

UNDERSTANDING THE MEMORIAL

“Keep doing this in remembrance of me.” –Luke 22:19b



Understanding the Memorial

“Keep doing this in remembrance of me.” –Luke 22:19b

On the evening before his death, Jesus met with twelve of his disciples in a large upper room to observe the Passover (Mark 14:14-16). Our Bible then goes on to relate what happens next through four accounts, two which were eyewitness recollections. As such, we are given a series of events, a command to continue observing the event, and what it represents. But the questions we need to ask ourselves are: who can have a share in this Memorial occasion, how often it should be done, and whether there are those who simply “observe” the occasion and sit idly by while it takes place. As we examine the scriptural facts, we should hopefully get a sense of the importance of why we need to properly understand the Memorial and what it fulfills and symbolizes for us today. We have a personal obligation to discern the evidence for ourselves and act in accordance with our findings.

Origin of the Passover

The occasion which Jesus was observing with twelve of his disciples that evening was the Passover. The Passover had been instituted on the evening before their departure from Egypt (the Exodus). The first Passover was observed about the time of full moon, on the 14th day of Abib (later called Nisan) in the year 1513 B.C.E. This was thereafter to be celebrated annually. (Ex 12:17-20, 24-27) Abib (Nisan) falls within the months March-April of the Gregorian calendar. Passover was followed by seven days of the Festival of Unfermented Cakes, Nisan 15-21. Passover commemorates the deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt and the ‘passing over’ of their firstborn when Jehovah destroyed the firstborn of Egypt. Seasonally, it fell at the beginning of the barley harvest.—Ex 12:14, 24-47; Le 23:10.

Passover was a memorial celebration; therefore the Scriptural command was: “And it must occur that when your sons say to you, ‘What does this service mean to you?’ then you must say, ‘It is the sacrifice of the passover to Jehovah, who passed over the houses of the sons of Israel in Egypt when he plagued the Egyptians, but he delivered our houses.’”—Ex 12:26, 27.

Since the Jews reckoned the day as starting after sundown and ending the next day at sundown, Nisan 14 would begin after sundown. It would be in the evening after Nisan 13 concluded that the Passover would be observed. Since the Bible definitely states that Christ is the Passover sacrifice (1Co 5:7) and that he observed the Passover meal the evening before he was put to death, the date of his death would be Nisan 14, not Nisan 15, in order to fulfill accurately the time feature of the type, or shadow, provided in the Law.—Heb 10:1.

Each household was to choose a male sheep or goat that was sound and a year old. It was taken into the house on the 10th day of the month Abib and kept until the 14th, and then it was slaughtered and its blood was splashed with a bunch of hyssop on the doorposts and the upper part of the doorway of the dwelling in which they were to eat it (not on the threshold where the blood would be trampled on).

The lamb (or goat) was slaughtered, skinned, its interior parts cleansed and replaced, and it was roasted whole, well-done, with no bones broken. (2Ch 35:11; Nu 9:12) If the household was too small to consume the whole animal, then it was to be shared with a neighbor household and eaten that same night. Anything left over was to be burned before morning. (Ex 12:10; 34:25) It was eaten with unfermented cakes, “the bread of affliction,” and with bitter greens, for their life had been bitter under slavery.—Ex 1:14; 12:1-11, 29, 34; De 16:3.

At the Passover in Egypt, the head of the family was responsible for the slaying of the lamb (or goat) at each home, and all were to stay inside the house to avoid being slain by the angel. The partakers ate in a standing position, their hips girded, staff in hand, sandals on so as to be ready for a long journey over rough ground (whereas they often did their daily work barefoot). At midnight all the firstborn of the Egyptians were slain, but the angel passed over the houses on which the blood had been spattered. (Ex 12:11, 23) Every Egyptian household in which there was a firstborn male was affected, from the house of Pharaoh himself to the firstborn of the prisoner. It was not the head of the house, even though he may have been a firstborn, but was any male firstborn in the household under the head, as well as the male firstborn of animals, that was slain.—Ex 12:29, 30

Prophetic Significance of the Passover

Jehovah God has always taught through example and illustration when dealing with humans. Jesus, while upon the earth, followed his heavenly father’s example of teaching. Everything that the Law contained was symbolic and prophetic, pointing to a future fulfillment or to a representative type within Jehovah’s Purpose. The institution and observance of the Passover was no different.

