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Preparation for Participation in the Lord's Supper - Dan Snaddon

In this study we will go to the Scriptures to find out what God expects of us as we prepare ourselves to participate in the Lord's Supper.

What is your normal practice of preparation—or do you prepare at all? For years I have made it a practice to keep short accounts with God throughout the week and, if at all possible, to be quiet on Saturday night. Spending these crucial hours in quiet meditation has been a profitable exercise for me; in my worship and service of the Lord's Day, it has paid tremendous dividends.

Unfortunately, this solemn and scriptural method of preparation for the Lord's Supper is the exception rather than the rule. It is common knowledge among us that many of the Lord's people will, on a Saturday night, watch all kinds of sports, sometimes with a late movie thrown in. Beloved, these activities, while gratifying to the flesh, will not prepare the heart to meet the King on Sunday morning.

A friend of mine was summoned to appear before Her Majesty the Queen. This was one of the greatest days in his life. With the summons came instructions as to how he should dress. He must wear morning dress, which included a gray top hat, tails, striped trousers, and black shoes. When he arrived at Buckingham Palace, he was escorted into a room and given specific guidance as to how he should enter and exit the presence of Her Majesty. He was directed to approach her from the side, then face her, and from that given point, proceed to his

designated place before her. At the conclusion of the interview and after presentation of the decoration, he should withdraw backward to a certain point, then walk off to the side. He received strict instructions that under no circumstances must he turn his back on Her Majesty.

Beloved, we do not go to meet Her Majesty the Queen at the Lord's Supper. We go to meet His Majesty the King of kings and Lord of lords. If it is so important for those who are presented to the Queen to be properly attired and instructed in protocol, how much more important it is for us to be suitably attired and spiritually prepared when we come to worship His Majesty.

In the 22nd chapter of his Gospel, Luke says that Jesus:

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." Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the New Testament in My blood, which is shed for you."

The inference here is that we also drink of the cup in remembrance of Him. In 1 Cor. 11, Paul writes, 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 broke 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 and after he had supped, said, "This cup is the New Testament in My blood; this do as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Three times over the phrase is mentioned, "This do in remembrance of Me."

With these thoughts in mind, let us consider a few truths relative to the purpose of the Lord's Supper. There are at least "four looks" that we should consider if we are to remember the Lord acceptably:

First, we must "look in." There should always be a period of self-examination before worship. Second, during our worship there should be a "look back," a worshipful look at the pre-incarnate glories of Christ, as well as His redemptive work on the Cross. The gold, frankincense, and myrrh aspects of the Lord's life and character should be constantly under review. Third, we should have a "look up" to where the Christ of God is sitting at the right hand of God, crowned with glory and honor. Fourth, there should be a "look forward" to the Lord's coming.

We seldom reach these last two points in our worship meetings. We leave with our blessed Lord hanging on the Cross while in reality, He is exalted to the apex of the universe, God having raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenlies, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come; and has put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Eph. 1:20, 23

Paul also exhorts us to remember the Lord "till He come." When we are gathered together to break bread, we are announcing to the world, to the angels, and to ourselves, that the Lord is coming soon. The Lord's Supper should not only be a place of sorrow, it should be a time of anticipation and rejoicing:

I am waiting for the coming
Of the Lord who died for me
O His words have thrilled my spirit,
“I will come again for thee.”
I can almost hear His footfall
On the threshold of the door,
And my heart, my heart is longing
To be with Him evermore.

Let us give some further thought to the “look in” part of our preparation. Paul exhorts us to take an introspective look at ourselves when he says, “Let a man examine himself.” It is my considered opinion that it is a veritable impossibility to remember the Lord and worship acceptably unless we have first examined and judged ourselves. There must be self-analysis and an in-depth, soul-searching self-judgment, followed by an uninhibited disclosure of our real selves to God, before there can be true worship. Following this soul exposure, there should be full confession and repentance of all known sin. My beloved, do you know anything of this heart-moving, spiritual exercise before remembering the Lord? We are prone to tell sinners that they should confess and repent of their sins. Now the finger of God is pointing at us. If we have any unconfessed sin in our lives, we should get it out into the open before God, confess it, and repent of it. When we have done this, we are in a fit state to remember the Lord and worship God.

Furthermore, before participating in the Lord’s Supper, we should judge our motives as well as our actions. They should be brought up front and carefully analyzed. This

applies to older brethren as well as young men. What is the purpose of our going to the Lord's Supper? Whom do we remember? In John 12, the crowds did not come to Bethany to see Jesus, they came to see Lazarus whom Jesus had raised from the dead. The wise men came to worship the King. Wise men still come to worship the King. The disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration saw "no man except Jesus." Do we really come to the Lord's Supper to see Jesus, and worship Him?

What is the basic purpose for our attending the Lord's Supper? Is it to be heard? Is it to act on a sudden impulse? Is it simply to share the Word of God with those who are present? There are those who would turn the Lord's Supper into a sharing meeting. The purpose of this unique meeting is not for sharing; it is wholly and solely for the worship of God, and for remembering Jesus at His own request. With regard to sharing, there is nothing wrong with sharing some experiences with one another, but, in God's name, let us preserve the unparalleled extraordinariness, the stateliness, the splendor, and the sublimity of the Lord's Supper and have another meeting at another time for sharing and caring.

In Luke 22, and 1 Cor. 11, the words "remember Me" are mentioned three times directly and once by inference. Why does the Lord want us to attend this unique meeting? It is to "remember Him." This is the sole purpose of our going to the Lord's Supper. Everything and everyone must be submissive to Jesus Christ. The incomparable glory, majesty, and the unsurpassed dignity of His person should saturate everyone in the gathering. All human relationships, earthly and worldly, should pale into insignificance. The

atmosphere at the Lord's Supper should be charged with the glory of the Lord Jesus in the same way it was on the Mount of Transfiguration. On this occasion, Jesus Christ stood supreme; not even the best of men could be compared to Him. When Peter equated the Lord with Moses and Elijah, God enveloped the scene in Shekinah glory, and when the cloud was removed they saw "no man except Jesus." When we attend the Lord's Supper we, too, should see no one except the Lord Jesus, and we should worship Him alone.

Over the years there has developed among us a tendency to minister the Word at the Supper. More often than not, this ministry is of a general nature, and has little to do with the object of our gathering. I am of the opinion that if ministry is given before the breaking of bread, that ministry should be focused upon the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. As we listen to this Christ-exalting ministry, our hearts are softened and we are drawn closer to Him and our capacity for worship is increased. This kind of ministry is the only ministry that is profitable before the breaking of bread.

There is vast difference between "ministry" and "worship." Ministry, in its ideal form, comes down to us from God, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit; then it is delivered through the instrument whom God has prepared and gifted for this purpose. This is ministry in its ideal sense. Unfortunately, all ministry does not come up to this standard.

Worship is something altogether different. Worship is generated in the heart. Then it ascends through the Holy Spirit, to the Son, Who then presents it to the Father in all the value of His glorious Person. Ministry

descends from God. Worship ascends to God. Since worship is the highest form of service a believer can engage in, we should reach for the Highest.

Our late brother, A.P. Gibbs, differentiates between PRAYER—THANKSGIVING—and WORSHIP. He said, “PRAYER IS A SOUL OCCUPIED WITH ITS NEED.” There are meetings in which it is proper to pray. That’s why the prayer meeting is held. The Lord’s Supper is not the place to pray. The Lord’s Supper is the place to remember the Lord and to worship Him.

“PRAISE OR THANKSGIVING IS A SOUL OCCUPIED WITH ITS BLESSINGS.” There is nothing wrong with being occupied with our blessings. The Psalmist said it was a “good thing to give thanks to the Lord,” but in this sphere one does not reach God’s ideal.

