



THE OBSERVANCE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

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After His resurrection from the dead, the Lord Jesus Christ gave His disciples instructions for the carrying of the gospel of salvation to the world. His message to them at this time we refer to as the "Great Commission." Let us consider the wonderful words:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world (Matthew 28:19, 20).

Jesus told His disciples to teach everything which He had commanded them. How much does this include? We find that it includes the Ten Commandments, for He said to the rich young man, "... keep the commandments." He then quoted from the Ten Commandments to show exactly what He meant.

Jesus also taught baptism, both by His example and His teaching. In the Great Commission itself Jesus taught the disciples to baptize believers. In the record found in the Gospel of Mark we read:

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ... (Mark 16:16).

Jesus also commanded His disciples to love one another and to do good works. He

taught them to be good citizens, giving to the government that which belongs to it, so long as this does not violate the commandments of God.

In addition: to all these things, Jesus instituted and taught the observance of a special ceremony which is that of the Lord's Supper accompanied by the ceremony of feet washing. This is the special subject of this Bible study.

The Observance of the Passover

We cannot properly understand the meaning and purpose of the Lord's Supper without studying the Passover which God commanded Israel to keep. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper at the time of the Passover and it is evident that it was given to take the place of that observance. In 1 Corinthians 5:7 Christ is declared to be "our passover." Let us examine the connection between the Passover and the Lord's Supper.

In the Bible book of Exodus we have the story of the enslavement of the people of God in the ancient land of Egypt. As a result of their suffering under the cruel bondage, they cried out to God for deliverance. God sent His servant Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. Because the Egyptians refused to allow them to leave the country, God sent terrible plagues. These brought great inconvenience and suffering to the Egyptians, but the king continued to refuse to allow the people of Israel to depart until after the tenth plague. In this last disaster the oldest child in every Egyptian household died. God's

angel of death passed through the land to smite at least one in every home.

The angel of death "passed over" the homes of the Israelites who had the blood of the lamb on the door posts of their homes. God had told them to kill a lamb and to put the blood on the two side posts and the lintel of each doorway. This act identified those who were obedient to God. Because God "passed over" those who had the sign of the blood, this time was named the "passover." God commanded that the anniversary of this event be kept as a special memorial:

And this day shall be unto you for a memorial: and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance forever (Exodus 12:14).

Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year (Exodus 13:10).

In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover (Leviticus 23:5).

In the keeping of the Passover they were to kill a lamb "without blemish, a male of the first year" (Exodus 12:5). They were to roast it and eat it with unleavened bread and bitter herbs. This was to be done each year in the evening, or night, at the beginning of the 14th of the Hebrew month of Abib (later called Nisan). This was the month which began with the spring new moon. The people of Israel, and all Gentiles who joined with them in the worship of the true God, observed

this memorial very faithfully each year. Each time they killed the lamb to celebrate the deliverance from Egypt they were also, in type and symbol, showing faith in a coming deliverance through the death of the "Lamb of God." The apostle Paul said, "*Christ our passover is sacrificed for us...*" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

The Passover and the Lord's Supper

Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper at the time of the Passover. In fact, the disciples gathered in the upper room with Him for the purpose of eating the Passover supper. The regular preparation had been made for the Passover by the disciples. Concerning this we read:

And the first day of unleavened bread, when they killed the passover, his disciples said unto him, Where wilt thou that we go and prepare that thou mayest eat the passover? And he sendeth forth two of his disciples, and saith unto them, Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him. And wheresoever he shall go in, say ye to the goodman of the house, the Master saith, where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples? And he will shew you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us. And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said, into

them: and they made ready the passover (Mark 14:12-16).

The Passover was always eaten at the beginning of the day according to Bible time. Since the day begins at sundown, the time for eating the Passover was after sundown, or in the early part of the night. The disciples prepared for the Passover during the day and then gathered with Jesus for the Passover supper after sundown that evening.

Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve (Matthew 26:20).

As they kept the Passover, they ate the meat of a roasted lamb. This was the last time such a lamb would ever truly have a special significance. The killing of the Passover lamb represented, or foreshadowed, the killing of the Lamb of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, on the cross. Jesus was to die during the light part of that same day on which He ate the last Passover with the disciples. After His death, the lamb would never again typify or foreshadow that event. The shadow of a tree ends when you get to the tree itself.

The Passover was kept as a memorial of the deliverance from Egypt, which was also a type of our deliverance from sin through the work of Christ. After His death, making real that greater deliverance, there would no longer be any point in commemorating the original type. Thus the Passover observed by the people of God that night before the death of Christ, was the last Passover which could be held with any real meaning. As the dis-

disciples ate it that night, the Passover was then coming to its end for it was completing its purpose.

But if it was important to commemorate the deliverance from Egypt, how much more important is it to commemorate the greater deliverance from the bondage of sin, which deliverance is provided through the death of Christ. But even though we might see this as important for Christians, yet if Christ had not instituted a *new memorial service*, there would have been nothing to take the place of the Passover, and the death of Christ would not have been commemorated. But we find that Christ *did* give us the Lord's Supper as a memorial of His death.

The Lord's Supper Instituted

Let us now see just how and when the Lord's Supper was instituted. At the appointed time Jesus and the disciples sat (or reclined) around the table in the upper room and ate the Passover. This was usually a rather lengthy proceclure among the Jews, for besides eating the lamb, they reviewed the story of the deliverance from Egypt. Then while they were still at the table, we read:

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

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

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testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28).

In the record of this event in the Gospel of Luke we find an added thought:

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me (Luke 22: 19).

It is the last phrase which shows that He was instituting a new service. The old service, the Passover, was observed in *remembrance* of the deliverance of God's people from Egypt. But now Jesus breaks bread and asks His people to partake of it with a *new significance*. Before that day ended, Jesus would die as a sacrifice which would result in the deliverance of all who would accept it, from the bondage of sin. His body would be broken (pierced) and His blood would be shed. The emblems of the Lord's Supper are to be taken *to remember this great sacrifice*. Since at the time Jesus gave the service the events to be commemorated had not yet taken place the disciples probably wondered just what Jesus meant. But after the resurrection they realized the full significance of this new service.

The Lord's Supper

In the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians the apostle Paul introduces the name for this service, calling it "the Lord's Supper" (verse 20). In verses 23 through 26 he gives a description of it and he especially emphasizes

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the commemorative aspect. Let us read this account:

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. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

The Passover was in remembrance of an event; the Lord's Supper is also in remembrance of an event. The first was in remembrance of a type or shadow—the slaying of a lamb and the deliverance of a people from a wicked nation. The second was, and is, in remembrance of a reality—the slaying of the Son of God and the deliverance of a people from wickedness itself. The first service was observed once every year and thus had been kept many hundreds of times during the time it was in effect. Of the Lord's Supper Paul said, "as often as ye eat this bread, and drink, this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." This does *not* say that it is to be observed *often*, but rather that when on the appointed times they would do it, it would show the Lord's death. But in keeping it once a year we do observe it often—as many times

as there are years in the course of a Christian life.

The Time of the Service

From the beginning of its observance Christians held the Lord's Supper annually at the Passover time. Later when the "falling away" from the truth came, (2 Thessalonians 2:3) people began to have a Lord's Supper service every few months and then every week. Perhaps they thought they could improve on the pattern which God had set for a memorial when He commanded that the Passover be kept on a specified day once each year. Or it may have been thought that since the deliverance of the people of God from sin is greater than the deliverance of the people of God from literal Egypt, it should be commemorated more often. But as one is the type of the other it is evident that the anti-type should receive the same memorial treatment as the type. The Passover was observed *once a year*. The Lord's Supper (in memory of Christ, our Passover) should then also be observed *once a year*. The Passover was observed on the anniversary of the event; the Lord's Supper should also be observed on the anniversary date. This date is the 14th of the Hebrew month Nisan (Leviticus 23:5).

