

Lord's Supper



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The Lord's Supper was instituted by our Lord Jesus at the last Passover that He kept with His disciples the night of His betrayal, just before He suffered on the cross, to take the place of the Passover. This is recorded in Matthew 26:20-29; Mark 14:17-25; Luke 22:14-23; and John 13:18-30.

At the heart of the Lord's Supper is the truth that, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). Until we recognise the Lord's body and blood in the daily provision He gives us – the food we eat and water we drink – we celebrate the Lord's Supper in vain. Christ desire that members of His church celebrate this memorial of His death, but whoever practices open sin is excluded: "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat" (1 Corinthians 5:11). Beyond open sin, we are not to judge, but let a man examine himself, for the Lord has not given us to read hearts.

The apostle says, "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; 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. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood; this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come. Wherefore, whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1 Corinthians 11:23-30).

Letter and spirit

In 2 Corinthians 3:5-6, the apostle says: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." The gospel has both its

letter and its spirit, and many professed Christians, by resting in the letter, receive not the life which it is calculated to impart. Water, in baptism, is the letter that points out the purification of the soul; they who rest in this letter are without this purification; and dying in that state, they die eternally.

Bread and wine in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper are the letter; the atoning efficacy of the death of Jesus, and the grace communicated by this to the soul of the believer, are the spirit. Many rest in this letter, simply receiving these symbols without reference to the atonement or to their guilt; thus lose the benefit of the atonement and salvation of their souls. Many souls eat at the Lord's Supper without Christ. To such souls, Christ may truly say, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40).

The letter of the law condemns the sinner, for we all have sinned (Romans 3:23). But the ministration of the Spirit is life, because "the Lord is that Spirit" and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2 Corinthians 3:17) and life (John 6:63). He who eats the Lord's Supper not discerning the Lord's body, eats and drinks damnation to himself (1 Corinthians 11:29), for such a person receives the letter only without the ministration of the Spirit that gives life.

Living by the Word of God

Life comes only from the Word of God. “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.” “For He spake, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast” (Psalms 33:6, 9). One of the words which God spake in the beginning was this: “Let the earth bring forth grass, and herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, upon the earth” (Genesis 1:11). What was the result? – “And it was so. And the earth brought forth grass, and herb yielding seed after his kind, and the tree yielding fruit, whose seed was in itself, after his kind; and God saw that it was good” (verse 12). The plants sprung up by the Word of God.

Christ is the perfect embodiment of the spoken word of God. The Word of God that created all things is Christ, for Christ is “called The Word of God” (Revelation 19:13); this He has always been, and He speaks the words of God. The Word of God that gave and gives life to all created things is Christ, for Christ is “the Word of life” (Philippians 2:16); “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4); it is “Christ, who is our life” (Colossians 3:4).

Apart from Christ, there is no life at all; so that wherever there is any life, in the things He created, there is evidence of the presence of Christ.

If man does not recognise the presence of Christ, he is “like the beasts that perish” (Psalms 49:20). The life of Christ in man is pure or perverted, to the extent that Christ is allowed to have full sway. Every man lives only by the Word of God – by Christ. God did “rain bread from heaven” (Exodus 16:4); and Moses told unbelieving Israel that God “fed thee with manna” – bread from heaven – “that He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live” (Deuteronomy 8:3).

Blessing of food for life

We live by eating. We obtain strength from eating food. Sometimes God keeps up a man’s strength for a long period without food, as in the cases of Elijah and Moses: but nevertheless the fact remains that God has ordained that men must live by eating the food which He has provided for them. Eating food is a fact patent to everybody, that our physical, mental, and spiritual power has a direct relation to our eating. Let a man but refuse utterly to eat, and he will very soon have no power of any kind whatever.

Food is a blessing from God. The blessing that God promises to those who render to Him His tithe is thus stated: "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field" (Malachi 3:11). When people offered willingly in the days of Hezekiah, there was plenty to eat, because God "blessed His people" (2 Chronicles 31:1-10). God's witness of Himself is that He does good, sends rain and fruitful seasons, filling us with food and gladness (Acts 14:17).

