

Worship

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Introduction to Worship

A Prepared Offering

“When anyone offers a grain offering to the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour. And he shall pour oil on it, and put frankincense on it. He shall bring it to Aaron’s sons, the priests, one of whom shall take from it his handful of fine flour and oil with all the frankincense. And the priest shall burn it as a memorial on the altar, an offering made by fire, a sweet aroma to the Lord.” - Leviticus 2:1-2

“Thus the lamb and the meal offering and the oil shall be provided, morning by morning, for a regular burnt offering.” - Ezekiel 46:15

The meal offering of the people of God was to be prepared at home. As the offerer prepared the ingredients of flour, oil and frankincense, he was worshipping God for providing the good things of life. He was also thankful and appreciative, spending time in preparation, meditation, and giving of his resources to ensure that God was worshipped and glorified. The worshipping of God in this way and every way was a very serious matter.

Exodus 13:15 shows us that “No one was to appear before the Lord empty.” In the context of the Lord’s Supper that we now celebrate instead of giving sacrifices to the Lord, we should bring our prepared offering as we appear before God. Today, our prepared offering is Jesus - the Lord Jesus is all that we can offer or boast in - nothing less and nothing more. In this worship of the Lord’s Supper, we present Jesus to the

Father in all the excellent and incomparable glories: His preeminence, His virgin birth, His victorious death, and His victorious resurrection glory.

In the meal offering, the people of God only took a handful of the oil and salt and all the frankincense and threw it on the altar, and what was left of the ingredients of the offering was food for the priests. But note that all the frankincense was set aside for God “as a pleasing aroma.” There is nothing that pleases the heart of God more than for His people to be occupied alone with Christ, and to present to Him His superlative Son, setting aside what is His. God says to us, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” When we worship we say thankfully and humbly in return, “We present to you your beloved Son in whom we are well pleased.” (See Matthew 3:17)

When the people of God and the universal church worship the Lord, we are also called to be holy, just as our Father in heaven is holy. We should acknowledge and sincerely praise the Lord for His absolute and complete holiness, to whom every believer should aspire. Exodus 15:11 proclaims, “Who is like you, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like you, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” The Lord is indeed awesome in His splendor and works mightily in the world! Acts 2:36 declares, “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.” Ephesians 1:20-21 says God “worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, 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.” Our

Savior humbled Himself by his death on the cross, and God has highly exalted Him. Jesus did not seek things for Himself, but God has given Him a name that is above every name. Jesus bent His knee to serve others, yet God has decreed that every knee shall bow to Him!

Cleansing

In our worship of the Lord, there is another area of preparation with which we are not so familiar - the area of soul cleansing. Habakkuk 1:13 says, God “is of purer eyes than to behold evil.” He will not regard any who attend the worship meeting with a newfound sin in their life. It is only those “with clean hands and pure heart, and who have not lifted up their soul in vanity, not sworn deceitfully” who will “ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in His presence.” (Psalm 24:3-4)

John also introduces us to foot washing. We all are in need of the Savior to wash our feet with the water of the Word. We need to get rid of the filth of the world, confess of our sin, and repent. There must not be any unconfessed sin present in our lives when we come to worship! Hard thoughts, bitterness, anger and strife must be dealt with, and wrong attitudes corrected. As we read in Matthew 5:23-24, “when we bring our gifts to the altar, and remember that we have something against a brother, leave your gift there and go and be reconciled to your brother, then come and offer your gift.” If we take this literally, we indeed need to confess our sins and reconcile before we come to the altar of worship. These are scriptural truths that we neglect today, and they are the result of both individuals and church bodies being spiritually impoverished and withheld from God’s blessing.

A Nation of Priests

Furthermore, as we think about worshipping our holy God, we should recognize our own roles as Holy Priests. In 1 Peter 2:9, Peter tells us, “We are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His special people.” Also in Ephesians 1:4, Paul tells the church, “He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love.” To be royal priests is to proclaim the excellencies of Christ to the world, witnessing to the world, and to be holy priests is to go into the sanctuary to worship. Paul and Silas of Philippi are examples of those who were royal priests going into the world. In Acts 16, Luke reports the story of them being jailed in Philippi, being persecuted for their faith, and yet witnessing to a Philippian jailer, whose entire family is ultimately baptized through their gospel witness! Yet being royal priests is one of the church’s weaknesses today.

