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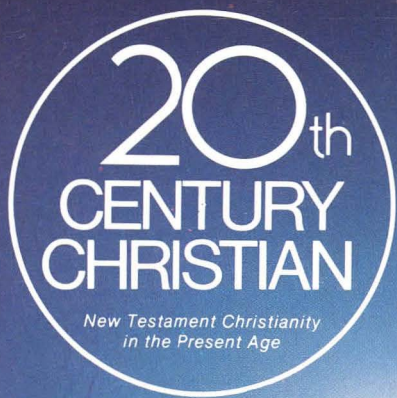
February, 1981

## 20th Century Christian February 1981

Jerry Rushford, *Pepperdine University*



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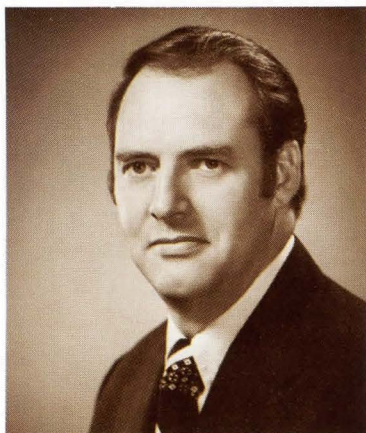


FEBRUARY / 1981

A large, dark silhouette of a cross is centered in the frame. The background is a clear blue sky with a bright sun or light source positioned directly behind the top of the cross, creating a strong lens flare and illuminating the scene. The silhouettes of trees are visible at the bottom and sides of the cross.

**MEDITATION ON THE LORD'S SUPPER**

# INTRODUCING



GEOFFREY ELLIS

A native of Ontario, Canada, Geoffrey Ellis ("The Calvary Context," p. 13) has served the past 20 years as president of Great Lakes Christian College in Beamsville. Under his leadership, Great Lakes has grown from a small Christian high school into a junior college and residential high school supporting the expanding church in Canada.

Ellis holds the B.A. and M.A. degrees from Abilene Christian University and the LLD from Harding.

A long-time preacher, he is associate editor of *Gospel Herald* and co-author of *Centennial Yearbook: Churches of Christ in Canada*.

Ellis is active in camp work and is an elder of the Beamsville church.

He and his wife Doreen have three children and four grandchildren.

COVER PHOTO: RANDY STINCHFIELD

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### 20th CENTURY CHRISTIAN

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# Comment



**M**ANY YEARS AGO General John B. Gordon campaigned for a seat in the United States Senate. A former army comrade was a part of the voting body which was to decide if his name would be placed in nomination. The two men had been fellow officers, and through the years terrible resentment had developed between them. Everyone knew this man would fight Gordon's bid to become a senator.

As the balloting began, General Gordon felt the intense gaze of his enemy. He was staring at the ugly scars which gashed the general's face—marks of his willingness to suffer and bleed for a cause he believed in.

Now it was time for his vote! All eyes were upon the face of the general. The old soldier was stricken with remorse. He said with great emotion, "I cannot be against him; I had forgotten the scars—I had forgotten the scars!"

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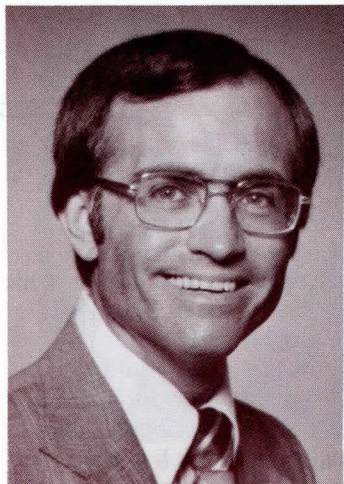
Dear reader, look at Jesus on that cross. It's not just a picture on an old Sunday school card. It really happened. Look at the scars.

- there they are on his head, where the thorns punctured his scalp!
- there, see those in his hands, where the nails gored him?
- there, see the big one in his side where they savagely speared him?
- there, look where the nails were rammed through his feet!
- there, look at that one—you'll have to look closely—the one in his heart where our sins gouged and tore him!

This special issue of *Meditations On the Lord's Supper* comes to you with the fervent prayer that you will not forget the scars. Hear him as he says, "... this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me."

*Joe P. Banner*  
Editor





## **RUSHFORD APPOINTED TO EDITORIAL BOARD**

**Jerry Rushford**

*20th Century Christian* is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr. Jerry Rushford to the magazine's Editorial Board.

4 Rushford has served as guest editor of this particular issue, and earlier edited the special issue on "Great Authors Who Charted A Movement."

Dr. Rushford preaches for the University church in Malibu, California, and is associate professor of religion at Pepperdine University.

He did graduate work at Abilene Christian University and studied under Elton Trueblood at Earlham School of Religion. He earned his Ph.D. in American Church History at the Santa Barbara campus of the University of California.

Rushford is writing a history of the church in California, and writes for several journals in the area of restoration history.

As a young man, Rushford was strongly influenced by *20th Century Christian*. He is now deeply involved with the magazine and we're happy he is joining the Editorial Board.

Other members of the Editorial Board are:

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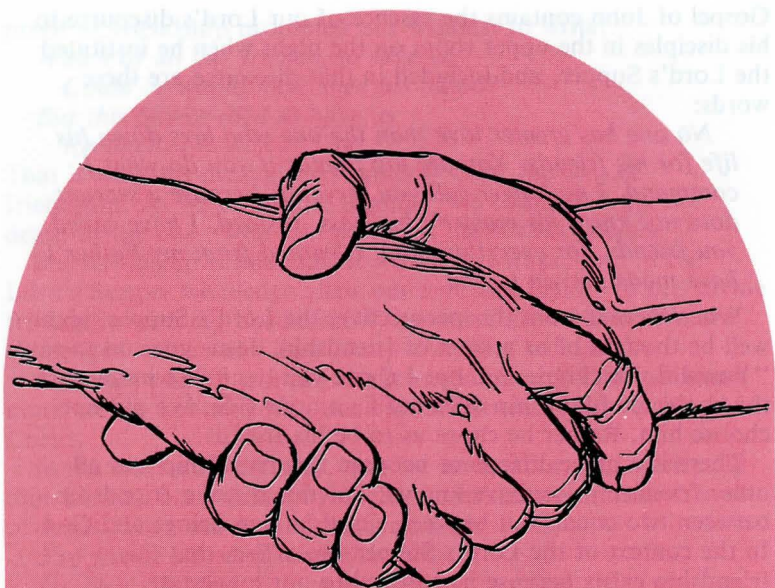
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# THE FEAST OF FRIENDSHIP

By JERRY RUSHFORD

**T**HERE IS SOMETHING beautiful about the word “friend” or “friendship.” We value our friends and know we would be much impoverished without them. When we survey our past, we can almost mark the major periods of our lives by the friends we have had.

