

FOR AS OFTEN

"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." I Corinthians 11:26. The first three words of that verse has caused some controversy with respect to the frequency of the observance of the Lord's Supper. For example, some Adventists believe in observing it four times a year, the argument being that "for as often" means that the Lord's Supper does not have to be held on any specific date during the year (eg. Nisan the 14th). Still others have made claims that it is an every day commemoration. The sad thing with believing this way, especially with a daily observance, is repeating an event that frequently makes the Lord's Supper loses its full meaning. The intent of this writing is to show that the Lord's Supper is the new testament replacement of the annual feast of the lamb sacrifice of the Jews which signified their deliverance from death and bondage while living under Egyptian rule (ie. The Passover meal). Under the new covenant, the Lord's Supper signifies to Christians their deliverance from the bondage of this world of sin, and thus from the bonds of death by the sacrifice of our Passover Lamb, the Lord Jesus, the Christ of God. This writing will also address the frequency with which Christians were supposed to observe the Lord's Supper. ***"It is a night to be much observed unto the LORD for bringing them out from the land of Egypt..."*** Exodus 12:42a; ***"Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib, the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night."*** Deuteronomy 16:1; ***"And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come."*** I Thessalonians 1:10.

The Jewish Passover was a feast normally held with the family, though on some occasions, friends would be invited if the family was small and would not be able to consume all of the lamb themselves. ***"And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; every man according to his eating shall make your count for the lamb."*** Exodus 12:4. Jesus, at his last Passover meal, broke with tradition by eating it with his disciples. ***"And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples."*** Matthew 26:18; ***"And when the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him. And he said unto them, With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."*** Luke 22:14, 15. Jesus' break with tradition likely had something to do with the extended view of who a Christian's family is: it is our fellow Christian brethren and sisters. ***"While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him. Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee. But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? And who are my brethren? And he stretched forth his hand towards his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren! For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."*** Matthew 12:47 to 50 – see also Luke 8:20, 21.

We who are Jesus' disciples today, through the emblems of the bread and cup, keep the memorial of the first Lord's Supper in it's due time, the difference being our

passover "lamb" is not an animal sacrifice eaten in remembrance of bondage in Egypt but the recognition of the selfless sacrifice made by the man, Jesus, who was the Lamb of God. *"He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth."* Isaiah 53:7; *"The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world."* John 1:29; *"Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us."* I Corinthians 5:7. Jesus is our one-time passover lamb, who delivered us from a life of bondage to sin and death to one in hope of eternal life. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life."* John 5:24.

We know that many things spoken about in the Old Testament were a shadow of things to come with the coming of the Messiah. *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat [eating] or in drink or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: which are a shadow of things to come, but the body is of Christ."* Colossians 2:16, 17; *"For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers there unto perfect."* Hebrews 10:1. From the book of Hebrews, there is controversy over the writing of those sayings of the one-time sacrifice of Jesus, with the inference that the word "once" telling us that we do not have to observe the Lord's Supper at any specific time or any time, because the ordinance was not intended to be observed as an annual event. The texts being alluded to are found in Hebrews chapters 7 to 10 and we will show that these verses have been taken out of context. There are too many verses in these chapters to recount them all, therefore, we only address the verses that directly pertain to our subject matter.

"For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens. Who needed not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law [ie. The Mosaic law] maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore." Hebrews 7:26 to 28; *"In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away."* Hebrews 8:13; *"But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people ... but Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us ... And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance... For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place*

every year with blood of others." Hebrews 9:7, 11, 12, 15, 24, 25; *"For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers there unto perfect ... But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."* Hebrews 10: 1, 3, 4. These verses are not saying that the ordinance of the Lord's Supper ceased to be held annually because Jesus shed his blood only once upon the cross; the verses are talking specifically about all the yearly and daily sacrificial offerings of animals by the priests who themselves were sinners and had to be continually cleansed for their own sins. In contrast, our sacrificial Lamb and High Priest, Jesus the Christ, was without blemish and was the perfect sacrifice who offered himself willingly. Jesus entered into the heavenly holy place once and sat down on the right hand of God where he will remain until the time of his return. The previous verses from Hebrews have nothing to do with the keeping of the Lord's Supper but the ending of the Mosaic sacrifices performed by the Levitical priesthood. The Levitical priesthood ended because the blood of thousands of slaughtered animals could never cleanse us of our sins, especially when the men serving as priests received their position due to their bloodline and not their spiritual character. Jesus was our High Priest and he became our lamb of sacrifice. He gave himself up willingly for us and because he was without blemish, his sacrifice was accepted of God. Through this accepted sacrifice, all the ceremonial services and sacrifices previously conducted were abolished and no longer necessary. Jesus entered into the most holy place and now sits on the right hand of God.