“WORSHIP IS A SOUL OCCUPIED WITH GOD ALONE.” The Father seeketh such to worship Him. Many of God’s dear children, despite their knowledge of the Scriptures, have not been able to burst through the ceiling of praise and thanksgiving and enter through the veil into the uttermost sanctuary, the most holy place, and there worship the Lord in beauty of holiness.

When we are in the Spirit and are being controlled by Him, we can enter into a deep and moving spiritual experience as we worship God, and be nearer to heaven than anywhere on earth.

To worship in spirit and in truth can be costly. It can be costly in time. We may be misunderstood if we absent ourselves from certain activities as we seek to prepare our hearts to worship at the Lord’s Supper. Psalm 45 says, “My heart is overflowing with a good matter, I speak of the things which I have made as touching the

King.” The Psalmist’s heart was overflowing with the worship he “had made.” It takes time to generate worship. It takes time to prepare the heart for worship. We do not learn to worship in a seminary or Bible school. We can learn many good things there but they cannot teach a person to worship. No one can teach another to worship. The only place you can learn to worship is in “St. Mary’s College” at Jesus’ feet. Mary learned, wept, anointed, and worshipped at Jesus’ feet.

If you feel you are not close enough to Jesus at His feet, rise a little higher and, like John, lean on the Savior’s breast, and there recline; listen to His every heart-beat; hear the sighs that escape from His lips; relish the words that drop like honey from His mouth; look into His blessed eyes that tell of His deep, deep love; gaze into His face that was marred more than any man’s, dumbfounded at the nail-scarred hands and feet and the riven side. This is where we will learn to worship, but to gain this deep insight into the heart of the Lord can be costly.

For Mary to worship the Lord was a costly but blessed experience. Three hundred pence was a year’s wages for a working man. Mary invested her life savings in that ointment. In giving it all to Him, she showed her boundless love for Jesus. She poured every last drop of that precious and costly ointment upon His blessed person. The Lord Jesus was never more honored in His life.

When we come together at the Lord’s Supper, God does not want our tongues as such, neither does He want our talents. He really does not want our word of ministry, unless it is in the Spirit. The Lord Jesus wants all our

love and worship. Mary gave Him both—she gave her all.

Several years ago I watched (on television) some war veterans return to the shores of Normandy. With great emotion, they visited the scenes of former brutal battles. Later, they visited the graves of their friends who had died in battle. Finally, the camera focused on a gravestone bearing the name of a young man, nineteen years of age. Underneath the name was the inscription, “He gave his all.” This young man gave everything he had for us; he gave his all for his King and country. Beloved, what have we given to the Lord Jesus? Have we given Him our lives? Have we given Him our worship? Have we given Him our all? At the Lord’s Supper and at home, we have the opportunity to do this.

Yes, it is costly to worship. It was costly for Abraham. He said to the young men, “Saddle the ass and let us go up and worship God.” At one point the worship of God cost Abraham his son, the son that he loved with all his heart. He was willing to sacrifice his most precious possession in order to worship God. If we would worship God acceptably, there must be preparation of heart; there must be sacrifice and consecration of mind and body. We must know what it means to “have our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” It is in this sublime, spiritual state that we are fit to enter the Lord’s presence and worship Him.

There is also a solemn warning issued to those partaking and participating in the Lord’s Supper. In Lev. 10, we read the story of two young priests who were impetuous and zealous. They rushed into the presence of God and

offered strange fire; for doing this they lost their lives. Beloved, we cannot attend the Lord's Supper, break bread, and partake of the wine in an unprepared state and do and say anything we like.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that they could not gorge themselves with food and drink themselves into intoxication at the love feast, then expect to worship the Lord at His Supper. They were not in a fit condition to discern the Lord's body and blood in the elements. For this grave error God visited this church in judgment. Some were sick, others were weak, and some had died. Brethren, if God were to visit the church in the same manner today, many would be turned into cemeteries.

When we come to remember the Lord, we come before the Creator, Upholder, and Sustainer of the universe. We come to remember the Lord of lords, and King of kings. We also come to remember the Lamb of God, crucified, and risen. The ascended One, glorified One, and the coming One.

When we come to worship, we should be cleansed from all sin. Our hearts should be tender and our baskets should be filled with first fruits, ready to worship in spirit and in truth.

The time has come for us to consider some of these grave principles. Before participating in worship we should take an introspective look at ourselves, engaging in deep, soul-searching self-analysis, so that when we appear before God, in the holiest of all, our hearts are clean and pure, then like a volcano will burst forth in adoration and worship.

Preparation For Participation in the Lord's Supper - Spanish

En este estudio iremos a las

Escrituras para ver qué es lo que Dios espera de nosotros mientras nos preparamos para participar en la Cena del Señor.

¿Cómo te preparas —o no te preparas— normalmente? Durante años he tenido la costumbre de ir llevando las cuentas al día con Dios y, si me es posible, la noche del sábado pasarla tranquila. Pasar estas horas cruciales en meditación y calma ha sido un ejercicio muy provechoso para mí; ha tenido tremendos resultados en mi adoración y servicio del Día del Señor.

Desafortunadamente, este método solemne y bíblico de preparación para la Cena del Señor, es más la excepción que la regla. Todos sabemos que lo que hace gran parte del pueblo del Señor el sábado por la tarde es mirar todo tipo de deporte, y algunas veces alguna película. Amados, estas actividades, aunque son agradables a la carne, no preparan el corazón para encontrarse con el Rey al día siguiente.

Una vez citaron a un amigo mío para comparecer ante Su Majestad la Reina. Éste fue uno de los días más grandes de su vida. Junto con la citación, se le dieron instrucciones de cómo debería vestirse. El protocolo incluía un sombrero gris, frac, pantalones de rayas, y zapatos negros. Cuando llegó al Palacio Buckingham, le escoltaron hasta una sala, y le dieron instrucciones específicas de cómo debía entrar y salir de la presencia de Su Majestad. Debía acercarse a ella por un lado,

entonces ponerse en frente, y desde ese punto, proceder a su lugar designado delante de ella. En la conclusión de la entrevista y después de la entrega de la condecoración, debía retroceder hasta cierto punto, y entonces salir por el lateral. Recibió estrictas instrucciones que bajo ninguna circunstancia debía darle la espalda a Su Majestad.

Amados, nosotros no nos encontramos con Su Majestad la Reina en la Cena del Señor. Nos encontramos con Su Majestad el Rey de reyes y Señor de señores. Si es tan importante que los que se presentan ante la Reina vayan ataviados correctamente e instruidos en su protocolo, cuánto más importante es que nosotros nos ataviemos y preparemos adecuada y espiritualmente cuando venimos a adorar a Su Majestad.

En Lucas 22:19-20, dice que el Señor Jesús:

"Tomó el pan y dio gracias, y lo partió y les dio, diciendo:

Esto es mi cuerpo, que por vosotros es dado; haced esto en memoria de mí. De igual manera, después que hubo cenado, tomó la copa, diciendo: Esta copa es el nuevo pacto en mi sangre, que por vosotros se derrama".

Aquí la deducción es que también bebemos de la copa en memoria de

Él. En 1 Corintios 11:23-25, Pablo escribe:

"Porque yo recibí del Señor lo que también os he enseñado:

Que el Señor Jesús, la noche que fue entregado, tomó pan; y habiendo dado gracias, lo partió, y dijo: Tomad, comed; esto es mi cuerpo que por vosotros es partido;

haced esto en memoria de mí. Asimismo tomó también la copa, después de haber cenado, diciendo:

Esta copa es el nuevo pacto en mi sangre; hacед esto todas las veces que la bebiereis, en memoria de mí".

