



Sabbath Service
Saturday, March 31, 2007
“A New Look at Jesus’ Last Supper”



Sabbath Service — Saturday, March 31, 2007

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(If you are meeting in a small group, select a leader for the day. The leader reads the text printed in regular face. The rest of the group reads the text printed in bold face and wherever it states "In Unison." If you are worshipping as a single individual, read all the parts.)

CALL TO WORSHIP

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and
From the Sovereign Jesus Christ.
God will not forsake or abandon us,
But promises justice to the upright of heart.
God is our stronghold and refuge;
The steadfast love of God upholds us.

Because we have been strengthened by the grace of God

We are here to offer our sacrifices of praise.

If God had not been our help,

Our souls would have dwelt in silence.

When the cares of our hearts are many

The consolations of God cheer our souls.

INVITATION *(In Unison)*

Although you are with us every day, God of all worlds, we come together to know your presence more fully in this special place set aside for worshiping you. We are here not only to be taught, but also to be chastened. We are here not only to remember, but also to be renewed. We are here not only to celebrate our freedom, but also to be strengthened in the living out of our responsibilities. May our worship be genuine and our discipleship complete. Amen.

OPENING HYMN #212

"God Speaks To Us"

John 14

George W. Warren

God speaks to us; by his great pow'r we're led;
Let not your hearts become disquieted.
You trust in God, believe and trust in Me;
You trust in God, believe and trust in Me.

In God's vast realm are many offices;
Were it not so I surely would have said;

For I must go, a place for you prepare;
For I must go, a place for you prepare.

And when this place has been prepared for you,
I will return; with me you shall be too;
So that where I am you may also be;
So that where I am you may also be.

OPENING PRAYER *(In Unison)*

Immortal, invisible God over all, we quake before your creative energy, so far beyond our knowing and evident beyond our willingness to perceive. We live in your presence, whether or not we acknowledge you, and we are subject to your rule, whether or not we choose to follow your way. Meet us in this hour, that we may not mistake our own prejudices and preferences for your will for us. Through Christ. Amen.

MOMENTS OF SILENCE

PERSONAL PRAYER *(In Silence)*

HYMN #102

“Give Ear Unto My Prayer, O God”

Psalm 61
Dwight Armstrong

Give ear unto my prayer, O God, from earth’s far end I call;
And lead me to the Rock to rest that higher is than I.
For you have been a shelter and a fort against the foe;
O let me in Your dwelling place abide for ever more.

My God has heard my vows and granted righteous heritage;
The share for those who trust in Him and fear His holy name.
Let God prolong the true king’s life; for ever let him reign!
That He may sit before our God, enthroned in righteousness

When I was faint I cried to God and he did hear my prayer.
For He has been my dwelling place; a shelter from the foe.
And so will I forever more sing praises to his name!
Sing praises to His Name fore’er, and daily pay my vows.

PRESENTATIONS BEFORE GOD *(Not monetary offerings)*

Time for any in attendance to offer a musical or instrumental piece, a reading, comments, or anything they would like to present before God.

If no one is prepared or if you want more, the link below will open a full choral anthem for your listening enjoyment.

“The Shepherd Became a Lamb”

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Time for groups to make any necessary announcements relating to their own group.

This week's message is another look at the difference between the Old Testament Passover and the Lord's Supper. As in the past two weeks, after reading this presentation, it still remains up to each individual to determine for themselves the best manner for them to observe the upcoming Holy Days, and which of the services provided on this website will best suit their needs. Three different services are provided in the Spring Holy Day section.

COLLECT *(Preparing for the lesson. In Unison)*

Challenge us again with a word that points us beyond where we are in the direction you would have us go. Link us together, parents and children of every generation, in the quest for righteous living. Reveal to us the depths of love, and teach us truly to love one another. Help us to reach out to those from whom we can expect no thanks or return of favors. We ask all in Jesus' name. Amen.

THE LESSON

(Use the lesson provided here, or conduct a study of your own selection.)

A New Look at Jesus' "Last Supper"

Have We Been Neglecting the Sacred Fellowship Meal?

Many have confused the "last meal" Jesus Christ had with His disciples with the "Passover." This meal was definitely not a "Passover" — there was no way they could have eaten the Passover lamb at that occasion — and John plainly says it was "BEFORE the Passover" (John 13:1). What, then, does this meal represent — and why did the apostle Paul say, "AS OFTEN AS YE EAT" this bread (I Cor.11:27)? Have we all been overlooking something here?

William F. Dankenbring

In the first epistle Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he admonished them about many problems which had come upon the Church, and such matters as hair length for men and women. Then he broke into another subject, discussing the church services or assemblies of God's people. He wrote: "I praise you not, that

ye come together [for religious worship] not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together IN THE CHURCH, I hear that there be divisions [Greek, “schisms”] among you; and I partly believe it. . . . When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating everyone takes before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? Have ye not houses to eat and drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not [them that are poor]? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I praise you not” (I Cor.11:17-22).

What is Paul talking about here? He seems to be talking about a regular Church service, on the Sabbath, when God’s people would come together for instruction, worship, and fellowship with God and Jesus Christ, and with one another. He clearly speaks of “coming together in the church.” But in this very same context, he indicates that they were participating in some sort of meal, which was not to be confused with the “Lord’s supper.” Apparently, each brought his own food to the banquet, and some who were rich had plenty, and the poor in the congregation had little — and Paul didn’t want the Corinthians to think this was the right way to do things. Not at all! This kind of selfishness, he said, was not at all like “the Lord’s supper.”

