

Our Lord's Communion

By Betty Burton Choate

Snap! Crack! Snap! Crack! The sound works its way down the rows of pews from the front to the back of the auditorium—the sound of Christians in the twenty-first century remembering their Lord's death, as He commanded.

You wouldn't have heard that sound in the first-century church. Back then, they were very little removed in time from the days when the Law given to Moses was in force. God had been very specific about minute details pertaining to the observance of feasts, when and how it was to be done, often stating how they were to prepare their bodies and their clothing in preparation for coming into His presence. He gave measurements and ingredients—a recipe—for grain offerings. He described the kind of animals He would accept as blood and burnt offerings. He drew the architectural plans for the tabernacle, for each piece of furniture in it and for the placement of each piece. He gave tailors' measurements and weavers' designs for the curtains for His place of worship.

There was a reason for these precise requirements. By making exact regulations and by demanding that they be respected and followed, He was creating a constant realization in the hearts of devout Israelites that He is Holy above all, Lord over all and the ultimate authority to Whom every soul must bow. Moses explained this to his brother Aaron after his sons had been slain by God because of their desecration of His worship. “And Moses said to Aaron, ‘This is what the LORD spoke, saying: “By those who come near Me I must be regarded as holy; And before all the people I must be glorified””’ (Leviticus 10:3).

God's law in dealing with His people has changed, but God has not changed. Just because we are allowed to come into His presence under the covering of the blood of His Son does not mean that we have the freedom to approach Him casually. He is still above everything that exists, and if we could see ourselves as we actually are and could see Him as He actually is, we would come into His presence with fear and trembling, falling on our faces before Him as Daniel did when the Angel of His Presence appeared to Him, visually (Daniel 8:17, 27).

When Jesus instituted His Memorial Supper, by what sort of guidance had the bread been made? We know that, for some reason, before the actual Passover feast the Jews were not to have leaven even in their houses for seven days. Therefore, we know that the bread was unleavened. What else do the

Scriptures say about how the grain offerings were to be made? They were called “cakes” or “wafers.” In Leviticus 2, details were given concerning the various offerings. With regard to grain offerings, these were the instructions:

And if you bring as an offering a grain offering baked in the oven, it shall be unleavened cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, or unleavened wafers anointed with oil. But if your offering is a grain offering baked in a pan, it shall be of fine flour, unleavened, mixed with oil. You shall break it in pieces and pour oil on it; it is a grain offering. If your offering is a grain offering baked in a covered pan, it shall be made of fine flour with oil. ...And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt (Leviticus 2:4-7, 13).

The bread that Jesus would have broken and offered to His disciples would have been made according to these instructions. First-century Christians would have respected the precedent. Within each congregation, which in many cases met in the homes of Christians, a dedicated Christian woman would have risen a little earlier than usual to lovingly and to carefully prepare the bread for the memorial of Her Lord’s body. I feel sure that other sisters in the congregation would have begged for the privilege of serving their Lord and their brothers and sisters by having their opportunity to be the one to prepare the Supper. Furthermore, I can’t imagine that they would have looked to Jewish hands to make that most sacred emblem for them. Can you?

However, we live in **modern** times. Today, men dressed in play or work clothes presume to go in their casual and disrespectful appearance to the Lord’s death memorial, and even to stand before the congregation as leaders—yet their very dress shows that they are not honoring the age-old requirements God has made concerning the respect due Him. In addition, Christian women sit before God and their brethren in worship, dressed with plunging necklines and other fads of grossly immodest dress, never considering what God has had to say about that. In Exodus 28:42-43, when detailing the clothing for the priests, in addition to the outer robes, God said, “And you shall make for them linen trousers to cover their nakedness; they shall reach from the waist to the thighs. They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they come into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister in the holy place, that they do not incur iniquity and die.”

Obviously, from these words spoken by our omnipotent God Who does not change, He was adamant that those who would presume to come into His

presence show Him due respect by being properly clothed. The penalty for insulting God by their lack of modest dress? Death. It was a pretty serious matter to God. Why do we deal with it so casually—or think nothing about immodesty at all? Are the elders in the church properly looking after the souls of the sheep under their care when they tolerate such disrespect for God? **We avoid “offending” each other by daring to offend the very God we claim to serve.**

We **modern** women have no time or desire to make the bread for Communion. No! We can buy readymade Matzos! It says on the box that they are “unleavened.” Therefore, we buy a big box, keep it in our refrigerators, and serve from it to our brothers and sisters, week after week, in bits and pieces until the box is finally used up. Is there an “expiry” date on those boxes? We wouldn’t even eat cereal that is as old as those crackers!

Yet, do we look closely enough to see that even the Jews (Do you remember whose hands brought about the crucifixion of our Lord?), even the Jews who made the crackers recognize that they in no way satisfy the biblical requirements for unleavened bread? They know that any bread offering was made with fine flour, oil and salt. (Why is the oil omitted from Matzos? Because oil develops a rancid taste when it gets old, so, eliminate that little problem by eliminating one of the required ingredients.) Then, notice printed plainly on the box, “Not for Passover.” Those little Matzos morsels are not good enough for the Jews to use in remembrance of their coming out of Egypt, but they are just fine for us **modern** Christians today to use conveniently to remember the death-price that was paid for our coming out of sin.

Shame on us! Shame on us!

I long for the day when, in every congregation of the church of Christ, worldwide, Christian women will vie for the coveted privilege to make fresh bread weekly, with fine flour, oil and salt, as was required for the bread offerings when Jesus and the apostles ate that first Memorial Supper.

Recently, I worshiped with a congregation that had an exemplary observance of the Supper. The brother who presided at the table made a lengthy talk concerning what we were about to do, drawing from the Scriptures and also reflecting on our need for the continual cleansing of the blood of Christ. When he had finished his remarks, Scriptures pertaining to our sin and the forgiveness we have in Christ were shown on the screen. He asked the congregation to stand and read the passages aloud together. Then, followed a meaningful prayer. The entire service was moving and was a great aid in causing each one

to examine himself/herself before eating the bread and drinking of the fruit of the vine, as we are commanded to do.

I hope that those who read this article will understand that it is not simply about using a different bread than is commonly accepted. It is about attitude. Recently, when some women in one congregation were asked if they would take turns making the bread, if the congregation decided to stop using the Matzos, one replied, "I don't know how to do that, and I don't want to learn." Another's answer was, "I just don't want to get involved with all of that."

Yes, the article, bottom line, is about attitude. What is lacking when Christian women refuse to be bothered with such a simple but meaningful service as weekly preparation of fresh bread to enable their brothers and sisters to partake with their Lord in thankful remembrance of the hideous death He died for them?

Recipe for 200 one-inch squares of bread

1 3/4 cup of bread flour
1/2 cup of olive oil
1/2 tsp salt
1/3 cup of water

Roll out into two 10 inch by 10 inch squares on baking sheets. Score with a seamstress' tracing wheel. Bake at 400 degrees for 10 minutes