How Can the Date Be Determined?

It may at first seem to be a perplexing problem to determine the time for the observance of the Lord's Supper because of the difference in calendars. The month of Nisan is in the Hebrew calendar. We use a Roman

calendar in which the names of the months are entirely different. The word *month* means *moon*, but Roman months begin and end without regard for the phase of the moon. However in the Bible whenever it speaks of a month it means a period between two new moons. (See Isa. 66:23.) Each month began with the new moon. Of the time of the Passover we read:

In the fourteenth day of the first month at even is the Lord's passover (Leviticus 23:5).

Since the month begins with a new moon, the fourteenth is at the time of the full moon. The Bible does not reveal the season of the first month, but the Jews have kept the names and order of the months all through the centuries. The month of Abib, or Nisan, in the original Hebrew calendar is the first month of spring. The Passover was usually at the time of the first full moon after the vernal equinox. The equinox is about the 21st of March and is marked on our Roman calendars as the first day of spring. The date of the Passover may vary about a month due to the fact that the Hebrew months are determined by the moon and the months do not come out even with the year, twelve moon-months being only 354 days. To compensate for this in the Hebrew calendar in every cycle of 19 years, seven of the years have 13 months each. Sometimes the new moon before the Passover is before the vernal equinox and sometimes after, and so the 14th of Nisan can vary from March 25 to April 24. It is very easy to obtain a Jewish calendar to find the date

for the current year. The Church of God announces this date each year in its periodicals. In 1964 the date of the 14th of Nisan was March 27. The Lord's Supper was observed at the beginning of the day which in this case was the night following March 26, or Thursday night as commonly called.

The Emblems of Remembrance

In the observance of the original Passover there were three things especially mentioned. These were the lamb, the unleavened bread, and the bitter herbs. These all had a special meaning. The lamb represented Christ. When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming to him he said, "Behold the lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The unleavened bread signified the haste with which the Israelites left Egypt, with no time to leaven the dough: "... even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste" (Deut. 16:3). The bitter herbs represented the bitterness of their affliction for the Egyptians had "... made their lives bitter with hard bondage..." (Exodus 1:14). These are only a few of the many symbols which are used in the Bible. In many places in the sacred Book, God uses literal objects to teach spiritual lessons.

When Jesus gave the Lord's Supper to the disciples, we find this record:

And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you... (Luke 22:19).

This was the same kind of unleavened

bread which they used in the Passover supper, but now instead of representing haste in leaving the land of Egypt, it is to represent the body of Christ. In His teachings Jesus had used leaven to represent false doctrines or sin (Matthew 16:6, 12). How fitting now for unleavened bread to represent His body which was free from sin and falsehood.

The second emblem used in the Lord's Supper is called "the cup" or the "fruit of the vine." We read:

And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them; and they all drank of it. And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God (Mark 14:23-25).

The vine here mentioned is known to be the grape vine, and the drink was the juice of the grape. There is a teaching that this was fermented wine, but it is very significant that the word *wine* is never used in the accounts of the Lord's Supper. It would hardly be consistent to *forbid* the use of leavened (fermented) bread to represent Christ's body, and then use fermented (leavened) grape juice to represent His blood.

The Bible account of the original Passover does not mention any drink, but the Jews introduced into the service the drinking of four cups of wine or grape juice. The fact that unfermented grape juice was acceptable to the Jews for use in the Passover

is stated in the *Universal Jewish Encyclopedia* (1948 edition, page 529). And we know it was fully within the power of Jesus to provide the unfermented grape juice for the original Lord's Supper.

The "fruit of the vine," or grape juice, is a fitting and beautiful symbol of the blood of Christ, which was shed for the remission of our sins. Therefore unfermented grape juice is used by the Church of God (Seventh Day) in the Lord's Supper service.