A Much Misunderstood Passage

What is Paul driving at here?

Let’s go on: He then refers to Jesus’ last meal with His disciples, and says:

“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: 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. For AS OFTEN AS ye EAT this bread, and drink this cup, ye do SHEW the Lord’s death till he come” (I Cor.11:23-26).

Let’s understand one thing very clearly: The final meal Jesus had with His disciples was NOT THE PASSOVER! The Passover was very plainly not yet come. John, in describing this final meal Jesus had with His disciples, said, “Now BEFORE the feast of the Passover” (John 13:1). He plainly shows this meal or banquet was BEFORE the true Passover, which was scheduled to be eaten and observed the next night, Nisan 15 (John 18:18). The next day the Jews would still be “preparing” for the Passover (John 19:14, 31). Therefore, what exactly WAS this “last meal”?

What few have realized, not being familiar with Jewish customs of the time of Jesus, is that this meal could not have been the Passover, since Passover lambs

would not be slain until the following afternoon, and then eaten in the homes of the Jews on the night of the actual “Passover” — when God slew the firstborn in the land of Egypt and “passed over” the Israelites — Nisan 15. Yet obviously, this final meal was very important — a meal of close fellowship and spiritual significance.

A Jewish Look at the Last Supper

Says David H. Stern, in the *Jewish New Testament Commentary*:

“The Last Supper is considered by most scholars to have been a Passover meal or *Seder*. Many *Pesach* themes are deepened, reinforced and given new levels of meaning by events in the life of Yeshua the Messiah and by his words on this night. However, Joseph Shulam has suggested that it may not have been the *Seder* but a *se’udat-mitzvah*, the CELEBRATORY ‘BANQUET accompanying performance of a commandment’ such as a wedding or *b’rit-milah*.

“Here is the background for his argument. When a rabbi and his students finish studying a tractate of the Talmud, they celebrate with a *se’udat-mitzvah* (also called a *se’udat-siyum*, ‘banquet of completion,’ i.e., graduation). The Fast of the Firstborn, expressing gratitude for the saving of Israel’s firstborn sons from the tenth plague, has been prescribed for the day before *Pesach*, Nisan 14, at least since Mishnaic times. When it is necessary to eat a *se’udat-mitzvah*, this takes precedence over a fast. With a modicum of foresight a rabbi can plan to complete a tractate on Nisan 14 and thus avoid having to fast; doing so is not construed as cheating, and in fact it has become the custom.

“The tradition of the Fast of the Firstborn dates at least from Mishnaic times. But, Shulam reasons, if it goes back a couple of centuries more to the time of Yeshua, and if the *si’udat siyum* custom applied in the first century to the completing of any course of study, then Yeshua might have arranged to have himself and his *talmidim* [students, disciples] finish reading a book of the Tanakh on Nisan 14. Or, since Yeshua knew he was going to die, he may have regarded it as appropriate to complete his disciples’ earthly ‘course of study’ with a BANQUET. *This solution would also resolve the perceived conflict between Yochanan [John] and the Synoptic Gospels over the timing of the Last Supper*” JNT, p.77).

In other words, there is much more to this passage in I Corinthians 11, and its meaning, than we have supposed. Although there is no doubt that Jesus Christ presented the new meanings of the bread and the wine as representing His broken body and shed blood, given on our behalf, at the last supper, and that these symbols are directly involved in the Passover *Seder*, held on Nisan 15, it is also a fact that this final meal was ONE DAY before the Passover. It is also a fact that Jesus did not tell His disciples that they should institute a NEW COMMANDMENT, or a new “holy day,” and begin observing Nisan 14, at the eve, as a memorial of this “last supper.” However, He was having a “final banquet” with them — a special and unique “fellowship meal” with them, where all were relaxed, reclining, at ease, and experiencing a very close oneness with each other. This was similar to a Passover *Seder* in some respects — but yet different.

The Greek Word “Artos”

Interestingly, when Jesus held this final dinner with His disciples, the word John used to describe it was *diepnon*, which means “supper, the principal meal, dinner.” It is used of the last supper Jesus held with His disciples, and other main meals of the day (see Mark 6:21; Luke 14:12, 16, 17, 24; 22:20; John 12:2; 13:21, 4; I Cor.11:20-21; Rev.19:9, 17). This word is NEVER used of an annual Festival, or of the Passover. However, it simply refers to the MAIN MEAL of the day, usually at evening.

Furthermore, at this final dinner or banquet, there is no mention of lamb being eaten — which would have been necessary if this were the Passover. The gospel accounts would hardly have neglected to mention such an important feature.

But even more interesting is the fact that Jewish custom of that time, and always, has dictated that UNLEAVENED BREAD was not to be eaten during the days before the FEAST of Unleavened Bread, so that the Feast would be set apart as distinct and real. For unleavened bread to have been eaten BEFORE the Festival would have diminished its importance during the Feast itself! Therefore, if Jesus and His disciples had eaten “unleavened bread” on the night of Nisan 14, they would have violated Jewish custom and practice. It is very interesting, therefore, to notice that when Jesus sat down at dinner, at that final meal with His disciples, “as they were eating, Jesus took *bread, and blessed it* [many Greek copies have, “gave thanks”], and brake it, and gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body” (Matt.26:26). The word for “bread” here is *artos*, and means, “bread (as raised), a loaf.” This same word is used in Matthew 4:3-4, “man does not live by bread alone,” in Matthew 6:11, “our daily bread,” and Matthew 16:12, “the leaven of bread,” etc. This word is often used of LEAVENED BREAD!

