

A LOOK IN THE CUP - PART 3

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Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 22:19b; 24:49-53

Two months ago, in the first of these communion meditations, we asked and gave several answers to the question: "Why celebrate the Lord's supper?" To refresh your memory, we said we do because He asked us to. There is something special about the dying wishes of someone we love, and the fact that on the eve of His crucifixion our Lord made this request is ample reason for us to gather around this memorial meal "in remembrance of (Him)."

More than that, we learned the communion service is a link to the church of the past as well as a bridge across time and space enabling us to be one in spirit with contemporary Christians around the world.

Next, we saw that Jesus asked us to worship "in remembrance of (Him)" because He knew a symbol can be more than a symbol. Communion not only represents something, it actually increases that which it represents. More on that in a moment.

Finally, by way of review, last month we focused on the incredible condescension of Christ who, as the apostle Paul says in II Cor.8-9 --

"though He was rich, yet for (our) sakes He became poor, that (we) through His poverty might be rich."

And, you'll remember we talked at length about the incalculable wonder of heaven, the Home from which He came and to which He returned.

Picking it up at that point, I want us to think for a few minutes about how **A Look In The Cup** can serve to remind us of the reality of Christ's promised presence. In the four gospels and the

book of Acts, we have five complimentary records of Jesus' last words to His disciples and His subsequent ascension into heaven. To sum them up, what Jesus said was this:

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15); “teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always” (Matt. 28:20); “behold, I send the promise of my father upon you...and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them...while He blessed them, He was departed from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:49-50).

Luke expands upon this piece of information when, in Acts 1, He quotes Jesus as saying:

“Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Sumaria, and unto the utter most part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight” (Acts 1:8-9).

“Go.”

“I will be with you.”

“I will send the promise of the Father.”

“You shall receive power, after the Holy Ghost has come upon you.”

“And a cloud received Him out of their sight.”

I don't know about you, but I would guess that, like myself, most of us have in the past thought of heaven as being up there somewhere. Far removed from us by time and space. And it very well may be. But in recent years, we have come to an understanding of the structure of things which sheds new light on the relationship between heaven and earth and therefore new meaning to Christ's promise...to be with His disciples...and us!

For instance, we now know that the atom which is the basic building-block out of which everything is made -- the smallest particle of an element which can exist -- consists of three parts: electron, proton and neutron. And, though the atom is so small no one has ever seen one with the human eye, the distance, or open space, between the electron, proton and neutron which make up the atom is, relatively speaking, as great as the distance, or open space, between the earth, the moon and the stars.

Which is to say: nothing is really solid. Everything is in motion. And, because of the vast, open space between the proton, electron and neutron, it is possible for more than one creation to exist in, and occupy, the “same space” at the “same time” without any awareness on the part of one of the existence of the other.

Now I don't know if you followed me through that and got the full force of what I said, but to put the cookies on the lowest possible shelf, what this means is that, from the stand point of physics, it is entirely possible, (perhaps even probable when we tie this insight of science into the insight of scripture), that heaven is not off there somewhere, but right here. That heaven occupies what, for want of a better term, we might call “the same space” earth occupies. With one great difference, of course, that marvelous existence, unlike our own, is completely under the righteous rule of God.

I hold in my hand a paper cutout in the shape of a man. This “Paper Man” has two dimensions: length and breadth, and a tiny smidgen -- paper thin -- of the third dimension of depth. If this “Paper Man” were a living being, I could stand right beside it having, as I do, a greater degree of depth (the third dimension) and this two dimensional creature would, to all practical purposes, be totally unaware of my existence. And yet, I could be standing right beside him.

To press the illustration further, we three dimensional beings have a smidgen -- or a fleeting moment -- of the fourth dimension of time. We understand the concepts of past and future, but in terms of life itself, we have it one fleeting moment at a time.

Which leads me to observe that our God who is eternal, who lives outside these fleeting ticks of the fourth dimension, and who holds the dimensions of length and breadth and depth within Himself, may be, and I believe He is, as near to us as hands and feet, as close as the breath of life itself. Therefore, there are not only scriptural, but substantial scientific reasons to both practice and experience the presence of God.

Now, I do not claim any inspiration at this point. I find myself in the same situation as Paul who, on occasion said:

“I speak to you as a man” (Rom. 6:19; Gal.3:15)

meaning he was not, at that moment, acting as a spokesman for God. But I would like to point out one or two of the many links between the world of science and the world of scripture. Especially as they relate to the life of our Lord.

Take, for instance, the angelic chorus which accompanied His birth. Did these very real beings come from some distant place in space with the speed of light? Or were they evidences of a momentary breakthrough of another world dominated by righteousness into our world dominated by sin? Another world, not removed from us by the vast reaches of the stars, but one which is actually as near to us (spatially speaking) as breath itself?

Or take the ascension of Jesus. When He was lifted up into a cloud, as Luke explains in Acts 1:9 and disappeared from view, was He off on a kind of first century space flight? Or did He simply slip into another dimension of existence which, spatially speaking, is in close relationship to our own?

Now, as I said a moment ago, I speak as a man and not as a spokesman for the Spirit, but what I'm trying to say is that the science of physics has made it possible for Evangelical Christians -- those of us who love and cherish this Book -- to really understand and come to grips with the imminence or near end of God. We are not limited to the ancient idea of His transcendence. Again, to put the cookies on the lowest shelf, we can sing with equal vigor and wonder “How

Great Thou Art" and "He walks with me and he talks with me and He tells me I am His own."

It also helps us to understand that this place called heaven -- the home from which Jesus came and to which He returned -- is just that. A place. A real place. A place every bit as real as this place. A place, which like our Lord who dwells there, is near at hand!

Now whether or not this idea is attractive to you is something you must decide. To me, it brings our Lord and heaven and our loved ones who have gone before us so much closer. It serves as a satisfying explanation for the multitude of breakthroughs which are on record, providing a mountain of evidence to the fact that there is life outside, beyond, and above that which we know here and now.

When Dr. Ralph Schell, your former pastor and my esteemed predecessor, was on his death bed, his family gathered about him. He had not been given any medication to control pain. He was simply resting quietly in a semi-comatose state. Suddenly, he opened his eyes, sat up, and with radiant awe upon his face and a brightness in his eyes, looked toward heaven and cried,

"Oh, what fools we mortals be!" and died!

He had seen something in his moment of passing which helps all of us understand that "out there beyond this life's horizon is more."

Luke quotes Jesus, in His last words to the disciples, as saying,

"I send the promise of my father upon you" (Luke 24:49a).

He then goes on, in Acts 1:8, to declare that Jesus was talking about "The Holy Spirit." Jesus, who was God in human flesh, and thereby limited by time and space, could only be in one place at one time. Yet He said,

"Lo, I am with you always."

How? Acts 1:8 explains this will be accomplished through the Holy Spirit who, not limited to one body, could be equally everywhere at all times with everybody who has a personal relationship with Jesus.

Think of this as you take **A Look In The Cup** this morning.

Think of heaven as being near at hand

Think of your body as the temple of the Holy Spirit as the scriptures say (1 Cor.5:19).

Think of those things which might grieve or quench the Holy Spirit. Confess them. Repent of them. And make your heart a happy home for Him who said:

“Lo, I am with you always.”