

# 3

## "In Remembrance Of Me"

- Lk 22:19

Suppose my wife and I invited you over to our home for supper. What would you think if the only items we served you were a single shot-glass of juice and a tiny fraction of a soda cracker? Would you really consider that a supper? Would it even qualify as a snack? Might you feel disappointed or even deceived?

"Supper" is generally understood to refer to a full meal-enough food to satisfy the appetite. A portion of food that is less than a meal is typically seen as a snack. Considering the way most churches observe the Lord's Supper (with a sip of juice and a cracker remnant), why is it called a supper? Would it not be better to name it what it honestly has become? To many believers, the Lord's Supper is not a "supper" at all. It is the Lord's Appetizer or perhaps the Lord's Hors D'oeuvres! Did our Lord really intend to launch a memorial snack?

### Its Form

The Lord's Supper originated at the "last supper" (Lk 22:7-38), which itself was a Passover feast. Have you ever looked up the word "feast" in the dictionary? A feast is an elaborate meal, a banquet, associated with abundant heaps of food. So it was with the Passover feast.

Luke wrote that at the last "supper" (22:20), Jesus took the cup and said that it was "the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you." The Greek word Luke used for "supper" is from the root noun *deipnon*. As you might expect, it means "dinner, supper, the main meal toward evening." It can also mean "formal dinner, banquet." This same word is used in Lk 14:15-24, where the NIV renders it "great banquet" (14:16).

Notice Jesus passed the cup around *after* the supper (Lk 22:20), whereas He had already taken the bread and said "this is my body given for you" *while* the supper was in progress (see 22:19; Mt 26:26; Mk 14:22). The point to be observed is that the newly initiated Lord's Supper occurred in the midst of a full banquet. The Passover meal was transformed into something new: the Lord's meal. Would the Twelve have deduced from this that the Lord's Supper was somehow no longer to be a true meal?

In most study Bibles, the topic heading for 1 Co 11:17-35 is "The Lord's Supper" (or something similar). This is because 1 Co 11:17-35 is about (surprise!) the Lord's Supper. Though the Corinthians were officially meeting together to observe the Lord's Supper, they were abusing it so badly that Paul said it had ceased being the "Lord's" Supper (11:20) and had instead become their "own" supper (11:21, NASB). What blunders had they committed to create such a situation?

First, divisions existed among them (11:18, more on this later). Second, each of them went ahead and ate the Lord's Supper without waiting for the others (11:21). The result? Those who arrived late went hungry and some of the earliest arrivers were already drunk! Third, they failed to recognize the body

of the Lord in the supper (11:29).

The letter to the Corinthians was written some twenty years after Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. Were they celebrating it as a token memorial (swallow and crumb) or as a full meal? It is clear from 11:21 that they understood it to be a real supper. How else could "hunger" have been a problem? No one would ever have come to church expecting to satisfy their physical hunger unless the Lord's Supper was indeed taken as a complete meal. And who ever became "drunk" from a single shot-glass of wine?!

So what was Paul's inspired solution to the Corinthian mess? Did he tell them to get rid of the meal? The answer was that "when you come together to eat, wait for each other" (11:33). As for those who were so famished that they were tempted to gobble up all the food ahead of time Paul wrote, "If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home" (11:34). Nowhere does Paul tell them to cease holding the Lord's Supper as a meal. In fact, turning the Lord's Supper into a snack-style memorial is a violation of the theology behind the Lord's Supper (as we shall see).

One final (and important) word needs to be said about the form of the Lord's Supper. Within the full meal there is still to be the bread and the cup. 1 Co 10:16-17 mentions "the" cup and "the" loaf, and stating that "because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf." It is important that we use one cup (or vessel) and one loaf in our Lord's Supper. The one cup and one loaf not only symbolize our unity as one body, but may even create unity! Did you notice the word "for" in 10:17? It signals an explanation of something. It may be that we are one body *because* we partake of one loaf. Look at the text and see for yourself! Following this pattern might help us overcome the "divisions" that plagued the Corinthians (11:18). In any event, based on the reasoning of 1 Co 10:16-17, the popular practice of distributing prebroken cracker crumbs and many prepoured shot glasses of juice is symbolic of disunity and division.

### Its Focus

Since the form of the Lord's Supper is a full meal, perhaps a rethinking of the focus of the Supper is in order. Typically, people focus exclusively on the death of Christ during the snack-style memorial. Everyone is quiet and somber, with heads bowed. Often an organ is being softly played in the background. This is based in part on Jesus' command to "do this in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19). A funeral atmosphere would seem to be in order.

Oddly though, the book of Acts paints a different picture. Since Jesus took "bread" and "broke" it (Lk 22:19), most commentators understand the phrase "the breaking of bread" in Acts to refer to the Lord's Supper. Associated with the Lord's Supper in Acts is "fellowship" (2:42), "glad and sincere hearts" (2:46), and "praising God" (2:47). Furthermore, the scene in 1 Co 11:17-34 is anything but somber. Why the difference between then and now?

