

In Remembrance, The Lord's Supper

George M. Stahnke, 11/08/98

1. In remembrance

1 Cor. 11:23-26 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

re-mem-brance (rî-mèm¹brens) noun

1. a. The act or process of remembering. **b.** The state of being remembered: holds him in fond remembrance.

2. Something serving to celebrate or honor the memory of a person or an event; a memorial.

—*The American Heritage Dictionary*

"To recall to mind means to transport an action that is buried in the past in such a way that its original potency and vitality are not lost but are carried over into the present. It is a remembrance of the life and death of the Lord." —*Holman Bible Handbook*

"The Communion service is a unique expression of our faith. And the word "remembrance" is the key to understanding its significance. The parallel word in the Old Testament is *zikkaron*, usually translated "memorial." Passover was a memorial feast. The pillar of stones that marked Israel's passage through the Jordan River was a memorial too. Like the others, these memorials were a witness to the past—and a call to each believer to enter into his heritage. As the Israelites ate the Passover meal, each family relived the experience of its ancestors. As an Israelite passed the heap of stones by the Jordan, and touched their rough surface, he or she was led back in time, and realized afresh that he was there when God parted the waters.

Communion too is a memorial. It is remembrance. Not of an event covered with the dust of centuries, but of an event that is ever fresh and new. Not of an experience witnessed by men and women long dead, but of an experience we share today as we return, through the elements that represent the body and blood of Jesus, to the foot of the cross.

In the Communion service we stand there again as, united with Christ through faith, we share His death even as we share in His resurrection. "Do this in remembrance" is an invitation to experience the awesome moment when our salvation was won. "Do this in remembrance" is an invitation to experience the holy and, by coming into the very presence of God, to offer Him our thanks, our worship, and our praise." —*The 365-Day Devotional Commentary*

1. The Lord's Supper

To gain a deeper understanding of the Lord's Supper, and the sequence of events as they unfold, we must note the departure of Judas in John 13:27. For clarity and flow of detail it has been inserted between verses 25 and 26 of Matthew 26.

Matthew 26:18-29 He replied, "Go into the city to a certain man and tell him, 'The Teacher says: My

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appointed time is near. I am going to celebrate the Passover with my disciples at your house.' " 19So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them and prepared the Passover. 20When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. 21And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me." 22They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?" 23Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. 24The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born." 25Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."

{John 13:27-30 As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, 28but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. 29Since Judas had charge of the money, some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. 30As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night.}

26While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." 27Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

a. The blood: "The sin-offering of blood will be converted into a thank-offering of wine, a cup of salvation, to be drunk with grateful, joyful hearts by all who through faith in His sacrifice have received the pardon of their sins. Finally, Jesus intimates that the new covenant concerns the many, not the few—not Israel alone, but all nations: it is a gospel which He bequeaths to sinners of mankind."

—*The Training of the Twelve by A.B. Bruce*

b. The body: The bread symbolizes His sinless life that qualified Him to be a perfect sacrifice for sin. It represents His body in which He actually bore our sin on the cross (1 Pet 2:24).

"In regarding Christ as the Bread of Life, we are not to restrict ourselves to the one benefit mentioned by Him in instituting the feast, the remission of sins, but to have in view all His benefits tending to our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace. Christ is the Bread of Life in all His offices. As a Prophet, He supplies the bread of divine truth to feed our minds; as a Priest, He furnishes the bread of righteousness to satisfy our troubled consciences; as a King, He presents Himself to us as an object of devotion, that shall fill our hearts, and whom we may worship without fear of idolatry."

—*The Training of the Twelve by A.B. Bruce*

c. The unity of believers: In John's Gospel we read that before the communion ceremony, Judas slipped out to complete arrangements to betray Jesus. Only the remaining eleven disciples received the bread and wine. So now today, the broken body and blood of Jesus are reserved only for those who have faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

In this sense our celebration of the LORD's Supper is more than showing forth "the LORD's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:26). It is also an affirmation of a shared discipleship: the statement by a family of believers that in a unique way we belong to each other, for Christ

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