

The Lord's Supper.

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*Reprinted from "Scripture Truth,"
a Monthly Magazine for Christians.*

Price ½d. per copy; or 25 for 1/., post-free.

LONDON:
"SCRIPTURE TRUTH" PUBLISHING OFFICES,
12 PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.

The Lord's Supper.

1 Corinthians xi. 17-34.

17 Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse.

18 For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it.

19 For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

20 When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.

21 For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.

22 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.

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:

24 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.

25 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.

26 For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

27 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.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup.

29 For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.

32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.

33 Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one for another.

34 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.

A Special Revelation.

THERE are two things of which Paul speaks as being specially revealed to him by the Lord Himself. He received them by no intermediary, but directly from the Lord in glory (for Paul knew Him not on earth—at any rate, not as a disciple—I Cor. xv. 8). These two things are : first, the truth of the personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, at which we shall be caught up to meet Him in the air, and from which time we shall be “for ever with the Lord” (I Thess. iv. 15–17) ; and second, the truth of the Lord’s Supper, which continues through all the period of His absence “till He come” (I Cor. xi. 23–26).

These two special revelations thus cover for us all time—the whole present “till He come,” and the vast “for ever” which lies beyond. In each of them the Lord Himself is prominent : *He* is coming again : we await not merely a glorious event, but a supremely

glorious Person, who has won our hearts to Himself by measureless love. In the Supper too, it is He *Himself* who is before our hearts : His simple word is, “ This do for a remembrance of *Me*.”

Moreover, let it be remembered that by the way in which they reach us a double significance is imparted to the never-to-be-forgotten words “ This do,” so that they possess on the one hand the character of a *last request* of Him who loved us even to death (for He uttered them on “ the same night in which He was betrayed ”), and on the other the character of a *message from the glory*, whence He gave the revelation to Paul to communicate to His own through the inspired Word.

The First Day of the Week.

This day is pre-eminently and distinctively connected in Scripture with the breaking of bread. It is the day which witnessed the triumph of infinite love, the resurrection day, and in significant accord with that fact is mentioned *eight* times in the New Testament.

The truth that Christ was *risen* exercised an immediate gathering power :

two disciples returned from Emmaus the very hour they learned it, and as with one accord, on the evening of the same day, the eleven and they that were with them "gathered together" (Luke xxiv. 33; John xx. 19). Into the midst of that gathered company came Jesus, and saying, "Peace be unto you," showed unto them His hands and His side. A week later the same event occurred on the first day of the week, and we find (1) the disciples gathered together; (2) Jesus in the midst; (3) He shows His hands and His side—those mute but eloquent witnesses of immortal love.

The twice-repeated event witnesses to us the thought of the Lord's loving heart for all the present interval until His second advent, and we are thus prepared for Acts xx. 7, whence we learn that it was the disciples' wont "*upon the first day of the week*" to "come together," and that for one express purpose, viz. "to break bread." We are prepared, I say, for this, for in the breaking of bread we find again, in this the period of Christ's absence, the same three things which from the outset have marked the first day of the week, viz. (1) the gathering together

of saints (1 Cor. xi. 18) ; (2) the presence of the Lord in the midst—invisible truly to mortal eye, but present to faith, for He is “in the midst of the assembly” (Heb. ii. 12 and Matt. xviii. 20) ; (3) the bread and wine, presenting His body given and His blood shed, witnesses to our adoring hearts of eternal love.

The Assembly of God.

There are certain blessings which are purely individual, such as the forgiveness of sins and salvation. These blessings could be known and enjoyed by a believer even if there were no other believer on the face of the earth. But there are other blessings and privileges which are collective. The breaking of bread is amongst the latter. The cup is the cup of blessing which *we* bless ; the bread is the bread which *we* break (1 Cor. x. 16) : it always supposes the company.

Now the Corinthians had lost the truth of the Lord's Supper in almost every way. They looked on the breaking of bread as *their* meal, and even then they individualized themselves (see ver. 21) and did not rise to the *collective* character of the Supper as

pertaining to the assembly of God. Coming together for the breaking of bread is properly coming together "in assembly" (see ver. 18).

Each one of us as saved by the grace of God has his own responsible history with the Lord but each is also connected with the Lord Jesus Christ on a wholly new plane outside the sphere of natural relationships. When Christ was risen He said, "Go to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father, and *your* Father; and to My God, and *your* God:" thus announcing the *new* relationship in which His own were set with Himself and His Father in *resurrection*. Each believer is at all times *of* the assembly, but coming together "in assembly" is coming together in that special aspect as linked with Christ and each other on resurrection ground. It is a first essential to partaking of the Supper aright that we should really recognize this. We are not to despise the "assembly of God" (see ver. 22).

