

Taken from
"In the Steps of the Master"
Compiled by Bro. Perce Mansfield

HIS MEMORIAL

The first written account of the Lord's Memorial is that contained in 1 Corinthians 11:17–34. This was recorded long before any of the Gospel Accounts, and so for the time constituted the main instruction concerning this important subject. What Paul there recorded, he received as a direct revelation from Christ (v. 23). It is important for all who gather around the table to consider Paul's words in detail.

VERSE 17

"Now in this that I declare unto you" – By this preamble, Paul indicates that he is commencing a new subject – the Lord's memorial.

"I praise you not" – This is a severe indictment. He declares that he cannot praise them for coming together in religious assembly. This reminds us that mere attendance is not sufficient; we must be mentally prepared for the occasion. In the absence of this mental preparation, our attendance at the Table can be a curse and not a blessing. Compare Paul's strictures here with his statement of praise in v. 2. Paul was frank and open in praise and blame.

"Ye come together" – These were the official gatherings of the Ecclesia.

"For the worse" – So that when the motive is not right, Ecclesial meetings can be to our disadvantage; they are not invariably good. More than mere attendance is required to make them so.

VERSE 18

"First of all" – This is the primary consideration.

"I hear that there be divisions among you" – Reference to these "schisms" (see margin) are found in Ch. 1:12. These factions were openly flaunted in the very meeting, so that they apparently gathered in separate groups. We need to break down any such factions among our Ecclesia.

VERSE 19

"For" – The Greek is "gar" and signifies. Verily, truly.

"There must be also heresies" – By the use of "must" Paul means that divisions are inevitable whilst such conditions continued – they must come, it is the inevitable result. The word "heresies" signifies "sects" as rendered in the margin. Paul warns that the folly of their conduct will inevitably divide the ecclesia up.

"That they which are approved may be made manifested" – Seeing that Christ "walks in the midst of the Ecclesias"(Rev. 2:1), why does he permit such conditions to continue? The answer is, That the approved might be manifested. By using such crises in Ecclesial life to reveal their loyalty to Christ, and refusing to be swayed by any disruptive elements within.

VERSE 20

"When ye come together therefore into one place" – As today, it was the custom of members to come together in imitation of the supper that the Lord had partaken with his Apostles (Acts 2:1, 46). This supper did not constitute the Memorials, for they were taken afterwards. The record in Luke reveals that the Lord first had supper, and then "after supper" (v. 20), the bread and wine. We only meet for the latter purpose, but in Paul's day, the brethren met together for an initial supper in imitation of Christ. It is that which the Apostle is now referring to. These "fellowship" suppers were called "love feasts" from "agapae" (2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 12).

"This is not to eat the Lord's supper" – They claimed that it was, but their disgraceful conduct proved that it did not bear any relationship to the love-feast that the Lord had with his Apostles. By "the Lord's supper" is not to be understood the Memorial, but rather the feast that in those days preceded the partaking of the bread and wine. The Greek word is "Deipnon" and it defined the chief meal of the day. It is to be distinguished from the bread and wine, which is designated the "communion" (1 Cor. 10:16). These so-called "love-feasts" were conducted in a disgraceful manner.

The participants indulged in a full scale, disorderly supper before communion which, because of the way in which it was conducted, bore no relationship to the Lord's supper, and could not justly claim that title. Paul continues to describe the circumstances.

VERSE 21

"Every one taketh before other his own supper" – "They did not eat together, but in groups, perpetuating the very divisions Paul mentioned earlier. The wealthy had plenty, the poor remained hungry, and the unity of the Body was broken. Poverty had a real meaning in those days.

"One is hungry, and another is drunken" – One is hungry and the other is "filled to the full", for as the Diaglott declares, the "word 'methein' does not necessarily mean 'drunken'" as we understand the term. The wealthy, with plenty, had no thought for the poor, who, in those days, were poverty-stricken indeed. This led to ostentatious display on the one hand, and envy on the other.

VERSE 22

"Have ye not houses to eat and to drink in?" – On an ironical note, Paul shows that it would be far better to eat at home than to meet as an Ecclesia in such a fashion.

"Despise ye the ecclesia of God" – The rich tended to do this towards the poor, forgetting that God had called all to His truth. We can do similarly if we despised those who are not endowed as we are (in our opinion!). Let each recognise his need of Christ, and the poverty-stricken state (spiritually) before God, and he and she will be thoroughly humbled.

"Shame them that have not" – Note the margin which is supported by the Diaglott: "Shame them that are poor."