Generally, whenever UNLEAVENED bread is meant, this word is preceded by the Greek word for “unleavened,” which is *azumos*, meaning “unleavened, uncorrupted.” But in the three synoptic gospel accounts of the last supper of Jesus and His disciples, Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, the writers always use ONLY THE WORD *ARTOS*, meaning BREAD — without the modifying word *azumos* to designate “unleavened.” Therefore, the clear indication is that AT THE LAST SUPPER *JESUS USED NORMAL LEAVENED BREAD, when He blessed and broke it, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body”!*

Here is further proof that this dinner was not and could not have been the PASSOVER!

The Real Bread at the “Last Supper”

Further proof that Jesus and His disciples did NOT and could not have eaten the “Passover,” with its unleavened bread, at the “last supper” on the eve or beginning of Nisan 14, is plain and simple Jewish law (halakha) of the time. It is

a historical fact that when the Scriptures use the expression “kept the Passover” (Ezra 6:19) it refers strictly to the slaying of the Passover lamb, on the 14th of Nisan, whereas the expression “eat the Passover” was fulfilled the coming evening of Nisan 15 which was the *beginning* of the eating of unleavened bread on “the night to be much observed.” The reason *why* this evening was called “the night to be much observed” was because the Passover meal was always eaten as the first meal in the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Also, according to Jewish law of the times (halakha), it was *absolutely forbidden* to eat unleavened bread during the 24-hour period prior to the first night of Unleavened Bread! This was a distinction made by law to sanctify (set apart) the sacred meaning of the Feast from whatever they may have eaten for bread on the previous days. This means that *Jesus and the disciples could not have eaten unleavened bread the evening prior to the “night to be much observed”!*

Also, the gospels indicate that Jesus was keeping the Fast of the Firstborn during the daylight hours of the crucifixion day — this was a daytime fast observed by all firstborn Jews on the Preparation Day in remembrance of God protecting the firstborn of Israel while killing the firstborn of Egypt; this also explains Jesus’ remark in Matthew 26:29, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” Obviously, Jesus did not drink any wine the following day. Furthermore, this explains why He refused to accept the vinegar mixed with gall mentioned in Matthew 27:34. The Hebrew text of Matthew’s gospel written by the Spanish Jewish scholar Shem-Tov ben-Shaprut (c.1380 A.D.) reads: “and gave him wine mixed with gall. But when he began to drink it he perceived and would not drink it.” Jesus must have remembered He was observing the Fast of the Firstborn. The Greek word for “taste” used in this verse produced a false impression. Jesus remembered before He drank and swallowed.

Clearly, then, the “bread” which Jesus broke and gave to His disciples during the beginning portion of Nisan 14, in the evening, at His final “supper” with them, *must have been and indeed was LEAVENED BREAD!*

But can this be? Can leavened bread, as well as unleavened bread, represent the body of Jesus Christ?

The answer is a resounding *YES!*

In Leviticus 23:17, regarding the feast of Pentecost, we read: “Ye shall bring out of your habitations two wave loaves of two tenth deals: they shall be of *fine flour*; they shall be BAKEN WITH LEAVEN; they are the *firstfruits* unto the LORD.” Leaven, in this case, certainly does *not* represent SIN, as nothing “contaminated” or “sinful” could ever be offered to God. To offer “sins” to God would be sacrilegious — blasphemy — like offering swine’s flesh (Isa.66:3, 17).

Notice, therefore, what the *Jamieson, Faussett and Brown Commentary* has to say on this passage in Leviticus 23:

“These loaves were made of “fine” or wheaten flour, the quantity contained in them being somewhat more than ten pounds weight. As the wave-sheaf gave the signal for the commencement, the two loaves solemnized the termination of the harvest season. They were the first-fruits of that season, being offered unto the Lord by the priest in name of the whole nation (see on Exo.34:22). The loaves used at the Passover were UNLEAVENED, those presented at Pentecost were LEAVENED — a difference which is thus accounted for, — that the one was a memorial of the bread hastily prepared at their departure, while the other was a TRIBUTE OF GRATITUDE TO GOD for their daily food, which was leavened . . .” (vol. 1, p.498).

However, even “leavened bread” is a TYPE of the body of Christ, and represents “His flesh” which He gave for the sins of the world. To the Jews, unleavened or flat bread represented affliction and poverty, as when the Israelites came out of Egypt; but leavened loaves of bread, as were sacrificed at Pentecost to the Lord (Leviticus 23:17), typify ABUNDANCE, richness, wealth. The typology should be clear. Christ crucified was in affliction, flatness, abject, beaten, bruised, pierced, pummeled — the perfect type being unleavened bread. Christ as the richness of the abundance of life, life-giving bread, is pictured by the loaves of beautiful, sweet-smelling leavened bread! Don’t all of us enjoy a beautiful loaf of home-made leavened whole wheat bread straight out of the oven steaming? Therefore, the richness of leavened bread also symbolizes Jesus Christ, the “bread of life.” Notice!

“The BREAD of Life”

In John chapter 6, when Jesus fed the multitude from a few loaves of bread and a few fishes, He declared,

“For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. . . . I AM THE BREAD OF LIFE: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst. . . .