Tres veces en este pasaje se menciona: "Haced esto en memoria de mí".

Con estos pensamientos en mente, consideremos unas verdades relativas al propósito de la Cena del Señor. Hay por lo menos "cuatro miradas" que debemos considerar si vamos a hacer memoria del Señor de una manera aceptable:

Primero, debemos "mirar adentro". Siempre debe haber un periodo de auto examen antes de la adoración.

Segundo, durante nuestra adoración debemos "mirar atrás", una mirada llena de adoración a las glorias pre-encarnadas de Cristo, y Su obra redentora en la Cruz. Los aspectos del oro, el incienso y la mirra en la vida y carácter del Señor deberían estar siempre bajo consideración. Tercero, debemos "mirar arriba", donde el Cristo de Dios está sentado a la diestra de Dios, coronado de gloria y honra. Cuarto, debemos "mirar hacia delante" a la venida del Señor.

Rara vez alcanzamos estos dos últimos puntos en nuestras reuniones de adoración. Nos quedamos con nuestro bendito Señor colgado de la Cruz, cuando en realidad

Él está exaltado a la cumbre más alta del universo:

"...Resucitándole de los muertos y sentándole a su diestra en los lugares celestiales, sobre todo principado y autoridad y poder y señorío, y sobre todo nombre que se nombra, no sólo en este siglo, sino también en el

venidero; y sometió todas las cosas bajo sus pies, y lo dio por cabeza sobre todas las cosas a la iglesia, la cual es su cuerpo, la plenitud de Aquel que todo lo llena en todo"

Efesios 1:20-23.

Pablo también nos exhorta a recordar al Señor: "hasta que Él venga". Cuando nos reunimos para partir el pan, estamos anunciando al mundo, a los ángeles, y a nosotros mismos, que el Señor viene pronto. La Cena del Señor no debería ser sólo un lugar de pena, sino que debería ser un lugar de anticipación y gozo:

Estoy esperando el retorno del Señor que murió por mí.

Sus palabras me han alentado, "Volveré a buscarte a ti".

Casi oigo ya sus pasos que se acercan más y más.

Y mi alma está anhelando, ir con Él por la eternidad.

Hagamos ahora más hincapié en la parte de nuestra preparación "mirando dentro". Pablo nos exhorta a dar una mirada introspectiva hacia nosotros mismos cuando dice: "Examinaos a vosotros mismos". Mi opinión considerada es que es una verdadera imposibilidad recordar al Señor y adorarle aceptablemente a menos que primero nos hayamos examinado y juzgado a nosotros mismos. Debe haber un auto examen, y un auto juicio a fondo, que alcance lo último de nuestra alma, seguido de una revelación sin reservas de nosotros mismos a Dios, antes de que pueda haber verdadera adoración. A continuación de esta exposición del alma, debe haber una confesión y arrepentimiento completo de todo pecado no ignorado. Amados, ¿conocéis algo de este ejercicio espiritual que mueve el corazón, antes de recordar al Señor? Somos propensos a decirle a los

pecadores que deben confesar y arrepentirse de sus pecados.

Ahora el dedo de Dios nos señala a nosotros. Si tenemos algún pecado sin confesar en nuestras vidas, debemos sacarlo a la luz delante de Dios, confesarlo, y arrepentirnos de ello. Cuando hayamos hecho esto, estaremos en el estado adecuado para recordar al Señor y adorar a Dios.

Además, antes de participar en la Cena del Señor, debemos juzgar nuestros motivos al igual que nuestras acciones. Todo esto debiera ser puesto delante nuestro para analizarlo detenidamente. Esto se aplica tanto a los hermanos mayores como a los jóvenes. ¿Cuál es el propósito de ir a la Cena del Señor? ¿A quién recordamos?

En Juan 12, las multitudes no iban a Betania para ver a Jesús; venían para ver a Lázaro, al que Jesús había resucitado de la muerte. Los sabios de Oriente fueron a adorar al Rey. Los hombres sabios aún van a adorar al Rey. Los discípulos, en el Monte de la Transfiguración "a nadie vieron, sino a Jesús solo". ¿Vamos realmente a la Cena del Señor a ver a Jesús y a adorarlo a Él?

¿Cuál es el propósito básico de asistir a la Cena del Señor? ¿Es que me oigan? ¿Es el actuar en un impulso repentino? ¿Es simplemente exponer la Palabra de Dios a los presentes? Hay algunos que convertirían la Cena del Señor en una reunión de exposición de la Palabra. Éste no es el propósito de esta reunión única; es completa y únicamente para adorar a Dios, y para recordar a Jesús como Él mismo nos dijo. Respecto a lo de la exposición de la Palabra o contar experiencias, no hay nada malo en ello, pero, en el nombre de Dios,

preservemos la singularidad sin par, majestuosidad, esplendor, y sublimidad de la Cena del Señor, y tengamos otra reunión en otro momento para lo demás.

En Lucas 22, y 1 Corintios 11, las palabras: "haced esto en memoria de Mí" se mencionan tres veces directamente y una por inferencia. ¿Por qué quiere el Señor que asistamos a esta reunión única? Es para "hacer memoria de

Él", traerle a la memoria. Éste es el único propósito de acudir a la Cena del Señor. Todo y todos deben someterse a Jesucristo. La gloria y majestad incomparables, y la dignidad sin par de Su persona deben saturar a todos los congregados. Todas las relaciones humanas, terrenales y mundanas, deberían palidecer en insignificancia. La atmósfera en la Cena del Señor debe estar cargada con la gloria del Señor Jesús de la misma manera que lo fue en el Monte de la Transfiguración. En esta ocasión, el Señor se mostró supremo; ni los mejores hombres podían comparársele. Cuando Pedro equiparó al Señor con Moisés y Elías, Dios selló la escena con una manifestación de Su gloria y, cuando la nube fue quitada, "a nadie vieron sino a Jesús solo". Cuando asistimos a la Cena del Señor, nosotros tampoco deberíamos ver a nadie excepto a Jesús, y adorarle sólo a Él.

A través de los años se ha desarrollado entre nosotros la tendencia o tradición de ministrar la Palabra en medio de la Cena del Señor. A menudo, este ministerio es de naturaleza general, y tiene muy poco que ver con el objetivo de nuestra reunión. Soy de la opinión de que si se ha de ministrar la Palabra antes del partimiento del pan, al menos este ministerio debe estar enfocado en la

Persona y obra del Señor Jesús. Mientras escuchamos este ministerio que está exaltando a Cristo, nuestros corazones se ablandan y nos acercamos a Él, y aumenta la capacidad para adorarlo. Este tipo de ministerio es el único provechoso antes del partimiento del pan [nota del traductor: y todavía mejor si lo que tenemos que decir, en lugar de decirlo a los hermanos como un pensamiento devocional, nos dirigimos directamente al Señor en adoración y se lo decimos a Él en presencia de los hermanos congregados].

Hay una gran diferencia entre "ministerio" y

"adoración", aunque adoración es ministrar al Señor. Pero cuando hablamos del ministerio, por ejemplo, de la Palabra, a otras personas, es otro concepto. Es algo que viene a nosotros de parte de Dios, a través del Hijo, en el poder del Espíritu Santo.

Entonces este ministerio es dado a otros mediante del instrumento que Dios ha preparado y a quien ha entregado el don para este propósito. Esto es lo que es el ministerio de la Palabra, al menos en su sentido ideal. Desafortunadamente, no todo el ministerio llega a este valor.

Pero la adoración es algo totalmente distinto. Es generado en el corazón, y entonces asciende a través del Espíritu Santo, al Hijo, Quien a Su vez lo presenta al Padre en todo el valor de Su gloriosa Persona. Así que, el ministerio desciende de Dios, pero la adoración asciende a Dios. Ya que la adoración es la forma suprema del servicio de un creyente, debemos llegar hasta el Supremo.