"I praise you not!" – So once again, the severe disapproval of the Apostle is voiced concerning their religious meetings.

VERSE 23

"For I have received of the Lord" – Paul constantly stresses the direct revelations that he received from Christ. See Ch. 15:3; Gal. 1:12; Acts 22:14. He was not present in the Upper Room, and therefore relied upon the revelation that came from Christ regarding this important feature of Divine worship.

"Took bread" – The Greek word is "artos" which is used of food of any kind (Matt. 6:11; 2 Cor. 9:10), as well as unleavened bread. There would have been only unleavened bread in the house at the time the Lord celebrated the memorials with the Apostles, and so it would be the crisp, unleavened bread he would take. As the Jews cleansed their homes from all leaven prior to partaking the Passover, so we should do likewise before presenting ourselves before the Lord. Paul makes that important point in 1 Cor. 5:7–8. Leaven, of course, symbolises "wickedness", and Jesus was completely free of all sin, so that unleavened bread fittingly symbolised his body. He was of our nature, but he sinned not. He conquered sin in sinful flesh by the strength that he derived from the Father (Ps. 80:17; Isa. 11:1–3; 2 Cor. 5:19–21; John 6:63). The body of the Lord, though sinless, was crucified; and whilst this was through the wickedness of man, it was also in accordance with the will of God (Acts 2:22–23). Christ crucified upon the stake Dramatises to us the way in which he rendered perfect obedience to the Father (by denying the flesh), and this illustrated what is required of us. See Gal. 5:24.

Most meetings throughout the world use unleavened bread, which is certainly most expressive and symbolic of the memorial.

VERSE 24

"He gave thanks" – We follow the same procedure. The "thanks" is not a general prayer, but specific for the bread before us.

"He brake it" – Unleavened bread breaks sharply, figurative of the violent death of the Lord.

"This is my body" – It represents Christ's body, as the Rock of Ch. 10:4 represented Christ.

"Which is broken for you" – If these words are used for the bread, they are quite sound; but not if used for the body of the Lord which was not broken, though pierced. Quite a point is made of the fact that the body of the Lord was not broken. See John 19:36. The word "broken" is omitted in the Revised Version, Diaglott, etc. It is not in the Greek, so that the phrase should read: "Take, eat: this is my body, which is for you..."

When we take the bread in our hands, let us recall the sinlessness of the Lord, and also recall our own sins, and in the mercy and forgiveness promised of Yahweh, let us beseech Him for forgiveness, blotting out those sins, and covering them out of sight. See Psalms 103:8–14.

"This do" – The verb is in what Greek scholars call the "durative, present tense", which denotes indefinite repetition. It could thus be rendered "do again and

again". Keep on doing this! And how necessary it is, seeing we are so completely compassed with iniquity, and are conscious of weakness.

"In remembrance of me" – The Greek word for "remembrance" is "anamnesis" and signifies "Memorial" thus "this do again and again as my Memorial". What is a memorial? Not merely a recalling to mind, but an AWAKENING OF THE MIND. It is used in the LXX (Greek Old Testament) in Lev. 24:7; Num. 10:10; and the titles of Psas. 38, 70 etc.

The Memorial demands not that we merely remember that Christ once walked the earth; that he died and rose from the dead; and that he is coming again, but rather, a remembrance of what is represented thereby. We recall his sinlessness, and how it was maintained; we consider him as God manifest in the flesh, God with us, strengthened by Divine influence to overcome; we bear in mind our own failings, and realise the need to reach out to Divine help in order to conquer the flesh.

So our minds are awakened to our need, and the provision provided in Him.

VERSE 25

"He took the cup" – The wine cup. Wine is a symbol of blood, which, in turn, represents life. See Lev. 17:11, and note from Lev. 23:27 the state of mind expected in one seeking a covering. Blood poured out represents life dedicated. So the wine is a symbol of Christ's dedicated life; a life devoted to doing the will of God. As the bread represents the flesh denied, and is therefore a negative aspect of sacrifice, the wine represents a life dedicated, given to Yahweh, and thus an affirmative aspect of sacrifice. We must apply both principles: deny the flesh; and dedicate our lives. Merely denying the flesh is not sufficient; we must build into our lives the character of Christ – the divine principles exhibited therein.

Consider wine as a symbol. It is a product of the vine (John 15:1–3) which is only of value to produce fruit. If it does not produce fruit, it is destroyed. Even when it does produce fruit, it is pruned to produce better fruit (John 15:3). The fruit is ripened by the sun's rays, speaking of the influence of the Sun of righteousness. Wine is best produced in a sunny locality, for it is the bloom of the grape that produces the wine.