God blesses us that we may live. Life and death, blessing and cursing, are set over against each other; but "in His favour is life" (Psalms 30:5); and the only life that He desires men to live is the righteous life. That, indeed, is the only thing that can really be called life. Accordingly, "God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from His iniquities" (Acts 3:26). Therefore God blesses us with food, in order that we may be able to live righteous lives.

Eating manna without faith

To the Israelites, God "had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven" (Psalms 78:24), so they may live holy lives.

“But with many of them He was not well pleased” (1 Corinthians 10:5), for they denied His presence, and so their carcasses fell in the wilderness. He gave them bread direct from Heaven; and since Christ is the bread that came down from heaven (John 6:51), it is evident that if they had seen Him in the gift of the manna, and had acknowledged Him in all their eating, and in all the strength derived from it, they would have been perfect and righteous before God.

Very few of the Jews in the wilderness recognised Christ’s presence among them. “They tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not?” (see 1 Corinthians 10:9; Exodus 17:7). Because they did not believe, they did not enter into God’s rest, but died in the desert. So we read, concerning the Lord’s Supper: “Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord ... For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1 Corinthians 11:27-30).

They would have lived a life of faith, and whoever does so is just – “the just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17). The children of Israel died in the wilderness because they did not eat by faith. “He that doubteth

is damned if he eat; because he eateth not by faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." Since they perished at last, it would have been just as good for them if they had not lived at all. God expects that men will eat and drink righteousness; for Christ says, "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6). Any man, who does not eat and drink righteousness, eats and drinks without faith and to no purpose.

Eat ye that which is good

In order, however, that man shall with faith eat righteousness, he must eat only "that which is good" and must not "spend money for that which is not the bread" of life (Isaiah 55:2). He must eat "to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). His soul may and should delight itself in fatness, but it must be the fatness of the house of God. In other words, if men would live righteous lives, they must literally and actually and by faith eat the flesh and drink the blood of the Son of God. This must be their sole life. Without this, there is no real abiding life. "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (1 John 5:12). These are the words of Jesus: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His

blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:53-54).

How to eat Christ's flesh

We feed upon Jesus by eating His word; for He is the Word. So He said, “The words that I speak unto you, they are Spirit, and they are life” (John 6:63). Does this seem intangible and unreal? Then remember the giving of the manna. Recall the statement that God fed the people with bread from heaven, in order that they might know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. By giving them bread He taught them that they were to live by the word (Deuteronomy 8:3). How so? – Because Christ Himself is the life of the bread. The life that we get from bread is the life of Christ, the Word of God, since everything that grows comes from the Word.

So when the unbelieving Jews referred to the giving of the manna (John 6:30-34), they answered their own question as to how Christ could give them Himself to eat; and they had but the day before had a demonstration of it, when Jesus took a little bread in His hands, and fed thousands of people, so that they were all filled, and there was more bread when

they had finished than when they begun (verses 9-13). By ordaining that men shall live by eating, and making them absolutely dependent on their daily bread for life, God has preached the Gospel to every creature, and put before them and into their hands, yes, into their bodies, the way of salvation and life.

Wash one another's feet

Turning to the Lord's Supper, we find it preceded by foot washing. "There was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22:24). This strife would show itself in an attempt to secure the place of honour at table, especially at this time, when they supposed that Christ was about to take the kingdom. We know that this is a matter of no small importance to worldly people. Jesus therefore told them that the place of honour in His kingdom is the place of greatest and lowliest service; and He gave them a practical illustration of this, by rising from the table and washing their feet. Then He said, "Ye call Me Master and Lord; and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to

you” (John 13:13-15). No command of Jesus is more emphatic than this, preceded by His own example.

Why is it not obeyed by all who profess to be His followers? If anything in the world could have won the heart of Judas, and held him back from the dark crime which he was about to commit, it would have been the sign of Jesus kneeling at his feet, and wash them. Yet Christ was the same then that He is now and always. “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (Hebrews 13:8). The Lord is washing us and serving all mankind continually.