The apostle Paul, in urging Christians to live clean lives, attributes pictorial significance to the Passover. He says: “For, indeed, Christ our passover has been sacrificed.” (1Co 5:7) Here he likens Christ Jesus to the Passover lamb. John the Baptizer pointed to Jesus, saying: “See, the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!” (Joh 1:29) John may have had in mind the Passover lamb, or he could have been thinking of the male sheep that Abraham offered up instead of his own son Isaac or of the male lamb that was offered up upon God’s altar at Jerusalem each morning and evening.—Ge 22:13; Ex 29:38-42.

Certain features of the Passover observance were fulfilled by Jesus. One fulfillment lies in the fact that the blood on the houses in Egypt delivered the firstborn from destruction at the hands of the destroying angel. Paul speaks of anointed Christians as the congregation of the firstborn (Heb 12:23), and of Christ as their deliverer through his blood. (1Th 1:10; Eph 1:7) No bones were to be broken in the Passover lamb. It had been prophesied that none of Jesus’ bones would be broken, and this was fulfilled at his death. (Ps 34:20; Joh 19:36) Thus the Passover kept by the Jews for centuries was one of those things in which the Law provided a shadow of the things to come and pointed to Jesus Christ, “the Lamb of God.”—Heb 10:1; Joh 1:29.

Jesus confirmed his role in fulfilling what the Law had been teaching and representing humans, because during his brief ministry on earth he said:

“Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I came, not to destroy, but to fulfill; (Matthew 5:17)

However, in spite of the numerous generations which had been observing the Law, mankind still had difficulty understanding the underlying significance of why things were just so. The time had not yet arrived for Jehovah to make things clear, although new insights were quickly coming to the fore as Jesus pressed ahead in his short tenure among humans here on earth. His methods of teaching were like breaths of fresh air to the people who heard him, and many listened to Jesus' message from his heavenly father with renewed interest.

Still, some of what Jesus said proved difficult to understand, and on one particular occasion was offensive to the extreme because the hearers were still thinking in a physical sense and not in a spiritual sense. It was because the Law inherently focused on the physical. Everything was represented through physical icons and resolved through tangible means. But they had forgotten that the Law was leading them to the Purpose that Jehovah God had put into place for mankind's salvation. No measure of animal sacrifices would ever be able to accomplish that for fallen mankind.

On the seemingly offensive occasion when Jesus tried to help his hearers to appreciate what needed to take place as fulfillment of the Law and to open the way for mankind back to Jehovah God, Jesus discussed how those who wished to have life would need to "eat his flesh."

35 Jesus said to them: "I am the bread of life. He that comes to me will not get hungry at all, and he that exercises faith in me will never get thirsty at all. **36** But I have said to YOU, YOU have even seen me and yet do not believe. **37** Everything the Father gives me will come to me, and the one that comes to me I will by no means drive away; **38** because I have come down from heaven to do, not my will, but the will of him that sent me. **39** This is the will of him that sent me, that I should lose nothing out of all that he has given me but that I should resurrect it at the last day. **40** For this is the will of my Father, that everyone that beholds the Son and exercises faith in him should have everlasting life, and I will resurrect him at the last day." (John 6:35-40)

After he said that to the listeners, they began "murmuring" about his words, and he afterwards went on to explain further:

48 "I am the bread of life. **49** YOUR forefathers ate the manna in the wilderness and yet died. **50** This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that anyone may eat of it and not die. **51** I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if anyone eats of this bread he will live forever; and, for a fact, the bread that I shall give is my flesh in behalf of the life of the world."

