

The Practice of the Lord's Table Meeting 2

Eph. 2:18 For through Him we both have access in one Spirit unto the Father.
3:14-17a For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father, Of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named, That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit into the inner man, That Christ may make His home in your hearts through faith,

In this lesson we want to continue our fellowship on the practice of the Lord's table meeting. In the previous lessons we fellowshiped about the practice of remembering the Lord and worshipping the Father. Now we want to see something concerning the worship that we need to offer to the Father in the Son as the reality and in our spirit mingled with the Spirit of God. This is a worship in the dispensing of God.

Paul's writings are filled with the concept of the divine dispensing of the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. The Father, the Son, and the Spirit are not referred to by Paul in a doctrinal way but in an experiential way. Ephesians 2:18 reveals that we have access to the Father through the Son and in the Spirit. Ephesians 3 says that the Father strengthens us through His Spirit into the inner man so that Christ, the Son, can make His home in our hearts (vv. 14-17). To praise the Father through the Son and in the Spirit is in the dispensing of the Triune God. To worship the Father with the Son and in the Spirit is the true worship in the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity.

III. THE WORSHIP IN THE DISPENSING OF GOD

When we speak of the worship in the dispensing of God, we are still speaking of our worship of the Father. The Jews, according to their view of the Old Testament, have their kind of worship of God. That is not the worship in God's dispensing. It is altogether not involved with the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Basically speaking, the Jews know God only in His creation. They do not know God in His dispensing. They consider God as their Creator, and they

may even consider God as their Father in the sense of being their source but not in the sense of the Divine Trinity for the divine dispensing of Himself into our being.

In the Gospels there is only one chapter in which the Lord talked about the worship of God. When He talked about the worship of God in John 4, He was referring specifically to the worship of the Father. The Samaritan woman spoke of worship, but she did not use the term *Father*. Then the Lord Jesus told her, "An hour is coming, and it is now, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truthfulness, for the Father also seeks such to worship Him" (v. 23). This meant that the age had changed. Even when the Lord Jesus was talking to her, the age had changed, so the Lord used the term *Father*, saying that we need to worship the Father. When we use John 4:24, we usually neglect verse 23. The Lord did not say that we worship God but that we worship the Father. The Father seeks after this worship.

In verse 24 the Lord spoke of the nature of God. The nature of God is Spirit. The Lord did not say that we worship God but that we worship the Father, whose nature, as God, is Spirit. The worship here is absolutely different from the Jewish worship. The Jewish worship is altogether the worship of the Creator. But what the Lord spoke of is the worship of the Father in the Son and also in the Spirit. Thus, this is a worship in God's dispensing, the worship by the divine dispensing. When the Jews worship God as the Creator, they do not have the thought of God being dispensed into them. But if we would have the true worship, we need God to be dispensed into our being. (*Basic Lessons on Service*, pp. 51-52)

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John 4:14, 24 But whoever drinks of the water that I will give him shall by no means thirst forever; but the water that I will give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into eternal life...God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

In John 4 the worship to the Father, the worship in the dispensing of God, is related to drinking the living water (vv. 10, 14). To contact God the Spirit with our spirit is to drink of the living water, and to drink of the living water is to render real worship to God. To ex-pound John 4:24 we need John 4:14. We need to drink of the living water to worship the Father in spirit and in truthfulness. If we do not drink the living water, we do not drink of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13), we have no experience of God, and God is not dispensed into us.

Without drinking the living water, we cannot have a subjective worship in the divine dispensing. We can have only the Jewish kind of objective worship to an objective God as the Creator. Today our worship is subjective in the dispensing of God. Our worship is our experience of drinking the living water, the Spirit. In order to have the worship in the dispensing of God, we need to drink of the Spirit so that God may dispense Himself into our being. This is the new worship revealed in the New Testament.

Even today much of the worship in Christianity is actually in the principle of the Jewish worship, the worship of the Creator who is far away from them. Our worship, however, is not merely to the Creator but to the Father, who has regenerated us and who has put Himself into our being. Now our worship is subjective with God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—dispensed into us.

This kind of worship can be practiced mostly in the Lord's table meeting, because in the Lord's table meeting, after we partake of the bread and the cup, the Lord takes the lead to bring us to the Father. The Lord leads us back to the Father in the Spirit. Here we must remember Ephesians 2:18, which reveals that our worship is through the Son, in the Spirit, and to the Father. This is fully portrayed in Luke 15 with the parables of the shepherd, the woman, and the father. It is through the Son's seeking as the Shepherd and through the Spirit's enlightening as the woman that the prodigal son comes back to the Father. Therefore, this coming back to the Father is in

the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity. The Son and the Spirit are wrought into the returning son. This is the true worship in God's dispensing.