Nuestro hermano, A. P. Gibbs, diferencia entre
ORACIÓN — ACCIÓN DE GRACIAS — y ADORACIÓN.

Dice que "LA ORACIÓN ES UN ALMA OCUPADA CON SU NECESIDAD". Hay reuniones en las que se debe orar, y gracias a Dios por ellas. Éste es el motivo de la reunión de oración. Pero aunque algunos no lo hayan entendido así, la Cena del Señor no es el lugar para orar, para hacer colar al final de una expresión de adoración una pequeña petición: "y te rogamos que aceptes nuestra adoración," o cualquier cosa así. No son palabras malas, pero están fuera de sitio. Dios ya nos asegura de que nos acepta y recibe nuestra adoración. Pero si tuviéramos que pedirlo, el lugar y el momento no es la Cena del Señor, porque la Cena del Señor es el lugar para hacer memoria del Señor y adorarle.

"LA ALABANZA O ACCIÓN DE GRACIAS ES UN ALMA OCUPADA CON SUS

BENDICIONES". No hay nada malo con estar ocupados con nuestras bendiciones. El salmista dijo que "es bueno dar gracias al Señor", pero en esta esfera uno no alcanza el ideal de Dios.

"LA ADORACIÓN ES UN ALMA OCUPADA SÓLO CON DIOS". Éstas almas son las que el Padre busca que le adoren. Muchos de los queridos hijos de Dios, a pesar de su conocimiento de las Escrituras, no han sido capaces de irrumpir a través del techo de alabanza y acción de gracias para entrar a través del velo al lugar santísimo, y allí adorar al Señor en la hermosura de la santidad.

Cuando estamos en el Espíritu y estamos siendo controlados por Él, podemos entrar en una experiencia espiritual profunda y conmovedora mientras adoramos a Dios, y estar más cerca del cielo que de ningún otro lugar en la tierra.

Adorar en espíritu y en verdad puede ser costoso. Puede ser costoso en tiempo. Puede que los demás no comprendan por qué nos ausentamos de ciertas actividades para preparar nuestros corazones para adorar en la Cena del Señor. El Salmo 45 dice:

"Rebosa mi corazón palabra buena, dirijo al rey mi canto..." El corazón del salmista estaba rebosando de la adoración que él había hecho. Adorar no es como encender la luz, un toque al interruptor y ya está. Lleva tiempo preparar el corazón para adorar. No se aprende a adorar en un seminario o en un instituto bíblico. Aunque aprendieras alguna cosa buena ahí, no pueden enseñar a una persona a adorar. No es una asignatura académica. Es difícil enseñar a otro a adorar, porque es algo que se aprende en la práctica. El mejor lugar para aprender a adorar es el que ocupó María la hermana de Lázaro, es decir, a los pies de Jesús. Ella aprendió, lloró, ungió, y adoró a los pies de Jesús.

Si sientes que no estás suficientemente cerca de Jesús al estar a Sus pies, sube un poco más y, como Juan, recuéstate sobre el pecho del Salvador; escucha cada latido de Su corazón; oye los suspiros que se escapan de Sus labios; saborea las palabras que fluyen como miel de Su boca; mira Sus ojos benditos que hablan de Su profundo amor; contempla Su rostro que fue herido más que cualquier otro, permanece maravillado ante las manos y los pies marcados por los clavos, y el costado abierto. Allí es donde aprenderemos a adorar, pero ganar esta percepción profunda en el corazón del Señor puede ser costoso.

Para María, adorar al Señor fue una experiencia costosa, pero bendita. Trescientos denarios era el salario de un hombre por el trabajo de un año.

María invirtió sus ahorros en aquel perfume. Al dárselo todo a Él, ella mostró el amor ilimitado que tenía por Jesús. Derramó hasta la última gota de aquel costoso y precioso perfume sobre Su bendita persona. Nunca en Su vida fue tan honrado el Señor Jesús.

Cuando nos reunimos en la Cena del Señor, Dios no quiere nuestras lenguas, ni tampoco nuestros talentos. Tampoco quiere nuestra palabra de ministerio, a menos que sea en el Espíritu. El Señor Jesús quiere todo nuestro amor y adoración.

María le dio ambas cosas —ella le dio su todo.

Hace años vi (en la televisión) cómo algunos veteranos de la guerra volvían a las orillas de Normandía. Con gran emoción, visitaron las escenas de brutales batallas anteriores. Más tarde, visitaron las tumbas de sus amigos que habían muerto en la batalla. Finalmente, la cámara enfocó una lápida que llevaba el nombre de un joven de diecinueve años. Debajo del nombre estaba la siguiente inscripción: "Dio su todo". Este joven dio todo lo que tenía por nosotros; dio su todo por su Rey y su país. Amados, ¿qué hemos dado nosotros al Señor Jesús? ¿Le hemos dado nuestras vidas? En la Cena del Señor y en casa tenemos la oportunidad de hacerlo.

Sí, adorar es costoso. A Abraham le costó. Él dijo a los jóvenes: "Esperad aquí con el asno, y yo y el muchacho iremos hasta allí y adoraremos". Adorar a Dios, al llegar a este punto, a Abraham le costó su hijo, el hijo al cual amaba con todo su corazón. Estaba dispuesto a sacrificar su posesión más preciosa para adorar a Dios.

Si quería adorar a Dios aceptablemente, debía preparar su corazón; debe haber sacrificio y consagración de mente y cuerpo. Debemos saber lo que significa tener: "purificados los corazones de mala conciencia, y lavados los cuerpos con agua pura". Es en este estado sublime y espiritual en el que somos aptos para entrar en la presencia del Señor y adorarle.

También hay una advertencia solemne dada para aquellos que participan en la Cena del Señor. En Levítico 10, leemos la historia de dos sacerdotes jóvenes que eran impetuosos y celosos. Se precipitaron en la presencia de Dios y ofrecieron fuego extraño y, como consecuencia, perdieron sus vidas. Amados, no podemos asistir a la Cena del Señor, partir el pan y participar del vino de manera despreocupada, haciendo o diciendo cualquier cosa que se nos ocurra.

Pablo les recordó a los corintios que no podían atracarse comiendo y bebiendo hasta empacharse en las cenas fraternales, y entonces esperar poder adorar al Señor en Su Cena. No estaban en una condición apta para discernir el cuerpo y la sangre del Señor en los elementos. Por este grave error Dios visitó esta iglesia en juicio.

Algunos estaban enfermos, otros débiles, y algunos habían muerto. Hermanos, si Dios visitara la iglesia hoy de la misma manera, muchas se convertirían en cementerios.

Cuando venimos para hacer memoria del Señor, venimos ante el Creador y Sustentador del Universo. Venimos para hacer memoria del Señor de señores y Rey de reyes. Venimos también a hacer memoria del Cordero de

Dios, crucificado y resucitado. El Ascendido, Glorificado, y Aquel que volverá.

Cuando venimos a adorar, debemos estar limpios de todo pecado. Nuestros corazones deberían ser sensibles y tiernos y nuestras canastas deberían estar llenas de las primicias, estando así preparados para adorar en espíritu y en verdad.

Ha llegado el momento de considerar algunos de estos principios importantes. Antes de participar en adoración deberíamos dar una mirada introspectiva hacia nosotros mismos, ocupándonos en un análisis profundo que penetre en nuestra alma, para que cuando nos presentemos ante Dios, en la más completa santidad, nuestros corazones sean limpios y puros. Será entonces cuando, como un volcán, desbordaremos en adoración.