On the night before he died, Jesus conferred upon the disciples and upon all who would believe in him through their witness the highest honor ever conferred upon men. He welcomed them into the intimate circle of his friendship.

When we assemble around the sacred table, we are reminded of how greatly Christ has proved his friendship for us. The

Gospel of John contains the essence of our Lord's discourse to his disciples in the upper room on the night when he instituted the Lord's Supper, and included in that discourse are these words:

*No one has greater love than the one who lays down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.*

When viewed from this perspective, the Lord's Supper might well be thought of as a feast of friendship. Jesus goes on to say: "You did not choose me, but I chose you . . ." We know that the choice of friendship does not lie on our side. We did not choose him. Rather he chose us to be his friends.

There is a great difference between this friendship and all other friendships we have known. For this is not a friendship between two equals but between sinful human beings and God. In the context of the Lord's Supper, we affirm that this friendship exists because he stooped to our low estate.

6 As we gather around the Lord's table from week to week there are various impressions that come flooding into our minds and hearts. We know we are sinners in need of forgiveness, but we also know Christ died to make forgiveness possible. He went the way of the cross for our redemption. With gratitude we sing:

*What language shall I borrow  
To thank Thee, dearest Friend,  
For this Thy dying sorrow,  
Thy pity without end?*

Perhaps the best analysis of our friendship for Christ is found in the words of John: "We love him because he first loved us." We are the friends of Christ—by the grace of God. As the apostle Paul affirms:

*You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

In the Lord's Supper we celebrate this great truth. The depth of Christ's friendship is anchored in the cross, and that ultimate



proof of friendship prompted one hymnist to write:

*Which of all our friends, to save us,  
Could or would have shed his blood?  
But this Savior died to have us  
Reconciled in him to God.*

That is why this meal always reminds us of the cost of friendship. As we commune together, we commemorate the death of the one “who laid down his life for his friends.”

But friendship is bilateral. It works two ways. And in the Lord’s Supper we pledge anew our love and loyalty to this divine friendship with the obedience of our surrendered lives. We are challenged to “go and bear fruit—fruit that will last.”

Abraham was known as “the friend of God,” but how much more are we honored with the eternal friendship that is found in Christ.

In the feast of friendship, may we be so nourished spiritually that we may bear testimony to the world that we are the friends of Jesus. Then our hearts truly can sing:

*I’ve found a Friend, O such a Friend!  
He bled, He died to save me;  
And not alone the gift of life,  
But His own self He gave me.  
Naught that I have my own I call:  
I hold it for the Giver;  
For I am His, and He is mine;  
For ever and for ever.*

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7

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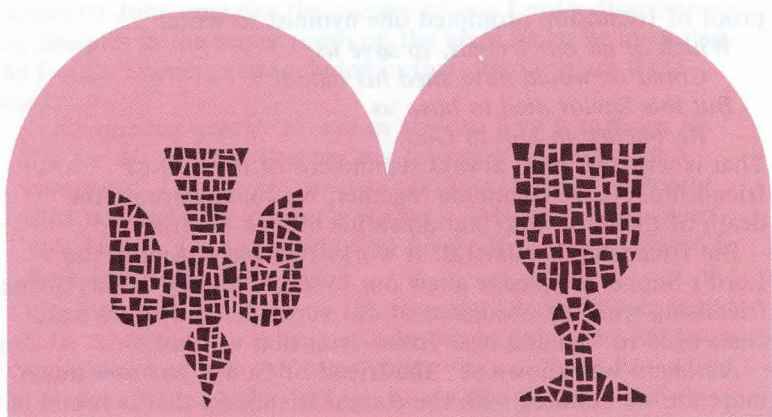
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# ANCIENT WORSHIP: THE LORD'S SUPPER

8

By WILLIAM M. GREEN

**I**N THE CHRISTIAN worship of all the ages, the Lord's Supper has held a central place. Its institution is given prominent mention in the records of Christ's life, it was observed by the earliest disciples in Jerusalem, it was the occasion of the Sunday meeting of the disciples at Troas, and it is an important subject of Paul's instructions to the Corinthian church. The history of Christian worship in the post-apostolic age centers about this institution, and the elaboration of beliefs and practices connected with it.

The words of Jesus, "This is my body, this is my blood," were taken simply and literally, and in the earliest times, little effort was made to explain how the Saviour's body and blood could be present.

Justin Martyr (150 A.D.) says that as Jesus was made incarnate through the Word of God, "so we have been taught that the food for which thanks is given through the word of prayer is the body and blood of Jesus" (Apology, 1, 66).

Irenaeus understood that the consecration of the bread infused it with a heavenly power, so that it then contained two elements,

the earthly or material, and the heavenly or spiritual. But it remained for Greek speculations of the fourth century to explain the consecration as a miracle, in which the substance of the bread and wine was changed.

Cyril of Jerusalem compares the miracle to that of Cana, when the Lord changed water to wine; Gregory of Nyssa compares the change to that by which bread and wine taken by Jesus were changed by digestion into his body and blood. This notion of a change in the elements was taught in the West by Ambrose, and developed into the modern Roman doctrine of "transubstantiation."

Along with this grew the idea of the communion as a sacrifice. The New Testament describes the death of Christ as a sacrifice, in which he offers his own blood to God (1 Corinthians 5:7, Hebrews 9:11-14). The Christian is to present his body as a living sacrifice, and in particular to offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually (Romans 12:1, Hebrews 13:15).

The spiritual nature of this sacrifice stands in contrast with the material sacrifices of Jews and heathen, and the semimagical ideas associated therewith. But the thanksgiving uttered in the communion service might be regarded as a sacrifice, and was early taken to be the "pure offering" which Malachi declares will be offered to God from among the Gentiles (1:11).

The whole institution came to be called the "eucharist," from the Greek word for thanksgiving (eucharistia), and was described as the new sacrifice which the church offered to God. That sacrifice was regularly offered by the bishops or presbyters on behalf of the congregation, a practice which enabled these officers to grow into the position of priests. By the time of Cyprian (250 A.D.), the priest alone is regarded as able to consecrate the elements and offer them as a sacrifice on behalf of the people.

This development of the doctrine of the "eucharist" was accompanied by a corresponding development of ritual, or form in which the celebration must take place. In Justin the Sunday service consists of readings from the Scripture, a sermon, prayer by the standing congregation, the eucharist, and the collection. When the bread and wine and water (commonly mixed with the wine in the Passover and elsewhere) were brought, "the president offers prayer and thanksgiving to the best of his ability, and the people assent by saying Amen: and the distribution is made to each one of his share of the elements which have been blessed,



and to those who are not present it is sent by the ministry of the deacons.”