“I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.

“I am the LIVING BREAD which came down from heaven: if any man eat of THIS BREAD, he shall live forever: and the bread which I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. . . .

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood,

dwelleth in me, and I in him As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.

“This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever” (John 6:33-58).

Jesus, then, is the “bread of life.” This is a reality. This is not just Passover. Throughout the year, every day, day in and day out, Jesus Christ remains and IS the “bread of life” which came down from heaven! We should be eating of this “bread” DAILY as we study the Scriptures! Jesus went on to declare:

“It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63).

Thus even regular bread is a type of the richness of the life-giving bread of Jesus Christ! In this sense, the leaven represents fullness and abundance. True Christians, as members of the body of Christ, also are “one bread” IN Christ!

“We . . . Are One Bread”

Now notice I Corinthians 10. Paul discusses this same subject of the wine and bread again — but not necessarily in a Passover context. Notice!

“I speak as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The CUP OF BLESSING, which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The BREAD WHICH WE BREAK, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? FOR WE BEING MANY ARE ONE BREAD, AND ONE BODY: for we are all partakers of that one bread. . . . Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons: ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of demons. Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?” (I Cor.10:15-22).

It is obvious that during Passover, on Nisan 15, we partake of the unleavened bread, the matzos, representing the body of Christ, as well as the cup of blessing, the wine, representing His shed blood as our Passover lamb (I Cor.5:7). But in the book of First Corinthians, Paul seems to be discussing NOT THE PASSOVER but something altogether different!

Notice! If he were discussing the Passover, *why doesn’t he call it “Passover”?*

Secondly, *why does he connect this meal, with bread and wine, with regular church services, “when ye come together IN THE CHURCH”? (I Cor.11:18)?*

Thirdly, *WHY* if this were the Passover does Paul say, as to the TIME ELEMENT when we partake of this special meal, “AS OFTEN AS YE EAT THIS BREAD” (*verse 26*)? The phrase “AS OFT” or “AS OFTEN” would seem to indicate not an anniversary event, but an INDEFINITE TIME PERIOD OF

UNKNOWN OR VARYING DURATION.

For years I have puzzled why Paul used the expression “as oft as” and “as often as” in regard to this ceremony or meal. Herbert Armstrong never explained it. He simply overrode it, and said the key to “how often” we observe it is the fact that the Passover is an ANNUAL event! But the apostle Paul does not call this the PASSOVER at all! People have simply *ASSUMED* it was the Passover!

The Jamieson, Faussett, Brown Commentary

Many have *assumed* in the past that Jesus’ last supper was the Passover. Therefore, they have concluded that I Corinthians 11 also must refer to the Passover. However, neither assumption is true. Since we now know that Jesus last supper with His disciples was actually ONE WHOLE DAY BEFORE the true Passover, it had to be a sacred meal of fellowship. This sheds new light on Paul’s real meaning and subject of discussion in I Corinthians 11. Let us notice this chapter carefully, going through it with the *Jamieson, Faussett and Brown Critical, Experimental and Practical Commentary*.

Verse 20. “When ye come together in one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper.” Says the commentary:

“It is not possible to eat a true Lord’s supper where UNITY exists not (ch.X.17); where each is greedily intent on ‘HIS OWN SUPPER,’ and some are excluded altogether, not having been waited for (v.33; where some are ‘drunken,’ others ‘hungry’ (v.21). The LOVE-FEAST preceded the Lord’s supper . . . They ate and drank together earthly, then heavenly food, in token of their unity for time and eternity. It was a CLUB-FEAST, where each brought his portion, and the rich extra portions for the poor. From it the bread and wine were taken for the Eucharist. It was at it that the excesses took place which made a true celebration of the Lord’s supper, during or after it, with due discernment of its solemnity, out of the question . . .”

Paul here, then, is rebuking the Corinthians for their IMPROPER OBSERVANCE of the sacred fellowship meal, patterned after Jesus’ last supper with His disciples. This was a “love feast” of the brethren, where members of the church ate together:

“23. He shows the unworthiness of such conduct from the dignity of the holy supper. I — emphatic in the Greek. It is not *my own*, but *the Lord’s* institution. **received of the Lord** — by immediate revelation from the risen Saviour (Gal.1:12; cf. Acts 22:17, 18; II Cor.12:1-4). . . . The renewal of the institution, by special revelation to St. Paul, enhances its solemnity. . . . *the time for the Lord’s supper is not fixed. betrayed.* With the traitor at the table, and though about to receive such injury from man, He gave this LAST GIFT, a pledge of his amazing love to man. 24. **brake.** The *breaking* of the bread involves its *distribution* . . . **as oft as** — *as many times soever*; FOR IT IS AN ORDINANCE *OFTEN* TO BE PARTAKEN OF.

in remembrance of me . . . The Lord's supper brings to our *remembrance* Christ's sacrifice once for all for the full and final *remission of sins*. Not 'do this for a *memorial* of me,' as if it were a *memorial sacrifice*, which would be *mnemosunon* (Acts 10:4) or *hupomnesin*, — a *reminding* the Father of His Son's sacrifice. Nay, it is for OUR **REMEMBRANCE** OF IT, not to *remind* Him. 26. **For** — in proof that the Lord's supper is 'in remembrance' of Him. **show** — *announce publicly*; not *dramatically represent*, but *publicly profess* each of you, the Lord died FOR ME' . . .

