

The Lord's Supper

Its Character and the Worship connected with it.

James McBroom.

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The Lord's Supper and holy worship to the Father and Son by the Holy Ghost.

"Had you a happy time in the meeting this morning?" is a question often asked among those who seek to answer to the desire of our Lord in these last days, in the breaking of bread. While the answers are varied, we often hear such as this: — "Yes, very happy: a sweet sense of the Lord's presence and the love that gave Himself for us. We did not, however, get far beyond thanksgiving, and one could have wished that there might have been a little more entrance into the new order of things opened up for us beyond death, and a little more energy in leading up to the worship of the Father in the power of the Holy Spirit" (see John 4).

The central feast in God's House.

The will of the Lord supreme.

Taking the above as a sample of the feelings common to the partakers, may we say a few words on that holy feast which He has called us to and which is the greatest of all favours which He has made the common portion of His own while on the way home to be with Himself for ever. As it is pre-eminently the Lord's own domain, it is necessary to approach the theme with reverence and holy submission to His word, that we may be preserved from laying down rules, or in any way obtruding ourselves, but finding to our souls deep delight that He who lays claim to our hearts deep fidelity has given in His Word full instruction about it.

Questions which bring disagreement and strife will in this way be excluded — indeed, all would admit that in no circumstances of the Christian life are disputes and striving more felt to be out of place.

The normal gathering together of the Assembly.

The Scriptures which speak of the supper, make it abundantly clear that it is simply to remember the Lord in His death that saints come together. It is thus the normal coming together of the assembly — the rallying point — and is such, on account of the claim of His love. "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" (1 Cor. 11: 23, 24). If this were simply attended to, much that is trying to the saints and grieving to the Lord, would not take place. The supper celebrated in simple response to the Lord, puts the saints in touch with the sanctuary where in spiritual function, and as a holy priesthood, they are led out in worship and adoration to the Lord Himself, and to His God and Father.

It is most happy when saints are led out in true ministering to the Lord.

In such cases, ministry to the saints is often excluded as being outside of the current of the Lord's leading for the moment. Happy it is for all when this is the case. We have no thought of condemning ministry to the saints, however, for there are, undoubtedly, times when the condition is quite in keeping with it and when the Head gives the impulse, when a distinct word from Himself is felt by all. Such a

word would come from "a priest among priests ministering according to the grace of the Head," and would carry conviction with it, but however precious this may be, it is still better when the hearts of the saints are so full, that in company with the Son, they rise in spirit to bless the Father. There, the Father's counsels of love so engage their hearts that they worship Him in spirit and in truth.

Divine festivity in God's House.

It is then that the saints hold festival, when all the instincts of the divine nature are in movement in their souls Godward, and the Holy Spirit leads their hearts in touch with the Head in His own domain in richest praise to God.

Surely, beloved, whatever helps in this, must be acceptable to us and well-pleasing to Him whose love is our eternal portion. But we turn to that scene which surpasses all others, and with adoring hearts let us dwell thereon.

The claim of Christ on the affections of His own.

It is well said that nothing can set the affections of the followers of Christ in movement towards Himself like His sufferings. In coming together to partake of the Lord's Supper, the emblems of His precious body and blood on the table speak to them of His suffering and death. Recalling, too, the whole circumstances of that night in which He was betrayed, chiefly from the time He sat down with them, saying, "With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer," we hear the invitation in the fullest sense, "Come ye yourselves apart." It is here we recall Him when He sought for compassion, and where He had to say to His enemies "This is your hour and the power of darkness," when all broke down; one denied, another betrayed, and all forsook Him and fled.

Suffering of our Lord at the hands of the forces of evil.

He is brought before Caiaphas, the high priest, condemned by false witnesses in a mock trial, buffeted, struck with the palm of the hand, and spat upon, and, when later put into the hands of Gentiles, made the sport of the coarse and brutal soldiers. Here the charge was, that He made Himself a king. The scarlet cloak, the crown of woven thorns and the reed in His blessed hand, bespeak the awful length to which their mockery could go, as they bow the knee and mocked Him, saying, "Hail, King of the Jews!" It was here that Roman justice would wash its hand in condemning the innocent, and when priests, judges, people, and soldiers all combine against Him.

