



30 SEPTEMBER 2018 FELLOWSHIP OF CHRISTIANS

- Scripture Text - 1 Corinthians 11:23-31

a) 23 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: 24 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. 25 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. 26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

b) 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. 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. 29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. 1 Corinthians 11:23-31 (KJV)

c) 16 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? 17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 (KJV)

d) The Living Bible: When we drink the cup of blessing, aren't we taking into ourselves the blood, the very life, of Christ? And isn't it the same with the loaf of bread we break and eat? Don't we take into ourselves the body, the very life, of Christ? Because there is one loaf, our manyness becomes oneness -Christ doesn't become fragmented in us. Rather, we become unified in him.

e) 9 Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: 10 And they saw the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. 11 And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand: also they saw God, and did eat and drink. Exodus 24:9-11 (KJV)

f) Ephesians 2:13 But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to him through the blood of Christ.

1) The Privilege of His Presence

- a) In the ancient Jewish Passover meal, the third cup was called the “cup of blessing.” That was the part of the meal that Jesus radically transformed into what we call “the Lord’s Supper.” Instead of remembering the time God had spared all the firstborn of Israel with blood on their doorposts to escape from Egypt, now Jesus’s disciples would celebrate the body of Jesus broken for them, and the blood of Jesus spilled for them, to escape the wrath of God.
- b) The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:16 that when we partake of the bread and of the cup, we “fellowship” with our Savior (the word for “participation” in verses 16 and 17 is the word for “fellowship” elsewhere). In other words, we participate with Jesus spiritually at his Table.

We are not merely remembering Jesus when we come to his Table; we are eating with him. Though remembering him remains significant, more is happening than that. Jesus himself is present by the Spirit. As we eat and drink, we eat and drink with him, and renew ourselves spiritually through him.

- c) The SHEWBREAD - “lechem paneem” mentioned in Exo 25:30 can be directly translated as the “Table(shulchan) of the Bread(lechem) of Faces(paneem)” and is also translated in some of our English Bibles as Table of Bread of the Presence(because God was meeting face to face).
- d) Not long before, Moses had presented the book of the covenant to the people, and they had pledged to obey the covenant (a promise which didn’t even last six weeks). As a sign of the covenant going into effect, Moses sprinkled the people with blood from a sacrifice, saying “This is the blood of the covenant,” the very words which Jesus used when he established the Lord’s Supper.
- e) God ratified the Mosaic covenant (Exod. 24:11) by having the elders of Israel sit down in his presence and consume a meal.
- f) The table of the bread of the presence in the Holy Place in the tabernacle was made of acacia wood overlaid with gold (Exo. 25:23-24); the wood typifies Christ’s humanity, and the gold His divinity. Acacia wood signifies that Christ’s humanity is the basic element for Him to be our feast.

2) Fellowship with God

- a) *9 God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord. 1 Corinthians 1:9 (KJV)*
- b) God invites us to this meal. Our intimacy with Christ comes from our calling by God. One of the ways we fellowship with Christ in deep intimacy happens at the Lord's Table.

Communion is a holy moment for the church.

- c) In this holy meal, we recognize that there is one bread, and that we who are many are one body as we all partake from this one bread. This is a family meal. Christ has taken us all in. Because there is only one true bread from heaven, all who believe in him are one body, eating and drinking spiritually from one great shared hope.
- d) The Bread and Wine on His Table signifying coming face to face or having Fellowship with His Children in remembrance of His Covenant was surely an integral part of the Tabernacle. Every Sabbath, the bread was renewed and the Table with its bread and wine was before the face of God continually.
- e) *Truly, truly, 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 feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. Whoever feeds on 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 whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not as the fathers ate and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever. (John 6:53-58).*
- f) **ZOE** - *The life of God is in us!*
- g) *The point is this: when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, we commune and fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Just as the Old Testament priests who ate the bread and wine were reminded of God's presence just a few feet away in the holy of holies and were reminded of his gracious redemption, so too when we eat the Lord's Supper we are reminded of Christ's presence in our midst and of the redemption that we have through faith by his life, death and resurrection.

3) Fellowship with One Another

- a) **WE BLESS** - The minister "blesses" (that is, consecrates with blessing) the cup, not by any priestly transmitted authority of his own, but as representative of the congregation, who virtually *through him bless the cup.*
- b) The consecration is the corporate act of the whole Church.
- c) The act of joint blessing (both cup and bread) of the cup, (not "the cup" itself, which, as also "the bread," in the Greek is in the accusative - the object of the verb), and the consequent drinking of it together, constitute the communion, that is, the joint participation "of the blood of Christ."

For we being many are one bread, and one body...