52 Therefore the Jews began contending with one another, saying: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" **53** Accordingly Jesus said to them: "Most truly I say to YOU, Unless YOU eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, YOU have no life in yourselves. **54** He that feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has everlasting life, and I shall resurrect him at the last day; **55** for my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. **56** He that feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood remains in union with me, and I in union with him. **57** Just as the living Father sent me forth and I live because of the Father, he also that feeds on me, even that one will live because of me. **58** This is the bread that came down from heaven. It is not as when YOUR forefathers ate and yet died. He that feeds on this bread will live forever." **59** These things he said as he was teaching in public assembly at Ca-per'na-um.

60 Therefore many of his disciples, when they heard this, said: "This speech is shocking; who can listen to it?" **61** But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were murmuring about this, said to them: "Does this stumble YOU? **62** What, therefore, if YOU should behold the Son of man ascending to where he was before? **63** It is the spirit that is life-giving; the flesh is of no use at all. The sayings that I have spoken to YOU are spirit and are life. **64** But there are some of YOU that do

not believe." For from [the] beginning Jesus knew who were the ones not believing and who was the one that would betray him. **65** So he went on to say: "This is why I have said to YOU, No one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father."

66 Owing to this many of his disciples went off to the things behind and would no longer walk with him. (John 6:48-66)

The very thought of Jesus suggesting that they would have to "eat the flesh" of this man standing before them was enough to drive away not only the hearers of Jesus' words, but many of those disciples which had accompanied Jesus thus far. Cannibalism, indeed!

It was an unfortunate loss for those who decided they couldn't listen to such an illustration, but one that not all of Jesus' followers abandoned. The Bible relates that twelve remained, and it was to these that Jesus now turned his attention:

67 Therefore Jesus said to the twelve: "You do not want to go also, do YOU?" **68** Simon Peter answered him: "Lord, whom shall we go away to? You have sayings of everlasting life; **69** and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God." (John 6:67-69)

It was likely that because of what they had personally observed during their time with Jesus that the twelve remained, even though they weren't entirely sure of what they had just heard. Still, there were other occasions when their Teacher would tell them something new and unheard of, and this one proved to be no different. They knew in their heart that Jesus would explain what was meant, when it was time.

Not too much earlier, they had heard another statement made by Jesus that, while not as horrific, was just as confusing because the time had not yet arrived for them to better understand the illustrations. On that occasion, Jesus was making reference to a "temple:"

18 Therefore, in answer, the Jews said to him: "What sign have you to show us, since you are doing these things?" **19** In answer Jesus said to them: "Break down this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." **20** Therefore the Jews said: "This temple was built in forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" **21** But he was talking about the temple of his body. **22** When, though, he was raised up from the dead, his disciples called to mind that he used to say this; and they believed the Scripture and the saying that Jesus said. (John 2:18-22)

As the scriptures point out in verse 22, it wasn't until much later that the underlying meaning of the statement became understood. But it did become understood, and abundantly so.

Not understanding everything Jesus taught did not discourage the faithful disciples. They could see with their own eyes that Jehovah was with Jesus. The miracles that he performed, the manner in which he taught, and the very example that he personally set for them day to day were more than enough to convince them. Still, Jesus was not one to keep his faithful followers in the dark regarding Jehovah's purposes, nor in preparing them for the eventual culmination of his ministry: his own death and subsequent resurrection. His father would never do that, neither would he. (Amos 3:7)

Instituting the Memorial

Jesus knew that his time on earth was nearly at an end. He had done everything he could to help prepare his faithful followers for the inevitable, and now, on this particular Passover celebration he offered them an understanding that they would afterwards explain to all who came to the Christ. He offered them the understanding of the fulfillment of the Passover.

