

# Truth for Today

*The Bible teaching radio programme*

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## Four New Testament Suppers: The Lord's Supper

Having considered the Great Supper of Luke 14, and then last Lord's day the supper at Bethany in John 12, we now come to the Lord's Supper. This of all the suppers is the one which should appeal to our hearts most, as it presents the highest privilege that we, as believers, have in answering to the appeal of the Lord Jesus on the dark night in which He was betrayed. Of all the things that the Lord Jesus asked His disciples to do, this is the greatest and it is open to every believer to do it.

When we remember that this was the very last thing that He requested from His own, whom He was about to leave, then I think we can understand how much it means to Him that there should always be those whose love compels them to answer to His love which took Him into death for us. We would not have known this were it not for Luke's account of the last Passover supper. For it is there we read in 22:19 the words, "this do in remembrance of Me." It is the simplest of requests. It is for every believer to partake of. It has a depth of meaning for which we are indebted to the Apostle Paul. He speaks as having received it directly from the Lord, in 1 Corinthians 11, where we read verse 23, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread."

Firstly, let us think about that night. In order to get the full picture we would have to read the account of it in all the Gospels. Matthew tells us of the initial movement in 26:3-4, "Then assembled together the chief priests and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtilty, and kill Him." This tells us of the hatred of the leaders of that nation which He had come especially to save. But we know from other scriptures that it was Satan who was behind this. In Luke 22:53, He said to those men, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness."

In His short life of public service, He had displayed to the full the love of God. His acts of kindness, His words of grace ever spoke of His devotion to His Father's will, and the grace that had brought Him down to answer man's need, but it only brought out the hatred of His own people. He spoke of it in John 15:24-25, "If I had not done among them the works which none other man did, they had not had sin: but now they have both seen and hated both Me and My Father. But this cometh to pass, that the word might be fulfilled that is written in their law, They hated Me without a cause."

The heart of God, seen in His perfect life, only revealed the evil heart of man. But it never altered His love. He knew everything that was going to happen to Him during the hours of that night, but never for one moment did He deviate from the will of His Father. We must ever remember this, because while the institution of the supper comes before all the details of what He suffered that night, yet He knew what would happen and still thought of you and me! We can never fully know what that night cost Him, but it should touch our hearts to realise that despite all that, His thoughts were toward us.

Not only was there the rejection of His own nation, but also the treachery of Judas, one of His disciples. We will never know the sorrow endured by the Lord Jesus throughout His life, knowing there was one with Him who would betray Him. David prophetically writes of this in Psalm 41:9, "Yea, Mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of My bread, hath lifted up his heel against Me." And again in Psalm 55:12-13, "For it was not an enemy that reproached Me; then I could have born it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid Myself from him: but it was thou, a man Mine equal, My guide, and Mine acquaintance."

In the gospel of John 13:21 we read, "When Jesus had thus said, He was troubled in spirit, and testified, and said, Verily, verily, I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me." That word caused consternation amongst the disciples, but far greater was the sorrow that it caused Him. In answer to John's enquiry, "Lord, who is it?" He indicates that it was the one to whom He would give the sop. This privilege was usually accorded to an honoured guest. The Lord Jesus seems as though He did not want to publicly denounce Judas and so gave him this honour. Probably only John understood.

Matthew tells us of the moment when Jesus was taken by the chief priests and elders and gives us the detail of how Judas pointed out the Lord. In 26:49, "And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed Him." What

anguish, and yet what grace, were in His answer, "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss." But His love carried Him on. Though His heart may have been breaking with the rejection of His people and now the treachery of one of His own, yet He remained steadfast.

But even this was not all. For one whom He dearly loved was going to deny Him. Peter had promised to lay down his life for Jesus. But he little understood how that Jesus was to bare the cross alone, and none could follow Him there. There can be few scenes in the Gospels like to the moment in Pilate's judgement hall, when Peter denied that he was one of Jesus' disciples and then the cock crew. We read in Luke 22:61, "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter." What Peter saw in that look only he knows, but I am sure he saw sorrow and love, and it broke him down completely. Despite all that Peter was, the Lord was going to lay down His life for him. The love of Christ was equal to every test that came upon Him.

The greatest sorrow of the Lord Jesus on that dark night was, however, the prospect of the judgement of sin, which He bore in His body when hanging on the cross. This we must come to when we consider the deep meaning in the two emblems of the bread and the wine. We read in verses 24 and 25, "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."

In order to correct the confusion that the Corinthians had got into, that of eating and drinking in an unworthy manner, the apostle goes back to the simple request of the Lord Jesus. The apostle had to judge their behaviour as being a dishonour to the Lord. They were treating the supper as just an ordinary meal, each one taking his own food and just having a feast. Some, who were poor, had little. So Paul points out that their own houses were the places to eat in this way, but the Lord's Supper was when they came together, not as individuals, but as the Church. It was not for their own satisfaction, but for the heart of Christ.

Sadly, there are many who have brought into the supper things which appeal to themselves, but the only scriptural elements that the Lord Jesus had when He instituted the supper were a loaf of bread and a cup of wine, nothing else. Even in regard to these, there is nothing in the things themselves but we have to understand the deep meaning that the Lord attached to them.

