

## **Bread And Cup Of Communion**

'Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High. He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High who has delivered your enemies into your hand"' (Genesis 14:18 to 20).

This event between Melchizedek and Abraham was the first scriptural record of the bread and wine being taken together during fellowship with God's chosen servant. Back then it was symbolic of the reverence and worship of God the Father, and His blessing in return. Melchizedek was Messiah Jesus on earth, thousands of years before He was born as a baby Who grew up to become our slain and risen Saviour. Melchizedek was a king and a priest and scripturally, Jesus was the first Person Who was given the roles of both King and Priest by God the Father. The Lord gave the bread and wine to Abraham and thousands of years later, He gave the bread and wine to His disciples who later became the apostles.

'Jesus took bread, gave thanks for it and broke it. He gave some to the disciples and said, "Take, eat. This is My body." He took the cup, gave thanks and gave it to them saying, "All of you drink it for this is My blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many for the remission of sins"' (Matthew 26:26 to 28). 'Jesus took bread and when He had blessed it, He broke it and gave some to them and said, "Take, eat. This is my body." He took the cup and when He had given thanks, He gave some to them. They all drank of it. He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant which is poured out for many"' (Mark 14:22 to 24). 'Jesus took bread and when He had given thanks, He broke it and gave pieces to them saying, "This is My body which is given for you. Do this in memory of Me." Likewise, He took the cup after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood which is poured out for you"' (Luke 22:19 & 20).

When Jesus broke the bread, gave thanks and dipped it in the dish, He would have done that at the beginning of the meal, as was and still is the Jewish custom. It was done as part of the blessing of the food. The Jews called it 'breaking bread'. Christians call it 'saying grace'. On that day though, instead of this act being part of the meal, Jesus invoked an eternal blessing on breaking bread in this way and it became symbolic of the new covenant as prophesied. "Behold the days will come," says the Lord "When I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Jeremiah 31:31). The shared cup or goblet of grape juice was sipped at the end of the meal as shown in Luke. This act was not a new thing but part of the Jewish custom. What was new, was the start of the new covenant. Jesus ratified the new covenant by giving His blood in the place of ours.

During the time of Jesus, sharing a communal meal like they did in the upper room was normal practice. The Jewish group called the Essenes who lived in the Judean Hills were known for their communal living. Everything was shared; food, clothing, housing, families and living expenses. John took Jesus' mother Mary home to take care of her which should have been the duty of Jesus' four brothers, but His cousin John took his Auntie Mary home. 'When Jesus saw his mother (Mary) and the disciple whom He loved (John) standing there, He said to His mother, "Woman, behold your son!" Then He said to John, "Behold, your mother!" From that hour, John took Mary to his own home' (John 19:26 & 27). In our society we would consider that strange, but in their culture such things were normal. Communal meals and the sharing of food was the culture in which Jesus grew up and it is the context in which the new covenant and the early church were born. We can see the same type of communal living beginning to grow throughout the early church. 'They continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayer ... All who believed were together (in unity) and had all things in common. They sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, according to their need. Day by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple and breaking bread at home, they took their food with joy and a pure heart' (Acts 2:42 to 46). 'The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing of the blood of Jesus? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing of the body of Jesus? There is one loaf of bread and we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf of bread' (1 Corinthians 10:16 & 17).

Jesus made it clear, the new covenant was to begin by the tearing of His flesh and the shedding of His blood. For some people that was a stumbling block as it is to some people today, but He did not mean people were to literally cannibalise Him, He meant to devour and live within the Spiritual aspect of the Gospel message, which gives us eternal life. "They who eat My flesh and drink My blood have eternal life and I will raise them up at the last day (the first resurrection). My flesh is (spiritual) food indeed and My blood is (spiritual) drink indeed. They who eat My flesh and drink My blood live in Me, and I in them. As the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so they who feed on Me, will also live because of Me ... Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples murmured at this and He said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble?" ... It is the Holy Spirit Who gives life. The flesh profits nothing. The words I speak to you are Spirit

and are life" (John 6:54 to 63). 'God made us sufficient to be servants of the new covenant of the Holy Spirit' (2 Corinthians 3:6).

'The first covenant with Abraham, with the bread and wine was a picture of the eternal covenant we have with Jesus. Back then, Abraham had to cut his flesh (circumcision). 'God said to Abraham, "As for you, you will keep My covenant, you and your seed after you throughout their generations. This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your seed after you. Every male among you will be circumcised. You will be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin. It will be a token of the covenant between Me and you. (Genesis 17:9 to 11). With the new covenant, we have to 'circumcise' our hearts, that is to spiritually cut the sin out of our hearts. 'As you received Jesus the Lord, walk in Him ... for in Him all the fullness of the Godhead (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) dwells in His body in Whom you were also circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands but in the cutting off the sins of the flesh, in the circumcision of Jesus (meaning we need Him to cleanse our lives)' (Colossians 2:6, 9 & 11).

A covenant was made with Moses but that came with the death and the shedding of the blood of lambs. 'On the tenth day of Nisan, they will take every man a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household, and if the household is too little for a lamb, then he and his neighbour next to his house will share one lamb according to the number of souls, according to what everyone can eat you will make your count for the lamb' (Exodus 12:3 & 4). In the new covenant, Jesus the slain Lamb of God (Revelation 5:6) gave His flesh and gave us the bread and wine a second time. The old covenant was polluted by sin. 'He (Jesus) has obtained a more excellent ministry because He is the Mediator of a better covenant, which on better promises has been given as law. If that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second, for finding fault with the Israelites He said, "Behold, the days will come when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, for they did not continue in My covenant," says the Lord. "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel. After those days I will put my laws into their mind, I will also write them on their heart. I will be their God, and they will be my people. They will not teach his fellow citizen or his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all will know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. I will be merciful to their unrighteousness. I will remember their sins and lawlessness no more." In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first one old and that which is becoming old and grows aged is near to disappearing' (Hebrews 8:8 to 13).