“AS OFT AS YE EAT IT . . .”

Notice! This sacred meal and service is NOT AN ANNUAL MEMORIAL AT ALL — it is to be partaken of “AS MANY TIMES SOEVER,” or ‘OFTEN.’ This could even mean as often as weekly, when possible. In Jewish synagogues, following the synagogue service the congregation often met together for a fellowship meal. Paul does not “set a time” for this wonderful fellowship meal, patterned after the Lord's final meal with His disciples — this LOVE-FEAST. But he does say, “as OFT as ye do it.” The implication is that this holy meal of fellowship, including the symbols of bread and wine representing Christ's body and blood given for us, should be enjoyed OFTEN!

This same expression in the Greek, “as oft as,” is found in Revelation 11:6, speaking of the two witnesses who in the future will smite the earth with plagues “*as often as* they will.” Thus Paul is not talking about the Passover here at all, but to a sacred fellowship meal held often, but not on an annual or “scheduled” basis such as an annual Festival! Let us continue:

“That the Lord's supper is in *remembrance* of Him, implies that He is bodily absent, though spiritually present; for we cannot ‘commemorate’ one absent. Our not only *showing* the Lord's death, but *eating* and *drinking* the pledges of it, *could only be understood BY THE JEWS, ACCUSTOMED TO FEASTS after propitiatory sacrifices*, as implying our *personal appropriation* of the benefits of that death. **till he come** — when there shall be no longer need of symbols, the body itself being manifested. The Greek . . . expresses the *certainty* of His coming . . .” (p.316-317, *Critical-Experimental Commentary*).

How cleverly Satan has deceived so many. Paul is not talking about the Passover at all in this passage. He discusses the Passover in I Corinthians 5:7-8, very plainly, showing that we should also observe that Feast. It is kept as a vigil and “Seder” on the night of Nisan 15, as it has been observed by the faithful ever since the time of Moses. But in I Corinthians 11, Paul is discussing another subject altogether — the sacred fellowship meal patterned after the final supper Jesus Christ held with His disciples! And this wonderful spiritual “banquet” is NOT an annual anniversary at all, but is to be held “OFTEN”!

What a wonderful, marvelous new TRUTH!

The Sacred Fellowship Meal

Now notice something else. After His resurrection, Jesus in disguise appeared to two of His disciples as they were walking to the village of Emmaus. As they walked and talked, Jesus expounded to them the words of the prophets concerning Himself. They were so interested in His words, that they constrained Him to abide with them that night. We read:

“And it came to pass, as he SAT AT MEAT with them, HE TOOK BREAD, AND BLESSED IT, AND BRAKE, and GAVE to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight” (Luke 24:13-31).

This was not the Passover. It was a simple meal of fellowship. But notice the symbolism! Jesus took bread, which is a symbol of His flesh, and blessed it, and GAVE it to them — and suddenly their eyes were OPENED and they knew who He was!

Now notice another related event. After Jesus ascended to heaven, and God began the New Testament Church by pouring out His Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, Sivan 6, in 41 A.D., Peter preached a powerful sermon at the Temple, and three thousand people were converted and baptized on that one day (Acts 2:1-40, 41).

Now notice! What did these NEW DISCIPLES do? What was the most important thing they did, together, that was SO IMPORTANT that it was *specifically written down in Scripture for our admonition and EXAMPLE?* Notice carefully! We read immediately in the very next few verses of Acts 2:

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine AND FELLOWSHIP, AND IN BREAKING OF BREAD, and in prayers

“And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing DAILY IN THE TEMPLE, AND BREAKING BREAD FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people “ (Acts 2:42-47).

NOTICE! IT WAS A CUSTOM OF THE EARLY CHURCH TO “BREAK BREAD” TOGETHER, IN FELLOWSHIP, PRAISING GOD! This was so important that it was recorded in the book of Acts.

Why? The answer should be obvious — FOR OUR INSTRUCTION and admonition, *SHOWING US that we should be doing the VERY SAME THING — TODAY!*

Paul's Inspired EXAMPLE

This is verified further in Acts 20, verse 7, a verse generally neglected and glossed over. Notice!

“And upon the first day of the week, WHEN THE DISCIPLES CAME TOGETHER TO BREAK BREAD, *Paul preached unto them*, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7).

What do we see here? The disciples are having a FELLOWSHIP MEAL, most likely shortly before sunset, on the Sabbath, following an afternoon Sabbath service. They are together for a SUPPER or DINNER, with fellowship, and that is followed by a message given by the apostle Paul as a “going away” message, Paul knowing he was going to Jerusalem, and not knowing what might befall him there.

Remember, Paul also wrote to the Corinthian brethren, “Be ye followers of *me*, even as I also am of CHRIST” (I Cor.11:1). These things were written in the book of Acts, and discussed in First Corinthians, to give us an EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW! We also, today, should be having sacred fellowship meals!

Again, when Paul was on board a ship which suffered in a heavy storm, when the storm passed, he spoke to the sailors:

“And while the day was coming on, Paul besought them all to take meat, saying, This day is the fourteenth day that ye have tarried and continued fasting, having taken nothing. Wherefore I pray you to take some meat: for this is for your health: for there shall not an hair fall from any of you. And when he had thus spoken, HE TOOK BREAD, *and gave thanks* to God in the presence of them all: and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat. And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship, and cast out the wheat into the sea” (Acts 27:33-38).