When we think of His words concerning the bread, "this is My body, which is broken for you", our minds should remember the supreme sacrifice that He made in giving His own body to bear the judgement of God against our sins. In so doing, we will recall all that He had to endure, not only at the hands of men, but primarily at the hand of His God. It was this which was before Him when He went into the garden of Gethsemane. We read of it in Luke 22:41 and 42, "And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, saying, Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me: nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done." Because of who He was, the Son of God, He knew all the contents of that cup and what it would involve for Him. He, the Holy One of God, shrank from its contents but He realised that only He could drink it. Nevertheless verse 44 says, "And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." Many times in this Gospel we read of Him praying, but there came a moment when the thought of doing His Father's will and what it would cost Him caused Him so much agony, that "He prayed more earnestly."

If the contemplation of the cup caused so much agony, what must the reality have been, when upon the cross "God made Him to be sin for us." It is beyond our understanding. Apart from the Old Testament Scriptures, we would have no idea at all. Psalm 22 tells us of His feelings when hanging on the accursed tree. "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" All His life He had been in perfect communion and dependence upon God. He refers to Old Testaments saints who had trusted in God and they were delivered. But He was forsaken. He gives the answer to His own questions when He says in verse 3, "But Thou art holy." He being made sin, God dealt with Him, as He had to deal with sin.

This is, I believe, what He meant when He said to His disciples, "This is my body broken for you." As it is impossible for us to partake of a loaf of bread without its being broken, so we could never come into the blessed place of having fellowship with God and with one another apart from the laying down of His precious body in death.

Then He speaks of the cup, saying, "This cup is the new testament in My blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me." We read earlier in Luke 22 His words, "This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you." Surely these words take us back to John's account of the crucifixion in chapter 19 where we read in verse 30, "He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost." It is important to realise that He was dead before His precious blood was shed. The words "It is finished" remind us of His words to His Father in John 17:4, "I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." These words had the cross in prospect but His own words on the cross give public testimony to the completion of the work of redemption. "It is finished" in the original language is one word. Its literal meaning is: "It is paid." Only He could say this. He alone knew what the righteousness of God

demanded as payment for sin, and He knew that His precious blood would satisfy those claims completely. But it had to be the blood of One whose life had been laid down.

Indeed there was blood from His precious brow as pierced by the thorns. There was blood from His hands and His feet. But this could not take away one sin. The blood of redemption had to come from the side of a dead Christ. The blood is a witness to God that the life had been given up. Every miracle that He did, every word of grace in forgiveness, had to be ratified. They all demanded a righteous basis in the sight of God. Only His shed blood could give that righteous basis. How solemn are the words of John in 19:33-34, "But when they came to Jesus, and saw that He was dead already, they brake not His legs: but one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water."

The Scriptures had before ordained, "A bone of Him shall not be broken." His integrity to God was complete. His inward motives were always to God's glory. There was nothing in His life which was broken towards God, and God saw to it that not one bone of His precious body would be broken.

We read further in 1 Corinthians 11:26, "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come." These words give the Lord's Supper a further meaning. It is not that this act is a public thing, for men outside to see. The word 'shew' has the idea of 'announcing' something. In partaking of the Lord's Supper we are announcing the rights of Christ in this world, where they are now denied. The believer acknowledges those rights at the supper. We only do it 'till He come' because then His rights to the kingdom will be universally seen in this world. This aspect of the supper is often overlooked, but it is important. How can I acknowledge the rights of Christ as to this world if I do not own Him as my Lord now?

Having looked at the privilege of partaking of the Lord's Supper, the apostle now turns to the serious matter of doing this in an unworthy manner. He says in verses 28 and 29, "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." Let me say again that every true believer, because he is clean in the sight of God by the blood of Christ, has a right to partake of the Lord's Supper. The question in this verse is, am I partaking of it in a worthy manner? The word 'damnation' is unfortunate; it should be 'judgement'. The Corinthians were guilty of this and consequently many of them had become sick and some had died.

The matter of 'discerning the Lord's body' is a very serious thing. They were treating it very lightly. They were more concerned with their own enjoyment than answering with reverence to the love of Christ that took Him into death. Before we can rightly remember the Lord, we need to examine our hearts and lives to see if there is anything in us, which is dishonouring the Lord. If deliberate sin is in our lives, and we do not judge ourselves, then the Lord will discipline us. We read in verses 31 and 32, "For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world."

Every Christian privilege carries with it a responsibility. 1 Corinthians 10 deals more with this than chapter 11, but I just refer to it. In verse 18 the apostle refers to the Old Testament service of the tabernacle and says, "Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?" The highest privilege in Israel was that of the priest. Some of the sacrifices that they offered to God on the altar they were allowed to eat. They were in fellowship with God over what was offered. But they had a responsibility to walk in accordance to what that altar represented, the holy and righteous claims of God. They did not offer sacrifices every moment of their lives but God looked at them as always being in fellowship with that altar.

So it is with us. We may only remember the Lord on the Lord's Day, but we have a responsibility every day of our lives to live in the light of all that the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ represents. May we not only seek to answer to the Lord's request, "Remember Me," but also to walk here for His pleasure until He comes.

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