—Dan C. Snaddon

The Basis for the New Testament Assembly

Let us go back in history to two points in time, two beginnings. The first commenced almost 2,000 years ago but, for the moment, we will not discuss this. We will consider first the new beginning which took place approximately 150 years ago. At this time scriptural truths and principles, long hidden in ecclesiastical darkness, were rediscovered and there was an unprecedented movement of the Holy Spirit. His working in the hearts and lives of godly men was apparent, especially in Dublin, Ireland; in Plymouth and London, England; and in various places on the continent of Europe.

In later years, when church historians assembled all the facts, they discovered that this manifestation of the Spirit was not confined to Europe. In many parts of the world, the Spirit's presence and power were evident as He drew men and women from religious and worldly backgrounds and gathered them in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Among those moved by the Holy Spirit were brethren who were spiritual giants—some of them ordained preachers—who came to be esteemed and respected in evangelical circles for their scholarly and meticulous translation of the Sacred scriptures. In retrospect, they may have been among the godliest men, raised up by God to represent Him in the world. Deeply concerned about the low spiritual state of the professing church, they also were heartsick and discouraged over the unscriptural practices in the various churches with

which they were affiliated. Their deep-seated exercise of soul led to a prayerful searching of the Holy Scriptures, to discern divine principles and practices.

The outgrowth of this spiritual awakening was the recovery of many precious truths, hidden for centuries in ecclesiastical tradition. You will observe that they searched the Book to discern the mind of God. They sought the Lord's guidance through the Holy Spirit and if we, today, are to be acquainted with the mind and will of God relative to church principles and practices, we must get back to the Book. Many foreign practices not in accordance with the Scriptures are being introduced into some assemblies. In these days of declension and departure, we must get back to God's Word and in simple faith follow the divine pattern.

What were some of the principles recovered at this time? By careful reading and analysis and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, these brethren discovered:

The true character of the New Testament assembly

The position of the believers as being in Christ—the truth of the eternal security of believers The priesthood of all believers—in contrast to that of officiating clergy The sufficiency of the Name of Christ—no other name The ministry of the Holy Spirit in relation to the local body—presidency of the Holy Spirit The pretribulation rapture of the Church The premillennial coming of the Lord to the earth The literal millennial reign of Christ on the earth The keeping of the Lord's Supper on a weekly basis These truths, long-hidden in obscurity, when rediscovered, led to an exercise of heart to practice them. It was a costly decision for some—they lost a great deal of this world's prestige when they withdrew

from their religious affiliations and established what they believed to be of God. Consequently, believers began to gather in a simple way in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, the movement spread rapidly northward into Scotland and then into Northern Ireland. This phenomenal growth was attained because God was in it. Many spiritual believers were drawn by the Spirit from dead orthodoxy into these virile and dynamic New Testament assemblies, where New Testament principles were practiced with New Testament power.

These brethren, whom God called out, met in simple places in a simple way, trying to preserve the New Testament simplicity. Gifted men, raised by the Holy Spirit, began to teach:

The precious truth of the one body

The Lordship and Headship of Christ

The leadership of the Holy Spirit

They owed allegiance to no denomination.

They took no sectarian names; they chose rather to be known as believers—Christians—disciples—brethren.

They recognized no human head.

They sought to return to the New Testament pattern for the Church: Simplicity.

Those godly men strove for collective unity. Here, also, is a point of interest. Two of their watchwords were: absolute unity and absolute purity. These watchwords ought to be sounded out from every platform, in every assembly. There has never been a time when we need to

be united, there never has been a time when we need to be pure and clean and holy in the sight of God, more than today.

During the years since these pristine days, much of the simplicity has been lost. Some have sought to introduce a sectarian spirit. Others have developed an organizational unity, rather than unity of the Spirit. Let us be careful when arranging our assembly curriculum, lest we program the Holy Spirit out of our gatherings. May God grant us wisdom to give the Holy Spirit His place in our meetings. Despite the declension and departure, we thank God for those who stand fast, and who seek to strengthen the things that remain, and strive to preserve the New Testament simplicity as practiced by the early church.

Let us now go back to the beginning of the Church in the first century and consider some of the distinctive characteristics which it displayed, and also consider the scriptural principles which it practiced:

They Gathered in the Name of the Lord Jesus

The first distinguishing feature that we observe is that they gathered in the name of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus was the gathering centre. The early disciples were held together by devotion to a Person, not by membership in an organization. Their lives revolved around the Lord. As they walked with Him, they learned from Him. They loved Him so much that they were willing to obey divine principles to glorify Him, even if it meant suffering shame for His name. Their love and enthusiasm were zealously manifested:

They preached in His name (Acts 4:12).

They baptized in His name (Acts 10:48).

They performed miracles in His name (Acts 3:6).

They defied opposition in His name (Acts 4:18-20).

They suffered willingly in His name (Acts 5:41).

When a local assembly is patterned after this divine principle, and gathered unto Christ, then He is central, He is supreme, He is Lord. Thank God for every company of believers who reject all sectarian names and gather unto the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. The New Testament speaks of assemblies composed of true believers, gathered unto the name of the Lord Jesus, in many localities. To name a few: Jerusalem—Corinth—Rome—Ephesus—and the seven churches in Asia Minor.

They Were Independent

The second distinctive characteristic of these churches was that they were independent. They were autonomous and indigenous, that is to say, they were self-governing and self-producing. Paul describes these churches composed of believers, elders and deacons (Phil 1:1).

Nowhere in the New Testament do we find a confederation of assemblies. There is no mention of a bishop over a diocese, and no superintendent over a group of churches. Each assembly was a sovereign unit; each was ruled by elders under the direction of the Holy Spirit; each was independent of the others. The elders of each assembly will give an account of their work and will be held responsible by the Lord, at the Judgment Seat, as to how they conducted His affairs in the local church. Each was in subjection to Christ alone.

There was a Spirit of Fellowship

Despite this evident scriptural autonomy, there was an obvious spirit of fellowship. These assemblies expressed their fellowship in practical ways:

They received all those whom Christ had received (Rom 15:7).

They accepted and supported the gifted servants of Christ who moved among them (1 Cor 16:9-12).

They gave letters of commendation to those who traveled (Rom 16:1-2). This is a scriptural practice which has almost fallen into disuse in certain circles. It is good and Scriptural to carry a letter of commendation with you when you travel in an area where you are not known.

Though these churches were independent, there were occasions when they rendered financial assistance to the needy in other assemblies (Rom 15:25-27). They were willing to give of their substance to their brethren who were in need.

The aforementioned are good scriptural practices which were observed by the first-century believers. We would do well in the twentieth century to implement the principles of gathering unto the Name of the Lord Jesus, carefully guarding our independence and sovereignty as local churches, showing the love of Christ to all men, especially those who are of the household of faith. Such devotion and adherence to these divine principles would draw forth Blessings from a delighted God, that we would not be able to contain.

They Observed the Lord's Supper

One of the priorities of the first century church was to observe the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42). They broke bread

and partook of the wine in memory of the Lord Jesus. You may not have noticed this, that there were times when, in their fervency, these brethren may have remembered the Lord daily (Acts 2:46). The Lord's Supper—the Breaking of the Bread—the Remembrance Feast was very special to them. Some years later, the churches adopted the practice of celebrating the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day (Acts 20:7).

The Lord's Supper, in its simplicity, was another of the great truths which was lost in the rubble of ecclesiastical ceremony and antiquity. It was only 150 years ago that this important truth was rediscovered by godly men. From then until now, groups of believers have met each Lord's Day in response to the Lord's request to "remember Him," until He comes.

The Breaking of the Bread, then and now, is a unique characteristic of the New Testament church. It was, and is, the high point of their regularly scheduled meetings. My present knowledge leads me to believe that there are no other groups who keep the Lord's Supper in the way we do. This is another of the distinctives of the assemblies.