Matthew 26:26-30	Mark 14:22-26	Luke 22:14-20
<p>26 As they continued eating, Jesus took a loaf and, after saying a blessing, he broke it and, giving it to the disciples, he said: "TAKE, eat. This means my body." 27 Also, he took a cup and, having given thanks, he gave it to them, saying: "Drink out of it, all of YOU; 28 for this means my 'blood of the covenant,' which is to be poured out in behalf of many for forgiveness of sins. 29 But I tell YOU, I will by no means drink henceforth any of this product of the vine until that day when I drink it new with YOU in the kingdom of my Father." 30 Finally, after singing praises, they went out to the Mount of Olives.</p>	<p>22 And as they continued eating, he took a loaf, said a blessing, broke it and gave it to them, and said: "Take it, this means my body." 23 And taking a cup, he offered thanks and gave it to them, and they all drank out of it. 24 And he said to them: "This means my 'blood of the covenant,' which is to be poured out in behalf of many. 25 Truly I say to YOU, I shall by no means drink anymore of the product of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." 26 Finally, after singing praises, they went out to the Mount of Olives.</p>	<p>14 At length when the hour came, he reclined at the table, and the apostles with him. 15 And he said to them: "I have greatly desired to eat this passover with YOU before I suffer; 16 for I tell YOU, I will not eat it again until it becomes fulfilled in the kingdom of God." 17 And, accepting a cup, he gave thanks and said: "Take this and pass it from one to the other among yourselves; 18 for I tell YOU, From now on I will not drink again from the product of the vine until the kingdom of God arrives." 19 Also, he took a loaf, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, saying: "This means my body which is to be given in YOUR behalf. Keep doing this in remembrance of me." 20 Also, the cup in the same way after they had the evening meal, he saying: "This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood, which is to be poured out in YOUR behalf.</p>

It was during the meal that these events took place, according to the three accounts we have recorded for us in the Bible. Too, we have a consistent order of events and Jesus' explanation of what is the meaning (and fulfillment) of the observance.

Jesus, after picking up the unleavened bread, the "bread of affliction" (Exodus 12:8b; Deut. 16:3), gave thanks to Jehovah God and then broke it and gave a piece to each of the disciples that were with him. After researching the possibility, it appears that the *breaking* of the bread wasn't symbolic insofar as having scriptural or prophetic significance; the bread was unleavened, and thus would *have* to be broken into pieces, since it would resemble a cracker in consistency. But Jesus did make clear what the bread

itself meant: his body. This would probably have called to the minds of the disciples that earlier incident when so many had abandoned the Teacher over a seemingly horrific, obscene suggestion. (John 6:35, 48-58, 60, 66)

Here again, as before, Jesus was saying that his flesh was going to be given in behalf of mankind, and now he was giving the representation of that flesh, the unleavened bread, the “bread of affliction,” to his disciples to eat. There was no cannibalism involved after all, as some had thought! And while perhaps they may not have fully understood all that the sacrifice of Jesus Christ’s flesh and life entailed, they were helped to appreciate the symbolism, simple and true, of the emblem which they had been sharing in all those years, and the generations before them had shared in eating... what that unleavened bread, that “bread of affliction” actually represented. “Take, eat,” Jesus told them. “This means my body.” Luke’s account adds a pointed additional statement, “which is given in your behalf.” This helped confirm to them Jesus’ earlier statement, too: “and, for a fact, the bread that I shall give is my flesh in behalf of the life of the world.” (John 6:51)

So the lesson continued when Jesus then took a cup of wine, again offered up thanks to Jehovah God, and gave it to them, saying: “Drink out of it, all of you; for this means my ‘blood of the covenant,’ which is to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.” (Matthew 26:27-28; Mark 14:23-24) Luke’s account differs from Matthew and Mark’s account, where it is recorded in this way: “This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood, which is to be poured out in your behalf.” (Luke 22:20)

Much earlier in Jesus’ ministry, there was a reference made to wine, and it was during Jesus’ first miracle, at a wedding feast. How very fitting, then, that his ministry was to be at its end on a similar occasion, spiritually speaking.

Here is the Bible’s account:

2 Now on the third day a marriage feast took place in Ca’na of Gal’i-lee, and the mother of Jesus was there. **2** Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the marriage feast.

