

1911 – THE MEMORIAL SUPPER – 1911

AGAIN we are approaching the anniversary of our dear Redeemer's crucifixion; once more we remind our readers of the lesson which years have taught many of us, namely, that for some unexplainable reason the Lord's consecrated people experience special trials and testings at this particular season – corresponding to our Lord's time of heaviness and sorrow, and the time of special testing amongst the early disciples. It was shortly before he went up to Jerusalem, foreknowing the crucifixion, that he explained it to the Apostles. It was then that he declared that only those who eat his flesh and drink his blood have life in them. Many of his close followers said, "This is a hard saying; who can receive it?" and walked no more with him. – John 6:60.

Shortly after, when telling the twelve of his approaching crucifixion, St. Peter brought upon himself a rebuke by saying, Far be it from thee, Lord. This thing shall not happen unto thee. But Jesus answered him, saying, Get thee behind me, Adversary, for thou savorest not of the things of God, but of the things of men. (Matt.16:22,23.) Your suggestions and advice are contrary to the Divine Program; it is necessary that the Son of man suffer sacrificially, that he might enter into his glory and accomplish his appointed work as the Savior of the Church and of the world – whosoever wills.

Later on, near the climax, we remember the special trial upon Judas, and how his love of money led him to oppose the anointing of the Master for his burial, and later on led him to sell that Master for thirty pieces of silver, and, later on, to betray him with a kiss. Still later we remember how all the disciples were disconcerted by the arrest of their Master and by his evident willingness to be arrested, so that they "all forsook him and fled." (Mark 14:50.) We remember how, still later, the noble St. Peter was overtaken in a serious fault and denied his Lord and Master, even with cursing.

Perhaps we *partly imagine* a parallel of testing on the Lord's people at this season of the year. And perhaps it is real and appropriate that the members of the Body of Christ should, in this particular at this season, have special trials, peculiar difficulties, testings of faith, obedience and loyalty.

THE LENTEN OR FASTING SEASON

It would appear that thoughts along the line above suggested came to others long ago and led to the appointment of the Lenten Season as a time of special fasting and prayer amongst the consecrated ones of the Lord's family. Certain it is that for long centuries this fasting has been in observance in the Roman Church, in the English Church, in the German Church, and, to some extent, in others.

Although with the majority fasting has become a mere outward form and ceremony, without heart appreciation, and, therefore, not pleasing to the Lord, nevertheless we believe that some fasted from the best of motives in olden times, and that some still so fast. It is not for us to judge and individually condemn anybody, yet many, we are sure, will confess to just what we have charged in an indefinite way. It is impossible, of course, for any laws or regulations to be made which will govern the heart – they can scarcely govern the flesh, even in the most casual manner.

We do not approve of set rules and laws governing such matters. The suggestions should be quite sufficient for all those who heartily desire to practise abstemiousness in respect to diet. We have the Master's suggestion that after his departure his followers would fast. Several instances of such fastings are recorded in the Scriptures, and these may be considered proper examples for the Lord's followers, none of whom are under law, under command, in respect to meats or drinks or other earthly ordinances.

A measure of self-restraint in fasting is valuable to us physically, as well as spiritually – and particularly in the Spring of the year. The

stronger foods necessary for the cold weather of winter are less necessary, as the weather becomes milder. Much of the Spring sickness is undoubtedly due to over-eating and may be considerably corrected by the observance of a measurable fast – restraint from the eating of dainties and rich food. And when the system is clogged with over-supply of nourishment, the brain becomes more stupid, impairing the higher mental powers, and particularly including those which connect us appreciatively with heavenly and spiritual things.

We throw out these suggestions without any desire to put a yoke or a law upon anybody, but wishing each to fast and pray according to the dictates of his own conscience and to receive spiritual blessings according to the degree of his fellowship with the Lord in this and in every matter.

THE DATE OF THE MEMORIAL SUPPER

As we have previously remarked, our Lord gave no intimation such as many dear Christian people have imagined – namely, that the Memorial Supper should be celebrated weekly, monthly, bi-monthly, tri-monthly. Most evidently the Supper was instituted by all of the Jewish arrangements as an annual observance – to take the place of the Passover Type. There was a definiteness about the date of the type which would not necessarily attach to our celebration of the antitype. The type was intended to specifically mark the exact date on which our Lord would be crucified. Hence great particularity on the part of the Jews was appropriate. Now that the great fact of Jesus' death is a thing of the past, there seems not to be as great necessity for particularity as to the exactness of a day and an hour.

Hence we see no objection to the custom followed by Episcopalians, Catholics and Lutherans of celebrating the Friday and the Sunday nearest to the anniversary of our Lord's death and resurrection, as Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Indeed, something may be said in favor of their custom, as it permits the anniversary to harmonize with the days of the week. However, for over thirty years we

have been accustomed to observe this Memorial – the nearest that we know to its exact anniversary, according to the Jewish reckoning of time – on the preceding evening of the 14th day of the Jewish Month Nisan. In view of this long custom, and the fact that some might not see clearly any advantage of a change; in view of the fact also that some might become confused and think that they were following an error, it is our preference. We advise, therefore, that the exact date, according to the Jewish calendar, be followed.

This year the new moon of the Spring Equinox appears March 30th, thus constituting it the First day of the First Month, Jewish time. Our Lord was crucified on the 14th day of the First Month, which this year will be April 12th. But the Memorial Supper, commemorative of his death, was celebrated on the evening preceding and therefore we, according to our previous custom, recommend that all, with one heart and one mind, unite in celebrating the great Redeemer's death on Tuesday night, April 11th, after six o'clock. Even then, of course, we will not all be able to celebrate at the same [R4756 : page 41] hour, because of differences of time; but the celebration will be very nearly at the same hour all over the world. The thought of this general fellowship will add to the joy and solemnity of the occasion. We recommend that all who love the Lord and are fully consecrated to do his will, even unto death, join in this celebration, which means so much to all of us.

It first of all reminds us of our dear Redeemer's sacrifice on behalf of his Church and on behalf of all the families of the earth. It reminds us, secondly, that we have vowed unto the Lord to walk in his steps, to suffer with him, to drink of his cup, to be baptized with his baptism of death. Of course, the breaking of the bread and the sipping of the cup, memorially, is far less important than our participation in the realities, of which they are merely a figure. We must in our minds and hearts feed upon the broken body of Jesus and realize by faith that we partake first of all, imputedly, of justification of our flesh through him and that, through him, [R4757 : page 41] comes all our hopes of a future life.

Secondly, as represented by his cup, we must share his sorrows, be partakers of the sufferings of Christ, fill up that which is behind of his afflictions, in walking faithfully in his footsteps – even unto death. The cup which the Father poured for the Master he drank. And by the grace of God we are privileged to share in his cup; for if we suffer with him, we shall also reign with him. And if we escape the sufferings of Christ and fail to become living sacrifices with him, we will thereby also be escaping the glorious privileges of his Kingdom.

We are giving this timely notice because some of our readers live in remote Australia and China.

