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205 - In Remembrance Of Me

1. Introduction

In the previous lessons we've seen how the sacrifices offered by the faithful linked them to the sacrifice of Christ and therefore salvation through his blood. Sacrifices were a central part of the Law of Moses and were offered daily, weekly and annually. In essence they were an instrument of not only accessing the mercy of God but were reminders of the blessings from the Lord. In this lesson, **In Remembrance Of Me**, we'll discuss the manner in which the faithful today are reminded of the blessings that we have in God through the sacrifice of Christ.

2. God's blessings and the memory of mankind

The biblical narrative is a testament of the forgetful nature of mankind. When it comes to God that failure is many times deliberate. Paul speaks of this in his letter to the Romans. Describing the spiritual history of mankind and the pagan world in particular, he tells us that *"they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."* (Rom 1.28-32). This attitude can be seen throughout the biblical narrative and even describes God's own people at different points in their history.

Today the Law of Moses has been fulfilled and taken out of the way. Sacrifices are no longer offered and not valid since Christ offered himself for mankind. Although there are no commandments to offer sacrifices, as the faithful did before the day of Pentecost, God has put elements in place that believers today are to observe. These call to mind the sacrifice of Christ and remind us of the terrible price that was paid to reconcile us with the Lord. These elements are physical but carry spiritual significance and are therefore symbolic of the sacrifice of Christ. They're also misunderstood by some and not observed correctly by others. I'm talking about the Lord's Supper or Communion, instituted by Christ on the evening before his arrest and crucifixion.

We'll explore these elements, their meaning and observance in order to come to a better understanding of God's design for us today. We'll take a look at

1. Sacrifices, the Passover & Christ
2. The institution of the Lord's Supper
3. The elements used by Jesus & why they were used
4. Consecration of a new priest
5. The connection and timing with the Passover

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7. Observance of the Lord's Supper and
8. Misunderstandings and mysticism applied to these elements

I believe that you'll have a better grasp of the meaning and significance of the Lord's Supper once we cover these areas. First, let's review the connection between the sacrifices, Passover and Christ.

3. Sacrifices, Passover & Christ

In the previous lessons I demonstrated that there's a link between the sacrifices commanded under the Law and the sacrifice of Christ. The sacrifices embodied a prophetic element pointing to the better offering by Jesus in accordance with the will of the Father. The animals offered served to validate the faithfulness of the people through keeping God's commands and laid the foundation for Christ who would be revealed in the fullness of time (**Gal 4.4**). The Law was a specific means of preparing the world for the Messiah (**Gal 3.24, Rom 10.4**) who would indeed be the more excellent sacrifice to take away the sins of the world (**Heb 10.1-4, Heb 9.15-16**).

A contrast can be made between the animal sacrifices offered under the Law of Moses and that of Christ. The animal sacrifices were paired with a continual remembrance of transgression (**Heb 10.1**) and the Law itself was incapable, by its design, of completely justifying man with God (**Heb 7.19, Rom 3.20**). The animal sacrifices were also intended to help the Hebrews remember the blessings they received from God. The contrast emerges as we note that the sacrifices, which were to be made continually, served a prophetic function looking forward to the time of Christ.

Once Christ had been offered as the final sacrifice, (**Heb 10.10,12**), animal sacrifices were no longer necessary. God's people however were not left without an instrument to remind us of the blessings provided through the death of Christ. God always commanded, and provided, a way for those who love Him to remain mindful of His goodness.

The means by which Christ is to be remembered is through the Communion or Lord's Supper. Instituted prior to His death, this memorial also represents the passing of the Law of Moses for a more durable covenant as the prophets spoke of (**Jer 31.31-32**). The sacrifice of Christ represents freedom from sin and the promise of eternal life with God (**John 14.3**). This is synonymous with the Passover lamb that was sacrificed by the Hebrews and whose blood saved the firstborn of the children of Israel. The timing of the institution of this memorial with the Passover was not coincidental.

4. The institution of the Lord's Supper

Passover was one of the most significant days in the Hebrew calendar. It marked the

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specific point at which God intervened directly, delivering the Hebrews from the Egyptians after four hundred thirty years of slavery (**Ex 12.41**). On that night, the firstborn of Egypt died causing such grief in the land that the Egyptians demanded that the Hebrews leave the country (**Ex 12.33**). Centuries later, mere hours before his arrest, Christ ate his final Passover with his disciples and gave them instructions for a memorial to be observed. Jesus designated two items for this purpose. These were unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine referring to unfermented grape juice. Luke writes, *“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.”* (**Luke 22.19-20**). We can find these instructions recorded in **Matthew 26.26-28** and **Mark 14.22-24** as well.

