

Assembly Basics

Session 4: A Basic Priority in an Assembly

1. THE SOURCE OF THE REMEMBRANCE

- Originates with command from the Lord: "this do in remembrance of me" (Lk 22:19). Paul states "I received of the Lord, that which I delivered unto you" (1 Cor 11:23).

2. THE SETTING OF THE REMEMBRANCE

- **THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS INSTITUTED:** in the upper room (Lk 22:12).
- **THE PLACE WHERE IT WAS OBSERVED:** In NT three occasions when observance of the breaking of bread mentioned, all involving an Assembly (Acts 2:41-42; 20:6-7; 1 Cor 11:17-34). Paul purposely waited and avoided breaking bread until he was with an Assembly (Acts 20:6-7). The Apostolic pattern is observance in context of an Assembly. Never observed by family alone, husband and wife alone, or a collection of believers who happen to be together. The Assembly setting also ensures accountability.
- **THE PLACE WHERE IT WILL BE REMOVED:** "till He come" (1 Cor 11:26). In Heaven faith will give place to sight and no more need of symbols. 1 Jn 3:2 "we shall see Him."

3. THE SOLEMNITY OF THE REMEMBRANCE

- **TIMING OF THE INSTITUTION:** The Lord could have given the remembrance just following His resurrection or at His ascension. However He chose to give it "the same night in which He was betrayed" (1 Cor 11:23). In Luke 22:15 He had a desire to give the remembrance "before I suffer". The remembrance was given in the shadows of Calvary.
- **CHARACTER OF THE OBSERVANCE:** Timing of the remembrance, as well as the subject matter, adds a solemnity to the remembrance. There is joy but the occasion will also be marked by a solemn reverence. The rituals of Judaism are gone but reverence has not been abolished for Christians today: Heb 12:28 "serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear." While this reverence should be seen in every gathering of the Assembly, there is a particular solemnity at the remembrance due to the character of the occasion.

4. THE SYMBOLS OF THE REMEMBRANCE

- **THE LOAF AND CUP:** "bread" (Lk 22:19). Ordinary word for bread. The fact that it was likely unleavened is not specified and thus is not a requirement. Turning to the "cup" (Lk 22:20). Only once are we told that the contents of the cup were "the fruit of the vine" (Mt 26:29). When the cup referred to in Lk 22:20 the reference is to more than a drinking object, pointing on to the contents of the cup.
- **THE SYMBOLISM:** The loaf of bread represents the body of Christ and the cup of wine represents His blood and thus His death. The bread was broken (Lk 22:19) not only to allow the disciples to eat, but, it is suggested, to remind them of the violence experienced by the body of the Lord Jesus. The wine was poured into a cup at some point in the upper room, and the Lord seems to draw attention to this "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Lk 22:20 NASB). This seems to be significant as there was no need for the Lord to mention "poured". He could have said "this cup of wine" instead. While good brethren disagree, it is suggested that the breaking of the loaf and the pouring of the cup carry significance, reminding the believer of the violence of Calvary and the shed blood of Christ. The partaking of the

emblems symbolically proclaims the believers' connection with Christ as well as each other (1 Cor 10:16-17). The cup being referred to as a symbol of the "new testament" (Lk 22:20) refers back to the "old covenant" with Israel at Sinai (Heb 8:13). A "new covenant" (Jer 31:31) was promised which would bring permanent removal of sins and other blessings. The Lord's death provides the basis for these blessings. Believers today are in the good of the spiritual blessings of the New Covenant (Heb 8:1- 9:28; 2 Cor 3:6-18). The blessings will fully come to Israel at the Lord's coming.

- **THE CONFUSION:** "this is my body" (Lk 22:19) has caused debate (i) Transubstantiation - "this bread has been transformed into my actual body"; (ii) Consubstantiation - "in, with and around this bread is the actual presence of my body"; (iii) Receptionism - "this bread carries with it the spiritual reception of my body." All of these errors miss the simplicity of the symbol. "This is my body" means "this is a representation or symbol of my body." John 6 does not teach about the Breaking of Bread but is stating that at salvation you receive the Lord Jesus (Jn 6:53-54). Emphasised by the Lord's words about the cup, "this cup is the new testament in my blood" (Lk 22:20). Lord does not mean the cup had transformed into a written covenant. It represents the blood required to make the new covenant possible. The disciples would have objected to drinking the Lord's literal blood as this was forbidden by the law (Lev 3:17; 7:26-27; 17:14; cf Peter Acts 10:6-16).

5. THE SHARERS IN THE REMEMBRANCE

- **WHO SHOULD SHARE?** The Lord's command "this do" applies to all believers. However, it has been seen that the remembrance was only observed in the context of Assembly Fellowship. It is one of the privileges of fellowship and only people who are part of that Assembly's Fellowship should participate. That being so, there is no such thing as "reception to the Breaking of Bread only." A person is either received to the whole privileges and responsibilities of the Assembly or not at all. Participation publicly professes oneness with the Lord and with that Assembly (1 Cor 10:16-17). There is symbolism to one cup and one loaf which should not be tampered with through, for example, individual cups. Sharing will follow self-examination (1 Cor 11:27) and preparation. Applies to those already in "the church of God at Corinth" (1 Cor 1:2).

6. THE SIMPLICITY OF THE REMEMBRANCE

- **POINT IN TIME:** The Apostolic pattern is observance on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). On that occasion the remembrance took place in the evening which is understandable given Sunday was a working day for those believers.
- **PRIORITY:** The main purpose of the gathering at Troas was to break bread (Acts 20:7). It is not something "tacked on" to the end of another meeting. This priority might also be emphasised by making the remembrance the first activity of the Assembly each week.
- **PROGRAMME:** Follows the principles outlined for any Spirit-led gathering described in 1 Cor 14:26-40. In the upper room thanksgiving (Lk 22:19), blessing (Mt 26:26), singing (Mt 26:30). At a moment, guided by the Spirit, thanks will be given for the emblems on behalf of all (1 Cor 10:16-17). Followed by ministry (Jn 14; see also Acts 20:7).

7. SELF-CENTREDNESS AT THE REMEMBRANCE

- "this do in remembrance of Me" (Lk 22:19). A calling to mind of who He is and what He has done. Blessed words "for you" but not all about me. Upper room: "there was also a strife among them" (Lk 22:24). Corinth: "Lord's supper" v "his own supper" (1 Cor 11:20-21). Tragic when the moment for recalling the Lord's selflessness becomes an opportunity for our self-centredness.