



# The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper

*“As [Jesus] took the bread and broke it, and took the cup and blessed it, he was presenting himself as the Lamb of God who would provide spiritual nourishment and eternal salvation.”*

## From the Life of Howard W. Hunter

Howard W. Hunter was raised by an active Latter-day Saint mother and a good father who was not then affiliated with any church. His father did not object to the family's participation in the Church—he even attended sacrament meetings with them occasionally—but he did not want his children to be baptized when they were 8 years old. He felt that they should not make that decision until they were older. When Howard turned 12, he could not receive the Aaronic Priesthood and be ordained a deacon because he had not been baptized. Even though he was able to participate with the young men in other activities, Howard was deeply disappointed that he could not pass the sacrament with them.

“I sat in sacrament meetings with the other boys,” he recalled. “When it was time for them to pass the sacrament, I would slump down in my seat. I felt so left out. I wanted to pass the sacrament, but couldn't because I had not been baptized.”<sup>1</sup>

Nearly five months after his 12th birthday, Howard persuaded his father to let him be baptized. Soon afterward, he was ordained a deacon. “I remember the first time I passed the sacrament,” he said. “I was frightened, but thrilled to have the privilege. After the meeting the bishop complimented me on the way I had conducted myself.”<sup>2</sup>



*“This do in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19).*

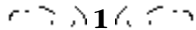
When Howard W. Hunter was called as an Apostle, he regularly participated in the ordinance of the sacrament with other General Authorities in the Salt Lake Temple. Elder David B. Haight, who served with Elder Hunter in the Quorum of the Twelve, described the experience of hearing him bless the sacrament:

“I wish the Aaronic Priesthood boys throughout the Church could have the same opportunity of hearing Elder Howard W. Hunter bless the sacrament as we have had in the temple. He is a special witness of Christ. As I have listened to him ask our Heavenly Father to bless the sacrament, I have felt of the deep spirituality in his soul. Every word was clear and meaningful. He was not in a hurry, not rushed. He was the spokesman for all of the Apostles in addressing our Heavenly Father.”<sup>3</sup>

These accounts illustrate President Hunter’s lifelong reverence for the sacred emblems of Christ’s atoning sacrifice.

As the teachings in this chapter show, one way President Hunter sought to help Church members understand the significance of the sacrament was to explain its connection to the ancient celebration of the Passover and to review the Savior’s introduction of this ordinance during a Passover meal with His disciples.

## **Teachings of Howard W. Hunter**



### **The Passover declares that death has no permanent power on us.**

[The Passover] is the oldest of the Jewish festivals, celebrating an event in advance of receiving the traditional Mosaic Law. It reminds every generation of the return of the children of Israel to the promised land and of the great travail in Egypt which preceded it. It commemorates the passage of a people from subjection and bondage to freedom and deliverance. It is the Old Testament festival of springtime when the world of nature awakens to life, growth, and fruition.

Passover is linked with the Christian observance of Easter. . . . The Passover [and Easter] testify of the great gift God has given and of the sacrifice that was involved in its bestowal. Both of these great

religious commemorations declare that death would “pass over” us and could have no permanent power upon us, and that the grave would have no victory.

In delivering the children of Israel out of Egypt, Jehovah himself spoke to Moses out of the burning bush at Sinai saying:

“I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows. . . .

“Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.” (Ex. 3:7, 10.)

Because Pharaoh was unyielding, many plagues were brought upon Egypt, but still “the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go.” (Ex. 9:35.)

In response to that refusal by Pharaoh, the Lord said, “And all the firstborn in the land of Egypt shall die, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the firstborn of the maidservant that is behind the mill; and all the firstborn of beasts.” (Ex. 11:5.)

As a protection against this last and most terrible punishment inflicted upon the Egyptians, the Lord instructed Moses to have the children of Israel take to them every man a lamb without blemish.

“And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.

“And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. . . .

“And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the Lord’s passover. . . .

“And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service?

“That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord’s passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt.” (Ex. 12:7–8, 11, 26–27.)