The assembly is God's ecclesia, His called-out-ones, as the word signifies. The Corinthians may have risen to the

thought of a "believers' meeting," but the thought of the assembly is something far higher than that. When we gather "in assembly" we do not gather for a meeting of *our own*. The assembly is the assembly of *God*; hence all must be under the guidance of the Spirit of God, who properly pervades all in that circle (chap. xii.–xiv.). It is most important, if we are to partake of the Supper according to the Lord's mind, that we should enter into this thought of the assembly, and come together not as believers merely, but as *the assembly of God*.

The Lord's Supper.

But the central point in which the Corinthians failed to apprehend the truth of the Lord's Supper was in the fact that the Supper is indeed the *Lord's*. In verse twenty-one we find that they had so far lost the truth that they were regarding it almost as an ordinary meal, and in partaking each took before the other his *own* supper. We are not likely in long-enlightened Christian lands to fall into the error into which the Corinthians fell, in the gross form in which we can understand it taking

place amongst those just called out of idolatry with all its corruption, but spiritually we are in danger of exactly the same thing. How many to-day look at the Lord's Supper simply as a means of grace *for themselves*. They look on it as a means of bringing home to themselves that which has been accomplished for them at Calvary, and each goes for what he can get for himself. True, the Lord would surely satisfy the longings of every heart. He delights to remind us of that which He has done for us: but to partake of the Supper simply as a means of grace for ourselves is to fall short almost altogether of the Lord's thought in instituting it. It is *His* Supper.

It is His word "This do" which calls us together, and the thought in it is that in the partaking of it *He Himself* might be brought before our souls. His word is "This do for a remembrance of *Me*"—not His work for us (though He is presented to us in the Supper in the hour in which His love accomplished the mighty work on the ground of which we are redeemed), nor yet the results of that work to us, but *Himself*. He loves us,

and in the Supper His love designs our growing personal acquaintance with Himself, that He Himself should become more and more real and precious to our souls as the weeks pass by and the hour of His second advent draws nigh.

Its Character.

In the Supper our Lord Himself is presented to us, but *in death*: the bread and wine, typifying His body given and His blood shed, are brought before us separately the one from the other. The Lord has been put to death here, and is absent from the scene in which we show forth His death, hence *memory* comes in, and we do this "for a remembrance" of Him.

True, He is the living One, and is a present reality to those gathered in faith in response to His word, "This do;" but the Supper carries us back specifically to the hour of His death. He, who is now "alive for evermore," once, in love to us, "*was dead*" (Rev. i. 18).

There are various aspects of the death of Christ presented in Scripture, but one is peculiarly prominent in the Lord's Supper, and that is the peace-

offering character of His death (Lev. iii.). In the burnt offering the whole offering save the skin (that which fell beneath the gaze of men) ascended as a sweet savour to God. This typifies the energy of devotion and love in which our Lord went into death for the glory of God. It is not this character which is specially presented in the Supper, nor on the other hand is it the sin-offering character in which He became a sacrifice for our sins, for not our blessing is the prominent thought, but the preciousness of the Blessor and His love to us: it is distinctly the peace-offering character. In the peace offering a part ascended to God, a part was eaten by the priests, and a part was shared *by the offerers*. It is this side that comes before us in the Lord's Supper: that in which we ourselves have part. His word is "This is My body which is given *for you*," and again "My blood which is shed *for you*." The thought that is emphasized is that of His love *for us*. That it is the peace-offering character which is presented is made very clear from reference to chapter x. 18, where the Lord's table is placed on a parallel with Israel's altar in connection with

that offering in which Israel were “partakers with the altar,” *i.e.* the peace offering.

But in drawing attention to that which the Lord designs should be prominently before our souls in the Supper there is one thing I would not wish for a moment to do, and that is to restrict the scope of that marvellous word “Me.” It reaches out in its limitless breadth so as to embrace all the offerings as well as all the worth and glory of His Person, yet that which the Lord specially emphasizes for us in this precious memorial feast is His own proved *love to us*, His church, His body, and His bride.

Note, too, the blessed simplicity of the ordinance—“This *do.*” No rules are laid down even as to that of which our hearts must take account in that hour : it is just “*This do.*”

Who may Partake ?

The epistle has two “alls” in it, which we will place side by side. It is addressed in chapter i. to “the assembly of God which is at Corinth . . . with *all* that in *every place* call upon

the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's." In chapter x. the statement is made, "We being many are one loaf and one body, for we are *all* partakers of that one bread." The second "*all*" is co-extensive with the first. All who call upon the Lord's name—the whole Christian "we"—are viewed as normally partaking of that one loaf: if any do not do so their position is altogether anomalous, and we know not *what* to say to such. How can we understand one who owes *everything* to Christ yet neglecting to take of the memorial Supper which He has instituted for *all* who are His?

