

THE MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Scripture Reading: John 6:22-59.

Text: John 6:52-58.

Intro: Our Lord was not teaching the Lord's Supper in John 6, but He was teaching the truth which the Lord's Supper pictures, that which it represents.

It all grew out of the feeding of the 5,000. But, as the Lord spoke to the people and to "the Jews" (their leaders) He also brought in the manna which was given to the children of Israel on their journey from Egypt to Canaan. This subject was actually introduced by the people themselves.

From all of this He claimed to be "the true bread from heaven" (v. 32). He followed this up with the statements that we have in vv. 33, 35, 47-51.

The emphasis on eating Him began in v. 50. Also in v. 51.

He adds to this the idea of drinking His blood in v. 53 after "the Jews" raised the question that they did in v. 52. This double emphasis continues through v. 56.

To eat and to drink is to believe, or, to state it another way, it is to appropriate, or to take possession of, and for ourselves, "the saving results of the violent death endured by CHRIST" (Thayer, p. 569).

I. THE MEANING OF THE BREAD.

Like the manna

- A. It came from heaven -- Christ's incarnation, and His pre-existence.
- B. It was sent by God.
- C. It was for the people to eat. It was all that they had, and it could only help them if they did eat it.
- D. It had to be consumed when the people ate it.

Thus we have in the bread a picture of the Deity of Christ, His incarnation, and, when broken, His death.

II. THE MEANING OF THE BLOOD.

There is no doubt but that the blood points to the death of Christ, His sacrificial, violent death.

The emphasis on the blood was new -- beginning with v. 53 and continuing through v. 56.

The Jews were forbidden to drink blood in connection with the OT sacrifices, or any other sacrifice, and so this must have struck them with amazement.

So the bread and the cup which we take in the Lord's Supper both point to the death of Christ. If there is a distinction (and there must be one), the bread speaks especially of what He gave, His body, Himself; the blood speaks of how He gave Himself, by death.

To eat and to drink is to believe.

This shows that salvation is a personal matter since we benefit only from what we eat -- not from what others may eat.

III. THE REPETITION OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

Regarding baptism -- it is only once. Regarding the Lord's Supper, we repeat it again and again. The early Church seems to have observed it daily for a time.

Why is there the difference?

Because baptism pictures our union with Christ in His death and resurrection -- which could only be once. It only needs to be once. That is sufficient.

Our text, in John 6:53-58 brings out the meaning as far as the Lord's Supper is concerned. Note the following truths which our Lord brought out. The Lord's Supper pictures our salvation in the following ways:

- A. There must be an initial eating and drinking, when we believe in Christ for the first time.

See v. 53. Otherwise there is no life. This is brought out by the aorist tense of the verbs which the Lord used in this verse.

This also constitutes a warning to those who had not believed in Christ.

- B. There must be continued eating, as evidence that we have life.

This is what the Israelites did. They ate manna every day. We are not only saved by faith, but we continue to show faith in Christ.

A true believer:

- ^ -- never gets away from Christ.
 - never ceases to depend upon Christ.
 - never tires of declaring his faith in Christ.
- "The just shall LIVE by faith."

But there is another reason:

- C. Eating and drinking pictures our union with Christ, our oneness with Him -- one of the most profound of truths that we have anywhere in the NT.

See John 6:56.

Just as what we eat and drink becomes a part of us, and we of it, so we have this truth concerning Christ. All of the bread we eat tonight, and all of the fruit of the vine that we drink, will be taken away in us, as a part of us.

- D. Repeated eating and drinking shows that we continue to live by Christ.

See John 6:57.

He sustains us. We live by Him, i.e., through Him, by means of Him.

- E. By eating and drinking over and over we shall that we will live forever, that we have eternal life.

See John 6:58; also vv. 54, 55.

Concl: All of this is symbolic of a real truth -- and of that truth as it applies to each one of us personally. No one should be involved in the symbol who has not actually trusted Christ. It becomes a farce then, and subjects the participant to the possibility of judgment from God.

In the same way, if a true believer partakes of the symbols while living in a manner that is a contradiction of what he has done, then this also may bring on judgment from God. This is the reason that we are to examine ourselves before we come to make sure that we are true to that which we are doing symbolically.

Finally, in observing the Lord's Supper we are all preaching. This is one great sermon. It is to provoke questions according to 1 Pet. 3:15, and then we are to be prepared to tell those who do not know the Lord why we do all of this.

May the Lord make our participation tonight more meaningful and more of a delight to the Lord and more of a blessing to each of us than ever before!