Jesus’ words at the Last Supper were: “This do in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19) Jesus’ last words before His ascension into heaven, following his resurrection were: “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations.” The church tends to be strong on the “This do,” part of Jesus’ command, yet weak on the “Go,” part of Jesus’ great commission. God has bypassed angels and has given us (His people) a message to proclaim to a perishing world - the only message of hope!

We indeed serve a living Savior—the only One. Faith in Christ, receiving Him as Savior, and receiving eternal life as a free gift is the only message of its kind. All other religious people come with their hands full, hoping what

they have to offer can merit salvation. In our faith in Jesus, we come with empty hands, recognizing that we have nothing to offer but our faith in Jesus Christ and the gospel message of the cross! Let us remember the words of the hymn, Rock of Ages, saying, "Nothing in my hand I bring. Simply to the cross I cling."

Worship

What is Worship?

Worship is offering praise to God for Who He is and for what He has done for us—the greatness of His work. It is the overflow of a heart that has been musing on Christ.

Worship is giving to God—not receiving from God, although it invariably results in blessing for the good.

Why is Worship Necessary?

We were created that we might bring glory to God (see Isaiah 43:7).

We were redeemed that we might bring honor to God (see Ephesians 1:12).

God, our Father, seeks our worship (see John 4:23).

Examples of Worship:

- The worship of the wise men (see Matthew 2:1-11).
- The worship by the woman with the alabaster box of ointment (see Matthew 26:6-13 and Mark 14:3-9).
- Worship by Mary (see Luke 10:38-42).
- Worship by the cleansed leper (see Luke 17:12-19).

The Lord's Supper:

Remember Him: "This do in remembrance of Me" (see Luke 22:19).

Show His death: "For as oft as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death" (see 1 Corinthians 11:26).

Look forward to His return, “till He comes” (see 1 Corinthians 4:26).

Witness to the unity of the Body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 10:10-17).

Worship, Part 2

The worship of God is not defined anywhere in Scripture. A close study of the subject shows that worship is not confined to praise alone. Worship, as an act of homage or reverence, may flow from the sanctified heart as we acknowledge God's nature, attributes, ways, or claims. It may express itself as praise, thanksgiving, or in our service.

The Worship of Believers

In 1 Peter 2:5 we are introduced to the holy priesthood of the believer. In verse 9 we find that we are not only holy priests, but also royal priests. As holy priests we offer up spiritual sacrifices and enter into the Holiest to worship God. As royal priests we proclaim the excellencies of God and go into the world to witness. The difference between the two priesthoods is illustrated in the prison at Philippi (Acts 16:2-5). As holy priests, Paul and Silas sang praises to God. As royal priests they preached the gospel to the jailer. Another example is what I am doing at the moment: I am functioning as a royal priest, telling forth the excellencies of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Note the spiritual emphasis made with regard to the holy priesthood of believers. The contrast is made between "living stones" and a "spiritual house." The concepts are meant to illustrate the difference between the temple of the Old Testament built with beautiful stones and materials and the church built with living stones. In the old economy, the priests came from the house of Levi and the family of Aaron. The priests were

forbidden to enter God's presence. Only the High Priest could enter God's presence one day of the year—on the Day of Atonement. In the present dispensation all believers, as holy priests, can enter the throne room at any time. They do not come to offer animals, birds, or meat—they come to offer spiritual sacrifices.

So, what are some of the spiritual sacrifices we offer? Hebrews 13:15-16 helps us enlarge our concept of worship. As holy priests we offer:

The sacrifice of praise - the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

The sacrifice of good works - See Ephesians 2:10 and Galatians 6:10. This sacrifice is pleasing to God.

The sacrifice of possessions - Do not forget to share. This also is well-pleasing to God. Consider the gift of giving.

The sacrifice of service - In Romans 15:16 Paul speaks of his ministry to the Gentiles as a priestly offering. The presentation of our body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, is your reasonable or worshipful service.

