

# The Sacrament and the Atonement

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The ordinance of the sacrament needs to become more holy and sacred to each of us.

On the eve of Gethsemane and Calvary, Jesus gathered His Apostles together one last time to worship. The place was the upper room of a disciple's home in Jerusalem, and the season was Passover.<sup>1</sup>

Before them was the traditional Passover meal, consisting of the sacrificial lamb, wine, and unleavened bread, emblems of Israel's past salvation from slavery and death<sup>2</sup> and of a future redemption yet to be realized.<sup>3</sup> As the meal drew to a conclusion, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it,<sup>4</sup> and gave it to His Apostles, saying, "Take, eat."<sup>5</sup> "This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."<sup>6</sup> In a similar manner, He took the cup of wine, offered a blessing on it, and passed it to those around Him, saying: "This cup is the new testament in my blood,"<sup>7</sup> "which is shed ... for the remission of sins."<sup>8</sup> "This do in remembrance of me."<sup>9</sup>

In this simple yet profound manner, Jesus instituted a new ordinance for God's covenant people. No longer would animal blood be spilled or animal flesh be consumed in anticipation of a redeeming sacrifice of a Christ who was yet to come.<sup>10</sup> Instead, emblems of the broken flesh and spilled blood of the Christ who had already come would be taken and eaten in remembrance of His redeeming sacrifice.<sup>11</sup> Participation in this new ordinance would signify to all a solemn acceptance of Jesus as the promised Christ and wholehearted willingness to follow Him and keep His commandments. To those who would so signify and conduct their life, spiritual death would "pass over" them, and eternal life would be assured.

In the hours and days that followed, Jesus entered into Gethsemane, was taken to Calvary, and triumphantly departed the Arimathean's tomb. After His departure from them, Jesus's faithful disciples in and about Jerusalem came together on the first day of the week to "break bread,"<sup>12</sup> and they did so "steadfastly."<sup>13</sup> Surely, they did so not only to remember their departed Lord but also to express gratitude for and faith in His marvelous Redemption of them.

Significantly, when Jesus visited His disciples in the Americas, He also instituted the sacrament among them.<sup>14</sup> In doing so, He said: "This shall ye always observe to do,"<sup>15</sup> and "it shall be a testimony unto the Father that ye do always remember me."<sup>16</sup> Again, at the outset of the Restoration, the Lord instituted the ordinance of the sacrament, giving instructions to us similar to those He gave His earlier disciples.<sup>17</sup>

The ordinance of the sacrament has been called "one of the most holy and sacred ordinances in the Church."<sup>18</sup> It needs to become more holy and sacred to each of us. Jesus Christ Himself instituted the ordinance to remind us what He did to redeem us and to teach us how we may avail ourselves of His Redemption and thereby live with God again.

With torn and broken bread, we signify that we remember the physical body of Jesus Christ—a body that was buffeted

with pains, afflictions, and temptations of every kind,<sup>19</sup> a body that bore a burden of anguish sufficient to bleed at every pore,<sup>20</sup> a body whose flesh was torn and whose heart was broken in crucifixion.<sup>21</sup> We signify our belief that while that same body was laid to rest in death, it was raised again to life from the grave, never again to know disease, decay, or death.<sup>22</sup> And in taking the bread to ourselves, we acknowledge that, like Christ's mortal body, our bodies will be released from the bonds of death, rise triumphantly from the grave, and be restored to our eternal spirits.<sup>23</sup>

With a small cup of water, we signify that we remember the blood Jesus spilled and the spiritual suffering He endured for all mankind. We remember the agony that caused great drops of blood to fall in Gethsemane.<sup>24</sup> We remember the bruising and scourging He endured at the hands of His captors.<sup>25</sup> We remember the blood He spilled from His hands, feet, and side while at Calvary.<sup>26</sup> And we remember His personal reflection on His suffering: "How sore you know not, how exquisite you know not, yea, how hard to bear you know not."<sup>27</sup> In taking the water to ourselves, we acknowledge that His blood and suffering atoned for our sins and that He will remit our sins as we embrace and accept the principles and ordinances of His gospel.