Occupied with the Lord Jesus Alone

The remembrance feast is unique in that we are occupied with the Lord Jesus alone. No Gospel is preached, no prayer requests are made. It is a time of intense adoration and worship, followed by the breaking of the bread and partaking of the wine. This time of remembrance and worship is among the most precious experiences this side of eternity.

I exhort the elders of all New Testament churches to exercise the utmost surveillance so that the character of

the Remembrance Feast will remain undisturbed. There are those among us that would reduce this time of worship into a sharing and caring meeting. Beloved in Christ, I beseech you in the Lord's name, if you feel the necessity for a share and care meeting, then arrange it at an appropriate time but please preserve the simplicity, the Scripturalness, the sacredness, the sanctity, and the beauty of the Lord's Supper.

The Simplicity of the Lord's Supper

Note the simplicity of this meeting. It is wonderful that we do not have to grapple with the error of transubstantiation, which teaches that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ. Neither are we vexed by the misconception of consubstantiation, which states that the bread and wine, after consecration, are side-by-side with the substance of the body and blood of Christ. It is beautiful that we can meet together in simplicity and practice what the early church practiced: A simple table on which is placed a loaf of bread and a cup of wine. As we gather around these symbols, believing them to represent the body and blood of the Lord Jesus, how wonderful it is to meet in the simplicity of New Testament principles, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, to praise, worship, and break the bread and partake of the wine in loving memory of our crucified, risen, ascended, glorified and soon-coming Lord.

The Lord's Return for His Church

Another of the truths rediscovered 150 years ago, was the truth of the Lord's return for His church; the Rapture of the saints as a Scriptural principle, was lost in the medieval darkness of the medieval ages. To these

godly and Spirit-filled men, we owe a debt of gratitude. We will never understand this side of eternity the deep spiritual exercise accompanied by prayers and tears, as these men of God carefully researched and analyzed the Scriptures under the guidance of the Spirit. We should thank God for the glorious truth of the Pretribulation Rapture of the Church.

The first-century believers accepted this precious truth. They rejoiced in the imminent return of the Lord. This blessed hope buoyed them up in the midst of trial and adversity. As the first-century believers left the Lord's Supper, they were filled with love for one another. They also had a great concern for the lost and because of this concern, evangelized wherever they went. They not only told of the Lord's death, they told of His glorious resurrection, His Ascension, and His coming again. These brethren were marked as men who were waiting for the Lord's return. They were little colonies waiting for the return of their King. This was the blessed hope that lifted their hearts as they greeted each other with Maranatha—the Lord is coming.

O that we, today, could capture the blessed expectation of the Lord's return. In the twentieth century, so many have become entrenched in this world. Most of us have never had it so good, so long; we have become so absorbed with the things of the world that the truth of the coming of the Lord has lost its power in our lives. The Lord is coming—the Lord is coming—and He is coming soon, silently and suddenly, and every born-again believer will be raptured into His presence.

Expectancy, simplicity, spirituality and power were the hallmarks of the early church. Thank God for the faithful

within the assemblies who seek to maintain the principles of the first-century church as they wait for the Lord's return.

The Activity of the Holy Spirit

Another characteristic of the early church was the presence and activity of the Holy Spirit. A careful study of the Acts brings to our attention the Ministry of the Holy Spirit. Not only did the Lord give the Church a Book, He also gave them the Holy Spirit to guide, corporately and privately. One of the truths that we need to relearn today is that the Holy Spirit is coequal, coeternal, and coexistent with the Father and the Son. May God help us all to understand this great truth and grant us the undying desire to give this Blessed Person His rightful place in our midst.

The apostles put great faith in the Holy Spirit. When the early missionaries left those little house churches behind them, they did so confidently, knowing that the Holy Spirit would lead them, empower and equip them.

They believed that He would raise up spiritual gifts for their growth (Eph 4:11).

Each believer was taught that he had a function to fulfill in the body (1 Cor 12:12).

Each believer was taught that he was the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19).

They were taught that there was no such division as clerisy and laity (Gal 3:28).

Most of the meetings were informal; they were unstructured for the most part. In mixed meetings, where brethren and sisters were present, the men took leadership (1 Cor 14:34). Some led in a hymn, some in

teaching, some in prayer or worship, some in exhortation. In this God-appointed way, spiritual gifts began to develop.

In time, some would emerge as teachers, and would be recognized as such; through them, God spoke to the local church. Others, by the Spirit, were gifted in the Gospel and became evangelists. Some were given shepherds' hearts by the Spirit; these became pastors in the Scriptural sense. The Holy Spirit was in complete control!

Do you wonder at the progress of these local churches? We would enjoy the same spiritual prosperity today if we crucified the flesh and gave the Holy Spirit His rightful place in our gatherings.

The Sisters' Place in the Local Church

Another characteristic of the Scriptural assembly is the position it holds with regard to the sisters. Before continuing, let me say we owe more to the godly sisters among us than we realize or admit. The spiritual standard of our assemblies would be greatly impaired were it not for the impact of our godly women.

Following the example of the first-century church, we believe in the silence of the sisters in public meetings. The two outstanding scriptures which support this are 1 Cor 14:34-35, "And if they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church," and 1 Tim 2:11-12, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I permit not a woman to teach, not to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."

Alas, the winds of change are blowing. There are many among us who have challenged, and are challenging, this particular truth. Despite these attacks, the unalterable principles of Scripture remain immovable and support the truth of the silence of sisters in the public meetings. The carrying out of this divine principle is God glorifying.

While adhering to this teaching, we readily admit that there are many spheres in which sisters can serve, and in many instances more acceptably than brethren. We thank God for their faithful attendance at the meetings. Their absence would cut the audiences by at least 60 percent. Most assemblies could not survive without their financial support. Their work in visitation is invaluable. In work of this type, situations arise which only a sister can deal with. Our Sunday Schools and extra-curricular activities among the young could not survive without their help. Our missionary endeavor would be greatly restricted were it not for the faithfulness and sacrifice of our dear sisters. Which one of us could estimate the value of their effectual and fervent prayers in any local gathering, or in the far-flung mission fields of the world. We should thank God for the dear sisters who, like Phoebe, are true servants of the church.

The Head Covering

Next, we come to the question of the head covering. It is unfortunate, but true, that many elders have become very lax in this matter. Some have turned a blind eye. All this, despite the teaching of 1 Cor. 11. Scriptural and spiritual assemblies believe and accept the teachings of the whole chapter. Not only do they believe in the weekly commemoration of the Lord's Supper, they also

believe in the head covering described in the earlier verses.

You will notice that in this regard there are no problems with godly sisters. They are content to preach the greatest of all sermons, to man, and to angels, of the headship of man, the Headship of Christ, and the supreme Headship of God. Nothing brings more glory to God than this.

In these days of feminist movements, this position, with that of the silence of the women, is being seriously challenged. May God give us wisdom to handle it Scripturally, honestly, and lovingly in the light of the Judgment Seat of Christ.

No Ordained Preachers

Another of the characteristics of the Scriptural Assembly is that we do not believe in ordained preachers.

Scriptural assemblies hold the position that there is no distinction between clerisy and laity. In fact, they believe that clerisy and laity do not exist in any form among believers. Paul left each local church he established in charge of local elders. These Spirit-filled men had authority in, and the rule over, the local company. They were the guides and leaders. May we all recognize that there is no higher authority in the assembly than Scripturally qualified elders. This is God's order.

Assembly Economics

Then there is the question of assembly economics. Assembly economics has always been a source of puzzlement to the uninitiated. A careful study will show that our financing of the Lord's work, in all its facets, is based on New Testament example. We should not, and

do not, make public appeals for money. Despite this, God meets the recurrent needs, sometimes in unbelievable ways.