But we soon find a tendency to replace the extemporaneous thanksgiving with one which was fixed and uniform. The resulting order of worship with its prescribed prayers and chants is known as a liturgy. Various liturgies arose in different regions, but it was finally that of Constantinople which was generally adopted in the Greek-speaking East, and that of Rome in the Latin West.

The Lord's Supper thus passes from a simple memorial of the death of Jesus, with which the disciples enter into communion, or fellowship, and becomes a miraculous sacrifice with elaborate ritual, offered by the priest for his congregation. This change, like many others, was an adaptation of Christian worship made to bring it into accord with the common ideas and practices of paganism.

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## COMMUNION

10

With awkward hand we break the bread.  
Bound by faith our souls are led  
To that dark hill.

We can but wonder at the grace  
Of one who chose to take our place,  
And time stands still.

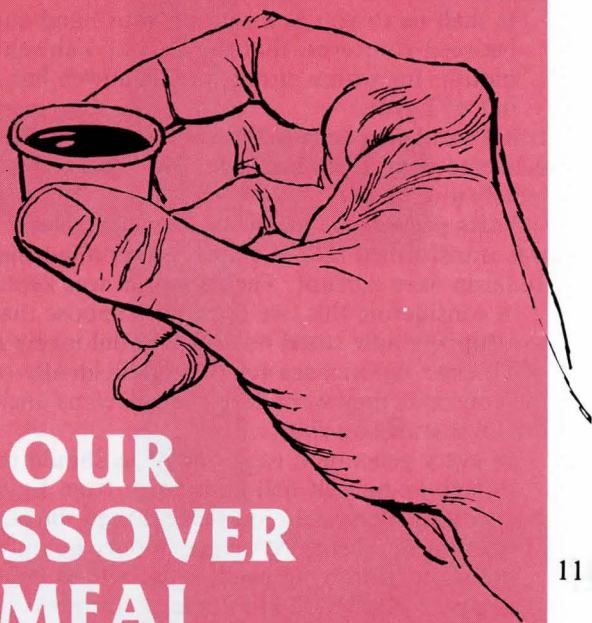
Beaten, weak, a crown of thorns,  
The precious Son of God adorns.  
He bore our shame.

The soldiers drop the cross in place.  
Such pain etched on his gentle face,  
For this he came.

We see his mother watching there.  
We think back to his earnest prayer.  
That we be one.

With thankful hearts we take the cup.  
Hope sings her sweetest as we sup,  
“Thy will be done.”

—Shirley Harvey



# OUR PASSOVER MEAL

11

By GARY D. COLLIER

**T**HERE IS NOTHING SPECIAL about the Lord's Supper. At least to an outsider this might seem to be the case. It is a simple meal. It does not set one in awe by elaborate rituals. It contains no magical solutions to life's problems, no mystical means to riches.

But a closer look reveals its depths and its tremendous importance both as a memorial of our suffering Lord on the cross, and as relating directly to the deepest questions of our existence. In reality it is very special.

In the Lord's Supper we look to the past, the present, and the future.

In looking back we go beyond the cross, back to the mind of God. The loving plan of God overflowed in the Passover meal in Exodus 13. Here the worshipper proclaimed that the meal was



given “because of what Yahweh did for me when I came out of Egypt.” But Yahweh continued:

It shall be to you as a sign on your hand and as a memorial between your eyes, that the Law of Yahweh may be in your mouth; for with a strong hand Yahweh has brought you out of Egypt. (Exodus 13:8-9)

Israel was Israel because Yahweh was their God and had delivered them from bondage. The meal was a *memorial*, not merely a reminder.

Years passed, the memorial was kept. Never mind that Israel was transformed into Judaism. Never mind that parts of Judaism were corrupt. The memorial was kept.

In considering this, we must not suppose that somehow worshippers now stood as detached onlookers of an ancient rite of no clear significance for them individually or corporately. To the contrary, they were deeply involved as ancient Jewish Passover tradition shows:

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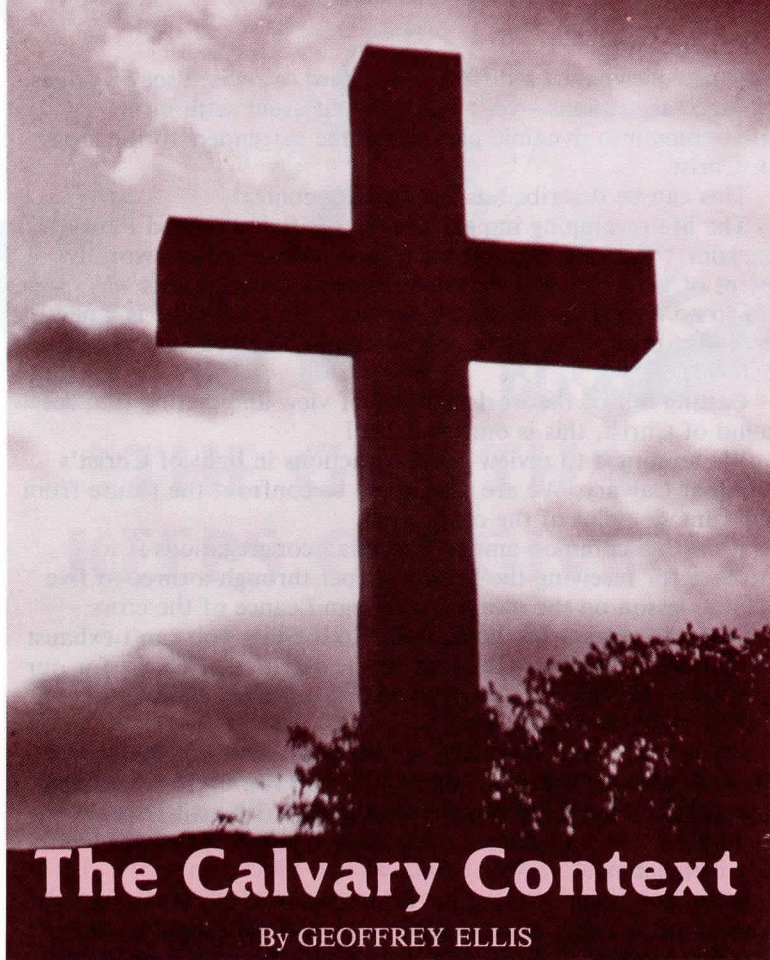
In every generation each one of us should regard himself as though he himself had gone forth from Egypt. Not our ancestors alone did God redeem then, but he did us redeem with them. Therefore we are in duty bound to thank, to praise, to glorify, to exalt, to honor, to bless, to extol, and to give reverence to Him who performed for us, as well as for our forefathers, all these wonders.