3 When the wine ran short the mother of Jesus said to him: “They have no wine.” **4** But Jesus said to her: “What have I to do with you, woman? My hour has not yet come.” **5** His mother said to those ministering: “Whatever he tells you, do.” (John 2:1-5)

The disciples who had seen their Teacher change water into wine on that occasion had put their faith in him that day (John 2:11), not because they understood what he had made reference to regarding wine and that his “hour” had not yet come, but because they saw a miracle with their own eyes, the changing of water into wine.

Now, however, Jesus’ hour *had* come. The words “They have no wine” was about to be made painfully clear as Jesus’ shed blood was about to be poured out in behalf of not only them, but the whole world. It was not through the sacrifice of beasts and the pouring out of their blood that mankind would or could be washed clean, but only through the pouring out of the blood of the Christ.

Here, too, Jesus was further clarifying the illustration he had used earlier in his ministry when he was telling his hearers how they would need to “drink his blood” and eat his flesh. (John 6:53-57).

Jesus also commanded his faithful disciples to “Keep doing this in remembrance of me.” (John 22:19b). Paul, in his first letter to the Corinthians, recorded Jesus’ words thus:

23 For I received from the Lord that which I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was going to be handed over took a loaf **24** and, after giving thanks, he broke it and said: "This means my body which is in your behalf. Keep doing this in remembrance of me." **25** He did likewise respecting the cup also, after he had the evening meal, saying: "This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood. Keep doing this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:23-25)

This observance would serve as the fulfillment and replacement of the Passover arrangement, serving as a memorial to Christ's sacrifice in our behalf, acting in lieu of beasts which had been sacrificed for our sins down through the generations. No more would the killing and sacrificing of a lamb or goat be expected at Passover for those serving Jehovah God: Jehovah Himself had provided the lamb. (John 1:29, 35-36)

Having finished instituting the Memorial, Jesus, along with his faithful disciples, sang psalms to Jehovah and went out to the Mount of Olives, where Jesus would soon be taken into custody and handed over for the fulfillment of the Passover and the Law's requirements in order to purchase back mankind from the sentence of death due to sin.

The Memorial in the Early Congregation of the First Century

Jesus had told his faithful disciples to "keep doing this" commemoration, and it is evident from a letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the command was being followed, but that some issues had arisen that were casting a bad light on the event. Indeed, Jesus, before ascending back into the heavens, had instructed the disciples:

16 However, the eleven disciples went into Gal'i-lee to the mountain where Jesus had arranged for them, **17** and when they saw him they did obeisance, but some doubted. **18** And Jesus approached and spoke to them, saying: "All authority has been given me in heaven and on the earth. **19** Go therefore and make disciples of people of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, **20** teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you. And, look! I am with you all the days until the conclusion of the system of things." (Matthew 28:16-20)

So what issues had arisen that had Paul writing concerning the proper observation of the Memorial? We can see for ourselves by reading the account from the scriptures:

14 Therefore, my beloved ones, flee from idolatry. **15** I speak as to men with discernment; judge for yourselves what I say. **16** The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of the Christ? The loaf which we break, is it not a sharing in the body of the Christ? **17** Because there is one loaf, we, although many, are one body, for we are all partaking of that one loaf. **18** Look at that which is Israel in a fleshly way: Are not those who eat the sacrifices sharers with the altar? **19** What, then, am I to say? That what is sacrificed to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? **20** No; but I say that the things which the nations sacrifice they sacrifice to demons, and not to God; and I do not want you to become sharers with the demons. **21** You cannot be drinking the cup of Jehovah and the cup of demons; you cannot be partaking of "the table of Jehovah" and the table of demons. **22** Or "are we inciting Jehovah to jealousy"? We are not stronger than he is, are we? (1 Corinthians 10:14-22)

Here, Paul is helping his readers to appreciate a number of points related to the sharing in the Memorial, including the oneness of all who partake. But he is also pointing out that Jehovah God will not tolerate a sharing with demons and Satanic influences. By

pointing to the fleshly mode which was served by sacrifice and then applying it to the spiritual way that a disciple of Christ should look upon his own life and service as a living sacrifice, Paul's words were meant to reflect that we cannot be serving two masters, an expression that Jesus made use of during his own ministry. (Matthew 6:24; compare with 1 Corinthians 10:21)

It was to be clear that by partaking in the Memorial and eating of the bread and drinking of the wine, that there was an exclusivity that bound us to our God. We were doing so out of sincerity, an earnest desire to do our utmost to live and express our appreciation for what the bread and the wine mean. To share in the Memorial and then seek after the longings of the world was unacceptable, in effect, inciting Jehovah to jealousy.