A. To Worship the Father

1. By Becoming the Father's Children

If we are to worship the Father, we first need to be reborn, becoming the Father's children (John 1:12; 1 John 3:1a).

2. By Knowing the Father's Name

In John 17:26a the Lord said that He would make the Father's name known to His disciples, and in Hebrews 2:12a we see that He declares the Father's name to His brothers. The name denotes the person. When you call on someone's name, the person comes, so the name of the Father denotes the Father's person. He is not only our God who created us but also the Father who begets us. He is not only the creating God but also the begetting Father. Now we are not only His creatures but also His children born of Him, begotten by Him. He is our Father, and we have to know His person. To know His person is to know His name.

All the disciples at that time had a Jewish background. They had the concept concerning God as their Creator, but they did not have any concept about God being their begetting Father. Before the Lord's resurrection they did not have the concept that they were to be the children of God with God's life and nature. Before His resurrection it was hard for the Lord to declare the Father's person to the disciples, because they did not have God as their Father. But in the resurrection He imparted the divine life into the disciples, so that made it easy for Him to make the Father's name, the Father's person, known to them.

On the day of His resurrection He told Mary, "Go to My brothers and say to them, I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20:17). The words *brothers* and *your Father* indicate an experience of life, a relationship in life. In His resurrection the Lord imparted the Father's life and nature into the disciples. Now His Father is their Father, and they are His brothers. This is all implied in knowing the Father's name, His person. (*Basic Lessons on Service*, pp. 52-54)

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John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him.

3. By Enjoying the Father's Presence

We worship the Father by enjoying the Father's presence. In John 14:23 the Lord said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make an abode with him." The Father and the Son will come to the one who loves the Son and will make Their abode with him. This is the constant presence of the Father. When we say, "Abba, Father" (Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6), we have a sweet inward sensation in an intimate enjoyment of the Father's presence.

By becoming the Father's children, by knowing the Father's name, and by enjoying the Father's presence, we worship the Father. If we are not born of the Father, do not know His person, and do not have His presence, we cannot worship Him subjectively; we can worship only an objective God.

B. In the Son as the Reality

We worship the Father in the Son as the reality (John 4:23-24). The Samaritan woman in John 4 tried to contend with the Lord Jesus by saying, "Our fathers worshipped in this mountain, yet you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men must worship" (v. 20). The Jews said this based upon Deuteronomy 12, which refers to Jerusalem as the unique place ordained by God for His people's worship. We have to refer the saints back to Deuteronomy 12 and tell them that the very worship ordained by God was with two regulations. First, it had to be in the unique, central place chosen by God, and second, it was with all the rich surplus of the produce of the good land. All the children of Israel in the ancient times had to worship God by keeping these two regulations.

The Lord pointed out to the Samaritan woman that the age had changed. Deuteronomy 12 is the type, but in the New Testament we have the reality and the fulfillment. In typology the unique place of worship was Jerusalem, and in the fulfillment this place is our spirit.

Today our spirit is the actual Jerusalem where God's habitation is. Furthermore, the surplus of the produce of the good land is a type of the riches of Christ. Christ is the reality of all the offerings from the riches of the good land, including the burnt offering, the meal offering, the peace offering, the sin offering, the trespass offering, the wave offering, the heave offering, and the drink offering. All these offerings were the surplus of the produce of the good land as types of Christ who is the real surplus, the real offerings. Thus, in John 4:23-24 the human spirit replaces Jerusalem as the unique worship center, and Christ replaces all the offerings, the surplus of the good land.

1. By Experiencing the Son as the Good Land

Our worship to the Father in the Son as the reality is by experiencing the Son as the good land (Deut. 8:7).

2. By Enjoying the Riches of the Son as the Rich Produce of the Good Land

We worship the Father in the Son as the reality by enjoying the riches of the Son as the rich produce of the good land (vv. 8-10).

3. By Presenting the Son to the Father as the Peace Offering

We worship the Father by presenting the Son to the Father as the peace offering (Lev. 3:1, 6, 12; 7:11-13). (*Basic Lessons on Service, pp. 54-56*)

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1 Cor. 12:13 For also in one Spirit we were all baptized into one Body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and were all given to drink one Spirit.

