy presence, forgiven, cleansed and accepted.*

WEEK FIFTY

WHEN I SEE THE BLOOD

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: Exodus 12:12-13. “I will pass **through** the land of Egypt this night, and will smite the entire 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”.

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.

Prayer: *Oh Father May I never reach a place where I take Your forgiveness for granted. Please burn into my soul this truth, that it is not my merit that has made me what I am, but Your grace and mercy.*



WEEK FIFTY ONE

YE SHALL EAT THE FLESH

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND HIS SON

Reading: John 6:56-57 ASV.

“He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he that eats me, he also shall live because of me”.

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; 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:

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”. 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 as 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.”

Prayer: *As we come today we are reminded of the words of Moses to Israel that they were to remember all the way by which You led them throughout the wilderness years. As we look back we can testify to the younger among us that Your great faithfulness has never failed us when we fully trusted You. We know now that all that has taken place was simply an expression of Your love, in order to make us realise, that we don't just live by natural bread alone, but that every word that proceeds out of Your mouth is full of life.*

WEEK FIFTY TWO

THE MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

AROUND THE TABLE WITH THE FATHER AND SON

Reconcile means to make friendly after estrangement. To be purified by special service after desecration. The words **Reconciliation** and **Ransom** are first introduced in Genesis 6:14 when God tells Noah to build an ark and "pitch it within and without with pitch".

This is the only place in the KJV where these two words are translated Pitch. (There is another word for Pitch - meaning tar). Here in the first usage God is fixing a value on the word **Reconcile** (which in many dictionaries is still used as a shipbuilding term). This word means to align and seal all the planks with the keel so that it won't allow water to come into the boat. God's definition of the word Reconcile is to line us up straight with Him. He doesn't bend regarding His standards of what is clean and unclean. We are the ones who have to be changed to learn His ways if we are to be "planks" in His boat as members of the Body of Christ. Reconciliation in God's eyes is not to "meet Him half way" and give up some sins and keep others. He wants us to put it all on the line (altar). Then his Ransom (which is linked in Scripture to the blood) is applied "within and without" (He covers us and the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, but He also enters our life and applies correction until we have a pure heart. see Matt. 5:8).

Psalms 51:10-13 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee.

In the second use of the term Reconcile or Reconciliation Jacob is on his way to meet his brother Esau and after a face to face encounter with God at Peniel, where God changed his name to Israel, Jacob

decides to make restitution to his brother, Esau, and sends him "presents" to make up for his former deception in the hope that he may "reconcile his wrath" and possibly be accepted by his brother (Genesis 32:20). In other words he knows that if he is to walk upright before God he must straighten things out with his brother.

In Exodus 25:17, the third use of this term has to do with the Ark of the Covenant. Instead of "mercy seat", we have translated this as, "seat of reconciliation". The word **Mercy** does not occur here. It is the word for reconciliation in the context of a place (seat). In fact this Seat of Reconciliation (Mercy Seat) in the Holy of Holies could be an extremely dangerous place for anyone who was not lined up straight with God paid for it with their lives. For those who were pure and clean, (upright lined up straight with God) it was the place where God spoke to them from between the Cherubim.

2 Corinthians 5:17-19 "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation".

In 2000 at an event called "The Gathering of the Nations" at Whistler Canada, fifteen hundred saints from around the world came together to worship, pray together and celebrate the Lord's Supper. It was wonderful to observe how people divided by language and cultures were drawn together to honour and remember what Christ had done for them. It was a foretaste of that day when we shall all be together with Him in His Kingdom.

Prayer: *Father thank you for remitting our sins and sending them as far as the east is from the west. Thank You for reconciling us for friendship and fellowship with You and Jesus and every member of Your family. 1 John 1: 1-3.*



A SOLEMN APPEAL

What the Altar was to the Patriarchs; the Tabernacle of Moses was to Israel, and the Lord intended His Table to be for us. When you see what the Fathers of Israel were doing as they built an altar it begins to become very clear that they were coming to back to God for mercy and forgiveness by way of blood sacrifice after sin.

When this becomes plain it will help us to understand why Christ was so insistent about our coming to His Table “Of”.

It is at the Table that the “Apostolic injunction” makes its appeal. “Let a man examine himself and so let him eat”. The writer of Hebrews says, WE HAVE AN ALTAR Heb 13: 10. The Altar is where God met with the Fathers in times of need. Psalm 50:5.

