

COMPETELY REVISED: Eucharistic Worship

Written by Calvin Fox

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In the middle of what was the Jewish Passover Meal with his disciples, the Lord commanded a certain Ceremony. This would come to be known as the "Eucharist". We read Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me." -Luke 22:18-20

Paul describes the scene this way, when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." -1 Cor 11:23-25

Three questions pop up here: What is meant by "do this"? Who is to do this? And what does "in remembrance of me" mean?

The "who" refers to Disciples, i.e.- Believers in Jesus, His Followers, Christians. This is important. It means that whatever the Eucharist is, it is not something to be done by unbelievers in order to be saved (it could be the occasion of conversion, but that is not its intent). The "what" is eating and drinking the Bread and Wine. Jesus was commanding the action of eating and drinking the Elements, which he said are His Body and Blood. And "why" is explained as a means of remembering Him- this action was to be his official Memorial (anamnēsis occurs 4 times in 4 verses in the Greek. It means recollection or that which serves to keep in or bring to mind; a memorial).

The Eucharist as a Memorial

Jesus said he is to be remembered [memorialized] by this Meal. Did Jesus mean Himself ("Me") or Himself in conjunction with His Death, i.e.- his sacrifice, of Himself, His Body and Blood, for the Redemption of the World?

Paul wrote, "as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim [preach] the Lord's death until he comes. -1 Cor 11:26

Using Paul's statement we can interpret Jesus' command as meaning the Supper would be a memorial, not to Him personally, but particularly to His Death. What Jesus was thinking is explained in His words,

Mark 14:24 he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for [uper- on behalf of] many.

Mark 10:45 the Son of Man came ... to give his life as a ransom for [anti- in place of, a substitute for] many."
Cf Matt 20:28

Jesus knew that His death would be not only on behalf of sinners, it would be as a substitute for

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them. The Lord's Supper is not to simply remember Jesus or to recall the Man who was the Model of a suffering servant. We are not remembering Him for his miracles or works of mercy and compassion. We are specifically remembering his sacrificial Death. The Lord's Supper is the Memorial to the substitutionary Atonement that secured our Salvation.

The purpose of the Memorial is also to remind God of Jesus' Sacrifice, or more specifically to remind God that we are approaching Him in and through that Sacrifice. God never forgets and does not need reminding of anything. Yes, but look at these verses-

Exodus 28:11-13 you shall set the two stones on the shoulder pieces of the ephod, as stones of remembrance for the sons of Israel. And Aaron shall bear their names before the LORD on his two shoulders for [His] remembrance.

Exodus 28:28-30 Aaron shall bear the names of the sons of Israel in the breast piece of judgment on his heart, when he goes into the Holy Place, to bring them to regular remembrance before the LORD.

Exodus 30:15-17 You shall take the atonement money from the people of Israel and shall give it [in the Tabernacle] that it may bring the people of Israel to remembrance before the LORD,

This is also what the Watchmen on the city walls were doing-

Isaiah 62:5-7 On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You, who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest.

We are not worthy to approach a holy God on our own or on our merit. We approach Him by claiming the Sacrifice on our behalf. We claim the Blood. We kneel and confess our unworthiness but also to remind God that we approach through Christ and His sacrifice on our behalf. With the Eucharist, we approach God as Blood-bought sinners.

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ... 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience [by the Blood of Jesus 9:14) and our bodies washed with pure water. [Baptism- Titus 3:5]

The Eucharist as Effective Symbols of Sacrifice

Most all Christians can agree that the Lord's Supper is a Memorial. Is it more?

The most basic concept of Biblical Worship is "Sacrifice". That is the essential. The Eucharist is the apex of a Worship Service. Is the Eucharist also a sacrifice?

1 Cor. 11:27 Whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord.

This would not be true if the Bread and Wine were simply and only bread and wine, "mere"

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arbitrary symbols of the body and blood of Jesus. The way many evangelicals, especially children, handle the Elements after a Service, would indicate they do not believe they are sacred. They are nothing but grape juice and bread to most Protestants.