"As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good works unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."

The Worship of Christ, the Son

In contrast to this, let us briefly consider Christ and the cross.

Through the gate of the city they led Him bearing His Cross as He walked down the via Dolorosa. He fell under its weight. Relieved of His burden by Simon the

Cyrenian, “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter.” He was nailed to the cross, but it was love that bound Him. He could have called 36,000 angels to His rescue, but instead He chose to be “Crowned with thorns upon the tree.” Isaac was saved from the fire and from the knife plunging into his body, but not so with the Lord.

“Jehovah has His sword evoked.”

God, the Father, felt the nails—the thorns—the spear. We know something of the agony of the Lord’s heart in this abandonment. We give little or no thought to the punishment, agony, or anguish of God’s heart as He watched the darling of His bosom being made sin and paying the price for the sins of the world. When God, the thrice Holy God, could not look any longer on His blood-splattered Son, He turned away from Him. Can you imagine what this meant to God?

Here, then, is the challenge to you: submission, obedience, and sacrifice.

The Importance of Worship

The Feast of Tabernacles

This feast is both memorial and prophetic. We look back and remind ourselves of our redemption. “We have known redemption, Lord.” We also look forward to the perfecting of our redemption, the consummation of our hope and the sharing of Christ’s ultimate glory.

Let me remind you of something we mentioned earlier: Leviticus 23 begins with the death of Christ, the Paschal Lamb. Then it reminds us of the resurrection, and finally sweeps us on to glory. This would be a good pattern to follow for the Lord’s Supper. We should never leave with Christ on the Cross or in the tomb. We should carry from our worship the thought of Christ exalted, crowned, and glorified. We also should remember Him in light of His soon return.

In closing, God selected the place where His people should gather to worship. He has made similar provision for His people in the 20th century, by instituting the Lord’s Supper. “This do in remembrance of Me.” See 1 Corinthians 11. At this weekly remembrance feast, worship becomes the predominant feature. We also express our unity in Christ, and our fellowship together in the bonds of Christian love.

Leviticus 23 is one of the most profound and comprehensive chapters in the Bible. It begins with the Passover and ends with the feast of tabernacles. That is to say we have first “Redemption” and last of all “Glory.” Between these two great truths we have some of the richest and most profound spiritual verities. In the

context of our subject, the importance of worship, each of these great spiritual truths should be present to some degree as the Spirit leads.

The Passover: This feast was memorial and brings into view redemption – upon which all blessing rests. Christ, our Passover, sacrificed for us (See 1 Corinthians 5:7).

Unleavened Bread: This speaks of communion with Christ. We gather around the Lord, cleansed by blood. Our bodies washed in pure water – our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (See Hebrews 10:22 and 1 Corinthians 11). While gathered by the blessed Spirit, the fragrant odor of the sacrifice of Christ ascends to the throne of our God.

First-Fruits: This is typical of resurrection. “Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept.” (1 Corinthians 15:20) The presentation of the sheaf of first-fruits typified the resurrection of Christ, who “at the end of the Sabbath as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, rose triumphant from the tomb, having accomplished the glorious work of redemption.”

The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost: This speaks to us of the descent of the Holy Spirit and the formation of the Church. Do you see how divinely perfect all of this is? Christ must die and be resurrected before the Church could be formed.

Pentecost took place 50 days after the feast of first-fruits = Resurrection.

Pentecost actually took place 50 days after the resurrection of Christ.

Forty days of manifestation, then 10 days after the ascension.

Trumpets: This draws our attention to the gathering and rapture of the Church - the last trumpet.

Atonement: This is not so much redemption and its consequent blessings as it affects us, but rather the cost to the Godhead of the atoning work of Christ. There is more truth in the "atonement" than our finite minds have ever grasped.

There are many things in a believer's life that can draw his heart away from God as the supreme object of his love. Israel is an example of this, and the Spirit warns us in 1 Corinthians 10:1-12 of this immanent peril. Self, in its many and various forms, can ascend to the throne of the heart and displace God so that little or no worship ascends. Among the many idols that have turned a believer's heart from God are: business, wealth, home, family, possessions, talents, popularity, power, and pleasure. All should seriously consider the concluding words of John's first epistle. "Little children, keep yourselves from idols," (1 John 5:21).