For what purpose do we need to meet with Him? We come to Him for the very same reasons that Abraham and Israel did; namely to confess, repent, and find forgiveness and readjustment after sin; and to receive mercy and grace to walk with integrity before Him and among our brethren. Don’t be a “Judas” 1 Cor 11:28.

Examine yourselves says Paul, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves 2 Corinthians 13:5 KJV.

The “Preacher approach” is to appeal to the congregation to come to the front (Mercy Seat) where they will pray for them; slay them, and then send them back to their seats supposedly delivered from their besetting sin, sickness, or problem.

But Mercy alone is insufficient. He has done infinitely more than spare us. His intention has always been to reconcile us that we might become friends, but if we are to keep our friendship warm and alive we must walk in the light.

What one of us has not had to mend relationships that went sour? God demands that believers must forgive to be forgiven. Through confession and repentance only can reconciliation be realized? It is for

this reason that the Lords Table should take pride of place in our midst and definitely not the minister's sermons or his antics. If we would tarry here for one another, many would be made whole physically as well as spiritually. We owe it to one another to do this.

The Lord's Table is sometimes called The Communion; The Covenant Meal; The Last Supper; The Eucharist and The Altar. It has many names, but they all point to a central theme; and that is to remember why Christ came. If we fail to recognize and celebrate this fact we shall have locked Him out just as surely as those Christians did in Laodicea. For this omission they would remain blind, poor, wretched and naked. We too shall fail miserably, at whatever we attempt to do for Him unless we open the door and invite Him in. He wants us to **sup** with Him; not **do** things for Him. God forbid that we would go so far as to ignore Him as He knocks and seeks admission.

Religion seems to have a talent for complicating what was meant to be simple; in particular those things that Christ always meant should be straightforward and plain. The message of the Kingdom of Heaven is one of those subjects. The confusion that now exists surrounding the true character of the Kingdom has been a complete triumph for the adversary, the arch-enemy of Christ. It shows how easy it is for the Church to be corrupted from the simplicity and purity that is Christ.

There are many interpretations abroad with regard to the nature and operation of the Kingdom of Heaven. No claim to authority by any individual or group can be accepted until they have proven it to be well founded. Simply because some put forward their claims is insufficient, and totally unacceptable, until they can prove their assertion from an infallible source beyond all doubt. This dissertation is an attempt to set forth as clearly as possible its true nature, free of any radical interpretations and unfounded claims of which many abound; some of which stretch the imagination to astounding lengths.

A businessman friend, who was a member of a large church, was approached by his minister to see if he would be available to mediate

in cases where conflict had arisen over some business venture that may have gone sour. After he prayed about it, The Holy Spirit gave him the perfect solution.

When my friend met with the antagonists he would produce a Cup and two elements, bread and wine. Next he would read from the scriptures on forgiveness and then each in turn would pray the Lord's Prayer and then take communion together. Afterwards and not before they would discuss the problem; invariably they found a Godly and fair solution.

Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven will leaven the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven that ye may be a new lump, 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. (1 Corinthians 5:6-8 KJV)

MINISTRY PROFILE OF SHAUN KEARNEY

After ministering extensively throughout Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and North America the Lord led the Kearney's and their five children to the North side of Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand. There they began to pioneer a church that was to have a significant impact on the church nationally and the community at large. In 1972 this growing body of believers known as “New Life Fellowship” miraculously acquired a tract of land where a Convention Centre, a Bible College and Christian Campground were established.

This beautiful location with its own private beach became the scene of many wonderful events. It was a venue for many conferences sponsored by the church for Christian leaders. Speakers from many parts of the world came there to minister to God's servants who had gathered from New Zealand, Australia, and as far away as India, South East Asia and the South Pacific. Ministers from every mainline denomination came to be challenged and blessed.

In 1979 the Kearney's travelled to the United States for a Sabbatical along with their family. Returning to New Zealand in 1980, they sold all their possessions and went back to the US in 1981. They lived there until they moved to Australia in 1987. Since then Brother Kearney has travelled in Asia, US, Canada, and Europe extensively. He is the author many books on ‘Unstructured Church Life’. In 2006 they moved back to New Zealand. Please go to our website for other titles

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