Another of the characteristics of the New Testament assembly is that we have no offerings when the unsaved are present. "Taking nothing of the Gentiles," (3 John 7). We also believe that there is sufficient instruction given in the Word as to how, when, and how much we should give (1 Cor 16:2).

Our giving to God of our substance should be an act of worship (Heb 13:15-16). This is one of the reasons the offering is taken at the Lord's Supper. We should consider this last point seriously. In worship, we not only give our praise but we give of our substance.

Support of the Lord's Servants

Finally, there is the way our missionaries are supported. This is so different from the normal practice of other groups. Our dear brothers and sisters have gone forth as sent by God, not by a missionary society. While on the field they are controlled by God and are accountable to God. They live and work in the light of the Judgment Seat of Christ, knowing that they shall give account to the Lord of the Harvest.

Many of these dear ones have left lucrative positions and assured futures, humanly speaking, and gone into places of hardship and danger, with no guarantee of financial support. Does this Biblical principle work today? It has been my personal experience, and that of every true servant of God, that God is able for every emergency and exigency. God is able to meet every need.

These, then, are some of the Scriptural principles recovered from the dust of ecclesiastical antiquity 150 years ago. These truths were practiced by some at great personal loss, but great spiritual enrichment. We, today, should give them our earnest and purposeful consideration. They should not be lightly cast aside for the unstable whims of modern thought.

The Meal Offering

Leviticus 2:1-11

The Meal Offering presents in an unparalleled way the peerless character of the Man, Christ Jesus. It sets Him forth as “God manifest in the flesh,” the Incomparable Christ and the Impeccable Savior. The Meal Offering embodies an excellent portrait of Christ as He lived and walked before God and man. It unveils Him in all His Excellency as the pure, perfect, holy, and sinless One; the only One on earth who fully satisfied God’s heart.

Millenniums later, Paul described the One of whom the Meal Offering speaks as “the fullness of the Godhead” (Col. 2:9). The Father and the Spirit were in the Son in full measure (Jn. 17:21-23; 3:34). In His humanity He was the “visible expression of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). He was “God over all blessed forever” (Rom. 9:5). The New Testament writers go to great lengths to present him as the preeminent, paramount, and peerless One. The One who, though in a body of flesh, was perfect man and yet perfect God.

In such an “all-sufficient” Savior, every longing of the believer’s heart is fully met. The hymn writer expressed it so beautifully when he wrote:

“Savior, Thou art enough,
The mind and heart to fill,
Thy life, to calm the anxious soul,
Thy love its fear dispel.”

In our sorrow and distress we need sincere sympathy. It can be found in the sympathizing Jesus, He who mingled

His tears with those of sorrowing sisters of Bethany (Jn. 11:35). In the midst of uncertainty and disappointment, we long for wholehearted, unfeigned love. This kind of love can be found in the heart of Him Who told forth His love in drops of blood. One has said, "I asked Jesus, 'How much do you love me?' He answered, 'This much.' And He stretched out His arms...and died."

Love that no tongue can teach

Love that no thought can reach

No love like His.

God is its blessed source

Death ne'er can stop its course

Nothing can stay its force

Matchless it is.

To every child of God, no matter the need, there are untapped resources in the person of our loving Savior.

There are many today who need protection from the world, the flesh, and the devil. They need a sanctuary from the stresses and cares of life. To obtain that peace that passes all understanding, we have but to flee to the lover of our soul, the One who made and holds the universe together. He has promised to be our shield—buckler—fortress—and high tower.

Do we need unerring wisdom in these days of complexity—days in which arise circumstances difficult to handle? Paul reminds us that "Christ hath been made unto us wisdom—righteousness—sanctification—and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). All our need, no matter what it is, can be met in our precious Savior.

When John wrote Rev. 1, he gave us an unsurpassed disclosure of Jesus Christ. He describes Him as the “faithful witness,” thus presenting the Lord as the Prophet. He next makes Him known as the “first begotten from the dead,” revealing Him as Priest. Finally, he announces Him as the “ruler of the kings of the earth,” bringing to our attention that He is King—King of kings and Lord of lords. So then, as Prophet, Priest, and King, He is able to meet the deepest longing in our breasts, and fill our beings with a “peace that passeth all understanding” (Phil. 4:7).

In Christ were exquisitely blended a majesty which overawed, and a gentleness which gave perfect serenity in His presence.

As to His majesty, watch Him as He purifies the Temple. He made a whip of small cords and drove out the sellers of oxen, sheep, and doves. He also drove out the moneychangers and overturned their tables, scattering their money. Despite the fact that these were rough men with many servants, and the proximity of temple guards, no one dared to challenge Him—they were overawed by His majesty.

His gentleness and sympathy are displayed at the grave of Lazarus. Even though He was about to demonstrate His deity in raising Lazarus, John records that “Jesus wept.” His gentleness is also seen in the incident when the disciples would have driven the children away but Jesus said, “Allow them to come to Me, for such is the kingdom of heaven.” The sisters of Bethany and the little children knew the gentleness of the Son of God. In Him was the perfect blend of sublime Deity and the

gentleness of perfect humanity. A true picture of the fine flour.

There was nothing unequal or uneven about the Lord. Think of the sorrow, suffering, and agony of Gethsemane—His strong crying and tears. Then consider the traitor's band as they fell backward before the grandeur of His inherent majesty, "I AM." Before God, His attitude was utter prostration. "Not My will, but Thine be done." But before His accusers it was unbending dignity. Every quality was in perfect proportion. Truly He is the "fine flour."

To understand the profundity and the simplicity of the teaching of the Meal Offering regarding Christ, we must consider three things:

1. The ingredients of which it was composed:

fine flour, oil, frankincense, salt

2. The forms in which it was presented:

baked in a pan; baked in an oven

3. The persons who partook of it:

Aaron and his sons

In considering the ingredients of which the Offering was composed, we are told "when any will offer a meal offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour" (v. 1). The fine flour speaks of the evenness and balance of the Lord's character. There was nothing unequal—uneven—or rough about Him. He "was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb. 7:26). Every attribute that He possessed was in perfect proportion. Grace and truth were perfectly balanced in Him.

The fine flour is also the emblem of the sinless humanity of the Lord Jesus. He was perfect in His speech: "Never a man spake like this man" (Jn. 7:46). He was perfect in His actions, "He does all things well" (Mk. 7:37). The centurion at the cross said, "Truly, this was the Son of God" (Mk. 15:39). If there had been any flaw or unevenness or roughness about Him, His adversary Satan, would have exposed it. But in His perfect and impeccable character, He said, "The prince of this world cometh and findeth nothing in Me" (Jn. 14:30).

Every perfection met in Him. As His Father watched Him from the courts of absolute holiness, during the silent years and in His public ministry, He opened the heavens and, on at least three occasions, said, "This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased" (Lk. 3:21-22; 9:35; Jn. 12:27-28).

Our Lord, depicted as the "fine flour," never had to recall a word nor retrace a step. He said, "I always do those things which please the Father" (Jn. 8:29). Near the end of His life He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do" (Jn. 17:4).

Note the perfect balance of His character in the following incidents. To His parents, he said, "Do ye not know that I must be about My Father's business?" Then afterward, "He went down with them to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (Lk. 2:49-51).

Later, under extreme pressure in Gethsemane's garden, He prayed, "Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me" but quickly added, "nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done" (Lk. 22:42). It was the recognition of

these unique qualities which brought forth the Father's commendation.