Here again we see Paul taking bread, breaking it, and giving thanks, preparatory of a meal of fellowship.

However, in this case, Paul had a special meal with the whole company of a ship, since all of them had weathered a severe storm at sea together, and were survivors together. They all had something in common. This meal was an encouragement to everybody — even the unconverted sailors!

A Very Important Lesson for US!

What are these Scriptures telling us? As a matter of fact, these Scriptures are highlighting something that has been SERIOUSLY NEGLECTED in ALL the end-time Remnant Churches of God — including Worldwide Church of God, Church

of God, International, and others.

NONE of the remnants of the Church of God, in our generation, have the CUSTOM or PRACTICE OF HOLDING A SACRED FELLOWSHIP MEAL, at which bread — a symbol of the body of Christ — and wine — a symbol of His shed blood — is partaken of, along with a REGULAR MEAL! In New Testament times, the “breaking of bread” was a term which referred to having a meal or dinner together! The disciples of the Lord, as we have seen, broke bread together OFTEN! There was no “set time,” necessarily — but they did it *OFTEN!*

This was the kind of meal that Jesus Christ had with His disciples on the EVE of His crucifixion! This was the kind of meal the EARLY CHURCH held, often, in fellowship with each other, in Christ!

And this was the very meal the apostle Paul was describing in I Corinthians, chapter 11 — a sacred fellowship meal!

Therefore, the statements given in I Corinthians 11 by Paul, looking back to the last “supper” or fellowship meal Jesus Christ held with His disciples before His death, *do not refer directly or only to the Passover at all.* In principle, of course, these statements do refer to the PORTION of the Passover which involves the eating of bread, symbolizing the body of Christ, and the drinking of wine, which connotes the blood of Christ. *Nor do these statements by Paul refer to any “new” memorial annual celebration to be held on Nisan 14, on the eve of Christ’s death!*

But these statements, in PRINCIPLE, *do refer to something else?* What is that?

The Sacred Fellowship Meal

Simply this — these statements refer directly to a FELLOWSHIP MEAL which should have been shared, as a sort of group dinner, with each contributing as he was able, to the common meal, which was held “*WHEN THEY CAME TOGETHER IN THE CHURCH*“ (I Cor.11:18) — A MEAL WHICH WOULD *OFTEN BE HELD RIGHT AFTER CHURCH SERVICES WERE FINISHED!*

Isn’t it about time we took these Scriptures literally? Isn’t it about time we quit arguing over Passover versus Nisan 14, and understood these Scriptures to be referring to something done “AS OFTEN AS YE EAT THIS BREAD,” or as often as they held a sacred fellowship meal in the Church? The phrase, “as often as,” proves that this meal was held at an INDEFINITE TIME — not a regular weekly, monthly, or annual event — not a yearly “memorial” at all — but “AS OFTEN AS” they were able, conditions permitting, to do it!

The Ancient “Love Feasts” of the Church!

In his second epistle, the apostle Peter warns us about false brethren who come to these “love feasts.” He declared of them, “But these as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. *Spots they are, and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings WHILE THEY FEAST WITH YOU . . .*” (II Pet.2:12-13).

Adam Clarke says of this passage: “It appears they held a kind of communion with the Church, and attended sacred festivals, which they desecrated with their own unhallowed opinions and conduct.” The *Jamieson, Faussett, Brown Commentary* states: “Whilst partaking of the LOVE-FEAST with you, they are ‘luxuriating in *their own* deceivings’ or ‘deceits’.”

The apostle Jude speaks of this same kind of problem which inevitably arises when carnal, wicked impostors and false brethren come in to partake of the sacred fellowship meals. He wrote:

“These are SPOTS in your FEASTS OF CHARITY [LOVE], *when they FEAST with you*, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 12-13).

Says Adam Clarke in his Commentary of the “feasts of charity” described in this passage:

“The *feasts of charity, or LOVE FEASTS*, of which the apostle speaks, WERE IN USE IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH *UNTIL THE FOURTH CENTURY, WHEN, BY THE COUNCIL OF LAODICEA, THEY WERE PROHIBITED TO BE HELD IN THE CHURCHES*; AND, HAVING BEEN ABUSED, FELL INTO DISUSE.”

Did you *GET THAT?*

These original “love feasts” or sacred fellowship meals, held OFTEN by the early Church, and patterned after the Lord’s final supper with His disciples, WERE THE CUSTOM OF THE TRUE CHURCH — and as such they were **ABOLISHED, FORBIDDEN AND PROHIBITED BY THE PAGAN ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH AT THE COUNCIL OF LAODICEA!!!**

Adam Clarke goes on:

“Among the ancients, the richer members of the Church made an occasional general feast, at which all the members attended, and

the *poor and the rich ate together*. The fatherless, the widows, and the strangers were invited to these feasts, and their EATING TOGETHER was a proof of their love to each other; whence such entertainments were called *love feasts*. The love feasts were at first celebrated *before* the Lord's Supper [that is, before the emblems of the bread and wine symbolizing the body and blood of Christ were taken] . . .”

These ancient feasts were patterned after the last supper or “love feast” which Jesus had with His disciples. At the end of the meal, as at the “last supper,” the emblems of bread and wine are taken, symbolizing the broken body and shed blood of our Saviour, keeping all in remembrance of the great price He paid on our behalf, and keeping us in an attitude of reverence and spiritual awe, even when fellowshiping and feasting together.