C. In Our Spirit Mingled with the Spirit of God

We worship the Father in our spirit mingled with the Spirit of God (John 4:23-24).

1. By Being Born of the Spirit of God in Our Spirit

If we are going to worship God in our spirit, we must be born of the Spirit of God in our spirit (3:5, 6b). In John 3 there is the need to be born again, and in John 4 there is the worship in spirit. First, we need to be born of the Spirit, and then we can worship in spirit.

2. By Being Baptized into One Body in the Spirit of God

By being baptized into one Body in the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12:13a), we can worship the Father in our spirit. Actually, our worship in the dispensing of God is not an individual matter. According to the type in the Old Testament, all the children of Israel came to Jerusalem to worship not in an individual way but in a corporate way. Their worship was a corporate worship. At every feast, three times a year, they came together to worship God. Therefore, the worship in the dispensing of God according to the economy of God is a corporate worship in the Body.

3. By Drinking of the Spirit of God

We also worship in our spirit by drinking of the Spirit of God (1 Cor. 12:13b; John 4:14).

4. By Being in the Unique Place of Worship Where God's Habitation Is

We must worship the Father by being in the unique place of worship where God's habitation is (Deut. 12:5; Eph. 2:22). After we are born of the Spirit of God in our spirit, baptized into one Body in the one Spirit, and drink of this one Spirit, our spirit becomes the unique place of worship because our spirit is the very place where God's habitation is. Christians are divided today because they will

not come to their spirit to worship. If all the Christians would come to their spirit to worship, there would be no division. As long as all the children of Israel came to Jerusalem to worship, they were kept in oneness. The principle is the same today. Many Christians will not come to their regenerated spirit to worship God, so they are divided. Today we have to worship the Father in our spirit mingled with the Spirit of God.

D. In the Dispensing of the Triune God

Our worship to the Father in the Lord's table meeting is in the dispensing of the Triune God. We have been baptized into the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). We also enjoy the Father's love, the Son's grace, and the Spirit's fellowship (2 Cor. 13:14). We must be in the dispensing of the Triune God. Then we can have the proper and true worship in the divine dispensing of the Divine Trinity.

The focus of this lesson is as follows: the worship in the dispensing of the Triune God is the worship to the Father by His many sons with His firstborn Son as the offerings and in His Spirit who mingles Himself with our spirit as the unique place for our worship.

This fellowship should help us in the worship of the Father in the Lord's table meeting. This is the worship that the Lord revealed in John 4. John's Gospel tells us in chapter 1 that we have the right to be God's children. He gave as many as received Him the right, the authority, to be His children (v. 12). These children are born of God Himself. Then chapter 3 tells us how to be born of God. We must be born of water and the Spirit to be reborn of the Spirit (vv. 5-6). Chapter 4 goes on to reveal how to worship God as the Father in our spirit as the unique place of our worship and with the Son as the real offerings (vv. 23-24). We have to experience the dispensing of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Then we can have the kind of worship that the Father seeks. (*Basic Lessons on Service*, pp. 56-57 by Witness Lee, ©1993 Living Stream Ministry, All references used by permission)

FOUR MAIN ITEMS IN THE LORD'S TABLE MEETING

Scripture Reading:

1 Cor. 10:21

You cannot drink the Lord's cup and the demons' cup; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the demons' table.

1 Cor. 11:23-25

For I received from the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread, And having given thanks, He broke it and said, This is My body, which is given for you; this do unto the remembrance of Me. Similarly also the cup after they had dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant established in My blood; this do, as often as you drink it, unto the remembrance of Me.

1 Cor. 15:45b ...the last Adam became a life-giving Spirit.

John 4:24

God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truthfulness.

1 John 2:23

Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who confesses the Son has the Father also.

Heb. 2:11b-12

For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brothers, Saying, "I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You."

Matt. 26:30

And after singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

REMEMBERING THE LORD BEING TO PARTAKE OF HIM

There are four main items that we must practice in the Lord's table meeting. First, to remember the Lord at His table is to partake of Him. The biblical ground for this is in 1 Corinthians 10 and 11. Verses 23 through 25 of chapter 11 say, "I received from the Lord that which also I delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread, and having given thanks, He broke it and said, This is My body, which is given for you; this do unto the remembrance of Me. Similarly also the cup after they had dined, saying, This cup is the new covenant established in My blood; this do, as often as you drink it, unto the remembrance of Me." This

indicates that to remember the Lord in a real way is to take, eat, and drink of Him.