The Emblems and Their Meaning

Emblems of remembrance! Once each year at the time of the ancient Passover we partake of these symbols thus showing our faith in the Redeemer they represent. These things bring us into a very close relationship to our Lord. Paul tells us they are the means of a communion, a very sacred nearness:

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (1 Corinthians 10:16).

Surely it is a great blessing to obey our Lord in doing this at the appointed time. The Lord's Supper is, in a sense, the Christian Passover for Christ is our Passover Lamb. We read:

...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 5:7, 8).

This memorial service is to be continued year after year, right up to the very time of the second advent of Christ. The apostle Paul clearly teaches this as we find in I Corinthians 11:26:

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

This verse does not say we should take it often as though it should be taken more than once a year, but rather it is saying that every time we have the service we commemorate the death of our Lord.

Who Is Worthy To Take Part?

Jesus gave the Lord's Supper to His disciples. It is a part of the service of God's people yet today who are now disciples of Jesus and who make up the Church of God. It shows faith in the broken body and shed blood of Christ by which we obtain our salvation. Therefore it is a service for Christians.

In the last part of the 11th chapter of First Corinthians the apostle Paul warns against taking part "unworthily." We read:

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 (I Corinthians 11:27, 28).

For one to take the emblems of Christ who has not accepted Him as his Saviour and who has not been baptized, would be a

wrong act. One who has not accepted the sacrifice of Christ for his sins is unworthy to take of the emblems which represent faith in Christ.

The verses also indicate that even one who is a Christian should examine himself. Does this mean that we should examine our lives to see if we have been perfect and thus qualify to take the Lord's Supper? Must one be free of all mistakes and sins during the past year to be worthy to partake? If this were the meaning no one would be fit to take part. Perfection is our goal, but none of us is now perfect. We find ourselves coming short of doing all that we should, and we also make mistakes and sometimes find that we have transgressed the law of God. Jesus taught us to ask forgiveness, and we are taught that:

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9).

Let us consider some of the things we ought to examine in regard to our lives. First, do we have a clear conscience? Is there some besetting sin from which we need deliverance and forgiveness? If we know of any sin which we have not confessed, and which is therefore unforgiven, we should confess it and ask God to forgive us. If we have sinned against a brother or sister in Christ or against any of our fellow men, we should ask forgiveness and in every possible way make things right with them. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus taught that if others have something against us we should go to them and seek reconcilia-

tion before worshipping God at His altar. Surely the same teaching applies to us in connection with taking part at the Lord's table.

We cannot become worthy by paying money or by doing any act to atone for our sins. Only Christ can atone for us. But we can confess our sins, and we can make things right with others; and we must do this no matter how much humiliation it brings us. We remember that "*God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble*" (James 4:6). The humble, repentant Christian who feels his great need and his personal unworthiness before God, is the one who is worthy to partake of the emblems of the body and blood of Christ. Each year we should get ready for the Lord's Supper by making things right with God and man.

Where Shall We Take Part?

The first Lord's Supper was given when Jesus and His disciples were gathered in a large upper room. Paul speaks of the Corinthian brethren coming together into one place for the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:20). And so it seems proper that it be a service in the church. Every congregation of the Church of God (Seventh Day) gathers together for the Lord's Supper on the appointed night. (The publishers of this tract will be glad to give anyone the date of the service and the address of the nearest minister and church.) However, if the distance is too great, or if it is otherwise impossible to meet with a church it is perfectly proper for a family to have this service in their home or for an in-

dividual to do so alone. Unleavened bread may be prepared similar to pie crust, but without any soda, baking powder, salt, or other leavening agent. Or Jewish Matzos for Passover may be purchased at any store selling Kosher products. The grape juice may be home-canned or purchased at a grocery store. The reading of the Bible, prayer, singing of hymns and some words of admonition should be a part of the service. There should be a prayer of thanks for the bread and then it should be broken and passed so that all may take a piece. There should be another prayer of thanksgiving for the "fruit of the vine." It may be in individual small glasses which are passed so that all take one, or it may be left in one cup from which all drink. Each may hold his piece of the bread until all have been served and all then partake together. The same may be done when the grape juice is taken in individual small glasses. It should be a service of quiet, prayerful reverence, a most sacred time for the Christian.