During the Ritual, the Celebrant lifts the Elements and pronounces Jesus' words: "This is My Body". "This is My Blood". The elements have the authority of Jesus himself behind them. This is essential to their meaning and value. The Bread and Cup are the Body and Blood of Jesus to us because He says they are. How is this possible and in what sense? Is the Eucharist a Sacrifice? No. Is what was offered in sacrifice on the Cross 2000 years ago on the Table now? No- and Yes

Obviously, Jesus was still alive when he made that original announcement. The inert matzo [unleavened bread used in the Passover or the Communion Wafer or Bread] and wine could not have been his actual, living body at that moment. And today, that body, having been resurrected, is in Heaven. Again, the matzo and wine can not be the literal body and blood of Jesus.

What Jesus is doing in the Upper Room, is making these consecrated elements effectual symbols. They are far more than simple arbitrary symbols ("this stands for that"). On His authority, the symbols of bread and wine produce or effect what they symbolize. They are effectual. We see this concept with money and stamps. Dollar bills and postage stamps are effectual symbols. They are mere pieces of paper in themselves, but with the authority of the Government, they make things happen. They are effectual. They have purchasing power or they move mail. They are more than paper. The matzo and wine are more than matzo and wine. The authority of Christ behind them enables them to convey what they symbolize. They have been authorized by Jesus to be the effectual, not arbitrary, symbols of his body and blood offered for our sins. The pronouncement of Jesus' words by the Celebrant and the action of the Holy Spirit are what make the Supper a Sacrament. This reality does not depend on or require anyone's faith. Likewise, the Gospel is the Gospel, whether anyone believes in it or not. But, the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation only to those who believe it and those who do not believe are condemned. The Lord's Supper makes the Gospel visible. Therefore, the Eucharistic Elements, in conjunction with the Gospel, are the power of God unto Salvation but only to those who receive them with faith and they bring condemnation to those who receive them without faith.

Communion and the Forgiveness of Sins

1 Corinthians 10:18 are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?

When sacrificial sin offerings were made, in the Old Testament, the worshiper identified himself with the animal- it represented him. In this way, the worshiper received the results of the Sacrifice, i.e.-forgiveness- see Leviticus 1-7

1 Corinthians 10:16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

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This “participation” includes participation in the results secured by the sacrifice of the body and blood, i.e.-forgiveness

1 John 1:8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

*2:1 ... if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ.... 2 He is [present tense]
the propitiation for our sins...*

His Sacrifice advocates for us. We remind God of the Blood of His Son. We ask God to remember what Christ has done. We ask God to remember that we believe in what His Son has done. His Blood pleads for us and we plead for cleansing based on that.

1:7 the blood of Jesus ... cleanses us [present tense] from all sin.

By eating and drinking the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist, we identify with Him and His Sacrifice. We are saying, by this action and in our hearts, “God, this Sacrifice is on my behalf. I do not kneel before you in my sin. I come before you under the covering of Christ’s Blood. I do not come empty handed. I kneel before you and seek forgiveness on the basis of this Sacrifice.

We are already a baptized Christians. We do not receive Communion to become a Christian; but, as sinners still, we sin. From week to week, sin accumulates in our lives. Christ secured our forgiveness at the cross; but, we can and must renew our appropriation of it as we partake of the Bread and Wine. This, of course, supposes that we come to the Table with contrition, having confessed our sins and trusting in Jesus the Lord as our Savior.

The result of this act of eating and drinking the effective symbols of the Body and Blood of Jesus is assurance (a sign and seal of God’s Promises) of forgiveness of our current sins. Kneeling at the Lord’s Table can be a powerful experience. A holy moment. A life changing moment.

This is why, again, it is altogether inappropriate for unbelievers or those who do not understand or believe in the Gospel and what the Lord’s Supper means to receive Communion.