Worshippers of every generation saw themselves as personally escorted from Egypt by the hand of God. But it was not merely an individual matter. It was a matter of inseparable relation to the whole nation of Israel. God did not save only me, he saved *us!*

The Lord's Supper is our passover meal. It is our celebration for being personally delivered from bondage by the death of Christ, for “Christ our paschal lamb has been sacrificed” (1 Corinthians 5:7)—*our past*. It is the point at which we see ourselves as part of a community, not as isolated individuals, for “Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread” (1 Corinthians 10:17)—*our present*. It is a *memorial* which proclaims “the death of Christ *until he comes*” (1 Corinthians 11:26)—*our future*.

How profound that one simple meal could so well capture the essence of life—our past, our present, and our future. And it focuses upon Christ and his Body, the Church (1 Corinthians 11:26, 29; cf. 10:17). Praise the Lord!





# The Calvary Context

By GEOFFREY ELLIS

**M**AY I NEVER boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world (Galatians 6:14). The Christian must be able to echo these words expressed by Paul.

He goes on, after asserting that the only thing that matters is “a new creation,” to extend “grace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:15).

In direct language, the death of Christ, followed by the triumphs of his resurrection, his ascension, and his coronation, totally alters the circumstances of the lives of those who are drawn to him in belief and submission.

A new viewpoint, a different standard, a revised set of values, changed aspirations—yes an entirely different setting for life—come into dynamic play when one surrenders to the cross of Christ.

This can be described as the Calvary context.

The life-revamping impact of the crucifixion moved Paul to exclaim, “So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come” (2 Corinthians 5:16-17).

Getting out of the worldly point of view and getting into the mind of Christ, this is our challenge!

We are urged to review our past actions in light of Christ’s death at Calvary. We are also urged to confront the future from the vantage point of the crucifixion.

A custom common among Canadian congregations is to prepare for receiving the Lord’s supper through a three to five minute lesson on the meaning and significance of the cross.

14 Over the years it has come home to me that you can’t exhaust the thoughts which are relevant to the sacrifice of Christ for our sins. The cross touches every aspect of our lives. This is the Calvary context of life.

Jesus said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself” (John 12:32). Drawn up to Christ, our crucified Lord, we gain an elevated perspective as it were, a panoramic view, a changed awareness of the shape of the world and its meaning.

When Jesus said, “Take up your cross” (Mark 8:34), he wasn’t encouraging us to stoically and patiently shoulder those burdens peculiar to our individual lives. Rather, he was saying, “Live your lives differently now, in keeping with the implications of my death freely given. As I was sent into the world to accomplish God’s will, even so I send you into the world. You have been given a cross also.”

The Calvary context is the altered way of looking through the cross at our work, our success, our failure, our prosperity, our countries, our families, our priorities, our time, our neighbors, our enemies. With a renewed mind, and by a disciplined life, and through an elated spirit, let each of us confess with Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20).





# THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

By RANDY MAYEUX

**T**HE SCENE IS FAMILIAR. A little boy prepares to open the 15 gifts at his birthday party. The packages are there for him to open and enjoy. Since he is still a little boy, he is not thinking, "I don't deserve such nice gifts," or, "I deserve at least this much from these people." No, this little boy just prepares to open his gifts, and enjoys all that he is given.

It is a trait of a child that he knows how to receive a gift. An adult tends to get hung up on "I don't deserve it," or, "you shouldn't have," or, "I was hoping for a Longine." A child simply says "thanks for the gift. Bye now. I'm going out to play with it."

Jesus said, "Unless you become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom" (Matthew 18:3). We have made many explanations in an attempt to understand this verse; children are trusting, optimistic, dependent. Perhaps one additional characteristic is the ability to receive a gift. The Kingdom itself is a gift. And only a child knows how to receive a gift.

God gave his only Son. God was the giver of life itself. Man decided to try life on his own, without God. But God pursued rebellious man. He called for his return, and ultimately gave up what was most precious—his only Son.



### **Will we gratefully accept his gift?**

Jesus *gave* us his very life. He came to give his followers abundant life, and then gave all he had, even to the point of death. At times he was tempted to bypass the cross—but he gave all that we might truly live.

### **Will we gratefully accept his gift?**

He *gave* us the bread. “Jesus took bread, and *gave* it to his disciples.” He described the bread as the gift of his body. His physical body was a gift that purchased our eternal life. His spiritual body, the church, is a gift that nurtures us in our journey to eternal life.

### **Will we gratefully accept his gift?**

He *gave* us the cup. “Jesus took the cup, and gave thanks, and *offered* it to his disciples.” He described the cup as the gift of his blood. The cup (his blood), reminds us that we are all equals—guilty of sin, deserving of punishment, but recipients of the *greatest gift*—FORGIVENESS. By his blood, our sins are all forgiven. What a gift! The cup grabs us by the collar and says, “You are forgiven.”

### **16 Will we gratefully accept his gift?**

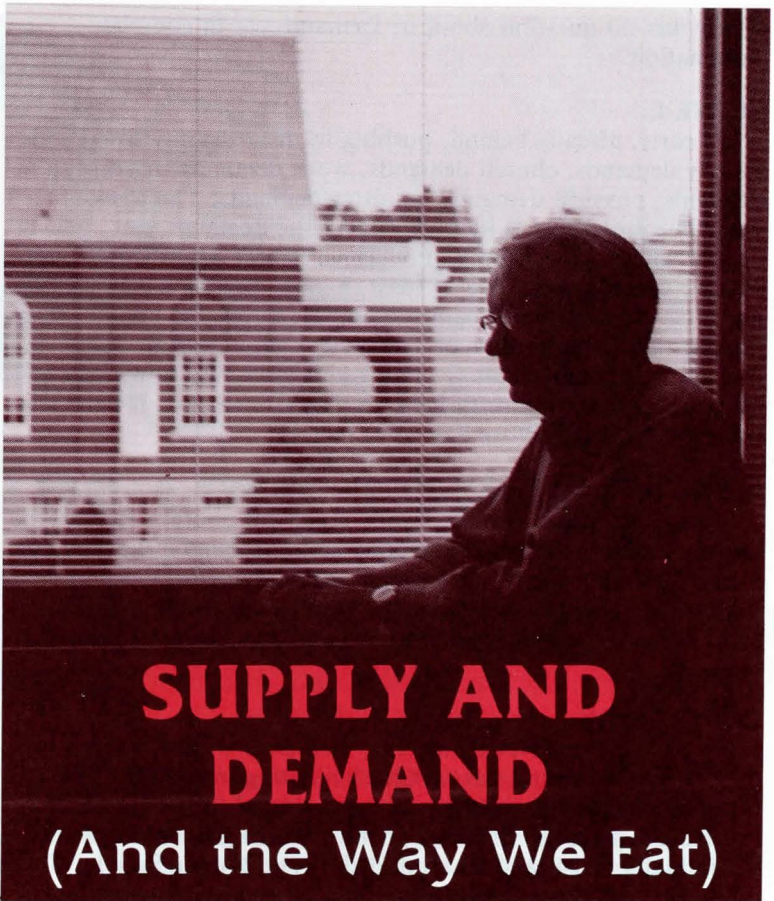
Jesus *gave* us the communion—“the Lord’s Supper.” It is the gift that keeps on giving. He gave us this weekly reminder of all his great gifts. We do not deserve his generosity. And we certainly do not deserve better. We simply approach this supper as a child approaches his birthday package—we open our gift, we gratefully accept it, and we enjoy it.