After the Israelites had escaped from Pharaoh's grasp and death came to the firstborn of the Egyptians, the Israelites eventually crossed over Jordan. It is recorded that "the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the month at even in the plains of Jericho." (Josh. 5:10.) And so it was with Jewish families year after year thereafter, including the family of Joseph and Mary and the young boy, Jesus.<sup>4</sup>

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**During a feast commemorating the Passover, the Savior instituted the ordinance of the sacrament.**

As the Gospel of John makes clear, the feast of the Passover marked significant milestones during the mortal ministry of Christ. At the first Passover in his ministry, Jesus made his mission known by purifying the temple when he drove from its portals the money changers and those who sold animals. In the second Passover Jesus manifested his power by the miracle of the loaves and fishes. Christ here introduced the symbols that would later have even greater meaning in the Upper Room. "I am the bread of life," he said. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." (John 6:35.)

Of course, it would be the feast of his last Passover that would give full expression to this ancient celebration. By that final week of his mortal ministry, Jesus knew clearly what this particular Passover would mean to him. Trouble was already in the air. Matthew records:

"When Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,

"Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified." (Matt. 26:1–2.)

Knowing full well what awaited him, Jesus asked Peter and John to make arrangements for the paschal meal. He told them to ask of the master of a local house, "Where is the guestchamber, where I shall eat the passover with my disciples?" (Luke 22:11.)

The loneliness of his birth was to be, in a sense, duplicated in the loneliness of his death. Foxes had holes and birds had nests, but



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the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head either in his nativity or in his last hours of mortality [see Matthew 8:20].

Finally, preparations for the Passover meal were complete, in keeping with nearly fifteen hundred years of tradition. Jesus sat down with his disciples and, after the eating of the sacrificial lamb and of the bread and wine of this ancient feast, he taught them a newer and holier meaning of that ancient blessing from God.

He took one of the flat, round loaves of unleavened bread, said the blessing over it, and broke it into pieces that he distributed to the Apostles, saying: “This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me.” (Luke 22:19.)

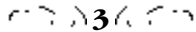
As the cup was being poured, he took it and, giving thanks, invited them to drink of it, saying, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.” (Luke 22:20.) Paul said of it: “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord’s death till he come.” (1 Cor. 11:26.)

The bread and wine, rather than the animals and herbs, would become emblems of the great Lamb’s body and blood, emblems to be eaten and drunk reverently and in remembrance of him forever.

In this simple but impressive manner the Savior instituted the ordinance now known as the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. With the suffering of Gethsemane, the sacrifice of Calvary, and the resurrection from a garden tomb, Jesus fulfilled the ancient law and ushered in a new dispensation based on a higher, holier understanding of the law of sacrifice. No more would men be required to offer the firstborn lamb from their flock, because the Firstborn of God had come to offer himself as an “infinite and eternal sacrifice.”

This is the majesty of the Atonement and Resurrection, not just a passover from death, but a gift of eternal life by an infinite sacrifice.<sup>5</sup>

How fitting it was during the observance of this ancient covenant of protection [the Passover meal] that Jesus should institute the emblems of the new covenant of safety—the emblems of his own body and blood. As he took the bread and broke it, and took the cup and blessed it, he was presenting himself as *the* Lamb of God who would provide spiritual nourishment and eternal salvation.<sup>6</sup>



**Our participation in the sacrament is an opportunity  
to review our lives and renew our covenants.**

Not long ago I . . . [had] the privilege of attending the sacrament service in our own home ward. . . . While the priests were preparing the sacrament, we were led in singing:

*God, our Father, hear us pray;  
Send thy grace this holy day.  
As we take of emblems blest,  
On our Savior’s love we rest.*

[*Hymns*, no. 170]

A priest kneeled over the broken bread and prayed: “That they may eat in remembrance of the body of thy Son, and witness unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they are willing to take upon them the name of thy Son, and always remember him and keep his commandments.” (D&C 20:77.) The deacons dispersed throughout the chapel to serve the broken bread. One of them came to our row and held the silver tray while I partook. Then I held the tray so Sister Hunter could partake, and she held it for the person next to her. Thus the tray went down the row, each serving and being served.