Next, let us consider the oil. The oil in the Meal Offering is a type of the Holy Spirit. The oil is used in a two-fold way: (1) it is "mingled" with the flour (v. 5), and (2) it is "poured" upon it (v. 1). In the antitype, we see first of all the Lord Jesus "conceived" by the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:18-23). The Lord's conception by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the virgin is one of the most profound mysteries that can engage the regenerated mind. "The Holy Spirit shall come upon you and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you, therefore, that holy thing that shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35).

We learn from this magnificent passage that the human body into which the Eternal Son entered, was formed by the "power of the Highest." "A body hast Thou prepared me" (Heb. 10:5). The Lord Jesus, the Eternal Son, entered a body which was prepared for Him by God, which was absolutely free from the principle of sin and mortality. This would be the teaching of the oil being mingled with the flour.

The oil was not only to be "mingled" with the flour but it had to be "poured" upon it (v. 1). In this action we have a type of the anointing of the Lord Jesus by the Holy Spirit. The Lord's body was not only mysteriously formed by the Holy Spirit, it was also "anointed" for service by the same Person (Lk. 4:18). This "anointing" of the Lord Jesus by the Spirit prior to His entrance into His public ministry, is of immense practical importance to every believer who wants to be a true and effective servant of God.

Although the Lord was conceived in absolute purity by the Holy Spirit, and even though He was “God manifest in flesh,” when He came forth publicly to do the will of God in preaching the Gospel, teaching in the synagogues, healing the sick, cleansing lepers, casting out demons, feeding the multitudes, raising the dead, He did it all by the power of the Holy Spirit. Our Lord was formed, anointed, filled, and led by the Holy Spirit every moment of His life.

This is a deep and important lesson for us. How prone we are to run unsent and act in the energy of the flesh. O that Christ, the anointed One, would become our example. Even though He possessed divine power in Himself, He did all His work, wrought all His miracles, and finally offered Himself to God without spot, by the eternal Spirit (Heb. 9:14).

The third ingredient in the Meal Offering is frankincense (v. 1). There is a beautiful connection between the oil and the frankincense. The oil teaches us that the Lord did everything by the spirit of God. The frankincense teaches us that the Lord did everything for the glory of God. The frankincense also speaks of the fragrance of the Lord’s life; this fragrance was exclusively for God. When heat was applied to the frankincense it emitted a unique fragrance. It was white in color, thus conveying the thought of purity. The life of the Lord was all for God. His every thought, word, and deed sent heavenward a fragrance which, in a unique way, satisfied God the Father. As a self-emptied, perfect, obedient Man on earth, the aroma of the intrinsic excellence of His life gratified the heart of God.

The fourth ingredient which composed the Meal Offering was salt (Lev. 2:13). Salt was a necessary ingredient, always present in the Meal Offering. Salt is that which preserves, and this speaks of the unique quality of the Lord Jesus. In the old economy, salt was used to ratify covenants (Num. 18:19). Our blessed Lord Jesus is not only the Mediator of a better covenant, He is also the Preserver of that covenant (Heb. 8:6). Under this covenant the believer receives the promise of an eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15).

The bodily presence of the Man Christ Jesus before God, assures us of eternal salvation and security. His presence before God guarantees us the fulfillment of every promise. Salt also speaks of incorruption and perpetuity. Death and corruption are the results of sin. In Christ there is no corruption, neither in His life nor in His death. God did not permit His Holy One to see corruption (Ps. 16:10). The Lord's body never deteriorated one iota while in the grave. When he arose on the third day, His body was as fresh as when it had been laid in the tomb. After showing himself to His own for forty days, He ascended into heaven in his specially prepared, incorruptible body.

In later years, John saw Him as a Lamb newly slain (Rev. 5:6). Today, millenniums later, the Lord in His incorruptible body is still in the midst of the throne. His perpetual presence before God in His divine character as salt, preserves all the great and exceedingly precious promises.

At this point, please note the absence of "leaven" and "honey". "No meal offering which ye shall bring unto the Lord shall be made with leaven" (v. 11). Leaven in the

Scripture is a symbol of evil (1 Cor. 5:8). In this offering there was to be nothing expressive of evil, nothing that would eulogize the flesh. As this particular offering personified the fragrant life of the Lord, nothing that represented malice and wickedness was permitted. Our glorious Lord was unblemished in character and untarnished in nature. There was no sin in Him—He was impeccable. His life exuded to God the fragrance of His own personal glories and excellencies.

Honey was the other substance which was positively excluded from this offering (v. 11). As leaven is the symbol of that which is evil, honey is that which is sweet in a natural sense. The human excellence which flowed from Christ and made Him the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely One, was not from human origin but was spiritual and divine. The Lord Jesus Christ, inherently had that spiritual sweetness which pleased His Father, God.

Let us now consider the preparation of the offering. There were two ways in which this offering was to be prepared. First, it could be “baked in a pan” (v. 7). In the pan, the effect of the heat on the offering could be seen by the human eye. This would bring before us the outward or visible sufferings of the Lord. He suffered for righteousness sake. He was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief (Isa. 53:3). He Himself declared that, “They hated me without a cause” (Jn. 15:25). Prophetically, it was said of Him, “Reproach hath broken My heart, I am full of heaviness, there was none to pity, and none to comfort” (Ps. 69:20).

One puzzling feature of the Lord’s visible sufferings was expressed by the Psalmist when he wrote, “They that

hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head” (Ps. 69:4). In His physical body He suffered reproach as He became the song of the drunkard, as He was maligned, hated, despised, and rejected.

The Lord also suffered visibly in His sympathy with others—at the grave of Lazarus (Jn. 11), and also as He wept over Jerusalem (Lk. 13). He suffered grievously in anticipation. As He anticipated being made sin on the Cross, we read of “His strong crying and tears.” As we contemplate the blood-like sweat, despite the ministrations of the heavenly messenger, we are confounded at the depth of the suffering. He was ultimately crushed when wicked hands took Him and nailed Him to a Roman Cross. These sufferings were visible to the human eye, as our Blessed Redeemer was “baked in a pan.”

The second way in which this offering could be prepared was to be “baked in an oven” (v. 4). This would bring to our attention the unseen sufferings of Christ. Only the Lord Himself and His Father knew the extent of these invisible sufferings. As the darkness covered Calvary’s wicked scene, the Lord was precipitated into the blackness of the oven. There, for three hours, He was shut off from the eyes of men. During this time, God applied the heat of hell to His blessed Son to procure redemption for repentant sinners. It is also worthy of note that while this “baking” was taking place, there arose a sweet-smelling fragrance which pleased and satisfied God. In life and in death—in service, walk, and work, God in His infinite holiness found full satisfaction and delight in His Son.

Finally, let us look at who partook of this Offering. Verses 3 and 10 show us that Aaron and his sons ate what was left of the offering. In other words, the Meal Offering was all for God; when God had received His portion (v. 3), the remainder of the priestly family. This is a beautiful picture of believer-priests today feeding on the perfections and glories of the Man, Christ Jesus.

According to Lev. 6:14-18, this offering was to be eaten with unleavened bread. This would teach us an important Scriptural lesson. Those who would feed upon Christ must be pure and holy and have no unconfessed sin in their lives. Furthermore, all those who touched the offering must be holy (Lev. 6:18). This reminds us that before we can enjoy Christ to the full, our lives must be holy and we must be separated unto God.

Notice also, that the offering had to be eaten in the Holy Place (Lev. 6:16). This would remind us of a truth once practiced but now almost forgotten, that our position, mode of life, person, and associations must conform to the holy character of God.

These then are God's requirements if we would feast to the full upon His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. "To Him be glory both now and forever" (2 Pet. 3:18).

Savior, Thou art enough

The mind and heart to fill;

Thy life to calm the anxious soul,

Thy love its fear dispel.

O fix our earnest gaze

So wholly, Lord, on Thee,

That with Thy beauty occupied,

We elsewhere none may see.