We have been *given* forgiveness. We have been *given* a loving church family—his body. We are *given* a weekly reminder of these gifts—the Lord’s Supper. It is the gift that keeps on giving.

### **Let us joyfully receive his gift.**

(A suggested prayer for the bread: O Father, you have given us so much. When you gave your Son, he then gave his body. And we, the body, gratefully thank you for his gift. As we eat the bread, we are reminded that he gave. We are grateful. In Jesus’ name, Amen.)

(A suggested prayer for the cup: Father, we who deserve nothing but punishment, thank you for the greatest gift—forgiveness. Thank you for his blood, which continually cleanses us from all guilt. And we thank you for this weekly reminder, this gift that keeps on giving. In his name, Amen.)



# SUPPLY AND DEMAND

## (And the Way We Eat)

By DAVID DAVENPORT

**S**ITTING AS JUDGE of my own case, I pronounced myself guilty, a lawbreaker. Actually I should have been brought to trial on this charge long ago, but I had not realized that this law even applied to me. To nations, to businesses, to economies, yes. But to me? Guilty of violating the Law of Supply and Demand?

I looked at the balance sheet of my life. On the one side was *Supply*, those resources that give me energy and life. On the other, in larger and bolder letters for me was *DEMAND*, those requirements in life that drain my energies and resources.



There was no question about it: Demand was in complete domination.

### SCENE I:

Up early, already behind, pushing to meet the day's demands. Family demands, church demands, work demands, friendship demands, physical demands, ministry demands. The week is over: but it can't be, I haven't met all the demands yet!

And what of the Supply? Perhaps it is best described by the way we eat: a quick piece of toast, a glass of juice in the morning, then off to demands. Time for Supply at noon? Barely: that exercise class or one o'clock appointment demands me. We're little different from our kids who gulp down dinner (Supply) so they can hurry back to play (Demands). It's the way we're raised, the way we live.

### SCENE II:

Sunday morning. Get the family ready for church. Review the lesson. Teach the class. Is someone going to handle the closing prayer? I'd better greet that visitor. And what of the Supply? Perhaps it is best described by the way we eat: there goes the Lord's Supper, a piece of bread, a glass of juice, then back to demands.

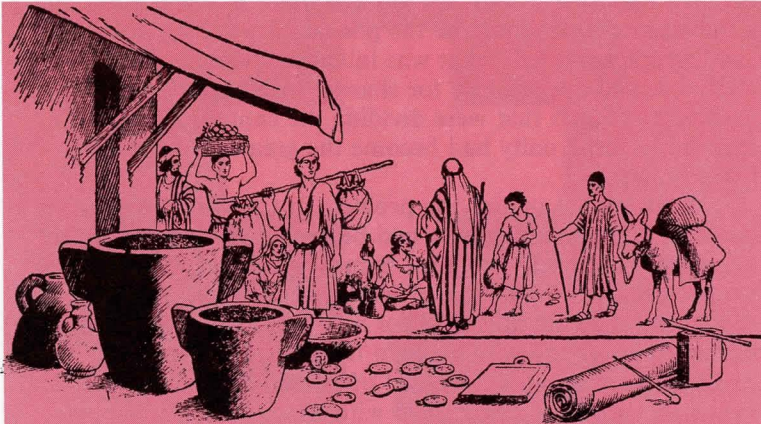
### CONCLUSION:

No business survives by meeting *Demands* without taking in *Supply*, by increasing sales while eliminating inventory. And those of us frenzied with the Demand side of life, God wisely calls together on the first day of the week to give thanks for (1 Corinthians 11:24) and be reminded of (11:24) our Supply. To be reminded of Christ's body, which led us and was broken for us (11:24). To be reminded of his blood, which was shed for us and cleansed us (11:25). To discern (11:29) God's abundant Supply for the most important needs of our lives.

Do you, too, need to spend more time on God's Supply? To spend more effort in receiving and taking inventory of Supply, and a little less worry about shipping and Demand?

This is not meant to suggest that the Lord's Supper is our only source of Supply as Christians. But when you assemble at the Lord's bountiful table each week, perhaps you, too, should look at your attitude toward the Supply side of life. Perhaps it is best described by the way you eat.





# The Lord's Supper— A Lesson From Corinth

By MILTON JONES

**I**T'S BEAUTIFUL to see how God causes all things to work together for good. It is because of the gross misbehavior of the Corinthian church that we now have the most comprehensive and glorious account of the Lord's Supper. First Corinthians 11:23-29 is probably more often read at the communion table than any other text in the Bible. Yet it was because of hypocrisy and lack of concern that Paul needed to express again that it was the suffering and death of Jesus which was at the foundation of the communion service.

The church of Corinth had ruined what was a lovely practice of the early church. Paul addresses the problem bluntly: "But in giving this instruction I do not praise you" (vs. 27). What was begun as a love feast had become the source of carnality, bitterness, hurt feelings, and drunkenness (vs. 21). Instead of thinking about the sacrifice of Christ, "everyone tries to grab his food before anyone else" (vs. 21, Phillips). The rich would be

there with gourmet foods and vintage wines in one corner, and in the other corner would be the poor with whatever food they could scrape together. What was intended to be a source of fellowship and opportunity for sharing with each other had turned into cliques that were dividing the church. What was intended to bring unity had become the greatest source of disharmony.