Christ is greatest, because He does the greatest service; and the recognition of His constant, loving service for us will lead us continually to repentance, and will bind us to Him. It is most fitting that the ordinance of foot washing should accompany the Lord’s Supper, since both show communion with Christ. His word is Spirit, and we are made clean by the word which He speaks to us (John 15:3). Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by a water bath in the Word (Ephesians 5:26). And “he that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet” (John 13:10). That is, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him” (Colossians 2:6). “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit”

(Galatians 5:25). The water in which the feet are washed, represents the Spirit of Christ, in which we are continually to walk. Thus only have we fellowship with Christ; He says: "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me" (John 13:8); He washes us always.

Supping with Christ

Whatever Christ did, was the work of God in Him (John 14:10), and "whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever" (Ecclesiastes 3:14); no act of Christ is merely for a moment, but for eternity. It is not merely that its effects continue throughout eternity, but that every act of Christ on this earth in the flesh, is a revelation to us of His constant work, even when He is invisible to mortal eyes. So the Lord's Supper with His disciples, the same night that He was betrayed, shows us what He is daily doing. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock; if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with Me" (Revelations 3:20). The Lord's Supper is a constant thing to all who know Him indeed. His flesh is true food, and His blood is true drink, so that whosoever eats of Him shall live by Him, and whoever does not eat of Him has no life (John 6:55-57). We are not only to sup with Him, but He supplies the food – giving us Himself to eat.

Bread of life

Now it was God's plan that man, even in his state of innocence, should receive life by eating such food as the Lord provided for him. "And God said, Behold I have given you every herb *bearing seed*, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree *yielding seed*; to you it shall be for meat" (Genesis 1:29). The lesson that was necessary to teach to man after he had sinned, and that is necessary for us to learn today, is that in the bread which we eat every day we are receiving life from God through Jesus Christ, who said:

"My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He which cometh down from heaven, and *giveth life unto the world* ... This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of the bread, he shall live for ever; and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:32-51). We are now better prepared to understand the meaning of His statement, "This is My body." The life of God, from which we cut ourselves off by sin, has been restored to us in "Christ, who is our life" (Colossians 3:4).

The curse, which is death, came upon all things, but “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13). By His death on the cross the channel of life from God to man is kept open for all; through the acceptance of Christ by faith this gift of life may be continued to us throughout eternity. While “the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord,” yet this life is supplied to us in the food which God provides for us, of which bread, being in itself a perfect food, is a complete representative. The grain, from which the bread is prepared, is simply the body in which the life of the Word is brought to us: “The seed is the Word of God” (Luke 8:11), by His Word seed sprung, “But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body” (1 Corinthians 15:38).

And so all unleavened bread, which is simply bread in which there is no element of decay or death, represent the body which the Lord Himself has given to His own life, in order that by eating it we might receive life from Him. Those who recognise it as being wholly a gift of God, brought to us by the Gospel of the death and resurrection of Jesus, and so receive it by faith as the manifested life of Jesus, will enjoy this blessing of life for ever and will “have right to the tree of life” (Revelation 22:14). In the

earth made new by the Word of God “they shall plant vineyards, and eat the fruit of them” (Isaiah 65:21).

Vine of life

“And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament [covenant], which is shed for many for the remission of sins.” The principles already set forth will apply with equal force to the statement of Jesus concerning the wine. The blood is the life (Genesis 9:4). Jesus has said, “I am the true vine.” In the pure, unfermented juice of the grape, the product of the vine, we have the nearest possible approach to liquid life just as the Lord has prepared it. But, just as in the case of the bread, this gift of life comes to us through Jesus and His work in our behalf, and is in very truth His life, His blood.

This is My body

The Lord Jesus took bread, gave thanks, and said, “This is My body.” This occurred “as they were eating.” The bread was the ordinary unleavened bread that they had on the table, and such it was after Jesus had given thanks; just as the bread that Jesus distributed to the five thousand, after giving thanks, was exactly the same bread that it was when

He took it into His hands. It was barley bread that the lad had with him that day, and it was barley bread that the multitude ate of; yet they ate the body of Christ. So the bread of the Lord's Supper, although it was the ordinary bread that was being eaten in every Jewish family at that time of the Passover, was nothing else than the body of Christ. The words of Jesus are absolute and unequivocal, and admit of no interpretation. They state a simple fact, which we accept by faith: "This is My body."