He is abandoned of God in His hour of need, His enemies taunting Him with this.

But there is more, infinitely more, for as we approach Golgotha's hill where this awful tragedy is completed, a new and unheard of thing comes to pass. There is no help, for Him in His God. Others had cried in their need and been heard and answered (Ps. 22: 4, 5), but now righteousness is alone and unheard. This is interpreted by His enemies, and in one solemn sense rightly, as if God were against Him. They say, "He trusted in God" — literally, "rolled Himself on Jehovah," compare Ps. 22: 8, margin with Matt. 27: 43 — "let Him deliver Him now, if He will have Him." They daringly claim God as on their side against His blessed Son.

But let us not be misunderstood on this, the most solemn of all themes. Never was His Son more precious to the heart of the Father than at that moment, but He had willingly come forth and offered Himself to carry out the will of God, and the moment had come when God was judging sin. He, whose penal judgment upon sin is death, deals with the whole sin question in the Person of His Son. Therefore, God is against Him. Solemn words. Ponder them, my soul.

He might, if it were merely a question of power, intervene, yea, the holy Sufferer in that case might easily have come down from the cross. It was even part of His suffering at that moment to be challenged by a dying criminal to do so, for what did He not suffer? But it must be seen that no act of power could atone.

Not only is the Lord forsaken but positive suffering at the hands of a holy God is His portion as the Sin-bearer.

But is this all? Oh! no, my soul, thou knowest right well, for the righteous One, instead of being heard and delivered, is bearing the wrath of God against sin. In the moment when the combined malevolence of fallen, rebellious creation is showered upon Him, He is under the consuming fire of divine wrath against sin. How blessedly this was held in due balance may be seen from the following, which we extract from "*The Man of Sorrows*."

"The pride of careless greatness could wash its hands of Thee:
Priests that should plead for weakness, must Thine accusers be."
And then travelling in thought to the deeper judgment from God —
'I PAUSE' — for on Thy vision the day is hastening now,
When for our lost condition, Thy holy head shall bow;
When, deep to deep still calling, the waters reach Thy soul,
And death and wrath appalling, their waves shall o'er Thee roll

His sufferings, which baffle thought, produce adoration as they come before us in thought at the Supper.

It is this beloved, that gives the supper of the Lord its supreme place in the affections of His own, and when we recall that all this was for us, our hearts are subdued, and we participate in it with holy and chastened feelings in accord with His own precious desire. It was the custom in Jewish homes in times of bereavement, to break bread and partake of wine with the afflicted (Jer. 16: 7, margin). The Lord takes up that simple custom and perpetuates it in His assembly; but what a difference! The character of His suffering exceeds infinitely all our little sufferings combined. The problem of suffering baffles indeed the strongest intellect, but what can we think as we behold the unmitigated suffering meted out to the sinless One?

Creation affected physically as well as morally in that that solemn hour.

Nor was the terrible character of the time confined to the moral order of creation, for nature

herself was in sympathy with the scene. "There was a darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst" (Luke 23: 44, 45). "And the earth did quake and the rocks rent" (Matt. 27: 51). Truly

"Earth shuddered as He died,
God's well-beloved Son."

It was the time when creation's God, who had stooped to manhood, was making atonement for sin.

Difference between drinking the cup in the three hours of darkness and death itself. but all perfectly gone through by Him.

But the three hours of darkness pass, the time when He was drinking the cup of God's wrath, and when alone, at the furthest point of moral distance, the agonising cry of abandonment was wrung from Him. The wrath is borne and judgment exhausted. All previous sacrifices had been consumed by the judgment. This precious sacrifice exhausts the judgment, and now His blessed voice is heard, saying, "Father." In the hour of His abandonment He cried, "My God" twice over, but now it is "Father." The article of death is accepted, that all may be perfectly accomplished, and with a loud voice He delivered up His spirit.

A hush falls upon our souls as we come to the end of this marvellous scene. It is the central hour of eternity, the centre of all moral history, the scene where everything is properly adjusted and where the deeper depths of the heart of God are made known.

The supreme importance of the Supper.

Its Institution and continuance.