Thus, with bread and water, we are reminded of Christ's Redemption of us from death and sin. The sequence of bread first and water second is not inconsequential. In partaking of the bread, we are reminded of our own inevitable personal resurrection, which consists of more than just the restoration of body and spirit. By the power of the Resurrection, all of us will be restored to the presence of God.<sup>28</sup> That reality presents to us the fundamental question of our lives. The fundamental question facing all of us is not whether we will live but with whom we will live after we die. While every one of us will return to the presence of God, not every one of us will remain with Him.

Through mortality, every one of us becomes soiled with sin and transgression.<sup>29</sup> We will have had thoughts, words, and works that will have been less than virtuous.<sup>30</sup> In short, we will be unclean. And the consequence of uncleanness in the presence of God, Jesus made perfectly clear: "No unclean thing can dwell ... in his presence."<sup>31</sup> That reality was brought home to Alma the Younger, who, when confronted by a holy angel, was so racked, harrowed, and tormented by his uncleanness that he desired to become "extinct both soul and body, that [he] might not be brought to stand in the presence of ... God."<sup>32</sup>

In partaking of the sacramental water, we are taught how we may be made clean from sin and transgression and thus stand in the presence of God. By the shedding of His innocent blood, Jesus Christ satisfied the demands of justice for every sin and transgression. He then offers to make us clean if we will have faith in Him sufficient to repent; accept all the ordinances and covenants of salvation, beginning with baptism; and receive the Holy Ghost. Upon our receipt of the Holy Ghost, we are cleansed and purified. Jesus made this doctrine very clear:

"No unclean thing can enter into [God's] kingdom; ... nothing entereth into his rest save it be those who have washed their garments in my blood. ...

"Now this is the commandment: Repent, all ye ends of the earth, and come unto me and be baptized in my name, that ye may be sanctified by the reception of the Holy Ghost, that ye may stand spotless before me at the last day."<sup>33</sup>

This is the doctrine of Christ.<sup>34</sup> When we receive this doctrine and conduct our lives accordingly, we are in effect washed in the blood of Christ and made clean.<sup>35</sup>

Through the sacramental prayers, we express our acceptance of this doctrine of Christ and our commitment to live according to it. In our petition to God, our Eternal Father, we declare that we will "always remember" His precious Son. First, we witness our "willingness" to remember. Then we witness that we "do" remember. In so doing, we are

making solemn commitments to exercise faith in Jesus Christ and in His Redemption of us from death and sin.

We further declare that we will “keep his commandments.” That is a solemn commitment to repent. If our thoughts, words, or actions have been less than what they should have been in days past, we recommit ourselves to more closely align our lives with His in days to come.

Next, we declare that we “are willing to take upon [us] the name of [the] Son.”<sup>36</sup> That is a solemn commitment to submit ourselves to His authority and to do His work, which includes receiving for ourselves every saving ordinance and covenant.<sup>37</sup>

When we commit ourselves to these principles, we are promised in the sacramental prayers that we will “have his Spirit to be with [us].”<sup>38</sup> Receiving anew the Spirit is a consummate blessing because the Spirit is the agent who cleanses and purifies us from sin and transgression.<sup>39</sup>

Brothers and sisters, the most important event in time and eternity is the Atonement of Jesus Christ. He who accomplished the Atonement has given us the ordinance of the sacrament to help us not only remember but also claim the blessings of this supreme act of grace. Regular and earnest participation in this sacred ordinance helps us continue to embrace and live the doctrine of Christ after baptism and thereby pursue and complete the process of sanctification. Indeed, the ordinance of the sacrament helps us faithfully endure to the end and receive the fulness of the Father in the same way Jesus did, grace for grace.<sup>40</sup>

I bear witness of the power of Jesus Christ to redeem us all from death and sin and of the power of the ordinances of His priesthood, including the sacrament, to prepare us to “see the face of God, even the Father, and live.”<sup>41</sup> May we receive the sacrament next week, and each week thereafter, with deeper desire and more earnest purpose, I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, amen.

