

How Often Should We Partake of the Lord's Supper?

By Herbert W. Armstrong

THE LORD'S SUPPER, like so many points of the original true doctrine, has fallen into the mire of erroneous tradition. Jude exhorts us to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

Modern confusion

Today different church denominations take this sacred ordinance in different ways. One church claims the bread and wine literally are transferred into the actual body and blood of Christ. Some churches take this "supper" every Sunday MORNING. Some take it once a month, in the morning. Others take it four times a year, and at night.

Truly, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

There is but one way to get back to the plain TRUTH once delivered to the saints, and that is to shelve our assumptions and traditions, and then with open



minds diligently search the Scriptures, the only true record of what was once delivered.

The first Lord's Supper

Let us examine the passages showing the first institution of this ordinance.

Notice Luke 22:14, 19-20: "And when the hour had come, He [Jesus] sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. . . . And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is

given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.'"

Notice, it was "when the hour had come" that Jesus first introduced the bread and the wine. There was a DEFINITE TIME — a definite hour — when He held this supper, setting an example for us.

Notice, too, He commanded them to observe it — "DO THIS." And why? "In remembrance of Me," Jesus said. It was, then, a MEMORIAL — in memory of His death. He instituted it on this tragic night, the very eve of His death.

In Matthew's account we read, "And as they were eating, Jesus took bread" (Matthew 26:26). It was "as they were eating" that He took bread and introduced this solemn ordinance we call the Lord's Supper. Eating what? Eating the PASSOVER (verse 17, Luke 22:15)!

Notice Matthew 26:2: "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man

will be delivered up to be crucified." Jesus knew His time had come. He was our Passover, sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).

"Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, 'Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?'" (Matthew 26:17).

After sundown (the days began at sundown), Jesus sat down with His 12 disciples in an upper room (verse 20, Mark 14:15).

And as they were eating the Passover supper (Matthew 26:26-28): "Jesus took bread, blessed it . . . and gave it to the disciples and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.'"

So we see it was the night of the final and last Passover supper that Jesus introduced the "Lord's Supper." To thoroughly understand the connection between the "Lord's Supper" of the New Testament and the Passover of the Old, let us make a quick examination of the Passover.

The ordinance under the Old Covenant

The original Passover marked the Exodus of the children of Israel out of Egypt. God had been pouring out the plagues upon Egypt, to induce Pharaoh to let the Israelites go. You will find it recorded in the 12th chapter of Exodus.

On the 10th day of the first month (the Hebrew, or sacred, year began with the new moon in the spring, near the equinox, not midwinter), they were told to take a young lamb without spot or blemish, a type of Christ, the Lamb of God. This lamb was to be kept until the 14th day of the first month, Abib, when they were to kill it "at twilight" (verses 1-6). The literal Hebrew,

margin, is "between the two evenings," and from the *Jewish Encyclopedia* we find this is the period between the time the sun goes down, when the new day has commenced, and the darkness, when the stars are out. So the lamb was killed in the very beginning of the 14th of Abib.

As soon as it was killed, the blood was to be sprinkled over the doorposts of their houses. The lamb was to be roasted and eaten in haste.

At midnight that night the angel of the Lord passed through the land, striking dead all the firstborn of the land. But, "When I see the blood, I will pass over

showing their faith, looking forward, that He would come.

Now notice Exodus 12:17, 24: The Passover was instituted as an ordinance FOREVER, just as circumcision was not done away, but was changed — today it is of the HEART (Romans 2:29).

In both cases God meant FOREVER, and so, as we have seen, at the last Passover supper Jesus CHANGED the manner of observance of this ordinance. No longer do we kill a lamb and eat it, since the Lamb of God has been sacrificed once for all. Instead, we take the bread, symbolizing His broken body, and the wine, symbolizing His shed blood, as a memorial, looking back to His death.

How often observed?

Now notice Exodus 13:10, speaking of the Days of Unleavened Bread: "You shall therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year." This time is once a year, at night, after the sun has set in the beginning of the 14th of Abib.

Jesus set us an example (1 Peter 2:21), observing it at this set time once a year (Luke 2:42).

Suppose the Israelites in Egypt had observed this ordinance at some other than this set time? They would not have been saved when the death angel passed by that night! God does things ON TIME. He has given us an exact time for this ordinance. Jesus instituted it "when the hour had come."

The ordinance of humility

In giving us the account of the instituting of the "Lord's Supper" ordinance, Matthew, Mark and Luke describe the taking of the bread and wine. But John relates another part of this annual ordinance.