- i) **We...all**—Greek "pas", "the whole of us."
 - ii) Omit "and"; "one loaf, one body." "We, the many (namely, believers assembled; so the Greek), are one bread (by our partaking of the same loaf, which becomes assimilated to the substance of all our bodies; and so we become), one body" (with Christ, and so with one another).
- d) **We "DISCERN" THE BODY OF CHRIST...**
- i) *For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. 30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. 31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.*
 - ii) *Twofold - We discern what His body has done for us (sin and sickness) and discern our relationship to those in the body of Christ.*

The fact that the table was overlaid with gold signifies the expression of God: within Him, Christ's humanity is the basic element for our enjoyment, and upon Him is His divinity as the expression of God. Eating Jesus with His fine, balanced, and uplifted humanity causes us to express God in His divinity; inwardly we have the Lord's humanity to support us, and outwardly the others see God being expressed through us.

As we partake of the humanity of Christ, we are "transformed" by His divine life into His same image!

THE BREAD OF THE PRESENCE

The bread of the Presence (also called the showbread or shewbread in some translations) was special bread always present on a table in the tabernacle (and later in the temple). Leviticus 24:5-7 describes this bread:

"You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. And you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table of pure gold before the Lord. And you shall put pure frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion as a food offering to the Lord."

This bread of the Presence was 1) made of fine flour, 2) baked in 12 loaves, 3) arranged in two piles of six loaves each on a table of pure gold, 4) covered with frankincense, and 5) served as a memorial food offering to the Lord. The bread could only be eaten by Aaron and his sons in a holy place and was set out every Sabbath day (Leviticus 24:8-9).

Now the burning question is: What is the bread of presence? The term bread of presence is a little ambiguous, as it could mean simply the bread that is in the presence of God, or it could mean that God is in the bread. The former is the more likely answer—it is the bread that was in the presence of God. Remember that the Ark of the Covenant, the symbol and earthly throne of God, was only a few feet away behind the veil in the Holy of Holies. The bread, then, was not only to remind the Israelites, specifically the priests, of the presence of God just a few feet away but it was also to remind them of God's gracious provision for Israel. It did this in two chief ways.

First, remember that when the priests ate the bread and drank the wine in the tabernacle, it was a reminder of the covenant that God had made with the people. The bread was a reminder of Israel's redemption from Egypt as well as the ratification of the covenant on Mount Sinai. However, it was also a reminder of God's gracious provisions for Israel's physical needs.

Second, remember that when Israel first left Egypt they were in need of food and complained. God provided them with bread from heaven: 'Behold, I am about to rain bread from heaven for you, and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether they will walk in my law or not' (Exod. 16:4). When God provided Israel with the bread from heaven, they were supposed to place some of the manna within the ark (Exod. 16:32-34). So then, the bread of presence was also likely a reminder of God's gracious provision for Israel's physical needs. Israel was hungry, and God fed them.

When we consider the table for the bread of presence, we also find another symbol that reminded Israel of God's nearness. The bread of presence also reminded Israel of their gracious covenant redemption and God's provision for Israel's every need, even feeding them when they were hungry.

We certainly see the connections between Christ, the Lord's Supper, and the table for the bread of presence in the tabernacle. In Exodus 24 the elders of Israel ascended Mount Sinai to eat a covenant ratification meal in the presence of the Lord. Just prior to that meal Moses and the people of Israel ratified the Mosaic covenant and Moses sprinkled the sacrificial blood on the book of the covenant and over the people. These same elements appear, and uniquely so, in the Lord's Supper. In fact, one connecting feature between the two events is the phrase, 'the blood of the covenant'. This phrase only occurs in Exodus 24, the Gospel accounts of the Lord's Supper, and the ninth chapter of Hebrews. In the Lord's Supper, however, Christ ratified the new covenant with his own blood, not the blood of animals. Recall that the author of Hebrews connects the sacrifice of Christ, the blood of the covenant, with that which cleanses us from sin: 'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water' (Heb. 10:22).

Incidentally, some might wonder, upon what Old Testament practice is the Lord's Supper then based? Is not the Lord's Supper based on the Passover? Yes, the Lord's Supper is based upon the Passover, but at the same time there is often overlapping biblical practice and imagery from other Old Testament passages that point to the same aspect of Christ's work. For example, the Passover prefigures Christ's sacrifice, as do the Old Testament sacrifices on the Day of Atonement. Here there is overlap with the Passover and the bread of presence. We should also realize that the practices of the New Testament, such as the Lord's Supper, do not arise without precedent in the Old Testament. In other words, Christ did not invent the Lord's Supper but instead the supper has its precedence here with the bread of presence in the tabernacle.

We can think of the connections in this way: the Old Testament priests would gather in the tabernacle and consume the bread of presence and drink the wine—both of which pointed to God's gracious redemption and provision for his people. Likewise, the New Testament tells us that we are a royal priesthood, and we gather together to consume bread and wine as a covenant meal, as it is set apart and consecrated through prayer. The bread and wine, as we saw in Christ's explanation, points to our redemption in Christ.