For some time Christ had been preparing his disciples for what was going to happen. On several occasions he told them he'd be killed. On one of these Peter rebuked Christ stating, *“Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.”* Christ told Peter *“Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.”* (**Matt 16.21-23**). The actions Jesus took and the way he spoke to them at this time are prophetic in nature. Like the Father, Christ often spoke and acted as if things in the future had already occurred. In this instance he spoke of his death as if it had already taken place. By doing so he spoke prophetically hours before it happened and the institution of this memorial would undoubtedly be ingrained into the disciples memory afterwards.

We need to take a moment to really appreciate the gravity of what's happening. A short time after creation man sinned. After man sinned the Lord pronounced consequences that were imposed on all humans including physical death. God told Satan that one who was the seed of the woman would one day bruise his head - or in other words - deal a death blow to his power. We know that it was Satan who had taken the appearance of the serpent who tempted Eve, so this statement was made directly to a spiritual being who challenged the credibility of God and corrupted man. Now, centuries later, the time had come for this to take place. Everything God had done to this point was in preparation for the sacrifice that would provide the means for humans to be saved. Christ had come into the world for this purpose (**John 12.27**), a body had been created to be offered for the sins of mankind (**Heb 10.5**) and the blood that was about to be shed would close the breach between man and God (**Rom 5.9**).

The time God had chosen had arrived (**Gal 4.4**). The sacrifice prepared (**Heb 10.5**) and the moment was at hand as the prince of this world approached (**John 14.30**). The timing of this memorial was planned and its significance can't be understated. To see this we need to take a closer look at the elements used and their deeper meaning.

5. Elements used by Jesus & their spiritual significance

From the accounts of Matthew and Mark we see that two elements, unleavened bread and

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the fruit of the vine, were used. These were part of the Passover observance but Christ singled them out for a unique distinction. Hours before his arrest and eventual death on the cross, Christ implemented a memorial that would characterize the new law by reverencing his death. In a simple yet powerful act Jesus left his disciples with a profound instrument that would call his sacrifice to their minds. Let's take a look at these two elements beginning with the unleavened bread.

Christ instituted the Lord's Supper during a period that was one of national purification in preparation for the Passover. During this time the Hebrews, or Jews, were to observe this. Speaking of the Passover feast God told Moses, "***And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it.***" (Ex 12.8). Later, Moses repeats these instructions stating, "***Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the Lord thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the Lord shall choose to place His name there. Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.***" (Deut 16.2-3).

Some refer to the unleavened bread as the "***bread of haste***". This is consistent with the description of the departure of the Hebrews from Egypt. "***And the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneadingtroughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders...And they baked unleavened cakes of the dough which they brought forth out of Egypt, for it was not leavened; because they were thrust out of Egypt, and could not tarry, neither had they prepared for themselves any victual.***" (Ex 12.34). The power of God and the liberation of the people was not an insignificant event. The nation of Egypt, one of the most powerful in the world at that time, had been devastated by ten plagues. Moses notes the significance of this as he writes, "***It is a night to be much observed unto the Lord for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their generations.***" (Ex 12.42).

Instructions in preparation for the Passover were specific.

- a. **Exodus 12.15, 18** - unleavened bread was to be eaten from the 14th to the 21st day of the month. Leaven was to be removed from their houses and anyone who ate anything leavened would be cut off from Israel
- b. **Exodus 12.19** - the command to remove leaven is repeated with a reminder that anyone who ate anything leavened would be cut off from Israel. This also included foreigners that were in the land with them.
- c. **Exodus 12.17** - God notes that the feast of unleavened bread is to be observed as a reminder of the day when the Lord brought their "***armies***" out of the land of Egypt. The

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final statement in this verse is that the feast of unleavened bread was to be observed in their **“generations by an ordinance for ever.”**

d. Since God had ordered that there should be nothing leavened in their homes the removal of such in preparation for the Passover represented a purification of the nation.

The significance of the unleavened bread is further emphasized as its part of the consecration of the priests, which we’ll talk about shortly, but its also paired with the sacrifices. The unleavened bread was to be made of fine flour and could be baked in an oven, fried with oil in a pan or made into wafers that were anointed with oil. Twelve cakes of unleavened bread were placed in the Tabernacle before the vail and was referred to as the **“shewbread”** or bread of the presence representing God’s presence with his people. An interesting note that we’ll cover at another time is the fact that frankincense was to be placed on the bread of the presence which was one of the gifts presented to Jesus by the wise men.