It is in the 13th chapter of the book of John. Verse 1 shows the event is the last Passover. The supper being ended (verse 2), Jesus took a towel (verse 4) and began washing His disciples' feet

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you," the Lord told the Israelites (verse 13).

For seven days they ate only unleavened bread. The 14th of the first month, Abib, was the Passover, and the 15th was a feast day, or annual Holy Day (verses 15-16, Numbers 28:16-17). The 15th was the first of seven days of unleavened bread. The seventh of these, or the 21st of Abib, was also a holy feast day, or annual Sabbath, called a "high day" even still today by the Jews.

The lamb was killed as the sun was going down (Deuteronomy 16:6), yet it was eaten IN the 14th day (Leviticus 23:5-6), not after it was passed.

Instituted forever

Year after year Israel continued to observe the Passover. The eating of the lamb symbolized the acceptance of the broken body and spilled blood of Christ,

(verse 5). "So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example that YOU SHOULD DO AS I HAVE DONE TO YOU'" (verses 12-15).

Many today do not want to humiliate themselves by washing the feet of their church brethren. Some argue that Jesus commanded only the disciples to wash one another's feet. But they will admit it was a COMMAND to them. Very well, turn to Matthew 28:19-20:

"Go therefore," He said to these same disciples, "and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them . . . teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded YOU."

So they were to teach us to observe ALL things that He commanded them. Surely God is no respecter of persons!

Kept once a year in the apostolic Church

Now notice 1 Corinthians 5:7-8: "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven . . . but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth."

Paul gives directions regarding the "Lord's Supper" in the 11th chapter of 1 Corinthians. Some have misunderstood verse 26, which says, "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, and interpret it to say, 'Take it as often as you please.' But it does not say that!"

It says "as often" as we observe it, "you proclaim the LORD'S DEATH till he comes." And Jesus commanded, "This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me" (verse 25). We do it in remembrance of THE

LORD'S DEATH — a memorial of His death. And memorials of momentous occasions always are observed annually, once a year, on the ANNIVERSARY of the event they commemorate. That is the way Americans, for instance, observe the Fourth of July today. Jesus instituted this New Testament ordinance on the EVE of His DEATH. It was the 14th of Abib, Hebrew calendar. He was our Passover, sacrificed for us — and He was sacrificed on the same exact day of the year that the Passover lambs always had been slain!

As the Old Testament Passover commemorated Israel's deliver-

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ance from Egypt, a type of sin, so the New Testament "Lord's Supper" — a continuation of the Passover with different emblems — commemorates Jesus' death, and our deliverance from sin.

Immediately after that last supper, Jesus and His disciples went out to Gethsemane, where, later that night, Judas Iscariot led the bloodthirsty mob that seized Jesus and led Him away to be crucified during the daylight part of the same 14th day of the month.

Jesus set us an example, and by following His example and observing this sacred ordinance at the same time He did — the same time the Passover always was observed, commanded to continue FOREVER — we do continue to remember His death, annually, on the very anniversary of His crucifixion. It is the most solemn and sacred occasion of the year — especially when observed

at this correct scriptural hour! Notice verses 27 and 29 in 1 Corinthians 11. This is not speaking about a Christian being worthy or unworthy to take it. It is speaking of the MANNER in which we do it. To take it in a UNWORTHY manner. Had the ancient Israelites in Egypt observed the first Passover at any time except the exact time appointed by God, they would have done it unworthily, and suffered the plague.

Surely if we, once we see and know the truth, partake of this most sacred ordinance at any other time than that set apart in the Scripture, we do it unworthily, and to our damnation. To take the bread and wine while not truly accepting the body and blood of Christ with the whole heart would be taking it unworthily and to one's damnation. Let us observe it WORTHILY!

Example of the first-century Church

The first-century Church of God, under the original apostles, continued to observe this solemn ordinance once a year at the set time. The Days of Unleavened Bread were still being observed. Notice Acts 20:6: "But we sailed away from Philippi after the Days of Unleavened Bread." That was in A.D. 56.

Then notice Acts 12:3. God inspired these words, to tell us the time of year: "Now it was during the Days of Unleavened Bread." That could not have been written had these days been done away and kept only by Jews.