In process of time, however, even these wonderful sacred fellowship meals became a problem due to infiltrators and false brethren who sought to pervert them and use them to exalt their own authority. Rather than a true fellowship meal, with ministers and lay members all eating and fellowshiping together, *at the same tables*, as Christ did with His disciples, although He was over them in authority, like one big joyous family, these false deceivers sought to exalt themselves.

The *Jamieson, Faussett and Brown Commentary* points out this tragic fact:

“**spots**. So II Pet.2:13 [*spiloi*; here, *spilades*, which, in secular writers, means *rocks*, viz., on which the Christian *love-feasts* were in danger of shipwreck]. A B C read emphatically ‘THE rocks.’ The reference to ‘clouds . . . winds . . . waves,’ accords with *rocks*. . . The love-feasts accompanied the Lord’s Supper (I Cor.11, end). Korah the Levite, not satisfied with his *ministry*, aspired to the *sacrificing priesthood* also: so ministers in the Lord’s Supper, seeking to make it a *sacrifice*, and themselves *sacrificing* priests, usurp the function of our only Christian sacerdotal *Priest*, Christ Jesus. Let them beware of Korah’s doom! **feeding themselves** [*poimainontes*] — ‘pasturing themselves.’ What they look to is *tending themselves*, not the flock: they are ‘pastors,’ but it is to ‘themselves.’ **without fear**. Join, not as the English version, but with ‘feast.’ Sacred feasts especially ought to be celebrated *with fear*. Feasting is not faulty in itself (*Bengel*), but needs to be accompanied with *fear* of forgetting God, as Job (ch.1:5) in his sons’ feasts. **clouds** — from which one would expect refreshing rain; but ‘without water’ (II Pet.2:17): professors without practice. **carried about**. . . ‘carried aside;’ i.e., out of the right course **trees whose fruit withereth** [*phthinoporina*] ‘trees of the late (*waning*) autumn,’ viz., when there are no longer leaves or fruits on the trees . . . **without fruit** — *without good fruit* of knowledge and practice; sometimes what is positively *bad*. **twice dead** — first, when they cast their leaves in autumn, and seem during winter *dead*, but revive again in spring; secondly, when they are ‘plucked up by the roots.’ SO THESE APOSTATES, once dead in unbelief, then, in respect to profession, raised from the death of sin to the life of righteousness, but NOW HAVING BECOME **DEAD AGAIN BY APOSTASY**, so *hopelessly dead* . . .”

This is a very powerful, thought-provoking, knowledge-crammed passage, deserving to be read and studied very carefully. Clearly, the early Church, which followed most closely the TRUTH teachings of Jesus Christ, held from time to time a “LOVE-FEAST,” or “sacred fellowship banquet” or dinner. Each member contributed as he was able. Those who could afford nothing, however, brought themselves, as the dinner was for ALL the Church! Ministers and members, all members being a “spiritual house,” a “holy priesthood,” “lively stones,” fellowshiping TOGETHER, *on an equal plane!* In the original TRUE Church, ministers were NOT exalted “above” the brethren. True ministers are not “as being *lords* over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (I Pet.5:3).

There was no division or “separation” between ministers and lay members at these true “love-feasts.” It was a true FAMILY SETTING — as the Church of God IS the “FAMILY” of God (Eph.3:15).

Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, in *The Story of the Christian Church*, describes how these corrupters and self-seeking individuals crept into the church and began to pervert and change that which was holy and good, and changed it into an ungodly, pagan, heathenish masquerade.

Notice his stinging indictment of the spiritually sinking ministry of that time!

“Many privileges were bestowed upon the clergy, not all by imperial enactment, but by custom which soon became law. Public duties obligatory upon all citizens were no longer required of the clergy; they were set free from taxes [in some churches today, tithes!]; all accusations against clergymen were tried before ecclesiastical courts [i.e., by ministerial cohorts, in private — of course!]. The MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH SOON BECAME A PRIVILEGED CLASS, ABOVE THE LAW OF THE LAND” (p.76).

This, of course, became a great CURSE to the Church, by now far removed from the pure, primitive, sacred TRUTH of God! Says Hurlbut, further:

“Everybody sought membership in the church, and nearly everybody was received. Both good and bad, sincere seekers after God and hypocritical seekers after gain, rushed into the communion. *Ambitious, worldly, unscrupulous men sought office* in the church for social and political influence. The moral tone of Christianity was FAR BELOW that which had marked the same people under persecution.

“The services of worship increased in splendor, but were LESS SPIRITUAL AND HEARTY than those of former times. The forms and ceremonies of PAGANISM gradually crept into the worship. *Some of the old HEATHEN FEASTS BECAME CHURCH FESTIVALS WITH CHANGE OF NAME AND WORSHIP.* About 405 A.D. *images* of saints and martyrs began to appear in the churches, *at first as memorials*, then in succession revered, adored, and worshipped. The adoration of the Virgin Mary was substituted for the worship of Venus and Diana; the *LORD’S SUPPER BECAME A SACRIFICE* in place of a memorial; and the ELDER EVOLVED *from a preacher into a priest*” (p.79).

