

Communion 4-28-13

A matter of some confusion in the religious world today is the question as to the substance to the elements used on the Lord's Table. The Roman Catholic church teaches the doctrine of transubstantiation, that is, the elements of the table literally become the blood and body of Christ. This is not taught in the Bible. The Calvinistic view is that of Spiritual Transubstantiation; while this sounds more likely, it too is not what the Bible states. The Biblical view is that of a figurative memorial. What is a figurative memorial?

Figurative language is used every day. Consider these examples:

I have told you a million times – hyperbole

I am as hungry as a horse – simile

He is a wolf in sheep's clothing – metaphor

Now consider similar examples in the Bible:

Matthew 23:24 "Swallow a camel" - hyperbole

Matthew 13:44 "the kingdom of heaven is like" - simile

James 3:6 "the tongue is a fire" - metaphor

Jesus used a great deal of figurative language. We must use context and comparison of parallel/similar passages to discern when a literal meaning is necessary, or a figurative meaning applies.

"These things I have spoken to you in figurative language; but the time is coming when I will no longer speak to you in figurative language, but I will tell you plainly about the Father. John 16:25

All these things Jesus spoke to the multitude in parables; and without a parable He did not speak to them, Matthew 13:34

This brings us to the purpose of our lesson. In Matthew 26:26-29 Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. At that moment He said that the unleavened bread of the Passover was His body sacrificed, and the fruit of the vine was His blood of new covenant. Both the context and other passages tell us that this is a figurative statement.

An Emblem is a physical representation of a person or idea. Webster's Dictionary says it is: a *visible sign of an idea; an object, or the figure of an object, symbolizing and suggesting another object, or an idea, by natural aptness or by association; a figurative representation; a typical designation; a symbol;*¹ We use this word to describe the figurative nature of the elements of the Lord's Table.

Why these emblems? The Unleavened bread is associated with Christ's body in the Gospel accounts. Why unleavened bread? This was the bread of the Passover, which itself was a fore-

¹ <http://www.webster-dictionary.org/definition/emblem>

shadow of the death of Christ. But it may have more to do with the figurative nature of leavening. Consider these passages:

Then Jesus said to them, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." Matthew 16:6

Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Galatians 5:9

As you see, leavening represents sin. It fits well; once leaven is introduced to the dough, it permeates and affects the entire batch. So it is with sin; once touched by sin, we are "contaminated" or made unclean by it. But now consider Christ, who was "*in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*" (Hebrews 4:15b). It was in His physical death that He removed sin ((Jesus) *Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed. 1 Peter 2:24*). As we can see, unleavened bread is a perfect representation of the body of Christ.

Why the Fruit of the Vine? There is some language in the Bible which points to the similarity of blood and the juice of the vine plant (*He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes. Genesis 49:11*). Let us see that specifically, this is the choice for representing what the blood did:

"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" Matthew 26:28

".....the church of God which He purchased with His own blood." Acts 20:28

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Blood is the purchase price of the covenant; this is true even of old (Hebrews 9:18).

Why the order we find in the Gospel pattern? Consider the words of the Hebrew writer:

He said, "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Hebrews 10:9-10

"*He takes away the first*" – we know that by physically dying, Jesus fulfilled the previous covenants and justified God by proving they were fair. He did not sin in the flesh. Unleavened bread is this memorial. But by dying, which nailed these things to the cross, He also "*establishes the second*"; His blood then paid the price of a new covenant. It was necessary for the first covenants to be removed (in the body of Christ) for the final; covenant to be instituted (by His blood). Therefore, we find that there is a specific order to the pattern.