

Food for the New Man

by G.W. North

The supper is a symbol of spiritual nourishment and a reminder of God's provision for the inward, spiritual man.

Scripture: Matthew 26:26, John 6:35, 1 Corinthians 12:12

Topics: "Self-Denial", "Spiritual Nourishment"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes the significance of the Lord's Supper as a spiritual nourishment for the new man rather than a physical meal. He explains that in the Eastern context, supper represents the beginning of a new day, symbolizing the new life in Christ. The elements of bread and wine are mere symbols pointing to the deeper spiritual reality that believers must feed on. North stresses that participation in this feast is a lifelong commitment to self-denial and living for the body of Christ, reflecting Jesus' sacrificial love. Ultimately, the supper serves as a reminder of our call to nourish our spiritual selves and serve one another in love.

Transcript

The time element inherent in the description of the meal holds very real significance also. Surprisingly it is a supper. We may think that had it been called a breakfast it would more properly have introduced the element of newness best suited to its institution. But however strange it may seem to our western minds, supper in the east was not the last meal of the day but the first. Unlike our days, which begin and end at midnight, Jewish days began and ended at sunset. The first meal of our day is breakfast, but theirs was supper. Realisation of this fact brings a whole new range of meaning to the ordinance.

The Lord purposely instituted His supper with meagre elements so that we should understand that they are to be regarded as purely symbolical. In themselves they have no value at all, and to look upon them as nourishment for the mortal body would be foolishness. We are being pointed to the fact that God's great concern when instituting the first meal of His new day was that we should see it to be nothing other than a testimony of His provision of nourishment for the inner spiritual man. To the outward man the provision is negligible -- a token, that is all. To the carnal appetites it is ridiculous, and God intends it to be so too. He is not at all concerned to feed the carnal man. Likewise He is not primarily concerned to sustain the outward man either. His first and great emphasis is upon the inward, spiritual man. The feast is provided for him, because he is God's eternal concern.

This meal is of strictly limited supply to the physical body, and by it God plainly insists that in the new era it is the new man that must be fed, and he can only feed on the reality of which the bread and wine are

symbols. He must realise that he is a member of a new body, and that body is Christ's (1 Corinthians 12:12); Christ's body is no longer a body of flesh and blood. God's new man by regeneration must be nourished and built up so that he may function in and build up the body of Another, even Christ. If a man desires the Lord Jesus Christ to live in his body of flesh and blood, he must realise that he himself must live in and for a body which is not flesh and blood.

The feast teaches us that the Lord laid down His body of flesh and blood (in a tomb) for the sake of others. It must also teach us that God expects each of the members of Christ to lay aside the needs and concerns of his body of flesh and blood for the sake of that other greater body. The body of Christ is entirely spiritual. It must be seen also that this is to be done not merely for the duration of the supper. Far beyond the momentary act, each person must understand that by partaking of the elements he thereby testifies that this is his lifelong concern. God has designed that token nourishment should be taken in a purely symbolical act of eating and drinking, and done deliberately in order to show that the soul feasts solely on spiritual food; this is what participation in the feast implies.

This ordinance, by its bare elements, outwardly stands as a permanent demonstration of self-denial exercised before all; it must also speak of inward denial of the flesh. Both these are necessary in order that the spirit may live in health and strength and endlessly apply itself to the task of edification of the body of Christ. The whole is done for others; real life lies in living to lay down our lives for one another; this is the will of the Lord, the Head of the body. It is His table, His supper, and we are His guests and members of His body. Jesus Himself set both the table and the living example of which it speaks. In reality, had we eyes to see it, He is the table upon which the feast is spread. He also sits at the head of the table presiding in fullness of love and power, proclaiming in our ears and to our hearts the need for this constant memorial and reminder of sacrificial love.

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