Let it be borne in mind that the partaking of the body of Christ in the Lord's Supper is absolutely independent of any action of any priest or minister. It is utterly useless to spend time arguing (what is true enough) that the priest has not the power to change the bread into the body of Christ; for the Scripture tells us that it is Christ's body already, for He said: "This is My body." There is no magic whatever about the matter. The bread is the body of Christ, because His Word, which is His life, is the source whence everything comes, and is the life of everything.

Eating and drinking damnation

"Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." He will be in the

condition of the men who crucified Christ, not seeing in Him the Lord of glory. What does he who eats unworthily bring upon himself? The answer follows: “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself.” And how is it that one eats and drinks unworthily? By “not discerning the Lord’s body.”

How can one discern the Lord’s body, and thus avoid eating and drinking unworthily? – By faith; “He that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23). And how can one eat by faith? – Easily enough; he has only to believe the words of Christ: “This is My body.” It is faith that gives discernment. If we believe the words of Scripture, we shall have no difficulty in seeing the body of Christ, who is the power of God, in the gifts of our daily food which He bestows on us to keep us in life.

Acknowledging that all life is Christ’s

Faith means acceptance. “As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12). Faith receives Christ into the inner life. Faith takes Him for all that He is, and all that He wishes to be to us. So if we eat the body of Christ worthily, we

acknowledge that He is our life, and submit ourselves to Him, that He may direct His own life in His own way.

By the Lord's Supper we signify this. In the bread of the Lord's Supper we do not receive the body of the Lord any more than we do in an ordinary meal (providing of course that the meal is of that which the Lord Himself gives us to eat), but we then solemnly remind ourselves of the fact, and make known our profession to others. In short, the Lord's Supper is our public and solemn profession of faith in the fact that we have no life except in Christ, and that we receive His life in the food that He gives us to eat.

The knowledge of this truth sanctifies and glorifies eating and drinking. He who lives in constant recognition of it, eats and drinks to the glory of God. He eats and drinks by faith, for since we live by our food, it is evident that he who lives by faith must eat by faith. And such an one is righteous, for the just man is the one who lives by faith. He eats and drinks righteousness. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

If we will daily and hourly remember and acknowledge that we have no life except the life of Christ who is come in our flesh, He has pledged Himself to see that our ways please God. He takes

the responsibility on Himself; our part is simply to acknowledge His presence and His right to control.

Consequences of not recognising Christ's life

What are the consequences of eating and drinking unworthily, that is, of not discerning the Lord's body? – Here is the answer: “For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.” How was it with Israel in the desert? They ate manna, but they died, for they did not eat in faith.

“With many of them God was not well pleased; for they were overthrown in the wilderness.” Why was he not well pleased with them? – Because they did not believe; for “without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Hebrews 11:6). Every day they ate of Christ, the bread that came down from heaven; but since they did not eat in faith, and did not discern His body, they fell in the wilderness.

They did “all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed [went with] them; and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:3-4). Christ is the living Bread sent down from heaven (John 6:34-35, 48-51); and it was of Him that the children of Israel ate in the desert. But many ate without faith and were overthrown as a result.

Someone may ask, Why should this follow? Why should they be overthrown simply because they did not discern the Lord's body? The answer is, that it could not be otherwise. Their overthrow was not an arbitrary thing, but was the natural and inevitable result of their not discerning the Lord's body in the food that He gave them day by day.

Thus: since they did not recognise the Lord in the bread that He gave them for their life, they very naturally did not yield themselves to Him. Since they did not recognise Him as their life – not a part, but the whole – they would of course assume the right to control their own actions, and to do as pleased them. This was what they did; and it is what everybody does, just to the extent that he fails to discern and acknowledge the Lord's body. Without faith it is impossible to please God; because he who does not recognise that he has no life except from God, will naturally please himself.