But some one may say, "I see that the Lord's Supper is the privilege of 'all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both their's and our's'—but is there no exception?" I know of *none* in the inspired Word: the man spoken of in 1 Corinthians v. would certainly be excluded, as he was "put away" from the Christian company altogether (1 Cor. v. 13), but mark this, he was put away not as *of* the Christian company but as a "wicked person." That he did eventually prove to be a real believer who had fallen into grievous sin (see 2 Cor.

ii. 5-11) is not the question: the Supper was his privilege *as long*, and so long only, as he could certainly be recognized as of the assembly.

But some there are who would make the Supper *only* a privilege. It *is* a privilege, a privilege of the highest order; but, too often, remarks as to the Supper being a "privilege" are made in such a way as to convey the idea that it is open to the Christian to partake or not just at his own caprice or pleasure, that the Lord has expressed no definite mind on the subject, and it is simply a matter of choice. Such reasoners should read, and ponder carefully, the closing words of this section of the epistle, *i.e.* chapter xiv. verse 37, "The things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord," and 1 John v. 3, "His commandments are *not* grievous."

A Difficulty.

But here let me note a difficulty—a conscientious difficulty which some may have, and which very easily arises. A person may say, "I am not worthy to partake of so sacred a feast of remembrance as is the Lord's Supper;

and does it not say, indeed, ‘ He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation [or condemnation, as it should read] to himself ’ ” ? Yes, the Scripture does very solemnly so run, but notice, it does not say “ he who is unworthy,” but “ he that eateth *unworthily* :” and there is a vast difference. In ourselves none of us is worthy, but it is not a question of worthiness but of the *way* in which we partake. The Corinthians were partaking of it unworthily : they were not having regard to the sacred and symbolical character of the Supper. They partook of it as a common meal, whereat one was hungry and another was drunken. It is this the Apostle so searchingly condemns. The Supper is not to be partaken of lightly, and without regard to its meaning, for we are to ‘ discern the Lord’s body ’ (ver. 29). It is not to be taken as a common meal, but as the *Lord’s Supper*.

Again, we read, “ Let a man examine himself ;” and a Christian says, “ Alas ! when I examine myself, how unworthy do I find myself to be : and in result feel my unfitness to partake of the Supper.” But note again how the Scripture runs : “ Let a man examine

himself and so let him *eat*”—not *slay away*, but “eat.” We partake not of that Supper on the ground of worthiness in ourselves at all. It is a feast which commemorates the worthiness of the One who has died for us, and all who put their trust in Him are accepted in the worth of His sacrifice, and are of the assembly of God, part of Christ’s body and His bride, and so divinely fitted to partake of the feast which sets forth so wonderfully the worthiness of Another. Examination of ourselves shows us how unworthy we are — but that is simply to lead us to self-judgment and a readiness to turn away from all that we are, gladly to forget ourselves and to remember *Him*. In this precious way does the Lord, by His Word, encourage our hearts.

The Spirit’s Comment.

In verse 26 we have the Spirit’s comment on the Supper instituted : “ For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew [or, announce] the Lord’s death till He come.” This is pregnant with meaning. *The world around* forgets the Lord Jesus Christ : not that they may not recognize Him as

an historical personage, but as an active and cherished memory He is absent from their thoughts : *we* gladly remember Him. *The world* despises His death, they speak lightly of it, as though it were no more than the death of a martyr and a good man : *we* make our glory and boast in that death. In it shine forth all the wonders of infinite and eternal love, and there we find the basis of sure and stedfast hope for eternity : our all is staked on the Lord's death.

Vast is the meaning contained in that expression "*the Lord's death.*" It brings before us the glory of the Person who died, and it is His wondrous sacrifice which we announce in the very act of taking of His Supper week by week, in a world which forgets and despises the Person and His work. And let none imagine that this ever shall cease so long as the saints are yet here ; for the Spirit's word is this, " Ye [that is, the Christian company] do shew the Lord's death *till He come*" — all through the long night of His absence, and until the breaking of the day which never shall close in night.

“ Scripture Truth ”

EDITED BY

J. T. MAWSON AND H. D. R. JAMESON.

A Monthly Magazine aiming to “minister the truth of Scripture so as to be of the greatest possible help to all classes of Christians.”

The outlook of its Editors and Contributors is on “all saints,” and its object to exalt *Christ*, and, as He gives ability, to present “in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.”

Price 2d. per copy through any bookseller, or 2/6 per annum for a single copy monthly sent direct, post-free, from the Publishers.

Orders for direct supply of the Magazine to be addressed to :—

The Publishers of “SCRIPTURE TRUTH,”

12 PATERNOSTER ROW,

LONDON, E.C.