Specific instructions were given for the use of unleavened bread and different sacrifices and offerings were accompanied by the various forms it was made in. This chart denotes some of these that accompanied different types of sacrifices. We can see that the unleavened bread wasn’t restricted to being used only at Passover and the feast of unleavened bread.

Offering / Usage	Ref	Form	Prep
Meat (Grain)	Lev 2.4	Baked in oven	Unleavened cakes of fine flour mingled with oil or unleavened wafers anointed with oil
	Lev 2.5	Baked in pan	Fine flour unleavned, mingled with oil, part it in pieces and pour oil thereon
	Lev 2.7	Baked in fryingpan	fine flour with oil
	Lev 2.11	All Meat Offerings	No meat offering, which ye shall bring unto the Lord, shall be made with leaven
Sin Offerings & Peace offerings for Nazarite	Num 6.14-17	Basket of unleavened bread	cakes of fine flour mingled with oil (offered with ram for peace offerings)
		Wafers of unleavened bread	anointed with oil
Consecrating priests - ram of consecration	Lev 8.26	Basket of unleavened bread	one unleavened cake, and a cake of oiled bread, and one wafer
Table of shewbread	Lev 24.5-8	Cakes, baked	made with fine flour, 2/10 deals of flour per cake, frankincense placed on each row, placed in 2 rows - 6 in a row

Figure 1 Uses of unleavened bread with sacrifices etc.

The offering and handling of the unleavened bread was also something that had the highest spiritual importance. God stated to Moses, **“Speak unto Aaron, saying, Whosoever he be of thy seed in their generations that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God.”** (Lev 21.17). In the following verses, God identifies the blemishes that would prevent a man from serving as a priest and be able to offer the sacrifices. In this verse we see that

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not only were the sacrificial animals to be without blemish but those who offered them were to be unblemished as well. Note that God emphasizes that the offering is of the “*bread of his God.*” This statement highlights the unleavened bread with extreme importance that mustn’t be overlooked.

Unleavened bread is also paired with blood creating an even more powerful figure. In regard to the sacrifices God states, “*Thou shalt not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the fat of my sacrifice remain until the morning.*” (Ex 23.18).

Let’s summarize what we know about the unleavened bread before we move on to the second element, the fruit of the vine.

1. The unleavened bread was commanded by God as part of the Passover
2. It was known as the bread of affliction and
3. Represented the deliverance of God
4. The Hebrews were not to have any leaven in their homes for seven days
5. Anyone eating anything leavened at this time would be cut off from Israel and God
6. Unleavened bread was paired with the sacrifices
7. It represented the twelve tribes before the presence of God in the Tabernacle
8. A man who had a defect or blemish was forbidden from offering the bread of his God
9. This was a perpetual command throughout their generations
10. Removal of leaven from their homes represented a purification and ...
11. Unleavened bread was paired with the offering of blood sacrifices

The second element used by Christ was the fruit of the vine, or grape juice. The phrase “*fruit of the vine*” denotes a lack of fermentation but creates a link to the sacrifices under the Law of Moses. This element, paired with the sacrifices, is the drink offering. We don’t discuss this very often and in many studies its overlooked but it forms a significant spiritual figure when investigated. The drink offering, referred to as “*strong wine*” (Num 28.7-8) indicates a fermented product which is interesting when we examine its use and the connection we’re making.

The drink offering, or “*strong wine*”, was not to be consumed. The priests were not to drink “*strong drink*” as we read in instructions from God. “*And the Lord spake unto Aaron, saying, Do not drink wine nor strong drink, thou, nor thy sons with thee, when ye go into the tabernacle of the congregation, lest ye die: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations: And that ye may put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean; And that ye may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the Lord hath spoken unto them by the hand of Moses.*” (Lev 10.9-11). The use of the strong wine with the sacrifices was therefore symbolic in nature due to God’s command not to drink it. The wine that would have been used for the Passover would not have been “*strong wine*” hence the reference to the “*fruit of the vine.*” Some Hebrew scholars note there’s a difference between the word for

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leaven in relation to bread and the fermentation process used to make wine. As we look at the references in preparation for the Passover we find that the focus is on bread specifically. It may be that the strong wine used in connection with the sacrifices was excluded from this by God and remained even during the time of the Passover. The drink offerings were an important part of the sacrifices and this may be the case. Let's review what the text has to say about the drink offering and other figures derived from it.