While the table of the world, set by Satan and his demons, is beset with every unclean thing imaginable, colorful and pleasing to the eyes, it is the foods which we should turn from, for Jehovah hates the things set upon it. (1 John 2:15-17).

On the other hand, Jehovah's table is simple, unfettered. Yet it contains everything we will ever need for life everlasting. (Matthew 11:29-30; John 3:16; John 6:27; John 17:3; James 1:27)

Indulging or "snacking" from the table of demons will cost us not only our relationship with Jehovah God, but our very lives.

Paul had still more to say about properly appreciating the Memorial:

20 Therefore, when YOU come together to one place, it is not possible to eat the Lord's evening meal. **21** For, when YOU eat [it], each one takes his own evening meal beforehand, so that one is hungry but another is intoxicated. **22** Certainly YOU do have houses for eating and drinking, do YOU not? Or do YOU despise the congregation of God and make those who have nothing ashamed? What shall I say to YOU? Shall I commend YOU? In this I do not commend YOU. **23** For I received from the Lord that which I also handed on to YOU, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was going to be handed over took a loaf **24** and, after giving thanks, he broke it and said: "This means my body which is in YOUR behalf. Keep doing this in remembrance of me." **25** He did likewise respecting the cup also, after he had the evening meal, saying: "This cup means the new covenant by virtue of my blood. Keep doing this, as often as YOU drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For as often as YOU eat this loaf and drink this cup, YOU keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, until he arrives. **27** Consequently whoever eats the loaf or drinks the cup of the Lord unworthily will be guilty respecting the body and the blood of the Lord. **28** First let a man approve himself after scrutiny, and thus let him eat of the loaf and drink of the cup. **29** For he that eats and drinks eats and drinks judgment against himself if he does not discern the body. **30** That is why many among YOU are weak and sickly, and quite a few are sleeping [in death]. **31** But if we would discern what we ourselves are, we would not be judged. **32** However, when we are judged, we are disciplined by Jehovah, that we may not become condemned with the world. **33** Consequently, my brothers, when YOU come together to eat [it], wait for one another. **34** If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, that YOU may not come together for judgment. But the remaining matters I will set in order when I get there. (1 Corinthians 11:20-34)

There was a growing failure to appreciate the Memorial and what it represented, and Paul was endeavoring to bring the Corinthians back to their senses. Apparently, some were fallen to being intoxicated before the observance while others came to the observance in search of a meal to eat. In neither case was the proper attitude being exercised. Paul refused to commend them in their keeping the Memorial due to this problem. He pointed out that he had shown them what he himself had been taught

regarding the observance of the Memorial, reminding them what the bread and the wine represented. And he admonished the Corinthians to first examine themselves before sharing in the Memorial, because they could be eating or drinking judgment to themselves if they were not of the right mind-set and living in accord with what they were proclaiming. Only after taking a hard look at themselves and making sure that they were in harmony with their sharing in the Memorial could they partake of the emblems of bread and wine and not stand judged by Jehovah God. And there was no need to rush the occasion, but rather the suggestion that all wait until everyone is present and share together the Memorial and the hopes therein. And to those who were coming to find a meal, they should eat in their own homes before attending and partaking.

Far better to do these things first than to partake unworthily of the symbolic emblems, Paul admonished them. (1 Corinthians 11:27)

The Memorial and Christians Today

Today, in a world besieged with dozens upon dozens of variations of Christianity all claiming to be based on the Bible, it is difficult to decide among them which is the “right” religion without learning something about each one. And the observance of the Memorial is practiced among many of the religions today, in many different ways, ranging from a weekly “mass” to an annual “Memorial.” Each claims to be correct in their observance and understanding.