To focus on the underlying problem in Corinth, we must see that their communion service had become man-centered rather than Christ-centered. The most humbling part of their worship had been turned into a time of worldly exhibition. Instead of recognizing their sin and need for a Savior, they were exalting themselves by seeing who brought the best foods and who had the greatest social status. Instead of being filled with prayer and reverence, they were being filled with wine. To put it simply, many were coming to worship to get something out of it for themselves rather than to glorify Christ. In a time which should have been filled with love, the Corinthians had forgotten to love their neighbor. This is the teaching of this passage—that love should control our hearts at the time of the Lord's Supper.

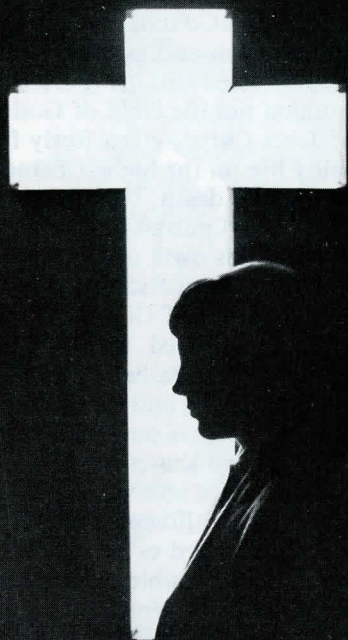
20 Paul's warning to the Corinthians is striking: "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord" (vs. 27). So who is it who kills Jesus Christ? It is us if we do not participate in this supper with true love in our hearts.

We take too lightly Paul's admonition concerning the Lord's Supper. It is tragic to see the results of the Corinthians' abuse of this sacred time. "For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you sleep" (vs. 30). Could it be possible that many of our spiritual ailments are caused by improper participation in the Lord's Supper? It happened in Corinth—it can happen today!

We should not come to worship or the Lord's Supper just to get something out of it. Too often we leave worship with statements like: "I didn't get much out of that today" or "The preacher didn't move me today." We are not assembling on the first day to be entertained, but to glorify Christ with our worship.

If we would meet at the Lord's Table with love for our neighbors and a desire to glorify Christ through this communion, our souls would be uplifted and the church would be healed of her sicknesses.





# **WE ARE TOGETHER ... WE ARE ONE**

By WALTER FENNEL

**T**HE LORD JESUS, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. . . . A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks



judgment on himself (1 Corinthians 11:23-29, NIV).

Participating in Christian Communion enables the child of God to receive inner strength and assurance of the lasting relationship to his resurrected and *living Lord*.

Christian Communion ties the child of God firmly into the body and blood of Jesus Christ, given freely for his sins, enabling him to enjoy life on the highest plane. This abundant life generates from the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It continues to pulsate in living faith that Jesus Christ is coming to claim his own; and one day all of God's family will be seated together at "supper time." By participating in the Lord's Supper the child of God is affirming his belief in the purpose for which Christ lived, taught, practiced and died—that of belonging to the Father.

22 Filled with the power of love and acceptance coming from the Father, the child of God reaches out to his brothers and sisters in Christian Communion and shares in their lives through this common bond. Their lives are interwoven. There is no room around the table for hostility, lukewarmness, selfishness, lovelessness, pride, vanity, greed or ill-will. We are family, we are one. This unity is made possible only by the body and blood of Jesus Christ. As Jesus has accepted and loved me, so I reach out to all my brothers and sisters in the family and accept and love them.

This weekly supper brings us together. Its purpose binds us together. Its love-in-action sustains us in our weakness. This Divine fellowship enables us to reach up to God and to reach out to one another in Christian love. This love compels me to correct any problem, any sin, with my God or with any member of the family. These precious moments of intimate fellowship with God and the Christian family must not be marred by the cares of this world. We are together—we are one!

I need the fellowship of God. I need the fellowship with all my Christian family. I am happy to come together each week with my brothers and sisters to share my life with them and their lives with me. Together we share life with our *living Lord*.

"Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are *one body*, for we all partake of the one loaf" (1 Corinthians 10:16,17, NIV).



## **“TAKE, EAT”**

By R. VERNON BOYD

**A** FRIEND told me about the closing days of his college work. He had established close friendships with several fellow students. Each was prepared to go his separate way in a matter of days. In the years of this acquaintance they had changed from young men to mature adults. Their shared experiences had molded them into a special unit of friendship. There were the struggles of exams, professors and bill-paying, as well as the joys of dating, bull sessions and ball games. Now it would all end. They might not see one another again, ever. He invited his friends to his room on their final evening on campus. “Everyone come! There will be pizza and cola!” They all came. The air was filled with excitement. There was a special spirit of friendship and warmth.



Since all of these young men were disciples of the Lord, they paused to reflect that the bond of love which they shared that evening must have been something like the Passover meal in the upper room when Jesus gave his disciples the special meal we call the Lord's Supper. During the meal Jesus stopped the group. Using the food and drink before him, he made some statements, and instituted one of the most profound and far-reaching connections to himself for them and future generations. These college boys gained an insight about something they had done often in church assemblies, but had more or less taken for granted. Often the deep meaning of the Lord's Supper becomes lost in mechanical and cold routine.

Hearing about that last meal those college boys had together gave me one of my deepest impressions of what the Lord wants from us in partaking of his fellowship meal. To be sure, we are not required to have a church banquet before we can have the Lord's meal. It was never intended to be a full-course dinner. The Lord's supper was given symbolically. Jesus took the items from the table in front of him; unleavened bread and wine, and gave new meaning to them.

24 When Jesus ate and drank with his disciples in that setting, it was a time filled with emotion. The disciples knew something was about to happen. They were sure their leader was God's special messenger. Some of them had expected that Jesus, like David, would establish a monarchy—and they would help him rule with power in Jerusalem. At this moment their anticipation was clouded because they knew Jesus had so disturbed the religious authorities that his life and theirs were threatened. The momentum of events was nearing a climax of some sort.

In this setting, these loyal friends ate the Passover with Jesus. It was good to be with one another and to share in the ancient feast which celebrated the mighty hand of God in freeing his people from slavery. With this flood of past memories, the uncertainty of the present crisis, yet in anticipation of a glorious future, the meal was eaten.

If we take the Supper lightly, perhaps it is because we are lightly attached to our Lord. Perhaps we are too loosely related with his disciples and the work they are doing in the Kingdom. The more deeply we are involved in the lives of fellow-believers and united in common Kingdom goals, the more meaningful will be our eating together at the Lord's table.



# The First Time Ever...

By KEN CHAFFIN

**P**ARENTHOOD! People had told me it would be different, but I didn't realize how different. I used to shrug off comments from those who said I didn't have any idea what it was all about. After all, I had been a child once. I knew what that was all about. But parenthood *is* a different story.