Dining with others is, in the Bible, symbolic of fellowship and acceptance. Thus Jesus said to the church in Laodicea that "if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me" (Re 3:20). Thus Jesus pictured paradise as having a favored place at Abraham's table (Abraham's "bosom"), with plenty to eat (Lk 16:19-31). Thus the Jews said, "Blessed is the man who will eat the feast in the kingdom of God" (Lk 14:15; see also Mt 8:11, where Jesus mentioned the feast with Abraham in the kingdom of heaven). Thus the gall of Judas who was so brazen as to betray the One with whom he had eaten: "He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against Me" (Jn 13:18). This is why the early church saw the Lord's Supper as a time of joyous fellowship.

But what of Jesus' instructions to "do this in remembrance of me"? Doesn't this dictate a funeral atmosphere as we reflect upon the horrors of the cross? Certainly it is important to recognize that the Lord's Supper is not just another meal (1 Co 11:29). It is a sacred, covenant meal. Had Jesus not given His body and poured out His blood, there would be no New Covenant, no forgiveness of sin, and nothing to be joyful about.

In Greek, the phrase "in remembrance of me" (literally "unto my remembrance," Lk 22:19) can be taken in one of two ways. One way is that we should eat the Lord's Supper to remind ourselves about Jesus (past looking). The other way is that we should eat the Lord's Supper to remind Jesus about something (forward looking). Only the context can determine what Jesus meant.

In Lk 22:15, Jesus expressed His eager desire to eat the final Passover with His disciples because He would not eat it again "until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God." Thus we see a forward-looking aspect of the Lord's Supper. Jesus repeated this future idea in 22:18 as He passed the cup, saying He would not drink again of the fruit of the vine "until the kingdom of God comes." The Lord's Supper looks forward to and typifies the banquet that will occur when the kingdom of God comes. It is like a prophecy that will find "fulfillment" (22:16). Then shortly after passing the cup, Jesus said to His disciples, "I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred on me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom . . ." (22:29-30). The Lord's Supper taken as a full meal is again associated with future eating and drinking in the kingdom.

Since in Jewish thought dining with someone was the perfect picture of fellowship and acceptance, they naturally envisioned the coming Messianic Kingdom as a time of unbroken feasting (Lk 14:15; 16:19-31; Mt 8:11). This imagery of kingdom eating was furthered by Jesus Himself in Lk 22:15-16, and 29-30. As John recorded in Revelation, "Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb and come . . . Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!" (19:7-9).

This linking of the Lord's Supper with the future event of the Second Coming suggest that the "reminder" is for Jesus. The Lord's Supper as a true meal is an object lesson prayer that reminds Jesus of His promise to return and commence the Messianic banquet! In fact, the Greek grammar behind "my" (Lk 22:19) is possessive: the reminder belongs to Jesus. It is His reminder. Thus, in 1 Co 11:26, we "proclaim" the Lord's death whenever we eat the bread and drink the cup. To whom do we "proclaim" it? We proclaim it unto Jesus, as a reminder. But why do we "proclaim" it (what is the purpose of the proclamation)? We proclaim it "until He comes" (1 Co 11:26). The "until" is not merely a time limit, it is also a goal. Our eating and drinking amount to a prophetic action that helps bring about Jesus' return. As the early believers said, "Maranatha" ("Come, O Lord")!

### Its Frequency

How often should we come to the Lord's Table? 1 Co 11:18ff mentions "when you come together as a church" and launches into directives concerning the Lord's Supper. This clearly indicates that every time the church gathered, it celebrated the Lord's Supper.

Amazingly, the only purpose ever given for a church meeting occurs in Ac 20:7. It says, "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread." The phrase "to break bread" is, in Greek, a "telic" infinitive, denoting a goal or purpose. Why did the church come together on the first day of the week? In order to observe the Lord's Supper (see also 1 Co 11:33).

Thus, it seems the primary objective for the weekly gathering of the saints is to break bread. This allows God's people to enjoy fellowship, to mutually encourage and exhort each other, to share prayer requests, to tell what God is doing in their lives, to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, to be reminded of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, to remind Jesus of His promise to return, and to be made into one body through the one loaf.

This truth bears repeating. The primary activity that a church should engage in during their Sunday meeting is the eating of the Lord's Supper as a full meal. All else is secondary to this and is therefore optional. This means that we do not assemble weekly to hold a "worship service," nor to hear "preaching," nor to have a praise meeting, nor for any other reason. These activities do have their place, but should not be allowed to preempt the Lord's Supper. An adjustment of our thinking is in order!

### Conclusion

The eating that is associated with the coming of Christ's kingdom is even seen in the model prayer of Mt 6:9-11. In reference to the kingdom, Jesus taught us to pray, "your kingdom come, your will be done . . ." The very next sentence is "Give us today our daily bread" (6:11). However, the Greek underlying 6:11 is not so easy to translate. A literal rendering yields something like, "the bread of us belonging to the coming day give us today." Linking 6:11 with 6:10, Jesus may well have been teaching us to ask that the bread of the Messianic feast be given to us today. This is what will happen when His kingdom comes!

Whether we pray the model prayer or celebrate the Lord's Supper, we are asking Jesus to come back. Thus we are to "look forward to the day of God and speed its coming" (2 Pe 3:12). Amen. Maranatha!

- S.A.

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