

## **Worship & Remembrance or Breaking of Bread Meeting**

*Remembering & Worshipping our Lord in the Assembly - What is it all about?*

**The occasion to write about this unique meeting:** In the assembly, conservative believers today, (as mainline denominations "progress" in their culture toward a more liberal theology and/or practice), are seeking out a more conservative Christian assembly with which to fellowship. Brethren Assemblies have become a very suitable alternative for these believers.

We of course are thankful, receiving these saints gladly into Fellowship. Yet they are not always provided a thorough understanding as to our historical biblical roots or proceedings (the whys and wherefores of what we practice), in what has been called but not claimed a "Brethren Assembly". This is true especially when it pertains to the "Breaking of Bread" or our "Worship and Remembrance" Meeting.

Even those who have grown up in our meetings have not always been taught or received an adequate understanding. Many in our midst have good and honest questions that need to be addressed. It is not right nor fair to these brothers and sisters (or to the assembly as a whole), when they don't possess a full understanding of what we do and why. This paper will address specifically the Breaking of Bread meeting which is different from most traditional "church" meetings. Head uncovering of men and covering of women will be handled in second writing.

**A New Testament Assembly Practice:** As most assembly believers know, the early church (His ecclesia or "called out ones"), "continued **steadfastly** (among other things) **in the breaking of bread...**" (**Acts 2:42**). We also read, "**as often as you do this...**" indicating the breaking of bread was a practice we were to do regularly and not seldom. However, the request from our Lord to "**remember Me**" and Paul's Corinthian comment to, "**proclaim His death until He come**" (**1 Cor. 11:26**), as we break the bread and pass the fruit of the vine, could be accomplished & fulfilled in as little as 10 or 15 minutes. Any Assembly could simply pass the emblems and be done.

So why do we take time to Worship, sing praises, and remember Him verbally, allowing many priests/brothers to audibly offer much more to Him who has saved us?

We could and do point to the biblical examples that were demonstrated that day. Prayer was offered by the Lord, they sang a hymn before leaving, an old testament scripture was quoted, thanks was given and, of course, the partaking of the emblems took place.

While these examples certainly weren't specific instruction for our Remembrance Meeting, we surely want to take notice of what took place at the "Last Supper". All the Lord did had purpose and was pleasing to His Father, therefore His example that day should be allowed to speak to us and it has spoken to us.

**Is any part of what we practice our tradition?** Some practices in our personal lives and in the assembly, are traditions yet God honoring. If they are God honoring, then we can confidently say they are good and even wonderful practices.

For example, we may pray with our children before bedtime (a good and profitable practice), yet there is no biblical example or specific scripture instructing us to pray with them at that time. We don't despise that prayer time because it is a tradition.

We hold to and believe the extended verbal portion of our Worship & Remembrance meeting falls into this God-honoring and profitable category. Our Lord instructed us to remember Him often, but He also seeks and desires worship from His people.

However, if pressed about the matter, our Lord didn't specifically instruct us to set aside an hour or more, nor did He tell each of His disciples to verbally offer worship & praise during this time. He didn't even say "**do this in worship of Me.**"

Strictly speaking, **Acts 2:42** ignores the idea of praise and hymns of worship, yet these things were present during the Last Supper with His disciples. Wonderfully and appropriately then, we in the assemblies have historically followed the example left to us and put together, in one consolidated meeting - singing, praise, and worship into a corporate formal time of remembering our Lord.

This addition of time and practice in part, could and may be viewed as an Assembly tradition, yet clearly a God-honoring one that every Assembly believer can appropriately, deeply cherish!

**Liberty and authority to meet in this way:** Of course, we understand worship is a scriptural practice, desired by God and needful in every church, (**John 4:23, 24**). A meeting which moves us to worship, then causes us to "**behold the Lord**" (**2 Cor. 3:18**), which then helps us as believers, to be changed into Christ's image, "**perfecting holiness in the fear of God**" (**2 Cor. 7:1**). This unique meeting has been warmly described as bringing us to the very throne room in heaven, this side of glory.

If the local Elders have, before the Lord, set this time aside for remembering, praising, and worshiping while we also break bread and pass the cup, we find ourselves with complete scriptural authority; authority to gather in remembrance, in worship from our Lord Himself, and on the practical side, through our Elders who have scheduled the meeting.

**Who is the meeting for and what shall the content be?** What direction shall we be led, or what words shall we hear and what will be our focus? If in this meeting, (before the emblems are passed), we have set this time aside for remembering Him, singing praises to Him and worshiping Him, the meeting itself is, **for Him** and **to Him** and not a time for ourselves.

