

EMBLEMS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Jon Macon

On our Lord Jesus Christ's last evening on this earth, he instituted the Lord's Supper (Matt 26:17-29; Mark 14:12-25; Luke 22:7-20). The "Lord's Supper" is one of the terms used in the New Testament for the memorial of Christ's death observed on the First Day of the Week by his disciples (1 Cor 11:20). The Lord's church was established on a Sunday, the Day of Pentecost, in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. The church began keeping the Lord's Supper that day (Acts 2:42), and this remains one of the central purposes of the assembly of the church every Sunday (Acts 20:7). The Lord's Supper is composed of two sacred emblems: the unleavened bread, and the fruit of the vine.

The unleavened bread

The Jewish Passover was the occasion of Christ's gathering with his apostles in the upper room on his last night with them. This is referred to in scripture as "the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed" (Luke 22:7). In the Law of Moses, God commanded that unleavened bread be used for the Passover (Exod 12:8). He said, "Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses: for whosoever eateth leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that soul shall be cut off from Israel" (Exod 12:15). Therefore, when Jesus "took bread" (Luke 22:19), it was *unleavened* bread, in keeping with God's commandment. Since that is what Christ used, then that is the only kind of food that is authorized to be used for the Lord's Supper in the New Testament. And God has a reason for the bread to be unleavened. First Corinthians 5:6-8 says, "Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? *Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*" Christ is our Passover, and his heart is unleavened with any wickedness, as our hearts need to be. The bread symbolizes or represents the body of Christ in his death. Jesus commands us to eat the bread in remembrance of him (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24). We must remember the body of Christ. This includes thinking about the sacrifice of the body of Christ. Jesus suffered and died for our sins that we might be brought to God (1 Pet 3:18). Jesus said, "This is my body which is broken for you" (1 Cor 11:24). Jesus' body was marred more than the sons of men (Isa 52:13-14). He was wounded and bruised for our sins, and by his stripes are we

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(continued)

healed (Isa 53:5-6). We need to think about these things that he suffered in his body for us. But we also must think about the example of Christ in these things that he suffered in his body when he died. The crucifixion of Christ proves that he did nothing of himself but always what pleased the Father (John 8:28-29). The sufferings of Christ for righteousness' sake are an example that we must follow (1 Pet 2:18-25; 4:1-2). This is why we must also think about ourselves when we eat the bread (1 Cor 11:28). Eating worthily includes self-examination (1 Cor 11:27-32). We need to examine ourselves and consider to what extent we are willing to suffer in order to obey God, so that we may be unleavened as Christ is.

The fruit of the vine

Unfermented grape juice was used by the Lord when he instituted the Lord's supper (Luke 22:17-18,20). Therefore, that is the only kind of beverage that is authorized to be used for the Lord's Supper. The grape juice represents the blood Christ shed in his death and the New Covenant which it established. Jesus commands us to drink the cup in remembrance of him (1 Cor 11:25). We must remember the shed blood of Christ. This includes thinking about the shedding of Christ's blood as a sacrifice for our sins. "*For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matt 26:28). We could not have the forgiveness of our sins without the blood of Christ because "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb 9:22). And we also need to think about the example of Christ as he bled and died in order to obey His Father. We need to have this same mind in us (Php 2:5-8). Further, as Jesus said "this cup is the new testament in my blood" (Luke 22:20; 1 Cor 11:25), we need to think about the covenant which we are under. Jesus purchased the church with his blood (Acts 20:28). The Lord tells us, "*Ye are bought with a price*" (1 Cor 7:23). Christ's death for us means we must live only for him (2 Cor 5:14-15). This is why we also need to examine ourselves when we drink the cup (1 Cor 11:28). Drinking worthily includes self-examination (1 Cor 11:27-32). Judging ourselves like this will enable us to escape the condemnation of the world. We need to consider whether or not we are following the example of Christ in being willing to suffer in order to obey God, and in doing nothing of ourselves but only God's will. We need to question whether or not we are living as one who has been bought, living only for Christ and not for ourselves at all. May we do this in a worthy manner each and every Lord's Day.