Drink Offerings With Sacrifices & Other Offerings	
Ref	Usage
Ex 29.40-41	Continual burnt offering, lamb made at door of the Tabernacle
Ex 30.9	No drink offering to be poured on the altar of incense
Lev 23.18	Offering of the firstfruits
Lev 23.37	Drink offerings and feasts of the Lord
Num 6.17	Offerings and law of the Nazarite
Num 15.5,7,10	With burnt offerings, vows, freewill offerings
Num 15.24	Offering for sin of ignorance by the congregation
Num 28.7-10	Daily burnt offerings and offerings on Sabbath
Num 28.15	Kid of the goats for a sin offering
Num 28.24	Offerings during the feast of unleavened bread
Num 29.6	7th month on the 1st day - feast of trumpets
Num 29.7-11	Offerings on the day of atonement 7th month 10th day
Num 29.12-38	Feast of tabernacles starting 7th month 15th day of the month

Figure 2 Drink offerings & various sacrifices / feasts

Instructions for the drink offerings are given in conjunction with a variety of sacrifices and offerings to the Lord. Drink offerings were to be made with the offering of the firstfruits of the harvest (**Leviticus 23.13**), accompanied the offering of seven lambs on the day of Pentecost (**Leviticus 23.18**), accompanied the feasts of the Lord, including the feast of tabernacles (**Leviticus 23.37**) and offered with unleavened bread as part of the law of the Nazarite (**Numbers 6.15-17**). Drink offerings were to be made with burnt offerings, freewill offerings, solemn feasts and the performance of vows to God (**Numbers 15.5-10**). The entire congregation was to offer a drink offering with other sacrifices as ordered for the sin of ignorance (**Numbers 15.24**).

In the instructions for the daily or continual burnt offerings God directed, “*And the drink offering thereof shall be the fourth part of an hin for the one lamb: in the holy place shalt thou cause the strong wine to be poured unto the Lord for a drink offering. And the other lamb shalt thou offer at even: as the meat offering of the morning, and as the drink offering thereof, thou shalt offer it, a sacrifice made by fire, of a sweet savour unto the Lord.*” (**Numbers 28.7-8**).

Likewise, specific instructions were given for a sacrifice to be made on the Sabbath.

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“And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of fine flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof: this is the burnt offering of every sabbath, beside the continual burnt offering, and his drink offering.” (Num 28.9-10). Notice the connection with the lambs and their condition. They were to be offered without spot, representative of Christ, and are accompanied by a drink offering which was poured out at the time of the sacrifice. Since the sacrifices in a figurative sense contained a prophetic symbol of Christ, its logical to conclude that the drink offering was a figure of the shedding of Christ’s blood, or more specifically, His act of surrendering His life.

During the first century the idea of the drink offering was familiar to the Jews. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul’s death appears to be imminent. He states, ***“For I am already being poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure is come” (2 Tim 4.6).*** Paul made a similar statement to the Philippians. ***“But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.” (Phil 2.17).*** The rendering quoted here in the **New American Standard Bible** is closer to what is found in the original Greek preserving the idea of the drink offering. In this we see that the idea being expressed is the surrender of one’s life. This is consistent with Christ being poured out, just as the drink offerings were, sacrificing himself for the sins of the world.

Let’s summarize what we know about the fruit of the vine and drink offerings as they relate to the communion

1. The fruit of the vine used by Jesus would not have been fermented
2. Although fermented the drink offerings were commanded by God and
3. Were not to be consumed by the priests
4. The image of the drink offering is paired with the sacrifices and
5. Represents the shedding of blood or sacrifice
6. The idea of being poured out , giving ones life, is consistent with the drink offerings

As Christ instituted the communion he used the unleavened bread which had been paired by God with the sacrifices. The sacrifices represented Christ and were a type of the final offering of Jesus for the sins of the world. The drink offering represented the shedding of blood and was also paired with the sacrifices. The fruit of the vine would have been a newly made beverage without time to ferment but was used by Christ to represent his blood.

We can add another note to the use of the fruit of the vine by Jesus and the strong wine of the Mosaic period. The strong wine would have been aged or old. The fruit of the vine would be newly made without having time to be fermented. The strong wine was older, and was replaced by something newer just as the old law was fulfilled and replaced by a newer one. If we look at it like this we find that the communion represents a transition from the Law of Moses to the new law brought about by Christ. While the strong wine had an association with an animal which was

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dead and being destroyed on the altar, the fruit of the vine represents a death that brought new life through the reconciliation with God. As we look closer at the memorial it leads uanother figurative aspect involving a change in the priesthood.

