

God Has Spoken Tract Series

“In Remembrance of Me”

(Considering the Memorial of Christ)

by A. L. Parr

As the apostle of Jesus Christ wrote to the church the letter we know as First Corinthians, he was motivated by the need to correct various errors in the belief and practice of the church. Some of those errors involved the Lord's supper. Let's review what he wrote (I Corinthians 11:17-34):

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper:

and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.

*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds
(Hebrews 1:1-2)*

For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another. And if any man hunger, let him eat at home; that ye come not together unto condemnation. And the rest will I set in order when I come.

In this letter the apostle Paul has given to the church which Jesus built explicit instructions for the “Lord’s supper.” Though men have used many terms of their own choosing, “the Lord’s supper” (verse 20) is one of the designations the Holy Spirit directed Paul to use for this form of worship:

Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (I Cor. 2:13).

The supper is also called a “communion” (fellowship, sharing, partaking) of the body and blood of Christ (I Cor. 10:16).

Paul says that the supper is a memorial of the Lord’s death (verse 26). It is fitting to have reminders of events of the past. God gave the rainbow as reminder of His promise that He will never again destroy the earth by water (Genesis 9:11-17). He gave to Israel an omer of Manna to remind them that God provides (Exodus 16:32-34). He told them to remember their time in slavery (Deuteronomy 5:15), the lessons of the wilderness (8:2), the Passover (16:13), and many other events and examples.

Men build memorials to politicians, athletes, military heroes, battles, triumphs, tragedies – the reasons are almost limitless. Man-made memorials may be physical (statues, bridges, roadways, etc.), or they may be less tangible (such as holidays, songs, and poems).

Jesus Himself built a memorial. It is a reminder of the most important event in the history of the world. In inaugurating this memorial **Jesus stated its purpose:**

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:26-28).

Unleavened bread reminds us of Jesus’ body given up on the cross for us. The fruit of the vine reminds us that Jesus shed His blood for us.

Christ designated the time of the memorial. We can visit our national monuments – or decorate graves – any time we choose to do so. Some special celebrations we have only once each year. When must we observe the memorial of Christ’s death? This too is explicitly spelled out in the instructions given to the church. It is

“often” (I Corinthians 11:26), when the church comes together (verses 17-18).

But despite what some practice, it is not necessarily every time the church might come together. By the authoritative teaching of the apostles, the church from the beginning has eaten the Lord’s supper in their assemblies on “the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7). There is authorization for no other frequency of observing this memorial, of eating this supper.

Christ designated the material elements for this memorial.

The emblems to be used are the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. That the bread is unleavened is a necessary inference. The memorial was instituted on the first day of the week of unleavened bread, when no leaven was permitted in their houses (Luke 22:1; Exodus 22:19). Though some have argued that many vines produce edible fruit, the phrase, “fruit of the vine” in the context of the Jews’ feasts always referred to the grape.

Christ designated the significance of the memorial.

There is usually a plaque, an interpretative center or a tour guide to explain man’s memorials. When God told Joshua to erect a monument to the crossing of the Jordan, He anticipated that future generations would ask, “What mean ye by these stones?” (Joshua 4:6), and He told them what to answer. The supreme sacrifice of the Son of God (John 3:16), a man entirely righteous (Hebrews 4:15), took upon Himself my sin (II Cor. 5:21; Rom. 5:8). For our sins, not His own, He was pierced (I Peter 2:22).

The memorial is of the terrible price a perfect man – and He the eternal Son of God – paid so that I might be free from the guilt of sin and have the hope of eternal life in Heaven. That is a significance worth remembering every moment of my life. But He asks – yes, even requires – me to observe His memorial feast only once each week.

Christ designated the location of the memorial. We all know where to find the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier. The Lord's memorial is also in a specific place. This greatest of all memorials is in the Kingdom of God (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:16). You don't have to be an American citizen to visit the great monuments in Washington, but you can properly observe the memorial of the death of Jesus only by being in His kingdom. If you have not been freed from sin by obeying His word, what is there to remember?

Apart from the understanding of salvation, which is only in Jesus Christ, the Lord's supper has no meaning. There is no communion with His body and blood because there is no conversion to Him. Obey Him today, and come to this memorial with great joy and thanksgiving.

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