But for those who have no particular allegiance or involvement with a given religious group or church, yet want to learn of the Memorial and whether it is something that Christians today should (or do) observe, the Bible holds the answers—not always agreeing with the teachings of a religious group or church. But whether there is agreement or not, we *must* obey the Bible as we understand it, and do our utmost to live in harmony with God’s Word.

The scriptures that have been presented are only the start to better understanding the Memorial and its significance to our lives. There are many facets of God’s Word that have not been discussed here, but are appropriate to the occasion, and it falls upon us as dedicated disciples of Christ and servants of Jehovah God to become familiar with them.

While the Bible doesn’t say pointedly that the Memorial should be held annually, or weekly, it *does* tell us that “For as often as you eat this loaf and drink this cup, you keep proclaiming the death of the Lord, until he arrives.” (1 Corinthians 11:26) And the Bible also tells us not to be judging one another when it comes to observances and festivals. (Colossians 2:16,17)

There are enough factors and forces to divide us, not only from each other, but from our Creator, Jehovah God, without allowing such issues as forcing our beliefs upon others as a standard and saying that Jehovah will not accept someone else unless they approach Him as we do, for the Bible tells us in no uncertain terms that “God is not partial, but in every nation the man that fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.” (Acts 10:34, 35)

If we have a share in observing the Memorial, may we first examine our lives and our conscience and ensure that we are in harmony with the proclamation we make when we partake of the bread, the representation of Jesus’ body given in our stead, and of the

wine, the representation of Jesus' blood, poured out in behalf of the world, so that we might live. (Ephesian 2:4, 5; 1 John 4:10)

Problems with Witness Theology and Doctrine

In this section, we shall examine why there appears to be errors in the current doctrine regarding the Memorial and who partake, as taught by Jehovah's Witnesses.

Doctrine: Only the Anointed Class may partake of the emblems.

According to current Witness theology, when Jesus instituted the Memorial, it sealed a new covenant that applied only to those who would reign with Christ in the New Order, Christ's Kingdom. This would involve a limited number of 144,000 which has been filled, with less than 9,000 of the "anointed class" remaining alive today. While those not of the "anointed class" would benefit from the new covenant arrangement, they are not considered to be in "union with Christ," and thus may not partake of the bread and the wine. They may, however, attend the Memorial and observe. They are considered of the "earthly class."

In addition, Jesus' statements in John 6 in reference to his being the "bread" and "wine" that mankind must "eat" and "drink" in order to have life was in no way a reference to the instituting of the Memorial since "it was spoken a year before the Memorial was set forth."

Applicable scriptures have already been examined regarding the Memorial, but nowhere is it to be found that the two occasions do not refer to one another, as Witnesses claim. If anything, the night that Jesus presented the emblems to his disciples was a confirmation and fulfillment of what he had said a year earlier.

The covenant to which they refer as being exclusive to Jesus' disciples as a promise of future co-rulership with Christ also does not appear to be tied to the Memorial itself.

The bread that is offered during the Memorial represents Christ's body, "which is given in your behalf." (Luke 22:19) If Jesus' statement of "in your behalf" applies only to an "anointed" class, who are entitled to eat of it, then those of the "earthly" class will not live forever as he suggested in John 6:51, since an "earthly" class will not eat the bread from heaven that has been provided by Jehovah. (John 3:16) But that would be contradictory. The "your" in Luke 22:19 must, then, be as Jesus explained in John 6:51, to not only those who were present with Jesus in that upper room on the Passover, but to *all* who would later learn how to participate in the Memorial. (Matthew 28:20)

Paul offers further elaboration on the subject in his letter to the Corinthians. There, we read that: "Because there is one loaf, we, although many, are one body, for we are all partaking of that one loaf." (1 Cor. 10:17) There is not one loaf (or application) for an "anointed" class, and another for an "earthly" class as Witness theology suggests.

