

BISHOP JOHN WELLS

Second Counselor in the Presiding Bishopric

I am impressed to speak to you on the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. It was instituted near the close of the Master's life. His earthly ministry was over, his public service was ended. He was staying at Bethany when he said to his apostles, "We will keep the Passover." He sent Peter and John to prepare for this great annual event and said unto them:

Go ye into the city, and there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water: follow him.

And whosoever he shall go in, say ye to the good man of the house, The Master saith, Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?

And he will show you a large upper room furnished and prepared: there make ready for us.

And his disciples went forth, and came into the city, and found as he had said unto them: and they made ready the passover.

No doubt his disciples went to the temple, purchased a lamb without blemish and prepared it in the room they had rented. And when the time was come he sat down with the Twelve. They partook of unleavened bread and bitter herbs which reminded them of their sufferings in Egypt, and of the roasted lamb procured at the temple, and no doubt performed the usual rites prescribed by the strict Jewish ritual.

When the Passover ceremony was completed and while they were still at the table in the room, the Master took some of the unleavened bread, blessed it and gave to each of his disciples, saying, "Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."

He then took the cup of wine, which on the Passover day was usually three-fourths wine and one-fourth water, gave thanks and blessed it, and gave it to them with the command: "Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

The simple ceremony of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper was inaugurated so that his disciples would perpetually remember his death, his atonement, and his teachings.

The Apostle Paul had raised up a branch of the church at Corinth. Learning that there were some abuses growing in this large branch, he wrote them a letter and in this letter he said:

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 testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.

For as often as ye eat 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.

The Apostles were no doubt strongly impressed with the solemn words he expressed on the night before his crucifixion. The unleavened bread and the lamb of the Passover were looked upon as memorials of their deliverance from Egypt. The Passover had already been instituted to remind the Jews of the coming of Christ, his great atoning sacrifice which he should make. Now the old Passover symbol had been fulfilled. Jesus was about to leave them. His public ministry was ended. He would no longer be with them and they needed some common bond which would link them to each other and to their Master, and in this simple but impressive manner was instituted the spiritual bond or covenant, the ordinance known to us as the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. The bread and wine, duly consecrated by prayer, became emblems of the Lord's body and blood, to be eaten and drunk reverently in remembrance of him. This ceremony is full of deep spiritual significance.

When the Master established his church on this western continent, he did not leave the Nephites in doubt as to his identity, nor as to his wishes concerning the Lord's supper. After the great destruction and cataclysm, many of the people who were left gathered around the Land Bountiful. A voice was heard among all the inhabitants of the land:

Behold, I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I created the Heavens and the earth, and all things that in them are. I was with the Father from the beginning. I am in the Father and the Father in me; and in me hath the Father glorified his name.

I came unto my own and my own received me not. And the scriptures concerning me are fulfilled.

And as many as have received me, to them have I given to become the sons of God; and even so will I to as many as shall believe on my name, for behold, by me redemption cometh, and in me is the law of Moses fulfilled.

I am the light and the life of the world. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

And ye shall offer up unto me no more the shedding of blood; yea, your sacrifices and your burnt offerings shall be done away, for I will accept none of your sacrifices and your burnt offerings.

And ye shall offer for a sacrifice unto me a broken heart and a contrite spirit. And whoso cometh unto me with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, him will I baptize with fire and with the Holy Ghost. . . .

Behold, I have come unto the world to bring redemption unto the world, to save the world from sin.

The Savior ministered to the Nephites and taught them the Gospel. Many marvelous things happened among this chosen people. But now he was about to leave and in order that they might be kept mindful of his coming and of his mission, he instituted among them the same sacra-

ment of the Lord's supper, as he had among the disciples on the eastern continent. He asked his disciples to bring bread and wine, and while they were absent he had the people sit down on the grass, and when the disciples brought this bread and wine he blessed it and broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, who afterwards gave it to the multitude. He said it should be given unto the people of his church and to all those who should believe and be baptized in his name. His final words were as follows:

And this shall ye always observe to do, even as I have done, even as I have broken bread and blessed it and given it unto you.

And this shall ye do in remembrance of my body, which I have shown unto you. And it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me. And if ye do always remember me ye shall have my spirit to be with you.

He emphasized the thought that in partaking of the bread they do it in remembrance of his body, and in partaking of the wine they should do it in remembrance of his blood, and witness unto the Father that they would always remember him.

On the 6th day of April, 1830, when the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was organized, and after the usual preliminaries preparatory to organizing the Church under the laws of the State of New York, the Prophet and his friend, Oliver Cowdery, were sustained as the first and second elders of the Church, and then the sacrament of the Lord's supper was administered and partaken of by the baptized members of the Church present on that occasion. At that meeting the Saints were advised that it was expedient that the Church should meet together often, and partake of bread and wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus. The prayers to be used in this sacred ordinance were also given. Later, while the Prophet was in quest of wine to administer the sacrament, he was told by the Lord:

For, behold, I say unto you, that it mattereth not what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink when ye partake of the sacrament, if it so be that ye do it with an eye single to my glory—remembering unto the Father my body which was laid down for you, and my blood which was shed for the remission of your sins.

The question might be asked, "How often should we partake of these emblems?" The Lord has not left us in doubt about this matter, for in a revelation given August 7, 1831, known as Section 59, the Lord stated:

Thou shalt offer a sacrifice unto the Lord thy God in righteousness, even that of a broken heart and a contrite spirit.

And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day.

For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotion unto the Most High.

The records of the Church show that many members absent themselves from this important meeting. Does this mean that we do not fully understand or appreciate the importance of the sacrament and the

blessings that come from partaking of it? Every individual who has complied with the ordinances of the Gospel and has become a member of the Church is expected and required to attend the sacramental service on the Lord's day and there partake of this holy ordinance. It is a privilege to be counted worthy to partake of this sacrament.

We have considered the institution of the sacrament by the Master himself, with its impressive purpose of being an abiding memorial of the life, teachings and Gospel of the Master. Now let us consider its benefits and blessings to us as members of the Church.

The efficacy of partaking of the sacrament is contingent on our worthiness. We must partake of it in faith, must be sincerely repentant and desire forgiveness for ourselves and be ready to forgive others. If we partake of it worthily, with a broken heart and a contrite spirit, in meekness, reverence, humility, and in the spirit of worship, it will bring to us a chastening and purifying spirit.

What an inspiration and strength it gives to know there is someone who is so interested in us that if we will take upon us his name and keep his commandments, he, in turn, promises that his spirit shall abide with us. In the many trials and temptations of life, what a source of comfort this promise gives. When partaken of often and in the proper spirit, it is a safeguard against evil, and we shall develop an intimate fellowship with God and with one another. It will give us a richness of spirit, and it will uplift, ennoble and develop an active, living faith within us.

It is my sincere prayer for the Latter-day Saints that we may attend to our sacramental meetings and reap the rich blessings in store for us. May the Lord bless us in our endeavors to do so, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

The congregation sang the hymn, "How Firm a Foundation," after which the closing prayer was offered by Elder Elmer E. Hinckley, President of the Nevada Stake.

Conference adjourned until 10:00 Saturday morning, October 3.

SECOND DAY

MORNING MEETING

The Conference reconvened Saturday morning, October 3, at 10 o'clock a. m.

The Relief Society Singing Mothers (Sister Charlotte O. Sackett, director) provided the music for this session of the Conference, and sang as an opening number "Holy Art Thou," (Largo).

Elder Marvin O. Ashton, President of the Highland Stake, offered the opening prayer.

An alto solo, "List! The Cherubic Host," (Gaul), was sung by Mrs. Emery Epperson.