It was God's desire that His people should gather themselves together. This was to serve a double purpose: (1) To acknowledge Him as the Giver of every good and perfect gift, and (2) To praise and worship Him. In order that this should be done to God's satisfaction, He ordained the place - Shiloh and then Jerusalem.

God then instituted seven feasts, each with its own unique character and meaning. The names of these feasts were: Passover, Unleavened Bread, First Fruits, Pentecost, Trumpets, Atonement, and Tabernacles. For

our immediate purpose, we will not discuss the feasts in their relation to Israel, but rather consider them in their rich spiritual significance as they relate to the church.

The Importance of Worship

The importance of worship is seen both in the Old and New Testaments. From the conclusions drawn from a study of the Word, we see that worship is the believer's highest occupation. Its importance can be determined from the fact that it was the first commandment of the Law. Read Exodus 20:1-5:

"I am the Lord thy God, who has brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me." (verse 3)

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any carved image." (verse 4)

"Thou shalt not bow down to any carved image." (verse 5)

"Those that worship, and keep His commandments, and love Him can expect His blessing." (verse 6)

The implementation of these divine laws gives God the place of absolute pre-eminence. Not only does God claim first place, but He shows His disapproval, hatred and intolerance of anything that would deprive Him of His position. In Exodus 34:14, He says, "Thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God." Exodus 15:11 says, "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the gods? Who is like unto Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?" Our God is infinite in holiness - indescribable in praises, insuperable in power.

The Wise Men

Matthew 2:1-12

Worship Calls for Divine Guidance

The Wise Men's purpose was to worship Christ (see Matthew 2:2). God led these wise men; they followed the star and were brought into the presence of the Christ and then they presented their gifts. If we are to obey the Father's wishes (see John 4:23), then we must be led by Him through the infallible guide – the Word – as applied by the Holy Spirit.

John 16:13 “He will guide you into all truth.”

John 16:14 “He shall glorify Me.”

Consider Abraham Here:

First of all, God made known His wishes (see Genesis 22:2). Abraham, at great cost, carried them out. In the final act, he severed all fleshly connections (see Gen. 22:5) and then went on to worship. Notice that Abraham was going to worship – to offer his son as a burnt offering. Then, finally, he offered the ram as a burnt offering. In Leviticus 1, Moses, brings the burnt offering to our attention. This typifies Christ offering Himself without spot to God to do His Father's will, even unto death. Then, conversely, in the same sacrifice God is well-pleased with His Son.

The Wise Men Received Divine Revelation Concerning the Birth of the King When the new star appeared they had to make a decision: Will we go and worship Him? Or will we stay? Their subsequent experiences show how worship calls for both concentration and determination

of the will. On arriving in Jerusalem, they were treated coldly. “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” they asked. Many were unaware of His birth, indifferent even, and Herod was opposed.

These wise men could have been discouraged – but their interest and love was concentrated on Christ and they were determined to find Him and worship Him.

Concentration of mind is necessary if we would worship. Determination of the will is essential if we are to overcome the world, the flesh and the devil.

Worship is Accompanied With Joy

Following the star from Jerusalem, they came to “the house.” “They saw the young child.” “When they saw the star they rejoiced with exceeding great joy” (see Matthew 2:10). Their joy must have been indescribable, when they saw the King. Occupation with the Son of God not only leads to worship, but also fills the worshipper with joy, unspeakable and full of glory. Some examples include:

Mary: “My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior” (see Luke 1:46-47).

The Disciples: They were glad when they saw the Lord (see John 20:20).

The Cleansed Leper: “And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet, giving Him thanks”(see Luke 17:15-16).

We cannot worship unless we see the Son of God

It was when “they saw the young child” – or the Lord Jesus – that “they fell down and worshipped Him.” The

great error at Corinth was that while they were holding the Lord's Supper, some were "not discerning the Lord's Body." This is what brought God's judgment upon some.