I thought of the events that took place on the evening nearly two thousand years ago when Jesus was betrayed. . . . The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper [was] introduced to replace [animal] sacrifice and be a reminder to all those who partake that He truly made a sacrifice for them; and to be an additional reminder of the covenants they have made to follow Him, keep His commandments, and be faithful to the end.

While [I was] thinking about this, the admonition of Paul in his letter to the church in Corinth came to my mind. He said: “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 damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body.” (1 Cor. 11:27–29.)

I was troubled. I asked myself this question: “Do I place God above all other things and keep all of His commandments?” Then came reflection and resolution. To make a covenant with the Lord to always keep His commandments is a serious obligation, and to renew that covenant by partaking of the sacrament is equally serious. The solemn moments of thought while the sacrament is being served have great significance. They are moments of self-examination, introspection, self-discernment—a time to reflect and to resolve.



By this time the other priest was kneeling at the table, praying that all who should drink “may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy Son, which was shed for them; . . . that they do always remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be with them.” (D&C 20:79.)

There was quiet meditation, the silence broken only by the voice of a tiny babe whose mother quickly held him close. Anything that breaks the silence during this sacred ordinance seems out of place; but surely the sound of a little one would not displease the Lord. He, too, had been cradled by a loving mother at the beginning of a mortal life that commenced in Bethlehem and ended on the cross of Calvary.

The young men concluded serving the sacrament. Then followed words of encouragement and instruction, a closing hymn and prayer; and the sacred moments “unmarred by earthly care” had come to a close [see “Secret Prayer,” *Hymns*, no. 144]. On the way home . . . this thought came to my mind: What a wonderful thing it would be if all persons had an understanding of the purpose of baptism and the willingness to accept it; the desire to keep the covenants made in that ordinance to serve the Lord and live His commandments; and, in addition, the desire to partake of the sacrament on the Sabbath day to renew those covenants to serve Him and be faithful to the end. . . .

Having attended sacrament meeting and partaken of the sacrament made the day more meaningful, and I felt that I better understood the reason why the Lord said, “And that thou mayest more fully keep thyself unspotted from the world, thou shalt go to the house of prayer and offer up thy sacraments upon my holy day;

“For verily this is a day appointed unto you to rest from your labors, and to pay thy devotions unto the Most High.” (D&C 59:9–10.)<sup>7</sup>

## **Suggestions for Study and Teaching**

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### *Questions*

- Review President Hunter’s teachings about the Passover in ancient Israel (see section 1). What can we learn from the Passover? How is the Passover linked with the observance of Easter?

- Review President Hunter’s account of the Savior instituting the sacrament (see section 2). Why is this event significant to you? In what ways is the sacrament a “covenant of safety” for us?
- What impresses you about President Hunter’s account of partaking of the sacrament in section 3? What can we learn from this account to make the sacrament more meaningful? How is partaking of the sacrament a blessing to you?

*Related Scriptures*

1 Corinthians 5:7–8; 11:23–29; 3 Nephi 18:3–14; 20:8–9; Moroni 6:5–6; D&C 20:75–79; 27:1–2

*Teaching Help*

“As we teach the gospel, we should humbly recognize that the Holy Ghost is the true teacher. Our privilege is to serve as instruments through whom the Holy Ghost can teach, testify, comfort, and inspire” (*Teaching, No Greater Call* [1999], 41).

**Notes**

1. In Gerry Avant, “Elder Hunter—Packed Away Musician’s Career for Marriage,” *Church News*, May 19, 1985, 4.
2. In J. M. Heslop, “He Found Pleasure in Work,” *Church News*, Nov. 16, 1974, 4.
3. David B. Haight, “The Sacrament,” *Ensign*, May 1983, 13.
4. “Christ, Our Passover,” *Ensign*, May 1985, 17–18.
5. “Christ, Our Passover,” 18–19.
6. “His Final Hours,” *Ensign*, May 1974, 18.
7. “Thoughts on the Sacrament,” *Ensign*, May 1977, 24–25.