To eat and to drink something is to partake of it. Verse 21 of chapter 10 says, "You cannot drink the Lord's cup and the demons' cup; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the demons' table." It is not our own word to say that we partake of the Lord; in the Bible we have this phrase: *partake of the Lord's table*. Since this is a table, it must be something for us to enjoy. In 1 Corinthians 11 there is eating and drinking, and in chapter 10 there is the table and the partaker of the table. All of this strongly proves that to remember the Lord, to have the Lord's table, is to partake of the Lord. When we come to the Lord's table, we do not merely remember Him in our mind. Rather, we partake of the Lord, enjoy Him once again, eat and drink of Him, and sit at His table with the saints to share Him one with another. This is the first meaning of the Lord's table.

This thought, concept, and understanding is very much neglected by today's Christianity. Today when many Christians come to the so-called holy communion, they have the thought that they must remember what Jesus did for us, that He was the Son of God, and that He died on the cross for us. However, when we come to the table, we come again to take something of the Lord Himself. We come to partake of the Lord. The Lord's table is a table with the Lord Himself spread as a feast on the table. He has given Himself to us by His death and resurrection. Now He offers us not His blood first but His body. That His body is first and His blood follows proves that He is offering us Himself in resurrection. Even though the Lord set up the table before His death, it was something done in anticipation of His resurrection. He has given Himself to us by His death, and He has put Himself before us in His resurrection. Now in His resurrection we come to His table to enjoy Him, feast on Him, and eat and drink of Him.

FOUR MAIN ITEMS IN THE LORD'S TABLE MEETING

PREPARING OURSELVES BY EXERCISING OUR SPIRIT

The second main point concerning the Lord's table is the exercise of our spirit. The way we come to the Lord's table to partake of the Lord, that is, to eat and drink of the Lord, is by exercising our spirit. If we do not know how to exercise our spirit, we cannot enjoy the Lord. This matter is neglected too much. Whenever we come to the Lord's table, we have to realize that we have come to partake of the Lord. Therefore, we need to exercise. Before we come to a delicious feast, we have to get ourselves ready. Many times when I am invited to a dinner, I ask the one inviting me what he will serve. If it is something that I truly desire, I prepare my appetite all day long for the coming dinner. Then I am able to go and enjoy it adequately. To come to the Lord's table is to partake of the Lord, to enjoy the Lord, to eat and drink something of the Lord. For this we have to prepare our spirit. Therefore, the second main item concerning this meeting is the exercise of the spirit.

Whenever we come to the Lord's table, we must realize that we are coming to enjoy the Lord. Today the Lord is the life-giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45b), and the way He imparts Himself to us is in our spirit. Therefore, we have to exercise our spirit. The strongest ground to prove this from the Bible is John 4 and 6. Verse 63 of chapter 6 says, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words which I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." To this we can add John 4:24: "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him [that is, contact Him, enjoy Him, and partake of Him] must worship in spirit and truthfulness." We need to exercise our spirit.

We also need to give up all the preoccupying things. This means that we must not only prepare our spirit, but we have to open our spirit deeply. To open ourselves from our very depths is not only to open our mind and heart but to open our spirit. Whenever we come to the table, we have to prepare ourselves by opening to the Lord from our spirit, from the very depths of our being. It is not only that our sins have been purged away and that we have rid ourselves of the worldly things. It is also that we drop anything that preoccupies us, and we open deeply from within to the Lord. Then our spirit will be prepared and exercised.

SENSING THE ATMOSPHERE IN THE MEETING AND FOLLOWING THE FLOW OF THE SPIRIT

First, we must realize that we are coming to partake of the Lord. Then second, we need to get our spirit ready and exercised. The third practical matter concerning the Lord's table is even more important. We also have to sense the atmosphere of the meeting and follow the flow. These matters are very strategic. In order to have a good meeting for the Lord's table, we must have all these main items.

We may compare following the flow in the meeting to serving a feast, which requires that we know the proper way to serve. If we are to serve steak as the main dish, we must serve the steak first. We cannot serve ice cream as the first course in a feast of steak. We must know what the first course is and that the second course follows the first. Then we can have a proper feast in its proper courses. When we come to the Lord's table, we have to sense the atmosphere of the meeting and follow the flow. In that meeting will we "serve steak," or will we "serve fish"? We can, for example, stress what the Lord is, or we may stress the ascension and glory of the Lord.