We should add at this juncture; this meeting was meant to parallel (in type) that sacred and solemn gathering which took place in which Israel worshipped and the burnt offering was sacrificed unto the Lord. It is described in the OT as a "**solemn gathering**".

The Worship and Remembrance Meeting was never meant to be a believer's "personal sharing time" meeting or a "teaching" meeting nor an "exhortation for the saints" meeting. These things are wonderful and even needed in their time and place, but worship, by its very essence, is directed God-ward. Verbal praise and worship can't correctly be directed toward us! We read these words in scripture, "**offered up to God**" (**Heb. 13:15, 1 Pet. 2:5**).

On the other hand, words of remembering our Lord can and should be shared to each other, being horizontal in direction. Yet the focus of our words and thoughts (if we are gathered to remember Him) are not so much about us; they are about the Lord Himself.

When we remember a loved one (perhaps a parent) who has passed away, quite often, we discuss with our siblings what Mom or Dad did, how they acted, what they said, etc. But we do this with each other, speaking horizontally to one another which is completely appropriate.

Similarly, when we remember our Lord, it can and should be done in the same way; yet we must understand that He said, "**Do this in remembrance of Me!**" Thus, we might well ask ourselves, where is the "we" or "I" in Jesus' statement?

Do we have the courage to ask ourselves, how does a personal story about myself equate to worship or remembrance? Or how does this keep our hearts and minds on the Lord?

If I verbalize what I've been doing for the Lord, it may be encouraging to the saints, but does this bring honor to the Lord or to myself?" These things, although well intentioned, can only serve to take our minds and hearts away from remembering Him.

In the Breaking of Bread meeting many of us have likely experienced lengthy teachings, various exhortations, funny personal stories, or lessons on how we should live our lives.

Who doesn't like a funny story and who doesn't like good teaching? Many of us during the Worship hour have listened to the remembering of our earthly parents, on their special days or even the remembrance of our country and its patriots on July 4<sup>th</sup>. These are wonderful things to remember, but are they well suited for Worship of the Lord Who bought us with such great price?

*The Breaking of Bread meeting is our only corporate opportunity (one hour per week) for the Lord to be remembered in this way.*

Other meetings provide for our spiritual needs: In the Lord's assembly (with scriptural authority) the Elders have set adequate time aside for ministering to the believers - *ministering to the house of God.*

This is done through family bible hour, Sunday school classes, devotions on Wednesday night, and various Bible studies in our homes. The Elders have set a special time aside for corporate prayer on Wednesday nights. They have set aside special time for fellowship after and in-between meetings. They have set aside several special times scheduled that are devoted to gospel outreach. These meetings are designed to follow the example we find in **Acts 2:42**, which is designed to meet the needs of the saints in our personal lives and our family's lives.

What is actual Worship? When we consider the worship of the Old Testament, the sacrifice on the altar from Leviticus (which clearly speaks of Christ) was firstly a sweet-smelling aroma and secondly an aroma which ascended "**up to God!**" So, we could rightly say that true worship consists of us "**offering up**" the sweet aroma of Christ to the Father.

It has wisely been said during worship we are simply boasting to the Father about all the wondrous beauties of His Son. We are ministering to the Lord's heart in praise, worship, and remembrance of His Beloved.

**Ezekiel 44**, obviously referring to Israel, provides us with this important but seldom thought about spiritual concept - *a holy concept of ministering to God Himself!* In this passage some were given the responsibility to minister to the house of God (horizontally to the people).

Yet the faithful sons of Zadok were to draw near to the Lord and fulfill this other, illustrious ministry. It was a sacred a ministry directed not to the people but to the Lord Himself

We ask that you read and mediate on this passage, noticing specifically the ministering that takes place. It is unusual in that it is personally ministered by the priest **directly to the Lord Himself!**

When we consider the four living creatures in the book of Revelation who are worshipping God in heaven, to Whom are they ministering? Can you imagine those creatures focusing their worshipful attention on anything other than their God? They are one great example of what true worship looks like in His presence. They are bowed down, and all words are toward Him and for Him.

Some may think this puts restrictions on the Holy Spirit or the meeting itself. In fact, in this true story, a well-meaning brother, after spending ten minutes (during our Worship hour) speaking of his work in the mission field. He voiced this kind of complaint when a brother asked him about his comments. We don't want to quench the Holy Spirit", he said. His comments during the Remembrance Meeting, were encouraging and well said, yet were surely better suited for another time.

**Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty:** Sometimes saints feel any instruction here restricts "the Spirit". If this scripture comes to mind, we humbly ask you, if during a Family Bible Hour message (politely at a pause of course) one of us were to stand up and begin praying or singing praises in the middle of the message, would you say that person was out of place with that prayer or song? If so, why?

