

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

717 North Stapley Drive, Mesa, AZ 85203 Phone: (480) 833-7500

Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	53		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	I Corinthians 11:23-34		
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The Lord's Supper (Part I)

28. Lord's Day

Question 75. How art thou admonished and assured in the Lord's Supper, that thou art a partaker of that one sacrifice of Christ, accomplished on the cross, and of all his benefits?

Answer: Thus: That Christ has commanded me and all believers, to eat of this broken bread, and to drink of this cup, in remembrance of him, adding these promises: (a) first, that his body was offered and broken on the cross for me, and his blood shed for me, as certainly as I see with my eyes, the bread of the Lord broken for me, and the cup communicated to me; and further, that he feeds and nourishes my soul to everlasting life, with his crucified body and shed blood, as assuredly as I receive from the hands of the minister, and taste with my mouth the bread and cup of the Lord, as certain signs of the body and blood of Christ.

(a) Matt. 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. Matt. 26:27 And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; Matt. 26:28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Mark 14:22 And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. Mark 14:23 And he took the cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them: and they all drank of it. Mark 14:24 And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Luke 22:19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Luke 22:20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. 1 Cor. 10:16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? 1 Cor. 10:17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread. 1 Cor. 11:23 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: 1 Cor. 11:24 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. 11:25 After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. 1 Cor. 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

“We find it easier to read our Bible,” commented W.G.T. Shedd, “than to ponder upon it; easier to listen to preaching, than to inwardly digest it; easier to respond to the calls of benevolence and engage in external service in the church, than to go into our closets. And is not this the secret of the faint and sickly life in our souls? Is not this the reason why we live at a poor dying rate? Think you that if we often entered into the presence of God and obtained a realizing view of things unseen and eternal, earthly temptation would have such a strong power over us as it does? Think you that if we received every day a distinct and bold impression from the attributes of God, we should be so distant from Him in our hearts? Can we not trace our neglect of duty, our lukewarm feelings, our great worldliness of heart to our lack of the vision of God?”¹ We come to the Lord's Table in obedience to Jesus' words, “Do this in remembrance of me.” What does this involve? How is this to be done?

I. COMMEMORATION

A. Terms

Our English word is derived from the Latin *commemorāre*, “to call to mind.” The word translated “remembrance” in verse 24 is ANAMNĒSIS and is found only here and in Luke 22:19. The root meaning of this word is simply “to recall, to bring back into memory.” It is important to note the corresponding Hebrew word ZĀKHĀR (in the Qal). It refers to “bringing up to the present the effects of something done in the past.”² In most cases its usage is combined with the object of the intellectual activity. The word denotes the presence and acceptance of something in the mind. In the Hebrew framework, what is remembered is “taken to heart” (cf. Isaiah 47:7; 57:11), and the Hebraic concept of “heart” is understood to be an expression for the personality as a whole. The word, therefore, expresses “active cognitive occupation with a person or situation.”³ The word encompasses more than simply “recalling the past” since the word is used in reference to the future (cf. Ecclesiastes 11:8). “It is thus always important that recollection concerns not only past events, but also the consequences their memory entails.”⁴ Finally, this *remembering* “results in action,” and often “the relation between the remembering and the concomitant action is so close that they are virtually identified in the mind of the writer”⁵ (cf. Ezekiel 6:9; Numbers 15:40; Exodus 20:8; Psalm 22:27).

B. Significance

The Lord's Table serves as a visual reminder of an event, a historical event that occurred once and for all. It is NOT a duplication or repetition. “The Lord's death,” writes Murray, “is an event with a finality and perfection that does not admit of any repetition”⁶ (cf. Hebrews 9:26). We are called to *remembrance*. “A drowsy inattentive mind,” said Manton, “is easily deceived into sin, but he that doth often remember God, his conscience is kept waking; for he is all eye, and seeth all things; all hand, and toucheth all things; all foot, and walketh everywhere; all ear, and heareth all things.”⁷ We are summoned to the Lord's Table specifically to fix our thoughts on Christ – and this is the essence of meditation.