'If the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled, sanctify the flesh, how much more will the blood of Jesus, Who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? For this reason He is the Mediator of a new covenant, since a death has occurred for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, so those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. Where a last will and testament is implemented, there must of necessity be the death of him who made it. A will is in force where there has been death, for it is never in force while he who made it lives. Even the first covenant was not dedicated without blood. When every commandment had been spoken by Moses to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you" (Hebrews 9:13 to 20).

Once we are born again and live within the new covenant, God raises us up to high places. 'You have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to multitudes of angels, to the general assembly and assembly of the Firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect (when they died), to Jesus the Mediator of a new covenant and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better than that of Abel' (Hebrews 12:22 to 24).

The early Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, worshipped in the synagogues on the Sabbath and they also met together on the first day of the week we call Sunday, to share the bread and cup and to listen to teaching. 'On the first day of the week (Sunday) when the disciples were gathered together to break bread, Paul talked with them and continued his speech until midnight' (Acts 20:7). 'It happened in Iconium that they (Paul and Barnabas) went together in the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke (preached), and a great multitude both of Jews and of Gentiles believed' (Acts 14:1). 'Paul reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath and persuaded Jews and Gentiles' (Acts 18:4).

When we take communion, break the bread, share the cup, eat the wafer or whatever our church calls it, we must have a right attitude. We must remember and proclaim the sacrifice of Jesus. We must have a pure heart so we are worthy to take the bread and cup, and to be worthy we need to examine our heart, our attitude, repent of any sin in our lives and forgive others who have offended us. If we do not take those steps

each time we come before the Lord for the bread and cup, we can bring guilt and judgement on ourselves, become sick and die. We cannot take the bread and cup because others are doing it or because we enjoy the taste. We need to discern and believe in our hearts, we are partaking of the sacrifice of Jesus by symbolically devouring His broken body and shed blood. We need to examine and judge ourselves, not anyone else. We cannot poke our spouse in the ribs to remind them of their sin when we may have sin in our own hearts. We should also eat our fill at home so we do not embarrass ourselves by eating too much bread and drink and make others go without. 'The Lord Jesus, on the night He was betrayed, took bread and when He had given thanks He broke it and said, "Take, eat. This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in memory of me." In the same way He also took the cup after supper saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this as often as you drink in memory of Me." As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. Whoever eats this bread or drinks the Lord's cup in a manner unworthy of the Lord will be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. Let a person examine themselves, and let them eat of the bread and drink of the cup. Whoever eats and drinks unworthily eats and drinks judgment to themselves, if they do not discern the Lord's body. For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and many have died. If we discerned ourselves we would not be judged, but when we are judged we are punished by the Lord so we may not be condemned with the world. Therefore, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. If anyone is hungry let him eat at home, lest your coming together be for judgment instead of blessing' (1 Corinthians 11:23 to 34).

Scripturally, the bread should be unleavened; made without any yeast which represents sin. The cup does not have to be grape juice but should be juice taken from fruit of a vine – any vine. There are many different types of fruit that grow on vines. For the sake of individuals who once had a problem with alcohol, the juice should be non-alcoholic. The last thing any church needs is to encourage a former alcoholic to sip alcohol. The occasion of breaking unleavened bread and sharing the fruit of the vine is no trivial matter and should never be taken lightly. It needs to be taken with the thought of the Lord Jesus and His suffering uppermost in our minds. It needs to be taken with repentance, reverence, respect and in awe of the Lord our God and Creator, Who came to earth in the form of Man for the sole purpose of reconciling lost humanity with God the Father. It is the covenant God has made with those who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour, and who have accepted His blood as the offering for our sin. God the Father is building a Kingdom and He wants obedient children in His Kingdom. No wayward, disobedient, unrighteous, covenant-breaking person can ever enter the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:9).

A covenant made in blood cannot be broken without penalty. If we break our covenant with the Lord and return to sin, He takes that very seriously and says it is better for them if they had never known God in the first place. 'If after they have escaped the defilement of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus, and if they are again entangled in sin and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. It would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them' (2 Peter 2:20 & 21).

One of the disciples who had outwardly accepted the bread and cup, and therefore the new covenant was Judas Iscariot. Sadly, he went on to break the covenant just a short time later and ended up with such a severe eternal judgement, Jesus said it would be better for Judas if he had never been born. If Judas had repented he could have been restored to life but instead of repenting he chose to hang himself. 'The Son of Man goes as it is written of Him, but woe to that man through whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would be better for that man if he had not been born' (Matthew 26:24). Judas felt remorse at his betrayal of Jesus and knew he had sinned but that was not enough. He should have repented. 'When Judas saw that Jesus was condemned he felt remorse and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests saying, "I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? You see to it." Judas threw down the pieces of silver in the sanctuary and departed. He went away and hanged himself' (Matthew 27:3 to 5).

The new covenant bread and cup of vine fruit juice is an eternal symbol of the covenant He has made with us. Once every person has finished with Judgement Day and the righteous are established with Jesus in the Kingdom of God, the sharing of the bread and fruit of the vine will continue. Jesus said, "I tell you that I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on, until that day when I drink it anew with you in My Father's Kingdom" (Matthew 26:29; Mark 14:25). "I tell you, I will not eat of the bread until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." He received a cup and when He had given thanks He said, "Take this and share it among yourselves for I tell you, I will not drink from the fruit of the vine again, until the Kingdom of God comes" (Luke 22:16 to 18).

Amen and God Bless you.

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