The Eucharist as Meal

The Eucharist is Memorial of the Sacrificial Death of Jesus. It is more. It is the means by which we can secure forgiveness of our sins. The Eucharist is even more than all that. It is a Meal.

The concept of the Eucharist as a Meal, in which we spiritually ingest the Risen Lord (feeding on Him in our hearts by faith) comes from the words of Jesus recorded in John, chap.6. Jesus is the source of our Life. He offers Himself and that Life to us in the Eucharist. Through it, He truly and objectively feeds and nourishes us in body and soul. He is really present and

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receiving the Elements, we actually receive His life. This is a new concept to me as an evangelical; but it is an old one, both Catholic and Reformed. I now stand in an ancient Stream.

The Lamb is alive today. He is in Heaven, not on earth. This is important because it means that He is not literally on the Table or in, or with, or over, the Elements in any corporeal or physical way; we can not feed on him with our teeth. But in the action of the Supper, Christ, the Paschal Lamb, is truly and really present. Partaking of the Body and Blood offers a special opportunity for real communion with the Lamb that was slain, but who is alive. How is this possible? The Book of Revelation helps us grasp this. Read this with your imagination engaged.

Worship in Heaven described

Rev 5:6 ... I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, ... 8... the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying, "Worthy are you ... for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth."

11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!" 13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, ... to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!" 14 And the four living creatures said, "Amen!" and the elders fell down and worshiped.

Rev 7:9 I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, 10 and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" 11 And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, 12 saying, "Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

15 [Saints in Heaven] are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence. 16 They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat. 17 For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

This is what goes on in a worship service in Heaven. It is altogether, absolutely marvelous. Now this is a Model for Worship here on earth. Imagine that!

The Heart of Eucharistic Worship

In the action of the Eucharist, Believers can ascend into the presence of the Living Lamb who is in Heaven and enjoy this worship experience. There they are fed and find refuge and comfort. This entrée into the Holy of Holies is made possible by the Atoning Death of Jesus and by Believers claiming the covering of that Sacrificial Blood. Of course they can do this anytime, anywhere, but the occasion of the Eucharist is the God-given and appointed means for doing this, especially as a congregation. It is the heart of corporate Biblical Worship.

When Believers worship at the Altar in Church, Christ does not come down, but we ascend in the Spirit to Him. He is present there and we have the privilege through the Blood to enter into that true and real Presence and enjoy heavenly (liturgical) worship, especially when we gather at the Table of the Lord.

Rev.4:1 I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.' 2 At once I was in the spirit and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne!

Ephesians 2:18 we both have access in one Spirit to the Father.

Colossians 3:1 If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.

Hebrews 10:19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, 20 by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ... 22 let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith

Heavenly Worship Rev 4:1-11

1 I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.' [John is not describing the Rapture!] 2 At once I was in the spirit and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne! 3 And the one seated there looks like jasper and cornelian, and around the throne is a rainbow that looks like an emerald. 4 Around the throne are twenty-four thrones, and seated on the thrones are twenty-four elders, dressed in white robes, with golden crowns on their heads. 5 Coming from the throne are flashes of lightning, and rumblings and peals of thunder, and in front of the throne burn seven flaming torches, which are the seven spirits of God; 6 and in front of the throne there is something like a sea of glass, like crystal.

Around the throne, and on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: 7 the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with a face like a human face, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle. 8 And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and inside. Day and night without ceasing they sing,

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'Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.'

9 And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to the one who is seated on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall before the one who is seated on the throne and worship the one who lives for ever and ever; they cast their crowns before the throne, singing,

11 'You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you created all things, and by your will they existed and were created.'

Eucharistic Worship can be a foretaste of this heavenly experience! The Reader can see, if such is the case, why the Eucharist is meant to be the apex, the height, the peak moment of Worship. You can make your own comparison with the Worship in your church.