6. Consecration of a new priest

The unleavened bread and fruit of the vine have another figurative element attached to them, Christ's consecration as a high priest. As I noted earlier the priests were consecrated by being washed in water, having new garments placed on them and their bodies anointed with blood. Unleavened bread was part of this and forms a direct link to Christ. On the eve of his arrest, trial and crucifixion, Christ was presenting himself before God as not only a sacrifice but the high priest of the new law. This deepens our awareness of the wholeness of the scriptures and God's plan to bring all things together in Christ. Let's take a look at how the priests were consecrated for their office and the way this connects to Christ.

God instructed Moses to consecrate Aaron and his sons to be ministers before him. Moses writes, "***Now this is what you shall do to them to consecrate them to minister as priests to me: take one young bull and two rams without blemish, and unleavened bread and unleavened cakes mixed with oil, and unleavened wafers spread with oil; you shall make them with fine wheat flour ... and you shall put them in one basket, and present them in the basket along with the bull and the two rams.***" (Exodus 29.2-3). These instructions can be found in other places in the Law as well such as **Leviticus 8.2-10**. Details of the priests's consecration and the specific uses of a bull, two rams and the unleavened bread are stated more clearly in **Leviticus 8.10-32**.

The significance of the bread is emphasized in later passages describing the duties of the priests and requirements they had to meet. Speaking of these, God stated, "***They shall be holy to their God and not profane the name of their God, for they present the offerings by fire to the Lord, the bread of their God; so they shall be holy.***" (Leviticus 21.6). A figure of Christ emerges more strongly along with the prophetic element of the unleavened bread when Moses writes, "***No man of your offspring throughout their generations who has a defect shall approach to offer the bread of his God.***" (Leviticus 21.17).

Christ, the sinless lamb of God, is without defect. The Levitical priests, foreshadowing the future priesthood of Christ, were therefore to be without defect as well. The unleavened bread in this sense creates a link with Christ and the change in law that would take place. Paired with the sacrifices and consecration of the priests, the unleavened bread not only served as a reminder of what had been but pointed to the future as well.

During the institution of the lord's supper, Christ is consecrated not only as a sacrifice, but also as the high priest of the new covenant. The writer of Hebrews discusses this in detail. "***But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is***

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able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.” (Heb 7.24-27).

We can see the power behind these figures if we list them and note the spiritual nature of what's happening at the last supper.

1. Christ was the sinless lamb of God
2. He prepared to offer himself as a sacrifice and did so with unleavened bread
3. The fruit of the vine, like the drink offerings, depicted the shedding of innocent blood
4. Christ instituted this memorial having authority to do so as God's son
5. The unleavened bread pointed to Christ as the high priest of the new law

Now that we've seen the spiritual significance of the institution of the Lord's Supper and the elements used we need to add another dimension - the timing of the last supper and communion with the Passover.

7. The connection and timing with the Passover

The Passover, instituted during the Hebrews' bondage in Egypt, represented life to the people of God and death to those outside of His favor. The Passover put an end to a way of life for the Hebrews ushering in a new era. In a similar fashion, Christ's death signaled the end of a way of life, not only for the Jews under the Law, but for the entire world through the establishment of a new covenant or Testament. The price for the Hebrews freedom was the death of the firstborn of Egypt. The price for the freedom of the world from sin was the death of Christ, God's firstborn. The Passover utilized physical elements representing God's power over life, death, captivity and freedom. Christ embodied and represents spiritual freedom from sin and ties these elements together in one solemn memorial. The sacrifice of Christ is referred to by Paul in the New Testament. Speaking of an action to be taken against one of the Corinthians who had sinned Paul writes, ***“Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us...”*** (1 Cor 5.7).

Note that Paul refers to the sin in the congregation as ***“leaven”*** and to the Corinthians as ***“unleavened”***. Then he refers to Christ as ***“our passover”***. The figures of leaven, unleavened bread and the Passover remind us of the freedom that was brought about by the sacrifice of Christ. The timing of the sacrifice of Christ was in line with the freedom that had been provided to the Hebrews by God from Egyptian bondage. This was a carefully calculated and executed plan that had been in the making since sin entered the world and severed the relationship with the Lord. We'll talk in more detail about these events in another lesson but for now we can note

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the precision and depth of the figurative links at work throughout the event.

8. Observance of the Lord's Supper

Paul states that the purpose of the Communion is to “*proclaim the Lord's death till he comes*” (1 Corinthians 11.26 NKJV). While simple on the surface, the act of keeping this memorial contains a number of representative elements that link the scriptures together focusing our attention on Christ as the summation of God's eternal plan. These representations have to do with God's blessings through the remembrance of the sacrifice of Christ, the sanctification of Jesus as the lamb offered by God for the sins of the world, Christ's consecration as a high priest of the new covenant and the implications of Christ's sacrifice as a spiritual Passover. The Lord's supper is therefore a critical reminder of the price that was paid for freedom from sin. While some question when this should be done we see that an example has been provided in the New Testament.