In the month of two or three witnesses is a thing established. Notice a third text, Acts 12:4. The word *Easter* in the Authorized Version is a mistranslation. The Greek word is *Pascha*, meaning PASSOVER. It is exactly the same word used for "Passover" in Matthew 26:2, 17-19. Many other translations faithfully render this "Passover" in year — especially when observed

ceived, erring, wrongdoing people He loved, and cried out: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!" (Matthew 23:37).

Here was emotion expressed. But it was intelligent expression of feeling — not unthinking, unguided sensual impulse. It was filled with deep meaning!

Of course Jesus had the divine power; He could have gathered the people of Jerusalem to Him by force! But, had He brought them to Him by force, His whole purpose of character-building by free choice and free moral agency would have been defeated — so He willed that they, themselves, should make their own decisions. And He was grieved through His whole being that they rejected truth and happiness and salvation and eternal life, and chose curses and suffering and death.

Should we ever feel deeply about things? We certainly should. Jesus did! Just before the Judas-led murdering mob came to lead Him to trial and death, Jesus went apart from His disciples and prayed: "And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. And His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44).

If we do learn to live by "every word of God" — by God's instruction Book — we will learn to guide emotions intelligently — but we shall not suppress them, neither let them run rampant and uncontrolled where they ought not.

Jesus Christ, at age 33½, was the most perfectly developed man, physically, mentally, spiritually and emotionally, who ever lived. He was fully mature, these four blending harmoniously into the one perfect whole man.

Let us study Jesus Christ's life, follow His example, live as He lived. And let us begin, now, to train our children as early as possible in the art of growing up emotionally! □

Lord's Supper

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this verse, as it should be. So this verse is, "intending after the PASSOVER to bring him forth to the people."

This was more than 10 years after the New Testament Church was established.

The meaning of "break bread"

Some churches turn to Acts 20:7 — "Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread." To them this says, "Take the 'Lord's Supper' every Sunday morning."

Let us examine this. Notice verse 6. This is just AFTER the Days of Unleavened Bread, when the "Lord's Supper" had been taken.

Paul was holding a farewell meeting at Troas, ready to depart at sunrise. When was Paul preaching? It was not Sunday morning, but what would now be called Saturday night. It was between sunset, when the first day of the week commenced, and midnight (verse 7), and there were many lights burning (verse 8). But it was after midnight before they broke bread, when they were all getting hungry.

Notice carefully. It is in the 11th verse: "Now when he had come up, had broken bread and eaten." This bread-breaking was not the "Lord's Supper," but eating a plain meal.

"Break bread" does not necessarily refer to the "Lord's Supper," as some have carelessly assumed. In fact, this term is NEVER used to designate the "Lord's Supper" in the New Testament. Notice Acts 27:34-35: "Therefore I urge you to take nourishment . . . he took bread . . . and when he had broken it HE BEGAN TO EAT."

Notice Acts 2:46: "And breaking bread from house to house, they ATE THEIR FOOD with gladness." Here they were breaking bread daily, eating food, and Paul says if we eat to satisfy

hunger at the Lord's Supper, we do it to our condemnation (1 Corinthians 11:34).

Then notice Matthew 26:29. Jesus said He would not again take the "Lord's Supper" until after His Second Coming, in His Kingdom. Yet, later, as He sat "AT MEAL," eating a meal, He broke bread and blessed it (Luke 24:30, Authorized Version).

They then used a kind of bread such as is used in many European countries today, and instead of slicing, they broke it. "Break bread" was a common term to indicate eating a meal.

Let us return to the faith once delivered. Let us humbly and obediently observe this solemn, sacred ordinance as we are commanded at the time set apart in the Bible, after the sundown on the 14th of Abib, or Nisan, sacred Hebrew calendar.

The date, Abib 14, is calculated by the moon. The first day of the new year always begins with the day nearest the spring equinox when the new moon is first visible to the naked eye AT JERUSALEM.

The Jewish calendar as used by Jews today is correct. But it must be remembered that "in the 14th day of the first month at even is the Passover, and on the 15th day of the same month is the FEAST." The Jews no longer observe the Passover on the 14th. They observe the FEAST — one night after the Passover, on the eve of Abib 15. The "Lord's Supper" or New Testament Passover should be observed BEFORE the Jewish people celebrate their feast.

For more information on the Passover, the Days of Unleavened Bread and the other Holy Days in God's sacred calendar, request our free booklet *Pagan Holidays — or God's Holy Days — Which?* Also available, free of charge, is a full-color copy of God's sacred calendar for 1986-87, showing all the dates for God's annual Holy Days.

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