



The New Life in Christ

Lesson 6

The Breaking of Bread Service

In Lesson 2 we saw that baptism marks the end of our old life and the beginning of a new life in Christ. We become members of God's family, His sons and daughters, and so become brothers and sisters together in Christ. We become the disciples (the word means a student or pupil) of Jesus and commit our lives to following his words and his example.

"Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends.
You are my friends if you do what I command you.

No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing;
but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known
to you."
John 15:13-15

This is very important; our relationship with Jesus depends on doing what he *commands* us to do. One of the most important things he has commanded us to do is to meet regularly with our brothers and sisters to share bread and wine together in remembrance of him.

"The Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,
and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant
in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

1Corinthians 11:24-26

The worship together of true Christians is very simple and, apart from baptism, this is the only ritual act the Lord Jesus Christ has asked us to do – we must take it very seriously indeed.

We know that, after the ascension of Jesus, the disciples met daily in the homes of disciples to share bread and wine in remembrance of him (Acts 2:46-47). Later the ecclesias met weekly, on Sunday, the first day of the week, to do this.

"On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul
talked with them."
Acts 20:7

Under the Law of Moses the Jews met together on Saturday, the last day of the week, for a day of rest – the Sabbath. The disciples of Jesus decided to meet on the first day of the week as this was the day on which Jesus rose from the dead. This decision to meet weekly in this way probably looked to the Scriptural example of the weekly meal of the Shewbread by the priests in Old Testament times (Leviticus 24:5-9). When Jesus said 'do this in *remembrance* of me', he used quite a rare word which is also used in the Greek version of the Old Testament in Leviticus 24:7 where it is translated '*memorial*' in our English version. Just as this meal was holy and precious to the priests in Old Testament times – only they were allowed to eat it, so the Breaking of Bread meal is holy and precious for the true disciples who share it together today. They do not share it with other 'Christians', only with those who truly are their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Throughout the whole world, Christadelphians meet every Sunday to share bread and wine together in this way. They usually do this in a hall or rented room but sometimes in the home of a believer. The place is not important. The service is always very simple and is very similar wherever in the world it is held. It is the most important part of our fellowship together and Christadelphians know that wherever they are, they can go to an ecclesia to share bread and wine with those who worship there.

Jesus gave us a number of instructions about this service and we shall consider them individually.

‘Do this in Remembrance of Me’ (Luke 22:19)

It is Jesus who must be at the centre of our thoughts when we meet to share bread and wine. If our thoughts are on disagreements with other brothers or sisters or on problems we have in our daily lives, then we are failing to follow this command. The word remembrance does not mean ‘to remember something we have forgotten’ but has the idea of ‘filling our minds’ with Jesus. We remember that he died at Passover time. This was the time of year when Israel remembered the way in which God had rescued His people from Egypt, the land of slavery. He chose Moses to lead them out on the morning after Passover night when they had sacrificed a lamb and shared a meal together to celebrate God’s deliverance.

The Bible teaches us that Christ is the true Passover lamb; he died as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Therefore we share the bread and wine each week to remember that through his death we are saved from slavery to sin and death.

“For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.
Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” 1Corinthians 5:7-8

When we drink the wine we remember that the sacrifice of Jesus brought a new covenant, a new relationship, between God and His people. This covenant is the fulfilment of all the promises God made to men in Old Testament times. Jesus is the mediator of this covenant and is there in heaven to take our prayers to God and to ask Him for forgiveness of our sins as we pray about them.

“Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises.” Hebrews 8:6

These are the things concerning the Lord Jesus with which we should fill our minds at the Breaking of Bread service.

But there is something more. The apostle Paul wrote these words:

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” 1Corinthians 11:27

To whom do we proclaim or show this, surely to the Lord God and to each other. As the bread and wine is passed from disciple to disciple each of us shows our need of the sacrifice of Jesus for our own sins. We each see that Jesus died for our brother or sister as well as for us. This helps to bind us together in fellowship and unity. We become one united body of believers living together and worshipping together as we await the return of Jesus.

“Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.” 1Corinthians 10:17

‘Let a Man Examine Himself’ (1Corinthians 11:28)

Jesus did not say that we should examine each other! We do not go to the Breaking of Bread service to look at the faults of other disciples! We should take a careful look at ourselves, at our own motives and thoughts to make sure that we are genuine in our worship. We remember Jesus and his perfect life of obedience and then compare ourselves with him, this should make us feel very humble before God. If we have any thoughts about being ‘better’ or ‘more worthy’ than our brethren and sisters we must get rid of them before we take the bread and wine (see Matthew 5:23-24).

Sometimes brothers and sisters cannot do this. They bring quarrels to the Breaking of Bread or they stay away from it. They do this because they have a grievance against another brother or sister. The apostle Paul wrote very strong words against those who do this.

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.
Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.
Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.

That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died." 1Corinthians 11:27-30

He does not mean that they were physically ill but spiritually ill and dying. Just as we need physical food to keep our bodies alive, so we need spiritual food at the Breaking of Bread service to keep ourselves spiritually healthy.

It is always easier to see other people's failings rather than our own (Matthew 7:1-5) but when we come to take the bread and wine we must be totally honest about ourselves before God.

Jesus examined himself in this way just before he died upon the cross. In the Garden of Gethsemane, he was in an agony as he struggled with his own will. He prayed passionately for God to help him so that he could do God's will and purpose and not give in to his own will. This is the model for us to follow as we examine ourselves before we eat and drink in remembrance of Jesus.

The Bread and Wine

We now turn to the bread and wine. Luke records these words about the bread:

"And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Luke 22:19

When we take and eat the bread, it does not miraculously change and become part of the body of Jesus. There is no such thing as 'holy' bread which must be used. We use ordinary, everyday bread in our worship. The bread is a symbol of the body of Jesus. It represents to us his whole life, the way in which he shared our nature and was tempted to sin as we are tempted, yet he was sinless in everything he did. Jesus delighted to do the will of God (Psalm 40:8), even though this took him to the cross for our sins. These are the things we remember as we eat the bread.

"And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood."

Luke 22:20

The Bible makes it very clear that the shedding of blood is essential for the forgiveness of sins by God.

"Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."

Hebrews 9:22

Under the law there were sacrifices of animals, but they could not take away sins for ever. It was the death of Jesus and the pouring out of his blood which God accepted for the forgiveness of sins. Each time we drink the wine we remember this. It reminds us of the very high price paid for our sins. As we drink it, there is no room for pride in ourselves, no room for anything other than absolute humility that God loved us so much that He gave His Son to die that we might be forgiven.

"Knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot."

1Peter 1:18-19

Until He Come

"And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him.

And he said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.

For I tell you I will not eat it until it is **fulfilled in the kingdom of God.**"

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, "Take this, and divide it among yourselves.

For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine **until the kingdom of God comes.**"

And he took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood..."

"You are those who have stayed with me in my trials,
and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom,
that you may **eat and drink at my table in my kingdom** and sit on thrones judging the
twelve tribes of Israel."
Luke 22:14-30

So far we have seen how the Breaking of Bread service reminds us of the death of Jesus Christ. Those who regularly eat and drink in this way fill their minds with the memory of him and this helps them in their discipleship day by day. Worship in this way is essential to keep us spiritually strong. However, there is another part of the Last Supper which we often forget. Jesus looked forward to his return and the setting up of God's Kingdom on earth. When Jesus returns, he will sit down with his disciples and eat and drink with them in his Kingdom. So the Breaking of Bread service will be fulfilled in the Kingdom of God.

Every true disciple wants to be in the Kingdom in that day and so every true disciple should attend the Breaking of Bread service regularly in their lives now. It is this worship which strengthens us as we look forward to the return of the Lord.

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,
by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,
and since we have a great priest over the house of God,
let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.
Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.
And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,
not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another,
and all the more as you see the Day drawing near."
Hebrews 10:19-25

Questions

1. Why is it important that baptized disciples of Jesus should take the bread and wine regularly?
2. Why should they 'examine' themselves before they do this?
3. What does the bread represent?
4. What does the wine represent?
5. How does the Breaking of Bread service look forward to the return of Jesus Christ to the earth?
6. What should disciples be thinking about when they take the bread and wine?
7. Explain what Hebrews 10:19-25 means.