It is the same as it was with the chief priests and the rulers of the Jews. They did not recognise the presence of the Lord in a human body, and so they put Him to death as a criminal, saying, "His blood be on us, and on our children" (Matthew 27:25). If they had known Him as "the hidden wisdom," – "the wisdom of God," – "they would not have crucified the

Lord of Glory” (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). They were none the less guilty, for they might have known if they had believed that which had been told them by our Lord.

But professed Christians today are just as much in danger of rejecting Christ, and bringing upon themselves the blood of the Lord of glory, through not recognising Him, as were the Jews of old. He is “the Life.” People say that our life comes from Him, but that does not fully express the truth; it rather tends to conceal its fullness. He is our life, and in taking that which imparts life to us, and continues it, we are taking Christ Himself; for there is no life but His life – Himself. Whether we believe it or not, we are living by Him, – by His flesh and blood, – just as were the unbelieving Jews in the wilderness. This life is given to us, in order that it may be “made manifest in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:11).

If we recognise that Christ is our life, then the life which we live in the flesh will be by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and gave Himself for us (Galatians 2:20); Christ Himself will live in us, doing the works that He did when He came in Judea. Our part will be to yield to the life, that God may use it in His own way to His glory. If we do not recognise the life; if we do not discern the Lord’s body when we receive the gift of life, then we take His life without

allowing the power of the resurrection of life to shine within us. We are thus guilty of putting Him to death.

The death of the Lord is the bestowal of life upon us; therefore every breath of life that comes to us from God; every morsel of food that renews our fainting life; every drink of the refreshing, life-giving fluid that comes to us from the rock or the vine, is proof to us of the death of Christ – of His gift of Himself to us, to deliver us from this present evil world. In everything that has life, and that gives life, the cross of Christ – the power of God – is revealed. Every meal that we eat, therefore; every glass of pure water, or pure fruit of the vine that we drink; every breath of life that we inhale, is proof to us that God has made us accepted in His Son, and that He gives Him to us for the forgiveness of our sins.

In remembrance of Christ

Jesus said, “This do in remembrance of Me.” We are to partake of the bread in the Lord’s Supper, in remembrance of the fact that Jesus is “*the* life.” Just as in the intervals of our meals we live on the food that we take at those seasons, so in the intervals of the occasions when we eat the Lord’s Supper, we live on that which we partake then. That is, we live on the Word, the life of Christ. The Lord’s Supper is

a public confession that “Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (1 John 4:2).

This is as true today as it was when the children of Israel were in the desert of Arabia. The man who does not day by day recognise the body of Christ in His gifts, eats and drinks damnation to himself. Is this too strong a statement? Everyone who thinks of it for a moment must confess that it is not.

“Whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Romans 14:23); and “the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience” (Colossians 3:6). “The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God” (Psalms 9:17).

Now there is no one thing that men do oftener than eat, except to breathe. Two or three times a day, and with some even oftener, they sit at table and partake of food for the support of their lives. And the taking of the food into the body is only the beginning of the process of receiving it; the work begun by the teeth and tongue is continued for hours by the other organs of the body. Therefore if men do not remember God in the food that they eat, they cannot be said to remember Him at all.

Again: all our strength comes from what we eat; if therefore we do not recognise and acknowledge that the strength is the Lord's we shall not yield it to Him

for Him to control and direct; and that means of course that we will do what seems right in our own eyes; and the end of that way is death.

The Lord's Supper is a matter of health

It will be seen that the Lord's Supper contains a lesson on health, in that it teaches us how to eat and drink. It sets the pattern for every meal, for since we are the Lord's, every meal should be eaten as to Him. Now since according to 1 Corinthians 11:30, failure to discern the Lord's body is the cause why many are weak and sickly, and why many die, it follows that if the Lord's body were discerned, the opposite would be the case. If men discerned the Lord's body, they would find strength and health.