It is this that comes before the hearts of His own in the supper; that holy feast, which is the central and outstanding coming together of saints in the day when He is rejected. Without it, all meetings would degenerate, and our hearts soon become dull to the love expressed therein. This the Lord knew well when He instituted it. This He had before Him in ensuring its continuance till He comes again, and this, thank God, is the way He takes to secure the outflow of all our heart's affections in praise, and worship, and adoration.

Resurrection and reunion in a new way.

It was impossible that death could hold Him. He comes forth in resurrection power, the Spoiler of death and the Inaugurator of a new creation. He had said to His own, "I will see you again and your hearts shall rejoice." Accordingly, His first thought when risen is their company. Alone in the judgment, they could not possibly be with Him there. But as risen, He can bring them into association with Himself before His Father and His God. Then He speaks by the prophetic Spirit, saying, "He brought Me up out of an horrible pit, . . . And He hath put a new song in My mouth, even praise unto *OUR* God" (Ps. 40: 2, 3).

He associates His own with Him as last Adam and as Leader of their praises.

Thus we come together to remember Him and begin with the most sacred theme of His sufferings, and as melted before Himself, are put in tune with the sanctuary. He brings His own into new associations of life in holy intimacy to "join the singing that He leadeth," and to share the triumphs of His grace. Brought thus to new creation scenes where all things are of God, and where Christ is everything, and in all the full joy of forgiveness, and Christ formed in the soul, we worship and adore. Here, the priestly company are seen in function, and, blessed be God, all the result of the Spirit's unction, so that from the hearts of those who were once enemies, and in the world out of which His Son has been cast, God is glorified in deepest, richest praise.

The Assembly as convened for this holy feast.

But now, having touched the suffering side, let us ask the careful attention of the reader, while we endeavour to dwell a little on the results in the holy banquet to which His own are invited as His guests, and: which is seen in the divine idea of the assembly come together. We get running through Scripture, the thought of festivity and festive robes. The thought of beautiful robes for a royal conventicle is richly described there. "Awake, awake; put on thy strength, O Zion; put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city" (Isa. 52: 1). "I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy" (Ps. 132: 16). "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, etc." (Isa. 41: 20).

This is the anticipation of the day of glory, when the whole scene shall be luminous with the glory of the King. Zechariah 3 and Luke 15 show the coming in of the individual and his being fitted for this glorious feast. In the former it is said, "Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment" [festive robes, N.Tr.], and in the latter, the father said to his bondmen, "Bring forth the *best robe* and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry."

God's feast at His own expense and at His own House.

Thus are we brought to "a solemn assembly for purposes of festival rejoicing" (Heb. 12: 23, see *New Testament Synonyms*. Trench). "Wisdom hath built her house, . . . she hath mingled her wine, she hath also furnished her table" (Prov. 9: 1, 2). "I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse: I have gathered my myrrh with my spice; I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey: I have drunk my wine with my milk. Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" (Cant. 5: 1). Much more might be cited, but read especially Isa. 25: 6, and connect with Matt. 22: 1-10 and Luke 14: 15-24, where the thought of feasting before the Lord is set before us as His thought for His people.

The King in His beauty or Christ in fulness of administrative power and glory.

1 Kings 10: 1-13 with 2 Chr. 9: 1-12, furnish a pictorial representation of the King in His beauty and glory. There we can, in typical language, visualize much of that which we taste now in faith. Solomon's resource is seen in the house he had built, and all its vast machinery of glory. This, we learn, foreshadows the assembly's position as distinguished from Israel. It is the place of His royal Bride and

the food of His table. This typifies the Incarnate Son in redemption and mediatorial right of glory, as the sustaining and upholding power of the whole scene. In the type we have the deportment of His servants, and the order of service of His attendants, and their apparel, etc. This speaks to us of Christ, the glorified One among His brethren, where He makes known the Father's name and leads the praise to Him. We come in this scene to where Christ is everything and in every one. It is Christ the centre of the heavenly company, leading the praises to His God and Father.

What is to be displayed when He comes is today enjoyed in faith in His Assembly by the Spirit.