The ripened fruit is picked, and, in those days, was trodden underfoot, to extract the juice (sometimes called "the blood of the grape"). When fermentation took place wine was produced. Fermentation is a sign of life, so that fermented wine represents a new life developed by treading underfoot the old fruit. It is said that fermentation produces a chemical that prevents corruption, acting as a preservative. So the symbol suggests a new life that forms the basis of life eternal.

It is a symbol of a dedicated life unto Yahweh.

As we drink the wine, we recall to remembrance the dedicated life of the Lord; the manner in which he manifested God in flesh.

The wine represents "the new covenant" in the blood of the Lord Jesus.

This covenant was foreshadowed by that typically confirmed to Abraham in Genesis 15:9–11.

The blood of sacrifice shed to confirm a covenant, testifies that the terms of the covenant must be kept on pain of death. We are bound to keep our part of it, as Yahweh has declared He will keep His. If we do not, our lives will be required –

See Jer. 34:18–21. Thus, as we drink the wine, and renew the covenant, we are publicly acknowledging that we will try and dedicate our lives to the service of Yahweh, and that we will try to build into them the Divine qualities revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus we drink it as his memorial.

It Is A Passover

Christ is represented as “our Passover” – 1 Cor. 5:7.

Our Memorial is typed by the Passover from Egypt: Exod. 12:14

Unblemished lamb – Christ's offering.

Side-posts and lintels smeared with blood – Heb. 10:29

Lamb roasted – burnt offering.

In haste, ready to depart – In expectation of Christ's coming.

Eaten with unleavened bread – wickedness removed.

Bitter herbs – Acts 14:22

Remain in the house all night (Exod. 12:22) – Heb. 3:6, John 14:1–2

VERSE 26

"As often as ye eat this" – No specific time is set down; no specific day; though Heb. 10:25 suggests a regular set time, and Acts 20:7 indicates the first day of the week; the day Christ rose.

"Ye do shew the Lord's death" – The word “shew” in the Greek signifies “to proclaim”(Vine), “to bring home to one” (Bullinger). Thus the idea is to proclaim in such a way as to bring vividly home the significance of his death. His death was sacrificial. He gave all, including life, to please his Father, and this we must bear in mind, as we gather around the table.

"The Lord's death" – That death is painful and sacrificial, and we are related to it through baptism (Rom. 6:3). The circumstances are outlined by Paul in Philippians 2:5–11, and the principles there outlined should be in our minds around the Table: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Remember that what the Lord literally endured on the stake, we are supposed to implement in life (Gal. 5; 24). We “crucify the flesh” when we deny its desires and wants in order to serve Christ.

"Till he come" – This statement is also most significant. It means that we must take heed to the future as well as the past. By looking BACK we recall Christ's victory over the flesh; by looking ON (ourselves) we see the need for forgiveness and reform; by looking FORWARD we see the glorious consummation of all that Christ did, both as regards himself, as well as ourselves.

The future reveals that what Christ did in the past was well worth while, (Isa. 53:10–11).

VERSE 27

"Unworthily" – Greek, “Anaxios” – in an improper manner, treating it as common and not apprehending the solemn, symbolic import of the action. In Greek manuscripts, the word is used for the drawing up of weights, thus signifying of unequal weight. In that relationship, a person can eat or drink unworthily if he or she does not properly “balance” the significance of the action. When that is done, the act becomes merely mechanical, and so “common” or “unworthy”.

The word does not mean that if a person is conscious of sins committed he or she cannot partake "worthily"; in fact, the knowledge of sins committed makes the act more important, and the need to seek forgiveness through the offering of Christ more urgent.

A brother or sister eats and drinks unworthily when they do not stop to realise and recognise the solemn importance of what is done.

"Shall be guilty" – Here the word is "enochos" and signifies, "held in, bound by, or liable to a charge or action of law". It signifies that a person is in danger of the penal effect of a misdeed; that he or she can be charged with a crime; though, as yet, the crime must be proved. It is very easy to treat the bread and wine as something common, and perform the act mechanically. But what does it represent? The crucified body and poured out blood of the Lord. Should that be treated lightly? As we eat and drink, let us carefully ponder what is meant by the symbolism, and try to make a reality of the offering of Christ. See the awful warning of Heb. 10:29–31; 6:6; 10:24–26.

