



Question: When our Lord instituted the Feast....He said "Do this in memory of Me." How should we remember?

A brother whom I have known for very many years, and for whom I have great respect, has raised an important question concerning the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Although his question was raised in a personal letter, he has kindly given me permission to comment on it in 'The Question Box', and I am happy to do this, because I recognise that the issue he has raised affects – or *should* affect – us all.

The question springs from the fact that, whilst we are urged by the Lord to "*Do this in remembrance of me*", as our brother rightly points out in his letter there are no explicit or detailed instructions as to *how* we are to remember. He wonders what guidance we should give to young or new Christians.

This question is one that certainly merits attention, especially from those in our congregations who occupy positions of leadership. It must be admitted that only in a well-organised congregation is the time taken to give new converts guidance in the matter of their observance of the Lord's Supper. 'Babes in Christ' are, all too often, left to 'fend for themselves' when the Table is spread, with the result that they do not derive from the celebration of the Supper as rich a blessing as they might.

However, whilst it is true that the scriptures do not tell us how we should feel, or what we should think, when we take the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, they *do* contain indications and inferences which give us some degree of guidance.

1. Let us begin in the Upper Room, where Jesus and the disciples met to remember the Jewish Passover. There, when after the Passover celebration the Lord instituted His own Supper, He clearly established the connection between the death of the Passover lamb, the blood of which provided safety and shelter for the Israelites in Egypt, and His own death as the 'Lamb of God', whose blood was shed to ratify the New Covenant and provide our deliverance from sin.

On that occasion, He specifically declared that His blood was shed '*eis aphesin hamartion*' = '*for the remission of sins*', (Matt.26;28), – (this is the identical expression, used by Peter in Acts 2;38 in connection with the act of baptism.) As we celebrate the Supper, therefore, we might think about the high cost of our salvation, remembering that we have been redeemed by "**precious blood, as of a lamb without spot or blemish.**" (1st Pet.1:19).

2. You will also recall that, in 1st Cor.11, Paul states that what he had learned about the institution of the Supper he had learned "**from Lord Himself.**" (v.23). We should not overlook the significance of this piece of information, because it means that not only is Paul's both an accurate and an authoritative account of the events of that night, it is also the *earliest* account we have of those events, since the 1st letter to the Corinthian pre-dates all four of the Gospel narratives.

Paul also declares that, "**As often as you eat the bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.**" (v. 26) I recall that about forty years ago, I heard the scholarly F.F.Bruce say that the expression '*you proclaim*' the Lord's death, literally means, '*you tell again*' the Lord's death. This tells us that every time the early

Christians met together to celebrate the Supper, either in the very act of celebration itself, or in the words that were spoken on that occasion, there was a recalling and a re-telling of the most important facts that are the foundation of Christian faith.

They *'told again'* the story of His death - and, at the same time, they *proclaimed the message of His return*. This surely means they must have *thought* about both of these events, when, in obedience to His request/command, they kept the Feast.

3. It is true, of course, that we all think and feel about the death of the Lord in different ways and at different depths of spiritual intensity, because we are at different stages of spiritual maturity. In every congregation there are Christians who hold a faith that is both simple and uncomplicated, but which is for them, even though simple and uncomplicated, no less real and satisfying.

There are other believers, older in the faith and therefore more mature. who, when they take the bread and the fruit of the vine, find themselves led into a more profound contemplation of the mystery and wonder of the Saviour's sacrifice. Who can tell how wide a range of thought is represented in a congregation, when the Supper is celebrated?

I say this because I have in mind the statement which John makes in Rev.1:10. He says, **"I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day."** On the isle of Patmos, isolated from his brethren on the mainland, John did not forget the Lord's Day when it came around. He knew that on that special day the churches in Asia would be meeting to remember the Saviour.

He could not be physically present with them, but he could be with them in spirit, and he therefore took time for spiritual contemplation. I have no doubt that, on the Lord's own Day, John thought about the Lord Himself and remembered with gratitude what Jesus had done to make salvation possible (vv.5-6). **"Unto Him who loves us and loosed us from our sins...!"** Contemplation and meditation led to worship and praise!

One cannot think about the Supper and what it signifies, without recognizing, as did John, that everything it represents had its origin in Love. As we sit together at the Lord's Table, we too should be lead into thankfulness and praise.

4. In conclusion, I suggest that, when we celebrate the Lord's Supper, it is fitting that Christians, young and old, should be encouraged by those who lead the service, to think about *anything* involved in the life and death of the Lord, as, for example, is suggested by such passages as Gal.4:4, which reminds us:-

- a) *When* He came = **"in the fullness of time."** His supernatural birth occurred at the precisely planned moment in our Heavenly Father's perfect plan of redemption.
- b) *How* He came = **"born of woman."** He was truly Man, yet His life was the perfect example of sinless obedience to the will of the Father.
- c) *Why* He came = **"to redeem."** He 'bought us back' from the bondage of sin, by offering Himself as the purchase-price of our salvation.

Our brother G.Y.Tickle expressed this so well in his fine hymn:

*"Remember Thee! Thy death, Thy shame,
Our hearts' sad load to bear?
O memory! Leave no other Name
Than His recorded there!"*

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