In the meeting there is always a flow. We may illustrate the flow with a team playing a game. In basketball the five members of the one team do not play with more than one ball; they play with only one ball. In this sense, the ball follows a flow, as in a stream. If one person in a basketball game plays with a football, and others play with many different kinds of balls, that game will be a mess. In the best games, all the members play with one ball in one flow. For this we need practice.

Although it seems that there is not much wrong with our Lord's table meeting, the tide of the Spirit is sometimes too low. This is due to the lack of the exercise of our spirit. Our spirit is not very living and strong. This may be due to the fact that we are afraid to make mistakes, but that still chokes us and quenches the Spirit.

FOUR MAIN ITEMS IN THE LORD'S TABLE MEETING

Sometimes certain hymns frustrate the flow of prayer very much. At the beginning of the meeting there may be a real flow of prayer which is not fully expressed. This is not the right time to announce a hymn. Any hymn at such a time becomes a frustration to the flow of more prayers in the spirit. At other times, the worship to the Father may be the best portion of the meeting, but just when we come to the highest tide, a certain hymn again can frustrate the flow. Such a hymn can be like cold water poured on the fire. Just as we have the real sense that two or three more prayers will bring us to a climax, our mouths can be shut by the wrong hymn. To call a hymn in this way is the result of our forms, rituals, and knowledge. Therefore, we have to learn to sense the flow. We have to forget about mere knowledge. First we must sense the flow, and then we should exercise our proper knowledge to do things in an adequate, proper way. When there is a real flow of prayer, we should not do anything to frustrate it.

Sometimes we need a hymn to stir up the praying spirit. At other times, though, we should not call a hymn because the praying spirit is already present. To announce a hymn will stop the praying spirit. We have to follow the flow and not pay much attention to mere knowledge. To always say that after four or five prayers a hymn is needed to match the prayers is to act according to mere knowledge. The knowledge of the letter kills. We must pay attention to the flow. If there is a living flow, do not hinder it. Give the flow a free way to go on. We must learn to exercise the spirit to release something from within, and we must learn to always exercise the inner sense to take care of the flow.

THE WORSHIP TO THE FATHER

The fourth main point concerning the Lord's table is the worship to the Father. The Holy Spirit always brings people to Christ, the Son. When we are inspired by the Holy Spirit, we say, "Jesus is Lord!" (1 Cor. 12:3). In the same way, the Son always brings people to the Father. If you have the Son, then you have the Father. First John 2:23 says, "He who confesses the Son has the Father also." The principle here is that when we are touched by the Holy Spirit, we realize something of Christ, the Son, and when we experience the Son, He brings us to the Father. Therefore, after we have experienced the Lord at His table, we should not close the meeting. According to the

principle, when we have experienced the Son, He brings us to the Father. It is not right to close the Lord's table meeting without coming to the Father.

Hebrews 2:11b and 12 say, "He is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, 'I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the midst of the church I will sing hymns of praise to You.'" When does the Lord Jesus praise the Father in the church? It must be after the saints in the church have had the Lord's table. After we have experienced the Lord, the Son brings us to the Father to praise the Father in the midst of His brothers. Matthew 26:30 tells us that after the Lord established His table, He came to the Father to contact the Father by singing a hymn with the disciples. This is the principle to follow. Whenever we enjoy the Lord, we have to be brought to the Father through the Lord. This is why after we enjoy the table, we have to follow the Lord to worship the Father. The first part of the table meeting is to remember the Lord by partaking of Him. After partaking of the Lord, then the second part of the meeting is a time to worship the Father, following the Lord as the firstborn Son. We are the many sons following Him to worship the Father.

All these four main points are mostly neglected in today's Christianity. Neither the Catholic Church nor the so-called reformed churches pay attention to these matters when they have the "holy communion." If we are going to have the Lord's table, we must learn these four main items. We come to the table to partake of something of the Lord Himself. Therefore, we have to prepare our spirit, to cleanse ourselves, and to exercise the spirit to contact the Lord and enjoy Him. Then we learn the technique of how to sense the present atmosphere of the meeting and follow the flow in the meeting. If we all act as one "team," we will enjoy the Lord adequately and properly. Out of this enjoyment in the spirit, we have the Son. Then the Lord as the Son of the Father leads us to the Father, and we follow Him to worship the Father. In this way we will have a full meeting in two parts for two purposes: to remember the Lord and partake of Him, and to worship and praise the Father.

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