VERSE 28

"Let a man examine himself" – The word "dokimazo" rendered "examine"; signifies "to prove by test with the object of approving". Metal is proved by fire, other things by use. We must prove, examine, or test ourselves by mental examination, meditating upon our past deeds, comparing them with the action we should have manifested, and ascertaining our real need of Christ. As we "examine" ourselves with the object of proving by trial, so we will be conscious of our need of Christ, or of our thankfulness to Yahweh for that performed in His name. Thanksgiving and plea for forgiveness will thus be mingled in our personal approach to the Father.

"So let him eat and drink" – With the knowledge that we are in need of the cover that Christ provides for sins, and the strength that is derived from the Father, let us eat and drink, seeking both. It is possible to do either in a wrong spirit, and without proper discernment. Remember, the bread points to the body of the Lord crucified in life and death so that it did not fulfil the lusts of the flesh; the wine points to the poured out life–blood, a token of life itself dedicated to the Father. Do we crucify the lusts of the flesh? Are we attempting to build God into our lives in action? These are the things that the bread and wine should bring to our minds; and when they do, they comprise an exhortation in themselves. When we appreciate the solemn significance of the bread and wine, we shall never be guilty of eating or drinking unworthily. It does not require great depth of knowledge to ascertain what is meant by these symbols.

VERSE 29

"Eateth and drinketh unworthily" – According to the best texts, the word "unworthily" does not occur in this verse. The Diaglott renders: "For he eats and drinks judgment to himself, who eats and drinks not discerning the body." Notice that this verse eliminates two words that appear in the A.V.: "unworthily" and "Lord's" – and these words do not occur in R.V., Roth. etc. Their omission drastically alters the meaning of the verse, as we shall see. First consider the word "damnation" as occurring in the A.V. The word is given as "judgment" in the margin, and it is the translation of the word "krina" in the Greek. Krina signifies to discriminate or to give judgment, and in this context,

adverse judgment. According to this verse, the adverse judgment comes through "not discerning the Lord's body".

"Not discerning the Lord's body" – We have observed above, that the word "Lord's" is not in the original text, and is not included in such translations as the Diaglott, R.V., Rotherham's etc. For example, the Diaglott renders "not discriminating the body", without defining the "body" in question.

The word "discerning" is "diakrino" in the Greek, and signifies "to separate". It is compounded of two Greek words: "dia" – through; and "krino" – to distinguish. Thus to discriminate by seeing through. Rotherham renders it as "setting apart", and he identifies the "body" to the worshipper's own body, and not that of the Lord. Thus he would have Paul teach that a person eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not maintain the separateness demanded of Christ's followers – if he is not "setting apart the (i.e. his) body". In other words, a partaker of the bread and wine must live consistently to his calling. Otherwise, the partaking of the bread and wine will bring condemnation upon himself. Rotherham comments in a footnote: "When setting ourselves aside as consecrated persons we partake of the one sacred loaf, the feast is likely to be well kept."

VERSE 30

"For this cause" – Because they do not discern the separateness that partaking of the feast demands.

"Many are weak and sickly and many sleep" – Rotherham renders: "And not a few are falling asleep." see 1 Thess. 5:6. These terms should be interpreted spiritually.

VERSE 31

"If we would judge ourselves" – The word "judge" here is "diakrino", rendered "discerning" in v. 29. Rotherham renders: "If however we had been setting ourselves apart."

"We should not be judged" – Here the word is "krino" rendered "damnation" in v. 29. Thus "condemned" is inconsistent.

VERSE 32

"But when we are judged" – Krino. Paul had judged the Corinthians in relation to the memorial service, and condemned them (v. 17).

"We are chastened of the Lord" – If this condemnation brings an acknowledgement of wrong-doing to our mind. See Heb 12:7–10. Paul's condemnation of them should be viewed as "chastening from the Lord", designed to bring reformation (see 2 Cor. 7:8–11).

"That we should not be condemned with the world" – "Condemned" is "Katakriano" and is related to "krino" being a strengthened form of it, signifying "to pass sentence," hence to be condemned. The purpose of exhortation is to avoid this.

VERSE 33

"Wait" – R.V. (A.V. – tarry). Gr. Ekdechomai (ek – from; dechomai – to receive, hence to follow another, come next. In other words, to humble one another. cp. v. 21

"come not together unto condemnation" – Paul calls upon them to meet together for the solemn purpose of the Memorial, not for social gratification. This exhortation can be brought to mind today. Preparation of the mind should take place before we leave home for the Memorial meeting. A close observance of Paul's exhortation will profit each one and the Ecclesia.