

But Why Bread?

By David Wright

The Lord's Supper is a sacred meal including cup and bread. No one can easily miss the symbolism of the cup's contents. In Christ "we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses" (Eph. 1:7). The blood of Jesus, shed at the cross, is our atonement. The "blood" of the grape is a solemn reminder of the Lord's salvation work.

But why the bread? The night he instituted the Lord's Supper, Jesus gave bread to his disciples and said, "This is my body" (Mark 14:22). Christ here identified a connection between the bread and his soon-to-be-crucified body. But is this connection logical or somewhat forced?

To the Hebrew people, bread signified life and sustenance. Moses wanted Israel to know "that man does not live by bread alone, but that man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deut. 8:3). By "bread" Moses meant food, that which sustains physical life. Using the word in a similar way, Jesus taught his disciples to pray: "Give us each day our daily bread" (Luke 11:3). In this prayer "bread" represented the satisfaction of physical needs. Even today "staff of life" is a synonym of "bread" (www.yourdictionary.com).

After Jesus fed thousands of hungry people by multiplying a boy's lunch, some of his disciples hoped that he would supply food on a daily basis. But Jesus offered them something far better than physical sustenance. He gave them himself! "I am the bread of life," he said (John 6:48).

The symbolism of the sacred cup and bread cannot be improved upon. The spilt blood of Christ is our atonement. The crucified body of Jesus is our spiritual life.

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