Worship Involves the Trinity

The Father seeks such a one to worship Him (see John 4 and Hebrews 1:6). When He brought the first begotten into the world, He said, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." Philippians 3:3 says, "For we are the Lord's people who worship God by the Spirit."

What is it that hinders this blessed state?

- The carelessness of one's walk.
- The worldliness of one's life.
- Un-judged and un-confessed sin.

An example of this is the two on the way to Emmaus (see Luke 24). In Ephesians 1:18, Paul prayed, "that the eyes of your understanding might be enlightened." Spurgeon wrote:

"If now with eyes defiled and dim, we see the signs but see not Him; O may His love the scales displace, And bid us see Him face to face."

Hebrews 2:9 "But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor."

"Gazing on the Lord in glory, while our hearts in worship bow; There we read the wondrous story, of the cross its shame and woe.

Gazing on it we adore Thee

Blessed precious, holy Lord!

Thou the Lamb alone are worthy,

This be heaven and earth's accord."

Worship is Presenting Our Gifts to God

The wise men presented unto Him gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold represents His Deity. Frankincense represents His life. Myrrh represents suffering and death. Contact with fire represents the life of the Lord. And finally, myrrh speaks of suffering and is associated with the death of our Lord Jesus.

These men in essence expressed:

Their faith in His essential and eternal Deity.

Their appreciation for the fragrance of His sinless life.

Their estimation of the virtue and value of His vicarious sufferings.

We should keep these thoughts in mind when we worship. Nothing delights the Father more than to receive from His people gifts expressing their appreciation of His Son.

The Marks of a Healthy, Scriptural Assembly - The Breaking of Bread

The Breaking of Bread

The Lord's Supper is one of the two ordinances we have in the church that were left to believers by Jesus Christ. Like the other ordinances, the Lord's Supper is instituted in the Gospels, practiced in Acts, and explained in the Epistles. For an ordinance to be valid today in the church, it must meet several requirements. First, the Lord Jesus must command it in the Gospels. Secondly, it should be ordained and evidenced by the early church. Lastly, its spiritual meaning must be expounded in the Scriptures. The Lord's Supper develops each one of these elements in the Scriptures. First, the institution of this celebration begins with Jesus Himself in the Lord's Supper, reported in three different gospel passages: Luke 22:19, Matthew 26:26-30 and Mark 14:22-25. Here we receive the Lord Jesus' command to continue his example of this sacrament, where, after taking the bread and wine, he says, "This do in remembrance of Me." Second, we see the act of the breaking of bread with the early church in Acts. We are told, "They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine, and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers." (Acts 2:42) Acts 20 also testifies to this practice in the early church. Finally, Paul explains the Lord's Supper in his letter to the Corinthians. This passage is the evidence of the Lord's special revelation to Paul regarding the Lord's Supper. Paul contends that the Lord primarily intended the Lord's Supper to be a memorial of Himself. At this Supper, His disciples would

be given the opportunity to call Him to remembrance as they partook of the bread and wine after His ascension. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Paul says, "For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on 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; do this in remembrance of me...This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes."

This first institution of the Lord's Supper was the night of the last traditional Jewish celebration of the Passover, because the next day, "Christ our Savior was sacrificed for us" as the final sacrificial lamb atoning for sin. (See 1 Corinthians 5:7) On this memorable night, the Passover was celebrated for the final time since that memorable night of Exodus 12, and the Lord's Supper was instituted. 1 Corinthians 5:7 says, "Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us." After the events of the cross, there would be no further need for the Passover feast, hence the Lord's desire to institute the Lord's Supper, which today hearkens back to the cross and anticipates His second coming.