1. See Matthew 26:17–20; Mark 14:12–17; Luke 22:7–18.

2. See Exodus 12; Numbers 28:16–25; Bible Dictionary, “Feasts.”

3. See Exodus 13:12–13; Mosiah 2:3–4; Moses 5:5–8.

4. See Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19; 1 Corinthians 11:24. By contrast, when Jesus institutes the sacrament among the Nephites after His Resurrection, He breaks the bread, then blesses it (see 3 Nephi 18:3).

5. Matthew 26:26; Mark 14:22; 1 Corinthians 11:24.

6. Luke 22:19; see also 1 Corinthians 11:24.

7. Luke 22:20; see also Matthew 26:28; Mark 14:24; 1 Corinthians 11:25.

8. Matthew 26:28.

9. Luke 22:19; see also 3 Nephi 18:11.

10. See 2 Nephi 11:4; 25:24–25; Jacob 4:5; Alma 34:14; 3 Nephi 9:17, 19–20; Moses 5:5–8.

11. See John 6:51–57; 1 Corinthians 11:24–26; Doctrine and Covenants 20:40.

12. Acts 20:7.

13. Acts 2:42.

14. See 3 Nephi 9:19–20; 18:1–11; 20:3–9; 26:13.

15. 3 Nephi 18:6.

16. 3 Nephi 18:7.

17. See Doctrine and Covenants 20:75; 27:2; 59:9–12.

18. *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Fielding Smith* (2013), 96. “In my judgment the sacrament meeting is the most sacred, the most holy, of all the meetings of the Church” (*Teachings: Joseph Fielding Smith*, 95).

19. See Alma 7:11.

20. See Luke 22:44; Mosiah 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.

21. See Psalm 22:16; John 19:33–34; 20:25–27; 3 Nephi 11:14; Doctrine and Covenants 6:37; James E. Talmage, *Jesus the Christ*, 3rd. ed. (1916), 669.

22. See Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:6, 39; John 20:20; Doctrine and Covenants 76:22–24.

23. See John 6:51–59; Alma 11:42–44; 40:23; 3 Nephi 27:13–15.

24. See Luke 22:44; Mosiah 3:7; Doctrine and Covenants 19:18.

25. See Isaiah 53:5; Matthew 26:67; 27:26, 29–30; Mark 14:65; 15:15, 19; Luke 22:63–65; John 19:1; Mosiah 15:5.

26. See Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:15; Luke 23:33; John 19:16, 33–34.

27. Doctrine and Covenants 19:15.

28. See Alma 11:42–45; 3 Nephi 27:13–15.

29. See Moses 6:55.

30. See Matthew 5:27–28; 12:36; James 3:1–13; Mosiah 4:29–30; Alma 12:14.

31. Moses 6:57; see also 1 Corinthians 6:9; Ephesians 5:5; 1 Nephi 10:21; 15:33–34; Alma 7:21; 11:37; 40:26; 3 Nephi 27:19; Doctrine and Covenants 1:31–32.
32. Alma 36:15; see also verse 14; Revelation 6:15–17; Alma 12:14.
33. 3 Nephi 27:19–20.
34. See 2 Nephi 31:2–21; 3 Nephi 11:31–41; 27:13–22; Doctrine and Covenants 76:40–42, 50–54, 69–70.
35. See 3 Nephi 27:19; see also Revelation 1:5–6; 7:14–15; Alma 5:21; 13:11–12; Ether 13:10–11; Moses 6:59–60.
36. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77; Moroni 4:3.
37. See Dallin H. Oaks, *His Holy Name* (1998); Dallin H. Oaks, “Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 80–83.
38. Doctrine and Covenants 20:77, 79; Moroni 4:3; 5:2.
39. See Romans 15:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 2 Nephi 31:17; Alma 5:54; 13:12; 3 Nephi 27:20; Moroni 6:4.
40. See Doctrine and Covenants 93:6–20.
41. Doctrine and Covenants 84:22.