Seven years we had waited to be blessed by God with a child. We filed for adoption. Two more years we waited. Then, finally, we received a call. The social worker did not play games. Could she come over and talk with us? Was it about what we hoped it was about? Yes! We anxiously, nervously, fearfully, joyfully awaited her arrival. She came. "I have information for you about a little boy," she said. Jannie and I were holding hands. My heart jumped and her hand squeezed mine. A little boy—soon to be our little boy.

Two days later we met him. He grinned at his new mother. Our hearts were in our throats. All our dreams, hopes, and plans were fulfilled in that sweet boyish smile on that tiny face. During the trip home we sang, prayed and cried. We had a son and we loved him more than we ever imagined. Such love was impossible I thought. We loved him so much it hurt. For a week it was difficult to leave him. Even now, six months after his arrival, there is still pain in leaving him, even for an evening out. He captured our hearts and we are his prisoners. Our bias and prejudice allow us to see nothing but his beauty and grace. He is truly God's gift to us.

What does all this nostalgia and personal odyssey with parenthood have to do with the Lord's Supper? Well, this particular meditation on the Supper is not based on theology, historical perspective, or intellectual exercise. Such things are important and we need to be reminded of them when we come to the Table. But this meditation is personal. It emerges from the experience I have just shared. It reflects my "peak" moment at the Table.

Our son's arrival at our home came late on a Thursday night. For two days he was the center of our attention, and that of the

entire congregation. He shared the joy of his father's and mother's family, the local Body which is our ministry. So many people shared our joy. It was into this loving group that I stepped, on the following Sunday morning, to bring God's Word. But first came the Lord's Supper.

I had participated in this experience so many times before. Like many others, there were times when I had repeated the activity out of rote behavior. Many other times I had achieved a degree of union with the Father and Jesus in the Supper. But now, for the first time ever, as a dad deeply in love with his new boy, I began to recognize and experience a new meaning at the Lord's Table. For the Supper, above all else, is to remind us of an event . . . an event which every parent should relate to.

The Supper is remembering a time when a father offered his son so that others might live. In all my innocence as a new dad, I said, "My God, how could you?" He gave *his* son for me. If I had been asked at that minute to do the same, I would have shouted, "No!" At this moment I became aware, for the first time, of his agony as a parent in sacrificing his son for me. And for the first time I knew how much he *really* loved me. How could I keep from loving him back?

26

I knew intellectually that he loved me. But I had never fathomed the degree of that love. I had heard described the height, depth, length and breadth of his love for all mankind. I had read John 3:16 and inserted my name where the word "world" appears so as to make the passage specific rather than general. I had pictured myself on trial, being declared "not guilty" by God because Jesus had taken my place.

But that day, as I thought of having to give up my son, of allowing him to suffer and die so others might live, of never again in this life seeing his smile or watching him grow or seeing him laugh, I caught a glimpse of God's love for me. I haven't seen it all, just a glimpse. But frankly God, as one parent to another, let me say,

"I'm glad to be your child. When I partake now of the Body and Blood of Jesus, because I am a parent, I have looked a little deeper into the infinite caverns of your love for me and I know no one loves me like you do. Since that time the events surrounding your Table keep reminding me of the awful price you paid. What can I say but, thank you from a child who has begun to understand the joys and pains of parenting. Amen!"

20thCC

# INCREDIBLE FAITH

By CHARLES COULSTON

**T**HERE IS a TV show that shows us the “incredible.” The people appear to be ordinary, but they do incredible things. We probably could find something incredible in every person’s life if we looked closely enough.

There is something truly incredible which Christians do on a regular basis. Each Sunday, worshippers of the Creator eat a piece of cracker-like bread and drink a bit of grape juice. It is incredible that they do it with such regularity and that they attach such significance to it.

Even more incredible is the fact that this widespread practice is done in honor of Jesus of Nazareth, an executed carpenter-turned-teacher who was charged with stirring up unruly crowds and claiming to be God. Christians even claim that the ceremony is done in honor of his death. It is, in fact, their way of publicly proclaiming his death as the most significant moment in human history.

27

Still more incredible is their claim that this Jesus is Lord of all creation, all history, all development, all life. He is the Boss, willingly obeyed by those who eat the bread and drink the juice. And why is he the Master with the only and final word about God and humanity? Because, they claim with absolute confidence and calmness, he is alive! Jesus has been restored to life, having now received the power of an indestructible life.

More incredible yet is that the eating of bread and drinking of juice is for them not just a reliving of the past but also a hope for the future. He is coming back, they say, to be seen by people, to claim his own, to deliver all things into judgment, to close the doors of history, to finish his task of loving service and hand the product to the Father.

It is truly incredible—he died, he lives as Lord, he is coming again. These people know the scope of history in the breaking of the bread and the sipping of the juice.

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# THE LORD'S SUPPER

By DOWELL FLATT

**A** PROCLAMATION is a public announcement, publication, and demonstration. The supper of the Lord involves all of these.

(1) The Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. These are the basic facts of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). The Lord's Supper has been described as "the earliest Gospel." Before the writing of the Gospels or 1 Corinthians, early Christians were telling the Gospel story as they met around a common table.

The cup is symbolic of the "blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:28). As the children of Israel escaped the bondage of Egypt (Exodus 14:30), the New Israel is delivered from the shackles of sin (Matthew 26:28). The Passover celebrated the former deliverance; the Lord's supper proclaims the victory achieved through the blood of the Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7). The Christian joins in the victory cry of Thomas, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

(2) The Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the day of the Lord. Jesus was raised on the first day of the week (Matthew 28:1-6). His disciples met on that day "to break bread" (Acts 20:7).

Participation in the observance every Sunday continued to be the standard practice (Pliny, Letter to Trajan; Didache 14:1-2; Epistle of Barnabas 15:9; Justin, Apology I, 65-67). The Lord's Supper was surely on Sunday, and no Sunday was without the Lord's Supper.

# — A PROCLAMATION

(3) The Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the brethren of the Lord. By discerning the body of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:29), these comrades practice the words of their spiritual ancestor who proclaimed, "We be brethren" (Genesis 13:8). Jews-Gentiles, freemen-slaves, citizens-aliens, educated-illiterate, men-women meet as one around the table of the Lord (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

After partaking of this sacred institution, these brethren are ready to sing "Blest Be the Tie." They go forth to proclaim their mutual love, acceptance, and trust.

