

The Resurrection Body of Christ the Lord

(Part 6)

By **DR. JOHN C. WHITCOMB**

President, Whitcomb Ministries, Inc.

Our salvation, by God's infinite grace, will be fully manifested when we behold our resurrected Savior in glory. Thus, “*it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed*” (Rom. 13:11).

What we have experienced, namely, full justification before God by faith, and what we are experiencing, namely, progressive sanctification, will be completed on that great day! “He who has begun a good work in you will complete *it* until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6).

So important is this three-fold aspect of personal salvation that the Apostle Paul expressed it again in his letter to the Colossians: “If then you were raised with Christ [i.e., justification and identification], seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth [i.e., progressive sanctification]. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ *who is* our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory [i.e., glorification]” (Col. 3:1-4).

Thus, we have been saved from the penalty of sin (justification); we are being saved from the power of sin (sanctification); and we shall some day (perhaps today!) be saved from the very presence of sin (glorification). It is for this reason that many churches today participate in a three-fold communion service in order to illustrate these basic truths of our salvation, following the example set by the early church. Evangelical churches everywhere agree that the bread and the cup illustrate the substitutionary work of Christ upon the cross (our justification) because our Lord stated that by means of this symbol we “proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26).

But this divinely revealed ordinance was to be the climax of the washing of the saints' feet, which our Lord commanded us to observe as an illustration of our need of daily cleansing (sanctification; cf. John 13:14-17), and also the climax of “the Lord’s Supper” (1 Cor. 11:20; cf. vss. 25, 33), which was not only the bread and the cup but rather a full meal (i.e., “love feasts” [Jude 12]; Greek: *agape*). Paul tells us that it was “after supper” (i.e., “the Lord's Supper” [1 Cor. 11:20]) that the bread and the cup were to be taken (1 Cor. 11:25).

At the very dawn of the church's existence, believers “continued steadfastly...in the breaking of [the] bread” (Acts 2:42). In the words of a prominent New Testament Greek scholar, “The presence of the articles in the expression ‘the breaking of the bread’ (Greek: *tēi klasei tou artou*) indicates more than just eating. It appears to be a reference to the symbolic eating of the Bread and the Cup, partaken in connection with a sacred meal, the Agape” (Homer A. Kent, Jr., *Jerusalem to Rome: Studies in Acts* [Winona Lake, IN: BMH Books, 1972], p. 34).

Later, the apostle Paul shared such a meal with the saints of Troas. “On the first *day* of the week...the disciples came together to break bread” (Acts 20:7; cf., vs. 11). Kent states: “The observance of the Lord's Supper was a principal reason for the gathering. As was the custom in the early church, the partaking of the bread and cup seems here to have been combined with an agape or love feast. The word ‘eaten’ (Greek: *geusamenos*) (20:11) is used elsewhere in the NT of the satisfying of hunger (not just a sampling) and could easily denote the agape” (Ibid., p. 156).

But what was the purpose of this special meal, “the Lord's Supper” or the agape?

Our Lord gave special significance to the last meal He shared with His disciples. He said, “I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God” (Luke 22:16). During that meal, “He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, ‘Take this and divide *it* among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes”” (Luke 22:17, 18).

Yet again, He assured them: “And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed *one* upon Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29, 30). All of this was said and done to direct the hearts of the apostles to the inaugural feast of the kingdom on the earth, where He, their glorified Lord, would be seen again, not as a disembodied spirit or in a vision, but as a fully glorified human being, with a resurrection body, able to participate in a literal banquet of food and drink.

During the 40 days following His resurrection, He demonstrated His ability to do this by eating “a piece of a broiled fish and some honeycomb” in the upper room (Luke 24:42; cf. vs. 43), and serving a breakfast of bread and fish by the Sea of Galilee (John 21:9-15). Thus, the apostles, representing regenerate Israel at this point, were fully informed of the great banquet their Lord would prepare for them at the dawn of the millennium.

When the church was created, 10 days after Christ's ascension, the apostles perpetuated this symbolic meal, as we have seen in Acts 2. Sadly, and almost predictably, as the years went by, the love feast would be abused and desecrated, especially in the church at Corinth. Paul corrected the abuses, but did not recommend that this precious symbolic meal should be abandoned.

Just before the end of the first century, the Lord Jesus revealed to the Apostle John another aspect of this future banquet, namely the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven (see Rev. 19:6-9). This, as we have seen, will be the first of two distinct parts: the celebration meal in heaven (for the church, the bride of Christ) followed soon after by the great banquet for believing Israel, believing Gentiles and the church, on the earth.

Just as God knew that we needed the powerful visual aids (i.e., teaching symbols) of the bread and the cup (for substitutionary atonement, i.e., justification) and the washing of feet (for daily cleansing, i.e., sanctification), so also He knew that we needed a teaching symbol for our ultimate glorification, which will be climaxed at the marriage supper of

the Lamb when the bride of Christ (all born-again Christians) will have “made herself ready” and will be “arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright” (Rev. 19:7, 8). It is then that we will celebrate our permanent union with Him, our resurrected and glorified Savior and bridegroom.

This, we believe, was “the Lord's Supper,” which was desecrated by the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 11:20; cf. 11:17-22, 33-34).

“If the practice of the Love Feast was to be optional, why didn't Paul just suggest ceasing the practice in light of the current abuses? When the evidence in Corinth is added to the evidence from Jerusalem (Acts 2:42-46 with the apostles present) as well as the evidence from Troas (Acts 20:7-11 with Paul present) as well as the evidence from Jude 12, as well as the evidence from 300 years of church history in Africa, Asia Minor and Europe, the question which follows is worth consideration: If this was purely cultural, then why does it appear that the apostles spread the practice and gave it their authority?”
(conclusion of the “Report of the Two-Year Study Committee of the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches,” 1982. As quoted in David R. Plaster, *Ordinances: What Are They?* [Winona Lake: BMH Books, 1985], p. 137).

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