The requirement, or determining factor, laid upon disciples of Christ is that we first examine ourselves before partaking of the bread, lest we bring judgment to ourselves. An even sterner warning is offered in Hebrews, chapter 10, starting with verse 26 and going through to verse 31. There, we see the importance of being true to our discipleship under Christ. Especially take notice of verses 30 and 31 and compare the words there with 1 Corinthians 10:22!

Regarding the wine, we read in the Memorial account that the wine represents the “blood of the covenant” which is to be poured out in behalf of many for the forgiveness of sins.’ (Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24) Luke’s account uses the expression “in your behalf.” (Luke 22:20) It seems reasonable, then, to understand it to mean that it is not exclusive to an “anointed” class as is taught by Witness theology, not only because of the wording of the scriptures found here, but also the parallel reference in John 6 which has been discussed herein at length.

This can be shown from the scriptures by referring to Revelation 7:13-17 (compare verse 16 with John 6:35).

But what about the covenant that was sealed by means of the Memorial, as taught by Witness theology? Is there scriptural evidence that the Memorial instituted a new covenant, a covenant that applies only to an “anointed” class, although those of an “earthly” class will benefit from the arrangement?

None of the scriptures that have been examined so far deny that a “new” covenant was put into place by Jehovah. But there is absolutely no indication that this was an “exclusive” covenant, especially since both emblems, the bread and the wine, apply to all among mankind, as has been demonstrated.

The “new” covenant did away with the “old” covenant of which the Passover was a part of. Under the “old” covenant, man was required to offer up perpetual animal sacrifices to cover sins, but it could never satisfy Jehovah’s just Law. Only Christ’s blood would accomplish that. And the Law of the “old” covenant arrangement led up to the Christ. No longer would there be sacrifices of animals and incense. Instead, we would become a living sacrifice, each of us, as disciples of Christ. Having been washed clean from the sins accounted against us (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), we may now approach our Creator, Jehovah God, with freeness of speech and a clean conscience, provided we act in accordance with our faith and not eat at the table of demons, as Paul warned against.

The “new” covenant no longer required that we go through a priest or high priest. Our only mediator is now Christ, who has become our high priest and mediator. (Galatians 3:19-22; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6). We are so much closer now to having restored the privilege of approaching Jehovah God directly than we had been able to under the “old” covenant. And this “new” covenant will eventually be fulfilled and done away with, too, the Bible promises, once mankind has been restored to his former condition. Only then will we be able to approach Jehovah God with no mediator any longer, and He himself will teach and instruct us into eternity, as it had been before Adam’s fall. (Jeremiah 31:33, 34; Hebrews 8:1 through 10:25)

Witness theology seems to dismiss this new arrangement, however, in favor of its “anointed” class being privy to this new covenant arrangement, although they agree that those outside of the covenant will still realize the blessings because the exercising of the covenant will come to them through the “anointed” class. Yet as can be seen, there is no scriptural evidence that Witness theology is correct in its understanding.

At the same time, it must be noted that Christ *did* form a special covenant with his faithful disciples. But this was *after* the instituting of the Memorial, and separate from it. This covenant *was* exclusive.

Only Luke’s account relates the events, however, and at Luke 22:28 we read:

28 “However, YOU are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials; **29** and I make a covenant with YOU, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom, **30** that YOU may eat

and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. (Luke 22:28-30)

Since this is and was a separate covenant from the new covenant which was instituted at the Memorial, it is outside the scope of this article. However, the reader is encouraged to research the above passage for better understanding. Suffice it to say that it is unfortunate that the two covenants are applied into a single arrangement under Witness theology that applies only to the “anointed” class, because innumerable disciples of Christ have, in effect, been denied the expression that Christ proclaimed would bring them everlasting life.

Sadly, in accordance with the same Witness theology, those considering themselves of the “earthly” class have refused to do as Christ commanded them when he said “Take, eat” and “Take, drink,” having been instructed that they are not entitled.

Careful consideration should be given on the part of all of us concerning the Memorial and its observance. May we all accept Christ’s invitation, a privilege which has been afforded us at a high price at the hand of our Creator, Jehovah God, and His only begotten son, Jesus Christ.