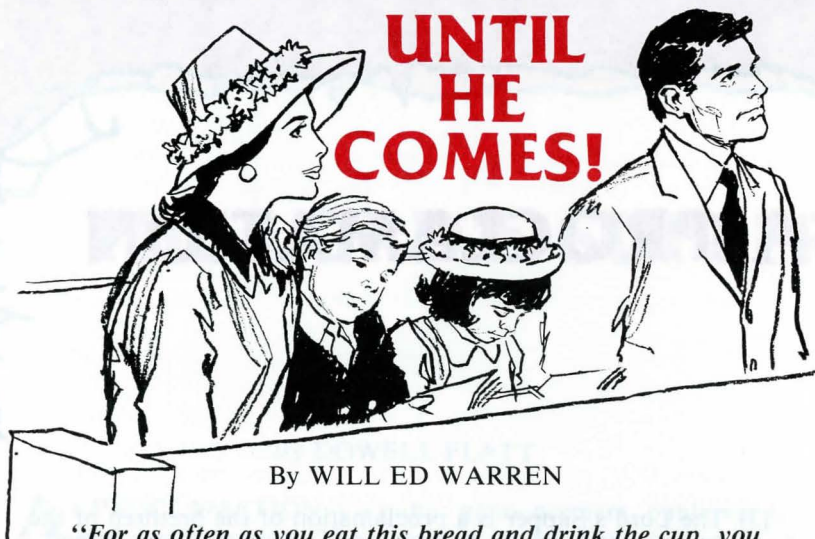
(4) The Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the second coming of the Lord. "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26). Because Jesus was raised from the grave, Christians can look forward to his return. As one participates in the Supper, he is expressing both a great memory and a great hope.

Rather than a cyclic, fatalistic, or evolutionary view of history, the follower of the lowly stranger from Galilee has an eschatological view. Instead of believing that one must go either in a circle or be governed by fate, the Christian knows that his life is moving toward a beautiful goal. The ending of this world will only be the beginning of that which is far better.

An invitation to dinner has come from the King of kings and Lord of lords. Those who obey his will are welcomed to eat at his table. This international state dinner is neither for the perfect nor the unrepentant; it is for every person who is striving to be a noble subject of the King.

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*"For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes" (1 Corinthians 11:16).*

30 *"When we remember Jesus we do not remember someone who is dead and gone, someone who lived and who died and left a memory. We are not remembering someone whose place was in the past and who lives only in the pages of a history book. We are remembering someone who is gloriously alive! The memory turns into an experience and an encounter" (William Barclay, The Lord's Supper, pp., 111-112).*

**T**HE LORD'S SUPPER is not a funeral dirge. Jesus should not be conceived as more dead than alive. Although there is a certain solemnity in observing the Lord's Supper, it is a solemnity that reflects joy. It is true that "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried," but it is also equally true that "he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

We must not expend all our mental and spiritual energies on a backward look, but should also recognize the present reality that "he has risen" (Matthew 28:6). The angel said to those at the tomb: "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, he is not here; see the place where they laid him" (Mark 16:6). The tomb was empty! He lives! Obviously, the early worship periods of the church were not periods of dull gloomy monotony, but rather were worshipful



occasions rich with fellowship and with the awareness, not only of his resurrection but also of the beauty of his presence in the assembly.

The proclamation of the second coming of Christ in the Lord's Supper is a proclamation of joy, hope and expectancy. The angel said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Christ "will appear a second time . . . to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Hebrews 9:28).

One of the most exciting expectations of the early Christians was that Jesus is coming again! An air of expectancy was reflected in their prayers: "Our Lord, come!" (1 Corinthians 16:22) and "Surely I am coming soon." John responded, "Amen. Come Lord Jesus!" (Revelation 22:20). To Christians in the first century Jesus could not come soon enough. This spirit of expectancy was without doubt a part of their worship together and especially when they observed the Lord's Supper.

The church in modern times needs desperately to regain this spirit of hope and expectancy, especially when we share the Lord's Supper. Therefore, scriptures read in conjunction with partaking of the Lord's Supper should be selected not only to tell of his death but also to reveal that he is alive and that he is coming again. Appropriate songs could be chosen that praise God for what he had done for us in his Son. Whatever comments are made should reflect hope and a genuine yearning for the Lord's return.

"Amen. Come Lord Jesus."

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31

## BACKWARD AND FORWARD

"And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat . . . this do in remembrance of me" (1 Cor. 11:24) The Feast is a memorial. Similarly, it is also a looking ahead. It allows us to look to the future with greater hope. "For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord's death till he come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

—Steven Clark Goad

# As I See It

## A MESSAGE FROM THE PUBLISHER

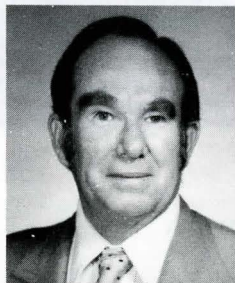
**T**HE LORD'S SUPPER offers one truly magnificent moment of honesty. Without any interruption, the child of God has the sweet period of silent meditation. No one speaks to him. Whispering by others would be rude and boorish. Reverently, he pauses to ponder. He remembers. "Me"—that "me" is Jesus! It is exhilarating! The mind and memory is flooded with grateful thoughts and prayers. Overtly and lovingly, he is participating in the obedience to a positive command of Christ—"do this—in memory of me."

32 But, there is another facet—just as in the bread, Jesus says "I am here" and with the cup, the Christian answers "I will faithfully continue." That Christian also has time for self-examination. The Christ and the Christian—together in blessed communion. The disciple looks inwardly. He asks himself some questions—there is no facade—no veneer—no show for the other fellow; it is pure openness; meeting self face to face. "Am I growing? Am I pleasing you, Lord? Am I guilty of the same sin week after week? Am I what I say I am? Am I fair? Am I genuine in my confession? Am I truly worshipping in spirit and truth?" No need to hide, compare self with others, dodge the question or put on a hypocritical show. Just Jesus and me! All the brothers and sisters of the family are around me, but they are not examining me; nor am I them—I am "coming clean" with the Lord and with myself. No excuses, no see-you-later, no I'm-as-good-as-he-is, but rather honestly before God in the spotlight of self-examination before Heaven's throne," what kind of citizen of the Kingdom am I?

As I see it, the Christian should not miss willfully the Lord's Supper on any Lord's day. It is too meaningful, powerful, and beneficial to neglect. Absence from the table so emaciates, it makes the saint "weak and sickly." Meet with the brethren, you have a weekly appointment, Jesus will see you there. Thank you Lord for loving me.

*Jim Bice McInteer*

*President and Publisher*





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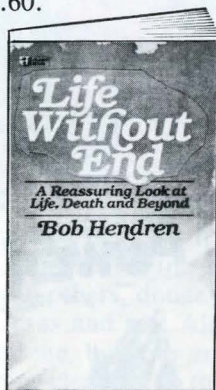
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