Let us consider the meaning of the breaking of bread from this initial institution of the celebration. 1 Corinthians 11:24 states, "He took bread and gave thanks and broke it, and gave unto them saying, 'This is my body, which is broken for you.'" The breaking of bread symbolizes the breaking of His body, which He Himself gave for us on the cross. The symbols at this

feast are very simple: a loaf of bread and a cup of wine. The loaf is the result of a grain of wheat being planted, then dying and bringing forth fruit. In John 12:24, we see Jesus teaching about this concept, saying, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." Then, we see in the loaf the small grains of wheat ground between the millstones to become flour. This speaks of the physical sufferings of Christ, calling to remembrance the suffering in the daylight hour on the cross: the spitting, mocking, beatings, and anguish he experienced. Then, we remember that this bread was placed in an oven and subjected to intense heat unseen by man. This is symbolic of the unseen sufferings of Christ during the hours of darkness on the cross, when God's wrath was poured upon Him. God continued to pour out His wrath upon His Son until His Holiness and righteousness were satisfied, and until all grounds of condemnation against us were removed. When this was accomplished, our Lord with a loud voice exclaimed triumphantly, "It is finished." We also read here of the meaning of the cup: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is shed for you." The purpose of the Lord's Supper is clearly stated here as well. Jesus says, "This do in remembrance of me." How blessed it is to have scriptural authority for keeping this memorial feast in our memory of Him and what He did for us! Therefore, when we partake of the elements and participate in the Lord's Supper we should realize that we are sitting in His presence, at His table, and with the emblems of His shed blood and broken body. These sobering elements should produce the atmosphere of Calvary as we participate in the Lord's Supper.

Having considered the first institution of the Lord's Supper, let us now consider its earliest celebration in the church; as we have previously mentioned, it was evident in Acts. In Acts 20:7, we see the definite purpose for the celebration: "The disciples came together to break bread." The breaking of bread occurred when the disciples came together for that specific purpose - to remember what the Lord had done. This was the primary and only purpose of the gathering. The Lord had commanded, "This do in remembrance of me."

The early church also met on a certain day: "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight."

Here we see that a very definite time was appointed for keeping the Lord's Supper. "The first day of the week," also mentioned in Matthew 28:1, seems to suggest that the Sabbath ended when Christ lay in the grave. It was the dawn of a new day, the dispensation of grace, when our Lord rose from the dead, and therefore the first day of the week would be kept in honor of Him. It was on this Lord's Day, the first day of the week, that the disciples came together to break bread.

If we examine who was involved in this early celebration act, it is clear that the disciples and Christ's followers were the only ones present, signifying that only believers who are born again can remember Him in this way. The church today should note this and take great care to assure that only believers partake. Furthermore, there was also a definite place where Israel was commanded to keep this memorial feast of the Passover. In Deuteronomy 16:5-6, God commands, "You may not sacrifice the Passover within any of your gates which the

Lord your God gives you; but at the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide, there you shall sacrifice the Passover at twilight." The Lord has designated our churches as places where we should break bread together.

We also see in Acts 20 that while at this meeting, Paul embraced the opportunity to preach the Word to the assembled believers. This appearance took place after they had broken bread, which is important. The ministry of a teaching character should not precede the partaking of the elements if the example of the early church is followed; it might interrupt the continuity of the worship. On the other hand, worship had been stimulated by a short devotional message on the person of Christ before the breaking of the bread, so we see that teaching is definitely important to the early church.

Paul's epistles give us exhortations and an explanation of the meaning of the Lord's Supper in more depth. Let us take a look at some of these passages that speak to the reason we celebrate the Lord's Supper.

"Do this in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:24)

First, the Lord's Supper is a memorial feast. We do it in remembrance of Christ Himself, who should fill our vision as we partake. How thrilling it is to sit down with gathered saints and be assured of the Lord's presence in our midst and review the cross of Christ. (See Matthew 18:20) What memories flood our soul! Memories of His suffering: the venom heaped upon Him, His patient endurance of it all, the love that constrained Him there to die, the atoning and redemptive value of the sacrifice He made. Surely this is a feast of soul-stirring, blessed memories. Our hearts should be thrilled, our souls filled

with gratitude and with worship as we partake. Let us consider the words of the hymn, O Patient Spotless One: "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."

We should lay everything and everyone aside and become wholly occupied with Christ and Christ alone as we celebrate the breaking of bread. At other times and in other meetings we consider our own service, needs, and the world we live in everyday. But when we assemble to break bread, we empty ourselves - our hands, our hearts, and our minds - of all that is earthly. Christ Himself should fill and permeate every fiber of our being. The Holy Spirit should be the moving force as He leads us to Bethlehem, Gethsemane, Calvary, the empty tomb, Ascension, and Glory. It is a memorial feast for us to remember and reflect on these times and places in the life of Christ.