As Paul is on his way back to Jerusalem on his third preaching trip, Luke records a meeting that he has in the city of Troas with the Ephesian elders. “*And there accompanied him into Asia Sopater of Berea; and of the Thessalonians, Aristarchus and Secundus; and Gaius of Derbe, and Timotheus; and of Asia, Tychicus and Trophimus. These going before tarried for us at Troas. And we sailed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread, and came unto them to Troas in five days; where we abode seven days. 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 20.4-7).

When Paul came to Troas he waited a full seven days so that he could meet with the brethren to “*break bread*”. This is a reference to the Lord's Supper which was done on the first day of the week. Had Paul intended to simply eat with the brethren he could have done that at any time so there was something unique about what they did on the first day of the week. Other references for acts of worship found in 1 Corinthians specifically name the first day of the week as the day when these were conducted. Christ rose on the first day of the week as well which in itself sets a precedent for when he should be remembered. This is a subject of scrutiny and debate but the Bible provides this example that its to be done on the first day of the week, every week.

9. Misunderstandings and mysticism applied to these elements

There's a lot of misunderstanding and mysticism concerning the meaning of the Lord's Supper. From certain doctrines that propose that a tangible spiritual energy is present to horror films depicting vampires repulsed by unleavened bread, or the host, the meaning of the communion is confused and incorrectly interpreted. As I've noted several times in this series, my aim is to demystify the Bible. God has given us a practical book that will unite us with him, strengthen us and help us maintain our spiritual focus but we have to approach it in a reasonable

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and common sense manner.

I noted earlier that the institution of the Lord's supper represents a transitional element. The Law of Moses was being fulfilled and in a short time would no longer be valid. A new law was about to be introduced with a new high priest and a new kingdom. That transition saw the end of the sacrifices as they were replaced with the perfect sacrifice of Christ. Elements that had been part of the Law of Moses however were given new meaning and application as Christ offered himself. The communion was set in place for one reason - to remind Christ's follower's of the sacrifice that made reconciliation with God possible.

Communion is a simple, solemn part of worship that helps Christians remember the debt we owe to both God and Christ. Partaking of the lord's supper then is the creation of a state of mind. There's no power in the emblems and no spiritual energies are gained by participants. Lengthy explanations of the process of blessing the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine and the results can be found in biblical commentaries and encyclopedias but such writings are an intrusion into things that humans can't explain. Like the scriptures themselves the communion is a simple act, includes simple items and is performed with simple humility and reverence.

Misunderstandings and failures in following the scriptural pattern are common. The use of common sandwich bread, fermented wine, quarterly or annual observances rather than weekly all fall short of what is simply and clearly outlined in the scriptures. There wouldn't be enough time to deal with all of the variations of belief and practice that have been adopted by the Bible believing community but we'll touch on a couple of the most common.

Matthew's record of the institution of the Lord's supper includes two statements at the heart of the first misunderstanding. Regarding the unleavened bread Christ stated, "***Take, eat; this is my body.***" As he gave instructions for the fruit of the vine he stated, "***Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament.***" (Matt 26.26-28). Christ often spoke in figures which were misunderstood even by his own disciples.

When Christ drove the money changers out of the temple, the Jews confronted him demanding a sign. Jesus answered, "***Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.***" (John 2.19). In this instance we have a very good example of the concrete mentality of the people. They replied, "***Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?***" (John 2. 20). They failed to understand that Christ was speaking figuratively. John clues us in to the meaning of this stating, "***But he spake of the temple of his body.***" (John 2.21). John goes on to explain that the disciples didn't understand this either until after the resurrection (John 2.22). Later during Christ's trial this statement was used as an attack on him as recorded in **Mark 14.58** and **Matthew 26.61**.

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Another example involves the disciples themselves. After being challenged by the Pharisees and Sadducees to show them a sign Christ informed them that one was already available, but then made a note for the benefit of his followers. Christ stated, ***“Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.”*** (Matt 16.6). The disciples, who Matthew stated had forgotten to bring bread with them ***“reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.”*** (Matt 16.7). Christ of course knew what they were thinking and corrects them with an explanation. It’s a bit humorous however to see how the disciples mistook his spiritual warning about the Jewish religious leaders for a complaint about not picking up bread.

