

Most Remarkable  
By Jimmie Eaton

It is Thursday, the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan. This was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, when it was customary to sacrifice the Passover lamb. Faithful Jewish worshipers gathered in Jerusalem from all over the Roman Empire. This feast celebrated God's deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage.

The meal consisted of roasted lamb, unleavened bread, wine, a dipping sauce made from bitter herbs and pureed fruit. Just before eating, a young boy in the family would ask, "Father, what does this mean?" The patriarch of the family would then tell the story of how God delivered Israel from their Egyptian bondage. Also during the meal at various intervals there would be the singing of Psalms which were taken from Psalms 113-118.

Jesus sends Peter and John to look for a man carrying a water jar. They are to follow him to a house. There they would make arrangements with the owner of the house to eat the Passover in a large upper room. (See Mark 14:12-16.) Mark tells us, "And His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover" (Mk. 14:16).

That evening after sundown Jesus with his twelve disciples met in that upper room to eat the Passover supper. As they assembled he told them, "With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer" (Lk. 22:15). For Jesus, this was much more than a festive meal. It was even more than a Passover celebration. Jesus knows that within a few hours He Himself would become the Passover lamb, slain for the deliverance of mankind from their sins. Once upon seeing Jesus, John the Baptist said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Near the end of the meal we are told, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them and said, Take, eat, this is My body. Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many' (Mk. 14:22-25). Luke tells us that Jesus told them, "This do in remembrance of me" (Lk. 22:19). What Jesus did is clear. He memorialized his death – not his life, his miracles, or his teaching! Jesus' primary purpose was to die for our sins. "The son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." Thus the Lord's Supper is for the purpose of remembering the cross.

Jesus could have left a monument of marble or some other durable monument but instead he chose two very perishable things to commemorate his body and blood. When taken during our worship on the first day of the week (Sunday) they are a constant reminder of the great sacrifice He made for us on the cross. Jesus took bread and said, "Take, eat, this is my body." Thus we have a fitting memorial to remind us of His crucified body on the cross. Jesus also took a cup containing wine and said, "This is my blood...drink from it, all of you." What a fitting memorial this is of his blood shed on the cross.

Jesus is not saying that bread mysteriously becomes his literal flesh and the wine in some way is

transformed into his literal blood. He was present with the disciples and the emblems were separate from Him. In 1Cor.10:21 Paul said, "You cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." One does not eat a literal table. This is a figure of speech. So it is "This is my body," "This is my blood" are also figures of speech.

We accomplish three things when partaking of the supper. First, we look backward to the cross. In our mind's eye we see the agony, pain, and shame that Jesus endured for us. We are aware He took our place, as we are the ones who have sinned. He took our guilt upon himself. Paul says we are to "discern the Lord's body." In doing this we recognize the significance of His body being sacrificed.

Second, we look forward to his second coming. Paul said that in partaking of the Lord's Supper, "We proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." We are reminded that he did not remain in the grave but arose on the third day victorious over death. He will give us that same victory too. He is coming again to claim his own and will reward them with everlasting life in heaven.

Third, we look inwardly to examine ourselves. Paul says, "But let a man examine himself." Partaking of the Lord's Supper is a time to take stock of ourselves. It is a time to contrast ourselves with the Lord and what he did for us on that cross of Calvary. How unworthy we can feel at such a time. Sometimes Christians will refuse to take the Lord's Supper with the explanation, "I'm not worthy to partake." The fact is, none of us are worthy! This is one of the reasons why we partake, so that we can look inwardly and examine ourselves. It makes us realize how amazing the grace of God is and how great his unconditional love is. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." This sacred supper becomes a weekly reminder that inspires us to be more like Jesus.

A good commentary on this is 1 Cor. 10:16, 17: "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, being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." Communion means to have fellowship between two or more persons. It is to engage in joint participation with someone. As we partake of the Lord's Supper we are fellowshiping with him, joining with Him in his death on the cross.

From Acts 20:7 we learn that this sacred supper was observed upon the first day of the week. "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." Combining this event with Paul's command to give on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1, 2) it is obvious that the church met each first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper. Secular history verifies that the early Christians met on Sundays to partake of the Supper.

From Acts 2:42 we learn they continued steadfastly "In the breaking of bread." Why so frequently? The human mind forgets so quickly. We soon forget unless we are constantly reminded. We often visit old cemeteries where we see the names of hundreds of people no one knows anything about. With the Lord's Supper we are reminded weekly of the most sacred event in the history of mankind.

Observing this sacred supper is a most rewarding experience. We can revisit the upper room, walk down across the brook Kidron and follow him on the path to the garden of Gethsemane, where he would agonize over his coming crucifixion. We see him betrayed by Judas. Then we follow Him through His trials and watch as the soldiers scourge Him. Finally we can agonize with him on the cross. We weep at his burial and experience the joy of his resurrection.

This wonderful event is called "The Lord's Supper" "Therefore when you come together in one place, is it not to eat the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. 11:20). Sometimes it is referred to as "breaking bread." "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). In 1 Cor. 10:16 the word communion is used. 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?" But by whatever name it is called in the Bible, partaking of this most remarkable Supper is the highlight of the week for the Christian. What better way to begin the week than with the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus fresh on our minds.

"For You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood.....Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!" (Rev. 5:9, 12.)

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