But in order that men may discern the Lord's body in their food, it is necessary that they should eat only that in which His body is clearly to be discerned. That is, they must eat that in which His life is contained in its purest form, and that, as we saw in the beginning, is the food which grows directly from the earth. In partaking of that, they get the life of Christ at first hand. They are not taking in the viciousness that has come as the result of the curse. It is true that God gave man permission to eat flesh, and so He allowed man to practice polygamy,

because of the hardness of their hearts; “but from the beginning it was not so” (Matthew 19:10). Out of the ground God makes food grow.

No living creature can find anything better to eat except that which grows from the ground; the beasts need exactly the same food elements that man does, and they find them in the plant creation; and the only change that the food elements in the plants undergo in the body of the beast is degeneration; so that when man eats the flesh of animals, he is simply, at the very best, taking life one degree removed from the hand of God. He is taking second-hand food, food that has been impaired by use.

It should be understood that the Lord’s Supper, as the model meal, teaches us that the flesh of animals should form no part of our bill of fare. But some one will surely say, with an air of triumph, as though he had disproved the whole teaching, ‘But Jesus fed the five thousand with fish as well as bread.’ They think that that is a proof that He wishes that we should eat flesh; but that is a mistaken idea.

In drawing the lesson from the miracle, Jesus spoke only of bread – “Having eyes, see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember? When I brake the five loaves among five thousand, how many baskets full of fragments took ye up?”

(Mark 8:18-19). Further, it should be remembered that it was only at the Lord's Supper, where no animal food was, that Jesus said, "This is My body;" and that in the wilderness, where He gave the people "bread from heaven," He gave then no flesh of animals. And finally, we should not overlook a single expression that is used in connection with the fish in the desert: "He also distributed as much fish as they wanted" (John 6:11). He did then just what He has always done, and what He does still: He provides everything, and allows each person to choose for himself. He multiplies fish, animals, and birds, as well as fruits and grains, and gives people the privilege of eating what they please.

At the same time the Lord has twice indicated in the most striking manner what is best for men, and what they ought to choose. First, in the beginning, when He prescribed the plant diet for men (Genesis 1:29-30). Second, at deliverance from Egypt, He intended to remove flesh from their diet when He gave them only manna (a plant diet), providing it daily (Numbers 11:7-8). Yet when the people longed for flesh, He unhappily gave it to them, performing a miracle to that end (Numbers 11:4-6, 18-20, 33).

The Lord gives men exactly what they wish, even though it is contrary to what He knows is best, but

He does not free them from the consequences of their unlawful desires. It is always best to choose only that which the Lord has indicated is best.

It is not by any means claimed that all religion is summed up in abstinence from animal food; only that since we live by the life of God, we ought to give diligence to eat those things that contain that life most nearly in its fulness. This applies to the purity of one's drink, and of the air which one breathes, and to the securing of abundance of bright sunshine, and perfect cleanliness as well.

We are to live by faith; faith comes only by God's Word: and "every word of God is pure" (Proverbs 3:5); God has nothing to do with impurity of any sort; therefore whatsoever is not pure is not of the Word of God, and so cannot possibly be of faith. But however pure air, food, or drink and surroundings may be, though it be the perfect body of Christ, yet if all be not received in faith, in conscious recognition of Christ, it is as though it were not.

The history of ancient Israel shows this. They had the best of food, direct from heaven, yet they died, because they did not eat in faith. But this must by no means be taken as evidence that what one eats or drinks is of no consequence. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory

of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). This is the sum of all godliness. And in this will be found life for the body as well as for the soul; “for godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Timothy 4:8).

Christ is our life, and “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses” (Isaiah 53:4; Matthew 8:17). If therefore we receive Him absolutely as our life, we shall experience the truthfulness of the words that He forgiveth all our iniquities, and healeth all our diseases. “And said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God, and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of those diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians, for I am the Lord that healeth thee” (Exodus 15:26); the last part could be rendered, literally, “I am the Lord thy Physician.”

“And ye shall serve the Lord your God, and He shall bless thy bread and thy water; and I will take sickness away from the midst of thee” (Exodus 23:25). “My son, attend to My words; incline thine ear unto My sayings, let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh” (Proverbs 4:20-22).

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