Paul also shows that this feast is a periodical recall to the center and heart of our faith. The Lord anticipated our human frailties and needs, and saw how important it was to recall us weekly from the circumference to the center of our faith. At the Supper we come face to face with the heart, the core and foundation of our faith, recalling the mighty mystery of Calvary. Furthermore, the Lord's Supper is an expression of corporate fellowship. In 1 Corinthians 10:16, Paul says, "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? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread." The comparison of our communion with

Him through the Lord's Supper is the same for our church fellowship. The fellowship is established through the shedding of the blood of Christ and the giving of our Lord's body as an atoning sacrifice. This fellowship embraces all who compose one bread, one body, and the partakers of Christ.

"You proclaim the Lord's death till He comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26)

Paul describes how when we meet together to break bread, we announce corporately the Lord's death. When we take our places around the Lord we are virtually proclaiming to the world, angels, and demons that Christ has died. The eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup constitute an act of testimony to the world that we are saved through the death of Christ, and by partaking we declare this glorious fact, actively worshipping our Risen King. The Paschal Lamb pointed forward to a Calvary yet to be, while the Lord's Supper points backward to the Calvary that has been. The Lord's death is the most stupendous event of two eternities, having divine authorization. His victorious death was the one voluntary death that also drew the sting of death. Praise God that because of His victory over death, this event brings life to those that trust Christ!

"Till He comes." (1 Corinthians 11:26)

Paul teaches that the breaking of bread is a confession of our hope still to come, a sign-post pointing towards heaven. The worldling says, "What is it all about? You preach of a death that has abolished death, yet you still attend funerals and follow the bodies of loved ones into the cemetery." When we sit around the Lord's Table to

take the Lord's Supper we are saying, "We are waiting." The feast, which began when He went to the Cross, will continue till He comes to receive His own to Himself. When we look backward from the Lord's Table we are reminded that we have been redeemed with precious blood. When we look forward from the Lord's Table, we are reminded that He has promised to come quickly. The first installment of victory over death is already in glory, yet soon there will be a mighty harvest. Graves will be opened, loved ones in Christ will be raised from the dead, living saints will be changed, and together we will be captured into the presence of our wonderful Lord! When we meet together as one at the Lord's Supper we are proclaiming with one voice that we believe in the Triune God; we proclaim it to an unbelieving world and to hostile powers around us, reinforcing each other's faith. We break bread until He comes!

How We Should Break Bread

Preparation for the Lord's Supper

[Some Notes]

Things to consider while breaking bread:

- It is one of the moments one is nearest to heaven
- The presence of God is beyond all measure
- The love of Christ melts our hearts
- Visualize the Man of Calvary
- Stoop to kiss the Conqueror's feet
- Consider His wounds ["My Lord and My God"]
- Preparation for the Supper: One must examine "himself" for the love feast (See Acts 2:46)
- Meaning: The breaking of bread formed an integral part
- Participation in the Supper: "So let us eat"
- Praise and Worship at the Supper: Song of Solomon 2:14

[Additional Notes]

1. Consider the inauguration (Matthew 26, Mark 14, and Luke 22). Trace the origin from Scripture.
2. It was an early Christian practice (Acts 2).
3. When should we/did they break bread? (Acts 20).
4. Where should we/did they break bread? (1 Corinthians 11:18) - In the church.

5. The purpose of meeting, as seen in 1 Corinthians 11, is to remember Him, to show His death, and to pronounce His coming.

6. The procedure at the meeting (Acts 20) - Ministry, praise, thanksgiving, worship, and partaking of the elements.

1 Corinthians 11 is where the Lord's Supper is closely linked with such a gathering; the original idea had been forgotten and a meal, meant to encourage fellowship, developed into an occasion of gross intemperance. Such was the condition of the participants that they really did not eat the supper (1 Corinthians 11:20) and did not discern the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:29). Eating and drinking unworthily brought divine judgment.

