

been selecting and measuring ingredients, mixing, cooking, readying those symbols so necessary for worship, she would have been thinking of the great love memorialized in the supper.

She would have worked with buoyant spirit, too, realizing that her own hands were performing this special service to God. God had made those physical things a part of worship, and God was dependent on physical hands to do that work. She must have thrilled with the thought that hers were the hands that could do such service for Him that day!

And I am sure that, since the vessels customarily used in Jewish worship had been especially shaped of gold and silver, then dedicated



solely to temple use, the early Christians looked with great care to the vessels that were used in portraying their Lord's death and burial. There would have been no casualness in the cleansing of them, no begrudging of the work involved.

Instead, for whoever had that privilege, the preparation itself would have been a part of their worship, their own private time of communion with God.

That same attitude would have carried over in the cleaning of the place of worship, in the preparation of food for the sick, in every physical act they did for God. Wherever He needed human hands to do His work, they must have happily offered theirs in service that was beautiful private worship.

How much we miss when, in short-sightedness, we fail to see these special opportunities for closeness with God.

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The Memorial **Betty Burton Choate**



“And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father’s kingdom.’”

“And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (Matthew 26:26-30).

The First Century Church’s Observance of the Memorial

“Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received and in which you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast that word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

“For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scripture” (1 Corinthians 15:1-4).

Probably for most Christians in most congregations of churches of Christ today, the memorial for Jesus’ death begins with the gathering of the men around the table and ends with the returning of the trays to their assigned spot. The involvement is centered around examining one’s own conscience while remembering the death of Christ.

The remembrance is good, and I would take nothing from it, but it is sad that a wonderful occasion for service and closeness with Christ is most often being missed in our impersonal routine in preparation for the memorial.

When Jesus died, believers took His body from the cross. Believers wrapped His body in a linen cloth, with spices, and believers laid Him in the tomb. Then, early on the first day of the week, mourning women — believers — came to the tomb with more spices to complete the preparation of His body for what they expected to be the long rest in death.

It is in memory of that death, and of His triumph over death, that we meet each first day of the week, as did Christians in the first century: *“Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight” (Acts 20:7)..*

The memorial ordained by God in memory of His Son’s death, burial, and resurrection consists of Christians partaking of unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, representative of Jesus’ body and His blood. But in most churches of Christ throughout the United States, who “makes preparation” for the remembrance of His death? Is the bread, like the Passover bread which was the shadow of the true feast, baked fresh, lovingly and reverently prepared by the hands of believers? No, sadly, it is most often a stale cracker that is used in the majority of the congregations for this sacred remembrance,

bread baked by a Jewish company, and clearly marked “Not for Passover”..

You would suggest that I am making a mountain of a molehill? Perhaps. Yet perhaps it isn’t such a small matter. God was very exacting in the Old Testament about minute things that had to do with worship. Even if He would tolerate less strictness under the reign of Christ, isn’t it *reasonable* to think that reverence and care concerning His Son’s memorial would please Him more than would a casual attitude?

And even if God would permit our laxness, somehow it just doesn’t seem in keeping with the feelings we should have for Christ when Christians sit back in unconcern and allow unbelievers to do the work so vital to our memorial.

Can you imagine Mary and Joanna and Mary Magdalene going out to the market and buying bread for worship, bread made by the people who had rejected and crucified their Lord?

No — instead, I see them planning among themselves just who would have the privilege from week to week, each one eagerly looking forward to the Lord’s day morning when she would take the best flour and oil, the best fruit of the vine, and prepare that beautiful memorial. Undoubtedly, all the time she would have