When Christ stated that the unleavened bread was his body we can understand that he intended this in a figurative way. How? Obviously, Christ was still alive and there’s no indication that anything miraculous took place when they ate the bread other than they were following Jesus instructions. We can readily see that this was meant to represent the body of Christ as a reminder. The same is true of the fruit of the vine. It represented the blood of Christ that was shed. The following chart compares the statements made by Christ in the Gospel accounts. If we take a look at each of these we can begin to determine the purpose of the emblems.

	Unleavened bread	Fruit of The Vine
Matthew 26.26-28	This is my body	My blood of the new testament
Mark 14.22-24	This is my body	My blood of the new testament
Luke 22.19-20	My body given for you	Cup is the new testament in my blood

Figure 3 Emblems in communion & representation

	Unleavened bread	Fruit of The Vine
Matt 26.28		Shed for many for remission of sins
Mark 14.22		Shed for many
Luke 22.19-20	My body which is given for you	My blood which is shed for you
1 Cor 11.24	This do in remembrance of me	This do in remembrance of me

Figure 4 Meaning of the communion & elements used

The first chart shows the emblems as they were introduced by Christ and his description of what they represented. The second chart shows the meaning given by Christ and Paul in his letter to the Corinthians. From the charts and other passages we’ve read we can summarize the meaning of the elements. Let’s start with what they represent.

The unleavened bread represented

1. The body of Christ
2. His body was created to be offered as a sacrifice

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3. His sacrifice was for everyone
4. The unleavened bread is eaten to remember the sacrifice

Now let's do the same for the fruit of the vine.

The fruit of the vine represented

1. The blood of the new testament
2. The blood shed for many, referring to all who will believe and obey
3. The shedding of Christ's blood for the remission of sins
4. The love of God that was willing to pay such a terrible price to redeem mankind

We can see that the elements Christ used as a memorial were put in place by God during the institution of the Passover. Christ then took these and created a way to remember his sacrifice that was made for all people. He gave a direct command to continue to do this to remember him and as this is taken we remember the Lord's death until he returns. These elements are simple but have profound spiritual meaning. The Passover brought life and freedom to the Hebrews but death and destruction to the Egyptians. It drew a line between life and death and demonstrated God's power to save. Today the communion stands as a reminder of the price that was paid for freedom from eternal destruction. It reminds us that there is a line between life and death and serves to warn us if we're outside the saving power of God through disobedience. The meaning is clear and simple.

The communion is to be observed with deep reverence and respect for God. It is in the believers mind that we honor the Lord by doing this. As was true of the sacrifices and other things under the Law of Moses, there's no mystical energy or other effect that results from this. Over the centuries however there are many who have attempted to ascribe meanings and effects to the emblems themselves although the scriptures don't do this. Part of this may be due to the influence of gnostic and mystic beliefs that were introduced into the church, or, it might simply be that humans lack the willingness to understand that the elements are just what they are and nothing else.

In an effort to explain these emblems and the statements of Christ, certain teachers in the church began to ascribe meaning to the bread and fruit of the vine that isn't supported by the scriptures. These teachings were an indication of doctrinal errors in other areas as well. The ideas that emerged are that the bread becomes the "essence" of the body of Christ and the fruit of the vine becomes the "essence" of the blood of Christ. The word essence here, to simplify it to some degree, is used to explain how the physical bread and usually wine, are not physically changed but are endowed with the spiritual quality and identity of the body and blood of the Lord. A very interesting exercise is to read articles in the Catholic Encyclopedia on the subjects of transubstantiation and consubstantiation. Reading the explanations attached to these terms is quite enough to create serious confusion about the communion and what it does for us. Those

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explanations are also attached to a plethora of doctrines that have no basis in the scriptures.

So, what's the real effect and meaning of the Lord's supper? I think Paul sums that up best in his letter to the Corinthians. The Christians at Corinth had turned the communion into a common meal and some were even drunk while observing it. Paul addressed these problems and spells out the meaning and attitude we should have regarding the communion. He writes, "***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.***" (1 Cor 11.23-25).

Before I go on to the next part of what Paul writes let's really focus on what's being stated here. The purpose of the memorial is to remember Christ. When we do that we honor the Lord and remember him. We become mindful of the debt we owe to Jesus for paying a price for us that we weren't able to do on our own. This is the love that God had for the world and the directive here is to do it in remembrance of him. Now let's take a look at the next statement where we'll see another function of the observance.