Here let us remind ourselves that Matt. 18 is a chapter of the Kingdom, yet the words, "there am I" in verse 20, give His presence in the assembly in glory and beauty, which beautifully harmonises with the scene on the holy mount presented in the chapter before. There He shines as centre of all the displayed glory and that which is mediatorial; known now in the assembly to faith; soon to be displayed in fulness, when He comes in His own glory and in His Father's, and in that of the holy angels.

Surely, beloved, we respond to all this favour in holy delight, and nowhere can we find words to express it like those of holy writ. "The King hath brought me into His chambers: we will be glad and rejoice in Thee, we will remember Thy love more than wine" (Cant. 1: 4).

Rejoicing in New Covenant blessings and partaking of the New covenant cup.

The more with delight we trace this holy celebration, the more we see the connection of thought of the new covenant ministry. The cup, on the table is the cup of the new covenant in His blood — and the ministry of reconciliation is brought before us in the Lord's Supper. It connects the peace offering or ram of consecration with the house and the feast, helping greatly to an apprehension of the fatted calf in Luke 15, where, from the lips of our Lord, we get a description of the scene and the joy brought about by His own precious death. Blessed, adorable Lord, what must Thy joy be in that wondrous work which removes sin and brings God and the creature that had fallen, into such holy delight.

Another most important aspect showing that which passes beyond display.

There is another side, however, for the assembly in her highest relations goes beyond that which is dispensational to the circle of holy love belonging to the Father and the Son. The Father's voice and the glory-cloud give the link of connection in that scene in the mount, between what is dispensational and these divine relationships which are beyond regal display. A few words from another may help to make this distinction clear.

"I think there is a double character in worship — our being able to draw near in the sense of what Christ is to God, as the blessed Man in whom all His glory was made good, and the question of good and evil solved for ever. We have that in Leviticus 8. Then there is what He was as Son with the Father. There we have eternal relationships before ever there was a created scene — Glory which the Son had with the Father before the world was, even as He was loved before the foundation of the world. Yet this wonderful love has been and is to be told out forever in the created scene, for Sonship has been brought

into Manhood. So that there is not only the worship connected with the perfections of Christ as Man, but affections rising to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." (*T. H. Reynolds*).

Sonship, its home, joys and feelings tasted now in the Assembly.

It is here that all the deep blessedness of the higher communion belonging to the calling of God comes in, and we can be before the Father in the consciousness of sonship for His pleasure, resting at home in the joy of having a place there in the present enjoyment of love's own circle before the Father, in the beauty and acceptance of the Son, according to the revealed will of the Father, and in perfect accord with the holy character of God.

It is all the fruit of divine workmanship, which is the free outcome of the divine will, and the pleasure of that will in the relationship of the Son, and the divine nature lifted from the scene and state where love compassionate met us, and brought to where love complacent dwells. Here, with adoring hearts, we gladly pour in the Father's ear what we have learnt of the ineffable beauties and glories of the Son, what the Son is to the Father as having glorified Him, and capable personally of being an object for His heart's eternal delight. There we learn that all the Father's counsels claim equal honours to the Son, for He who stooped **so low** for our redemption is eternally one with the Father.

"Rise our hearts and bless the Father,
Ceaseless song e'en here begun:
Endless praise and adoration
To the Father and the Son."

Great need of encouragement that we might rise to God's thoughts and that He might get His portion.

All this is deeply blessed and some might think it ideal, particularly at a time like the present, when the actual state is one of brokenness and weakness. We write to encourage and are far from ignoring the general state of the church, however humbling it may be. At the same time, we cannot and dare not leave out the thoughts of God, as these alone can lift us up. And besides, we dare not deny that there are those who, by the power and goodness of God, are in the enjoyment in measure of these things, that such things are known, enjoyed and reciprocated *in the assembly today*.

If we refuse the loss is great not only to us but to the Father and the Son.

The danger among the Corinthians was to turn the Lord's Supper into a time of revelry. Our danger is different. We, too, often in effect look on the supper as a means of grace, where we come to sing some beautiful hymns, using the hymn book much like the prayer book among others. Then at the end, break the bread and separate. In such a case, the whole range of heavenly and eternal things are left untouched and great is the loss great not only to ourselves, but to Him who seeks our worship, and who is so well worthy of it, and who desires to lead us as the priestly company into the heavenly sanctuary in worship.