NOTE: *Meditation* in the Biblical sense (and not in nonsensical, transcendental meditation that is associated with Eastern religion) is the contemplative and earnest fixing of the mind on the great spiritual realities that the Bible has revealed. Biblical meditation is the soul's conference with itself; the discourse which it holds with truth obtained and grasped and with the impressions that result. One of the Puritans, Oliver Heywood wrote: “It is not simple revelry or aimless speculation; nor is it a mere effort of the memory to recall and treasure up religious instruction. It is the set and solemn endeavor of

the soul to bring home to itself divine things; and to so revolve, ponder, and digest them, as to work their transforming power into every element and faculty of its being."⁸

II. COMMUNION

The Person whose death we commemorate is living and *present*. We remember His death which took place in past (time and space), and we have communion (from the Latin *commūniō*, to share in common). By profession of faith, we claim to have communion with Christ. We are joined with Christ and with other believers by faith. This is the *present* aspect.

III. ANTICIPATION

Note the *future* aspect: "until he come" (verse 26). Today we look upon symbols. These serve as signs. We know that the Lord is present by His Spirit, but one day He will be present bodily and visibly, and we will see Him (I John 3:2). We are gathered to *celebrate* the Lord's death on our behalf. This is what we commemorate – but we do so because His death did not end in death. "Do not be afraid. I am the First and Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:17, 18). We are charged with perpetual anticipation: "until He come again."

DISTRIBUTION OF THE ELEMENTS

CONCLUDING ADDRESS: We are called to *remember* and, therefore, we should be diligent to cultivate a mind that is trained to meditate upon the things of Christ. We need to take time to do this. "It is startling to consider how much of our life passes without any thought of God; without any distinct and filial recognition of His presence and character."⁹ Here are some things we can fix before our minds.

1. Remember our Priesthood. "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (I Peter 2:9).
2. Remember the Lord's Work. All believers are called to labor for Christ and are "to stand firm." "Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (I Corinthians 15:58). We have bountiful provision; let there be hearty work!
3. Remember the Race. We are called to run the race with endurance. "Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Hebrews 12:1, 2).
4. Remember the Battle. We war "not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms" (Ephesians 6:12). We must contend, not only against the world and the devil, but against sin that still remains a part of us. May we be able to say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race" (II Timothy 4:7).
5. Remember the Lord's Death. We gather to celebrate with bread and wine the Lord's death in anticipation of the Lord's return. This supper is in prospect of a coming one. Let us therefore be daily *remembering*, daily *running*, daily *fighting* the good fight of faith, and daily *looking* unto Jesus.

¹ W.G.T. Shedd, *Sermons to the Spiritual Man* (rpt. The Banner of Truth Trust, 1972), p. 14. The vision of God that Shedd has in mind is not "*visio oculi*" (a vision of the eye), but a clear perception of the knowledge of God, "*cognitio Dei*," which touches the whole of our being.

² Scott McCormick, Jr., *The Lord's Supper: A Biblical Interpretation* (Westminster Press, 1966), p. 78.

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- ³ *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* IV, ed. G.J. Botterweck and H. Ringgren, trans. D.E. Green (Eerdmans, 1980), p. 66.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 67.
- ⁵ *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, ed. R.L. Harris, G.L. Archer, Jr., B.K. Waltke (Moody, 1980), p. 241.
- ⁶ *Collected Writings of John Murray III* (The Banner of Truth Trust, 1982), p. 286.
- ⁷ *The Complete Works of Thomas Manton* VII (rpt. Maranatha Publications, N.D.), p. 79.
- ⁸ Oliver Heywood, *Heart Treasure* (rpt. Soli Deo Gloria, N.D.), p. 251.
- ⁹ W.G.T. Shedd, *op. cit.*, p. 15.