Paul writes, "***For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.***" (1 Cor 11.26). Paul's rebuke of the Corinthians shows they were failing to accomplish this. Paul points to the attitude of individual Christians while observing the Lord's Supper as being crucial. He states, "***But let a man examine himself and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup***" (1 Corinthians 11.28). The focus here isn't on any spiritual power or renewal to be gained from merely eating and drinking the bread and fruit of the vine. There are no implied mystical powers ascribed to these elements. The emphasis is on the heart of those partaking.

The act of remembrance, as I've noted, represents the mental and spiritual state of those observing the memorial. Nothing in the scriptures implies any spiritual cleansing or power to the elements themselves except that they are reserved for a specific usage, are to be of a specific type, and taken with the proper attitude. They're to be used when the saints gather themselves together, as Paul's indicates, and this was done on the first day of the week (**Acts 20.7**). Outside of this, no spiritual properties are inherent in the bread and fruit of the vine beyond the context of reverent worship to God through Christ and faithful observance of His command with the proper attitude.

The same can be said about the uses of these elements under the Law, which we'll discuss shortly. The items and their properties used in the various acts of worship in the Tabernacle possessed no power in themselves. The emphasis was on the manner in which they

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were offered by those directed to do so. If there had been any power in the things themselves then the nation would not have fallen away from God but would have been continually renewed. The writings of the prophets however speak of an attitude of negligence on the part of the people who no longer respected God and thus offered unacceptable sacrifices (**Mal 1.7-8, Zeph 3.1-2**). The defiling of the sacrifices, or the failure to offer them at all, represented the state of spirituality on the part of God's people.

The withholding of the type of sacrifices required by God and the eventual rejection of the Hebrews, with the exception of the remnant who remained faithful, was brought about by the hardness of the heart of the people. Joel told the nation of Judah ***“rend your heart, and not your garments ...”*** (**Joel 2.13**). The Psalmist wrote, ***“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, these O God you will not despise.”*** (**Psm 51.17 NKJV**). Hosea also states, ***“For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”*** (**Hos 6.6**).

The sacrifices were to call to mind the goodness of God toward a people who were established by God's direct intervention. God was interested in being remembered and treasured by His people as He had treasured them (**Ex 19.5**). The forgetfulness of the Hebrews, like all of mankind, resulted when the people no longer remembered God's blessings.

The same situation had occurred in Corinth. ***“Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.”*** (**1 Corinthians 11.20-21**). The spiritual purpose of the Communion had been forgotten. The manner in which this was being done, and the attitudes on the part of the Corinthians, were unacceptable to God. Paul continues, ***“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”*** (**1 Corinthians 11.27 NKJV**). The attitude that was unacceptable is further clarified as Paul states, ***“For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”*** (**1 Corinthians 11.29-30 NKJV**).

The idea of discerning the Lord's body implies the self examination Paul speaks of (**1 Cor. 11.28**) and understanding the reasons for observing the Communion. Paul emphasizes the realization of one's spiritual condition and the blessing of forgiveness found in Christ. Keeping these things in mind causes one to approach the Lord's Supper with an attitude of reverence and respect coupled with humility and the desire to be in God's favor by faithful obedience. Christ's instructions to His disciples at the time of the institution of the memorial bears this out as well.

10. Conclusion

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Like the Passover kept by the Hebrews, Christ embodies the power of God through His faithfulness and ability to perform the things that He's promised. Christ represented

1. The passing of the old covenant for a new and better law.
2. His death marked the end of the bondage of sin and eternal death in Hell.
3. Christ was separated from the beginning of the world and reserved as the sacrifice for sins just as the Passover lamb was killed.
4. Christ, on the eve of his death, instituted a memorial by which his followers would remember His offering on the cross.
5. The blood of the Passover lamb meant death for those outside the kingdom of God just as those who are outside God's spiritual kingdom, the church, who aren't cleansed by the blood of Christ, will be eternally lost.

The Lord's Supper is a remarkable yet simple means by which the body of Christ, the church, calls to mind the reason for their existence. The blessings of God and His goodness are brought to their fullest expression in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. The unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine therefore represent the totality of God's actions as they're brought together in the completion of His work. As Christians assemble themselves on the first day of the week to break bread, they're joined in common unity of purpose and spirit as God's holy people. Properly observed the Communion reinforces an attitude of reverence, respect and thankfulness to God and His son Jesus Christ.

11. Next

To think of symbols or representational forms in the scriptures usually leads us to objects or figures as types. When thinking about Christ we don't generally think of him as a symbol or figure but on closer examination Jesus, the Messiah, is a powerful figure and figurative element. In the next lesson I'll take a look at the question **Whose Sacrifice Is It** and provide an answer that deepens our appreciation for the link between the Father and Son.