Perhaps because, *the meeting and time was designated for teaching* and you would be right! The person who interrupted would be out of place, because the meeting time was set aside for teaching.

Now in response to the above, if you said "don't be so restrictive, we have liberty" This would seem somewhat almost silly, would it not? You may even say, "we are to do things decently and in order, and that is certainly not in order." We trust you see the point.

So, we see there are meeting times properly set aside for specific and certain purposes. The Breaking of Bread is set aside for worship, remembrance, and praise that ministers to the Lord! In the Assemblies, Breaking of Bread is a special time never seen in the world and, for that matter, rarely seen in Christendom. It is a time solely for glorifying the Lord, but this direction and focus doesn't come naturally.

*In fact, we believe the enemy of our souls desires we do anything BUT actually worship the Lord of glory!*

**What about the topic of us?** The meeting is for the Lord, yet let us not forget that when we draw near and behold the Lord, we are being changed into His image. This change is a wonderful bi-product of worship (**2 Cor. 3:18**). Though we aren't gathering together for ourselves, as we offer up and give to Him, wonderfully and mysteriously, He gives back to us.

We believe most would agree that we largely find ourselves almost every waking hour talking about ourselves and/or our own circumstances. We asked ourselves and now ask you: could there be just one hour per week which we can, for the most part, forget self and devote our hearts and this time solely to Him with our words, prayers, and songs?

Now, it is true; we rightly sing hymns and utter prayers that incorporate "us" as we sing about "our" sins being forgiven, etc.

But we can surely have worshipful comments that include ourselves in that sense that "our" great and wonderful Savior has wrought "our" salvation, etc... or "I" am broken before you, dear Father, as "I" consider your Son, etc.

*Surely, we can distinguish this from lengthy stories about ourselves or expositions of scriptural exhortation that are good in themselves but inappropriate during this solemn time.*

In this meeting there will always be grace upon grace and overwhelming understanding and flexibility. But if we are willing, let us guide our thoughts in a direction that ministers glorifying thoughts to and of our Blessed Savior and His Father, this one hour.

**Why the focus on His death when He is risen?** Some might think that His death, though a wonderful work, is sad and sort of a "downer." Is it necessary to hear about suffering and death every week when there is victory over death? While this thinking is certainly understandable and even natural, here is what Paul said: "**For as often as ye do this** (while passing the emblems among us) **you do show forth His death until He come**"!

We have the high privilege to proclaim this overarching Work of the Gospel to all attendees, as we show forth His death (in the emblems of bread and the cup), yet there is more to this than we might think.

Whenever Israel was straying from the Lord, over and over in scripture the Lord would remind Israel of the Passover that took place. He brings them back in their minds to why and how they were spared and delivered from death in Egypt - It was by the blood! The type of Christ here is unmistakable. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.

Remembering His death and His sacrifice is also a practice that humbles us, sobers us, and causes us to think solemnly in His presence at the meeting and through our coming week.

In this needed meditation of His sacrificial death, we are also subtly given permission to die to self, as we are instructed as believers to "**reckon ourselves dead...**" Paul says, "**I am crucified with Christ**"! In fact, we are to take up His Cross daily, which speaks of our death as we follow Him faithfully. We are to humbly go with Him, outside the camp.

There will come a great day of glorification, a day in which we are glorified with Christ, but that day is not today, dear saints! Today, we live in the day of His rejection, and we are partakers of His sufferings as pilgrims and strangers in this world. This is one of the most important truths in the New Testament to notice but the least lived out. Where will the help come from?

In Christianity, oddly, the way up is often down and the way to actual life, is in our death by a living sacrifice. The world thinks all day long of how they might speak of themselves, love themselves, lift up and exalt themselves; yet the Lord tells us, "**He that exalts Himself will be humbled**" and again, "**God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.**"

There is plenty of opportunity in this life for speaking about ourselves. There is a time for exhortation, teaching, humor and encouraging one another. There is time to think and speak on the glory to come and resurrection power which is true and wonderful.

Yet we believe the Lord is given glory and is also pleased with a unique group of people willing to yield themselves and humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, willing to bow - who are ready to put self away for a single hour.

We believe our Savior is pleased with saints who take time to remember Jesus Christ **often** in His death, just as Paul taught the saints of God.

**These thoughts have been given prayerful time before the Lord.** We bring these thoughts prayerfully to the assembly for your consideration before the Lord. We ask that you also, prayerfully consider what has been written and then reflect on what Worship is and what the remembering Him should consist, in this solemn meeting? What is honoring and exalting to the Lord during this special time - set aside for Remembering & Worshiping our Great God, Savior, and King!

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