The Ordinance of Feet Washing

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke describe the giving of the Lord's Supper at the time of the Passover. The Gospel of John (in chapter 13) tells of the same Passover but does not describe the Lord's Supper. However in connection with the Passover, John tells of Jesus washing the feet of the disciples. We are told that Jesus arose from the supper (table) girded Himself with a towel, poured water into a basin and began

to wash the feet of the disciples. The apostle Peter objected to Christ performing so lowly an act for him, but Jesus said:

...If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me (John 13:8).

Peter then said that he wanted his hands and his head also washed, but Jesus answered to the effect that the washing of the feet was sufficient. Jesus washed the feet of all the disciples, including those of Judas the betrayer. He then resumed his seat at the table and said to them:

....Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you (John 13:12-15).

It is evident that Jesus washed the disciples' feet either before or after He gave the Lord's Supper. If the supper mentioned in verse two is the Lord's Supper, the feet washing was after; if the giving of the sop mentioned in John 13:26 is the same event as mentioned in Matthew 26:23, then the feet washing was after the Passover supper and before the Lord's Supper. It was *in connection with the* Lord's Supper and the disciples were definitely instructed to follow the example of Jesus. Thus at the time of the Lord's Supper the followers of Jesus should obey His instruction and humbly wash one another's feet. He did not say we should *be willing* to do it, but to

actually *do* it. In obedience to this, those who gather for the Lord's Supper service, in its annual observance in the Church of God (Seventh Day), practice feet washing. For this portion of the service the congregation is divided into two groups---the women in one and the men in the other. They meet either in separate rooms, or in a room divided by a curtain. They use basins and towels which they have brought, and warm water is provided for all as they perform this humble act of hearts of all as they perform this humble act for each other. Gospel choruses are often sung during the time. In this we find a fulfillment of the words of Jesus:

If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them (John 13:17).

in Conclusion

The people of God once were blessed with a great deliverance as Israel left the land of Egypt. God asked His people to remember this by having a special ceremony each year on the anniversary of the event. This was called the Passover. The Bible clearly shows that the deliverance from Egypt was a type of the deliverance of the people of God from sin. The lamb killed at the Passover was a type of Christ who is called "the lamb of God."

On the night when He was betrayed, Jesus ate the Passover with His disciples. He washed their feet and told them they should follow His example. He broke the bread and declared that it was His body, given for them. He took the cup containing the "fruit of the

vine," blessed it and declared that it was His blood which was shed for them and each one was to drink a portion of it. They had been keeping the Passover to remember a former deliverance. Now Jesus told them to do these things—take of the bread and the fruit of the vine in remembrance of Him. The apostle Paul declares that each time we do this we show forth, or commemorate, the death of Christ until He comes back to earth again. Christ is declared to be "our pass-over" and so, in a sense, the Lord's Supper is the Christian Passover. The original Passover was to be observed at only one time of the year, on the 14th of the Hebrew month Nisan (or in certain emergencies, one month later on the same day of the month, Numbers 9:10, 11). The Lord's Supper, the Christian Passover, given to take the place of the ancient Passover, should be at the same time. This time is easily found by all who desire to obey the Lord. There is a great blessing in the Lord's Supper and feet washing service. In fact, it is essential to the Christian life to take the Lord's Supper, for Jesus evidently was referring to this service when He said:

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 (John 6:53).

Let us therefore take the Lord's Supper, the blessed communion of the body and blood of Christ, at its appointed time until Jesus comes. Amen.

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