Eph. 3: 14-21 compared with John 13, 17, with the worship flowing therefrom.

In closing, let us note the beautiful connection of thought underlying John 13-17, with the prayer in Eph. 3 in relation to the range of things on which we have been dwelling, and which puts the Apostle in the state of worship so that he bursts forth with these words: "Unto Him be glory," etc. The prayer views us in relation to His Father, "*I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" With that, read John 13. "Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands." Here by communications at the supper table, He is instructing His own in the heavenly things about to be introduced and preparing them by the act of feet-washing for part with Himself in all that into which He is entering. "*That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith*" (Eph. 3: 17). In this we have the preciousness of heavenly affections and devotion as seen in John 14: 20: "At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and *I in you.*" See also verses 21 and 23. We are on holy ground, in the presence of the richest and deepest thoughts of love divine.

A climax of glory passing thought, and which words cannot express.

But there is more. We read: "*Being rooted and founded in love*" (Eph. 3: 17). Compare this with John 15: 7-17, where we see a company wedded together in love. "As the Father hath loved Me, so also have I loved you: continue ye in My love" (John 15: 9). It is in the next verse, however, that the identification seems the closest: "*That ye . . . may be able to comprehend with all saints*" (Eph. 3: 18). Here we touch the vast system of glory belonging to the Father and the Son of which the Lord speaks in John 16. It was to be made theirs by the ministry of the Holy Ghost. So we read, "He shall glorify Me: for *He shall receive of Mine* and shall show it unto you. All things that the *Father hath are Mine*" (John 16: 14, 15).

This brings us back to the well-known and yet thought-surpassing love of Christ. Surely this is John 17. Who will open out to our souls the depth and grandeur of all this? The Holy Spirit, thank God, delights to do it. The thought-surpassing love of Christ and the filling even to all the fulness of God — for all is measureless here — brings us surely to John 17, where the **love** of the Father and the glory of the Son are co-equal with the glory of the Father and the love of the Son, and where all that the Son is, shines out in relation to the counsels of the Father, and the complacency of that love in those who were given to the Son by the Father.

The holy appeal of such love to our hearts.

We would encourage those that are His. We are brought into such an inconceivable place of blessedness, where love is seen in its highest form, giving, not as the world, but bringing the objects of its choice into all its richest and best, and making them at home there.

Surely, beloved, if there is a time when such things can be enjoyed it is at His supper when, having left for a little our own things, we meet with Him in His own circle. To refuse this, is to slight love's best. The Lord encourage His own, and may we all be more in the enjoyment of His riches, and thus able by the Spirit, to worship the Father and the Son.

Lord, to be with Thee in Thine own abode,

The place prepared where Thou wilt have us dwell;
Brought home unto Thy Father and Thy God,
Where harpers harping shall Thy triumphs tell.
Sons of His love! Heirs of His festal joy!
What bliss! how full, how pure beyond alloy!
To gaze around in that effulgent light,
With not a mist from earth to intervene;
Thy majesty, Thy beauty, full in sight,
Thy glory flooding all the boundless scene,
Thy love in its perfection, known at last —
'Twill solve the long enigma of the past.
To read in full the story of the cross —
Known dimly — but with growing wonder now;
To measure by God's glory what it cost,
Beneath His curse, Thy holy head to bow.
Thy royal garments (in that hour laid by)
Proving the depths of Thy descent — to DIE!
To hear Thee leading in our midst, high praise
To Him whom Thou hast glorified on earth;
Whose will, the rule of all Thy pilgrim days,
Made Thee a suffering stranger from Thy birth.
Proof — Thou the slain One — highest heaven above,
Of sovereign mercy and victorious love.
To know how Thou hast made an end of sin;
Swept every hostile element away;
To see eternal righteousness brought in,
And watch the universe Thy mind obey.
No longer to perceive and know in part;
But feel with Thee — behold Thee where Thou art.
To worship Him who sitteth on Thy throne,
Whose Church are we, the purchase of Thy blood.
Thine incorruptibility our own,
The dearest purpose of Thy heart made good,

And through eternity's exhaustless days,
Our Lord, our Saviour! to sound forth Thy praise."
(Voice to the Faithful, Vol. 3, pp. 255/6).