There was an absence of any rules and a vagueness of details. [Give a description of the Passover Feast: roast lamb, bitter herbs, unleavened bread, wine] He took bread from the table. Note the complete absence of any details as to the composition of the elements. Note also it is always "the cup." Wine is never mentioned. [Quote "Fruit of the Vine."]

Things were wrong at Corinth and there was no attempt made to write instructions. 1 Corinthians 11:34 says, "And the rest will I set in order when I come." God is a Spirit (See John 4:24). If we fall from this, we begin to make rules and bring in human expedients. If this meeting is to function at its highest, it means self-examination and being in the Spirit - there is nothing in the feast for the flesh. These truths represented are profound and majestic, baffling the intelligence of man.

Here of our Lord we see Thee face to face;

Here would we teach and handle things unseen;
Have group with former hand the eternal grace,
And all our weariness upon thee lean.

A Remembrance...it is an Act of Worship.

The Lord's Supper is an anticipation of His coming. "For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come." The feast is a signpost pointing towards heaven, forward to His coming again. The feast, which began when He went to the cross, will continue till He comes to receive His own to Himself. When we look backward from the Lord's Table, we are reminded that we have been redeemed with precious blood. When we look forward from the Lord's Table, we are reminded that He has promised to come quickly.

The Lord's Supper

See 1 Corinthians 10:16-21 and 1 Corinthians 11:20-34. Like baptism, the other ordinance given to the Christian church, the Lord's Supper was instituted in the Gospels, practiced in the Acts, and explained in the Epistles.

The Lord's Supper is an Expression of Fellowship

"The cup 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?"

The word communion is the same as fellowship. The Lord's Supper is an expression of fellowship. This fellowship is established through the shedding of the blood of Christ, through the giving of our Lord's body as an atoning sacrifice. This fellowship embraces all who compose the one bread, one body - the partakers of

Christ. "For we, being many, are one bread, one body; for we are partakers of that one body." The fellowship of the body of Christ is expressed by partaking of the Lord's Supper. See Matthew 5 and Hebrews 10.

"Prepare to meet God."

The Lord's Supper is a Feast of Remembrance

"For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's death till He comes."

How thrilling it is to sit down with gathered saints, and be assured of the Lord's presence in our midst and review the cross of Christ. See Matthew 18:20.

What memories flood our soul? Memories...

- Of the suffering
- Of the infamy heaped upon Him
- Of His patient endurance of it all
- Of the love that constrains Him thus to die
- Of the atoning and redemptive value of the sacrifice He made Surely this is a feast of remembrance, a feast of soul stirring, blessed memories. Our hearts are thrilled. Our soul is filled with amazement, with gratitude, and with worship, as we partake.

The Lord's Supper is a Declaration of His Death

Consider the same verse: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do share forth the Lord's death till He comes."

The eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup constitute an act of testimony to the world that we are saved through the death of Christ. By partaking of the

feast we declare this glorious fact, but the eating of this bread and the drinking of the cup is more than that.

Prayer

One of the distinguishing marks of a Christian Assembly is prayer. As it is with an assembly, so it is with the individual. When Saul was converted, Ananias was sent to minister to him. God said to Ananias, you will know him for "Behold, he prayeth." Prayer should be one of the characteristics of the believer. Also, when believers come together collectively, prayer becomes the mark of a healthy, spiritual assembly. "They continued in the apostolic doctrine, and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers."

Prayer gives a believer an audience in heaven. He may approach God, in the name of Jesus, with holy boldness, not with fear and trembling, as when Esther came in bidden into the presence of the King (See Esther 4:11 and Esther 5:1-3). Praise God His scepter is ever extended towards us (See Hebrews 4:16).

It is in the holy exercise of prayer that the believer renews his strength after the toil of the battle. It is here he mounts with wings from the sordid atmosphere of earth, till he breathes the very air of heaven. It is here he obtains the grace to run the race without wearying, to walk in paths of righteousness without fainting. See Isaiah 40:31. It is the neglect of this holy exercise that causes fainting by the wayside...wearying in the race... weakness when we need strength. The prayer meeting is the thermometer that shows the temperature of the assembly.