Do you see what happened? When the simple fellowship and sacred fellowship meal became perverted, and ministers began to EXALT THEMSELVES, they quickly led the church into PAGANISM! The truth of God became buried under an avalanche of RELIGIOUS totalitarian authority, supposedly from God, but actually a masquerade of Devil (see II Cor.11:13-15). In the process, the wonderful “love-feasts” of the first century Church of God became defiled, polluted, and perverted into the PAGAN MASS — called “the Lord’s Supper”! But what a travesty? The priests, or “ministers,” blessed the wine and bread, and doled it out to the members, and DID AWAY WITH THE “SUPPER” in the ‘Lord’s Supper’! Thus they turned a joyous supper *into a priestly sacrifice!*

Just as in the days of the arch-rebel Korah in the time of Moses, these ministers aren’t satisfied with being preachers of the gospel — they want to be OFFICIATING *PRIESTS* ALSO!

Today, a number of Churches, both Protestant and Catholic, and even the Worldwide Church of God and its several splinter churches, all observe what they often confuse with the “Passover” but also call “the Lord’s Supper,” at which they partake of the emblems of bread and wine blessed by the local priest or highest ranking minister. What originally began by Christ and the apostles as a joyous LOVE-FEAST they transformed and turned into a *religious ritual!*

How sad! How tragic!

The apostasy grew and spread, and matters became so bad, according to historian Jesse Lyman Hurbut, that

“The humility and saintliness of an earlier age was succeeded by ambition, pride, and arrogance, among CHURCHMEN. . . . the tide of worldliness swept uncontrolled over many professed disciples of their lowly Lord.

“. . . the church and the state became one. . . In the east the state dominated the church until it lost all energy and uplifting life. In the west . . . the church gradually usurped power over the state, and the result was not *Christianity* but a more or less corrupt *HIERARCHY* controlling the nations of Europe, making the church mainly a political machine” (p.80).

As apostasy spread and poisoned the minds of church members, the church itself became more and more a “POLITICAL MACHINE,” instead of the lowly, saintly, humble and pure virgin bride of Christ! The faith of many had become shipwrecked. What many still thought was the “bride of Christ” became instead the WHORE OF BABYLON! (see Rev.17:1-7; 18:1-9).

Isn’t it about time we REALLY get back to the “faith once delivered to the saints”? As the apostle Jude wrote, who himself mentioned the original “feasts of charity” or “love feasts,”

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, that ye should EARNESTLY *CONTEND* FOR THE FAITH WHICH WAS ONCE DELIVERED UNTO THE SAINTS. For there are certain men crept in unawares . . .” (Jude 3-4).

Wonderful TRUTH RESTORED!

Thus the passage in I Corinthians 11 certainly does not prove, as some claim, that Passover was changed to the beginning of Nisan 14. Although the principles Paul stated here can refer to the wine and bread elements of the true Passover, held annually on Nisan 15, Paul is actually discussing here the SACRED FELLOWSHIP DINNER, which was held “as OFT” as they were able to do so, to have a meal together as a Church and fellowship together, *remembering* on this occasion and partaking of the “bread” symbolizing Christ’s body, and the “wine,” symbolizing His blood — as a special observance associated with the “sacred fellowship meal.” This is much more than just having a “dinner” together! It focuses our minds, when we have such an observance, ON CHRIST, the one who makes our fellowship together IN HIM possible!

Let’s thank God for this new truth! Let’s thank Him for this NEW UNDERSTANDING which gives us NEW INSIGHT into the importance of “breaking bread” together, as God’s people, and FELLOWSHIPPING with a sacred FELLOWSHIP MEAL! We should strive to have a fellowship meal with brethren *often*. As Malachi and the apostle Paul write:

“Then they feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up MY JEWELS, and *I WILL SPARE THEM, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him*. Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth him not” (Malachi 4:16-18).

The apostle Paul added:

“And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: NOT FORSAKING THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER, as the manner of some is; but *exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching*” (Hebrews 10:24-25).

And in another place, he admonished:

“But exhort one another DAILY, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we are made partakers of Christ, IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:13-14).

As we head into the very last days, the time of Satan the devil’s “Last Stand,”

and horrifying times of persecution and affliction and great tribulation, let us draw near to God and to Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, and let us take to heart His admonition and example of fellowship and breaking bread together, with thanksgiving and praise to God.

And let us CELEBRATE God's sacred fellowship "LOVE FEASTS" — as Jesus Christ Himself set us the example at His "last supper" with His disciples — and let us do so in the bond of true Christian fellowship, peace, unity and love!

Original found at http://triumphpro.com/sacred_meal.htm
The original also contains a section called "Celebrating the 'Kiddush' "

CLOSING HYMN #39

"Wonderful Words of Life"

P.P. Bliss, 19th cent.

Sing them over again to me. Wonderful words of Life;
Let me more of their beauty see. Wonderful words of Life.
Words of life and beauty teach me faith and duty;
Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of Life.
Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of Life.

Christ, the blessed One, gives to all Wonderful words of Life;
Sinner, list to the loving call; Wonderful words of Life.
All so freely given, Given without leaven;
Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of Life.
Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of Life.

Sweetly echo the gospel call. Wonderful words of Life;
Offer pardon and peace to all. Wonderful words of Life.
Jesus only Savior, Sanctify for ever.
Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of Life.
Beautiful words, wonderful words, Wonderful words of Life.

CLOSING WORDS *(In Unison)*

The God of peace go with you into the world,
Equipping you for the work God calls you to do.
Listen for the will of God and dare to follow it,
That God may be praised in the good you do,
Grace to you and peace from God our Father,
And from the Sovereign Jesus Christ.
Amen.