The requirement of the observance of the Lord's Supper is supported by the use of "remember" in various passages of Scripture when discussing the Passover meal. Jesus clearly commands his followers to "remember" to partake of the emblems of bread and wine, as part of observing the Lord's Supper. These emblems represent his body and blood which he sacrificed for us. *"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me."* Luke 22:19; *"And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me."* I Corinthians 11:24, 25. Paul wrote the words to the Corinthians in about 58 to 60 A.D., well after Jesus' death, and he obviously believed in the continued observance of the Lord's Supper. Jesus' own words tell us to take of the emblems as a way to remember him and the sacrifice he made. The observance of the Lord's Supper is important for the true Christian.

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is NOT dedicated to Jesus' resurrection or coming return but is held in remembrance of his death and sacrifice. *"For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come."* I Corinthians 11:26. We should be very careful in our observance of the Lord's Supper because it should not be observed after the patterns laid down by men but after him who instituted it and gave us instructions on how to observe it. *"Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread and drink this cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the*

body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." I Corinthians 11:27 to 29. Jesus was crucified only once and we know that it occurred after he had partaken of the Passover meal with his disciples, so we definitely can figure out the time of year it occurred. For that reason, there is no excuse not to observe the Lord's Supper and partake of the emblems that he instituted during his last passover meal. Therefore, we should eat and drink to our passover Lamb, remembering the sacrifice he made for all mankind. ***"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread..."*** I Corinthians 11:23. Jesus was betrayed on Nisan the 14th of the Jewish calendar (the Jewish Passover meal was eaten on that night), thus, we can determine the time of year in which we should observe the Lord's Supper. Paul speaks of its observance by the early church and he makes no mention whatsoever of it being held more than once a year.

Given our comments relating to the frequency of observing the Lord's Supper, let us look at the custom of breaking bread. Let's read from the gospel of Luke: ***"And behold, two of them went that same day to a village called Emmaus, which was from Jerusalem about threescore furlongs ... while they communed together and reasoned, Jesus himself drew near, and went with them. But their eyes were holden that they should not know him ... But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight ... and they told what things were done in the way, and how he was known of them in breaking of bread."*** Luke 24:13, 15b, 16, 29 to 31, 35. ***"After that he appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country."*** Mark 16:12. This event of Jesus breaking bread with the two men on the way to Emmaus occurred after his resurrection. It is believed by some that these verses support the idea of the Lord's Supper not just being observed annually but as often as one breaks bread. The misunderstanding by those who believe this idea stems from not knowing the customs of the peoples of the Middle East of which the breaking of bread was common; it was not associated with the Lord's Supper. It was a sacred duty for Jews and other Semitic peoples to share their bread with strangers. Hospitality was commanded in the law of Moses: ***"But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God."*** Leviticus 19:34. For those interested in more detailed descriptions of the Middle Eastern customs, refer to the book *"Manners and Customs of Bible Lands"* by Fred H. Wight which has an article on hospitality. Another non-biblical source describing such customs is *"The Syrian Christ"* by Abraham Mitrie Rihban; in chapter three of that book: *"The person who fails to extend such hospitality brings reproach, not only upon himself, but upon his whole clan and town ... the man of the house should not allow a wayfarer to pass him without offering him a "morsel of bread to sustain his heart". So did Abraham of old extend hospitality to the three mysterious strangers who came upon him "in the plains*

of Memre" as stated in the eighteenth chapter of Genesis..." From these excerpts, we can see the importance of this Semitic custom of breaking bread with strangers and it gives us insight from the verses we quoted earlier from Luke 24 that the two men on the way to Emmaus was following their custom of hospitality to strangers to the letter. Breaking bread was a way of life for Semitic peoples so to use Luke 24 as support for suggesting the breaking of bread meant the Lord's Supper was being observed is very erroneous indeed. Other instances of breaking bread are as follows: ***"And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them..."*** Acts 20:7a; ***"And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers... And they continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart."*** Acts 2:42, 46.

There is also evidence from Jesus himself that the breaking of bread with the two men on the way to Emmaus was in no way a commemoration of the Lord's Supper. ***"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say unto, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until the day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*** Matthew 26:28, 29; ***"And he said unto them, This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many. Verily I say unto you, I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine, until that day that I drink it new in the kingdom of God."*** Mark 14:24, 25. See also Luke 22:16, 18. We must remember that in partaking of the emblems of the Lord's Supper, we take of both unleavened bread and wine (ie. The fruit of the vine). From these verses we just read, Jesus said that he will not drink of the fruit of the vine until he returns at his second coming; this was said at the institution of the Lord's Supper, prior to his crucifixion. Since Jesus does not lie, we know that the meal he had with the two men on the way to Emmaus after his resurrection was not an observance of the Lord's Supper since it would not have involved wine because he said he would not drink of wine until he returned with the Kingdom of God. As a side note, one should be aware that water was the common drink with meals for the common people. Wine was not commonly drunk by the masses, thus, would not likely have been on hand during Jesus' meal with the two men.

In summary, the Lord's Supper was instituted by our Lord Jesus the Christ as a way to remember the ultimate sacrifice he made for us and to not observe it would be a dishonour to him. It's observance should be held annually on Nisan the 14th according to the Jewish calendar. To observe the Lord's Supper on a frequent basis, as some do, would eventually lessen the specialness of its observance and that would be a discredit to the only tradition instituted by our Messiah.