Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Sunday Mass Study Notes for Sunday, 5-29-2016



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **5-29-2016**. This week we spend a great deal of time discussing the mysterious person of Melchizedek mentioned in a reading from Genesis. We dedicate so much time to this man because of the way his ministry prefigures the eternal intercession and finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf. In the second reading we learn from Saint Paul's teaching about the celebration of communion and conclude this week's study with the miracle of our Lord's feeding of the five thousand along the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The context of the first reading is when Abraham was returning from battle with the forces that kidnapped his nephew Lot (Genesis 14:12). Earlier, Lot had separated himself from Abraham after he chose the well-watered, fertile Jordan River Valley towards the east. Not long afterwards, Lot found himself surrounded by war in the nations surrounding the Dead Sea (Genesis 14:3). Abraham mustered his troops and successfully rescued his nephew and all of his possessions (Genesis 14:14-16). Today's reading picks up during Abraham's return from this perilous rescue mission as he passed by the city of Salem, what we know by the modern name of Jerusalem (formerly Jebus, the land of the Jebusites).

First Reading:

Genesis 14:18-20 NAS95 18 And Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; now he

was a priest of God Most High. 19 He blessed him and said, "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." He gave him a tenth of all.

In the reading, we are introduced to the mysterious figure of Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High" (v. 18b). Melchizedek is perhaps one of the most important people in the entire Bible, second only to Jesus. In fact, some believe that Melchizedek was the preincarnate Christ Himself, a "Christophany" or appearance of Christ before His physical birth to Mary as recorded in the Gospels. Why is Melchizedek such an important person, and what application does his ministry have for our lives today? Before we answer this question, we will provide some background about him.

Who is this man Melchizedek, king of Salem? In today's reading we find Melchizedek bringing out bread and wine to greet Abraham who was returning from battle with the forces that kidnapped his nephew Lot. The New Testament provides more information about this mysterious person. In Hebrews chapter 7, in verse 1 the text reads, "Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham as he was returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him." Looking at the book of Hebrews as whole you can see that it's grounded in an explanation of Christ through the perspective of the Old Testament Levitical priesthood, thus the title given to the book "Hebrews" meaning Jews. In Genesis 14:3 Abram, later called Abraham, the father of the Jews, is called a Hebrew. We see back in Hebrews 7:1 that Melchizedek is three things: 1. the King of Salem, the area we now identify as Jerusalem, 2. A priest of the "Most High God," meaning a priest of the *only* true God, and 3. one to whom Abraham the father of the Jews gave tribute. The lesser person gives tribute to the greater. To summarize, Melchizedek was a king, and a priest worthy of tribute.

Going on in Hebrews 7 we find in verse 17, "You [Jesus Christ] are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek," quoted from the Old Testament Book of Psalms 110:4. According to the Book of Leviticus under what we call the Jewish Law, all of the Old Testament Priests had to come from the tribe of Levi, but Melchizedek was a priest before the separate tribes or Law even existed! Yet Abraham gave a tenth portion (or tithe) to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:4) as required under the later Law for all priests (verse 5). What is being explained here is that Melchizedek was one of a class of priests that foreshadowed the coming final, eternal (and final) High Priest, Jesus. Melchizedek, whose name means King of righteousness, could not have come from the line of Aaron (Levi) or Judah, because these did not exist during his lifetime. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament sacrificial system, the final sacrifice was Jesus' own death on the cross which did away with the Levitical priesthood (Hebrews 10:11-14). Christ was from the "order of Melchizedek (Ps 110:4, Hebrews 7:17), not the line of Aaron. This new order is made even more clear by reading beyond the quoted section of Psalm 110 to verse 7, "Therefore He will lift up his [Jesus Christ's] head." This eternal priest Jesus of the non-priestly line of Judah is and will be exalted by God. As a side note, Melchizedek was the first biblical personality to picture the reality of a priest/king.

Now, with this wisdom in mind let's answer the question we posited in the opening, why is

Melchizedek such an important person, and what application does his ministry has for our lives today? As Christians, we cannot underestimate the importance of what Melchizedek's priesthood teaches us. First, the "Melchizedekian" is eternal, in contrast to the Jewish sacrificial system that passed away after the destruction of the temple in AD 70. Truly, the Levitical priesthood died the moment that Jesus died and the veil was torn in two (Matthew 27:51) although the Jews nursed it along for another four decades. Second, the priesthood of Jesus is eternal and is not tied to the life of the priest. Hebrews says, "The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing," (Hebrews 7:23). This is a critically important point because the Scripture says regarding Jesus, "Therefore He is able also to save **forever** those who draw near to God through Him, since **He always lives to make intercession for them** (Hebrews 7:25, emphasis added). Bold text alone does not do provide this quote with enough emphasis, as the implications for the church and the Christian are enormous:

- Since Jesus lives eternally, He is always there for us. His intercession with the Father God is eternal on our behalf. In contrast, human priests died and their ministries ended with their passing.
- Regardless of whatever type of human priesthood was instituted after Jesus' death, the Scripture is clear that the sacrificial system and associated priesthood was eliminated by God forever. The sacrifice of lambs (Exodus 12:5, Numbers 28:7), wine (Numbers 28:7), or bread (Leviticus 7:13) was forever eliminated by Jesus willingly offering Himself and one perfect sacrifice forever, because "For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified" (Hebrews 10:14). We can be thankful that Jesus' sacrifice cannot ever be repeated, and will never need to be.
- Jesus declared victor over sin, something whereas the Levitical priesthood left a memory of sin. We see this clearly in the Book of Hebrews.

  Hebrews 10:1-4 NAS95 1 "For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."

- Jesus is the Victor of sin, and is nowhere in the Bible every portrayed as a victim but He chose to go the cross. Jesus is our Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, the One Who suffered on our behalf. Jesus said, "No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father" (John 10:18). Because Jesus was victorious over sin, we can be victorious over sin as well. The Bible says, "but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).
- Jesus instituted a new priesthood consisting of all believers, and the old, broken, bloody, corrupt (Matthew 21:13) sacrificial system of the Old Testament has passed away forever. The Scripture says, "But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A

> PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9). As believers in the risen Lord Jesus Christ, we offer continual **spiritual** sacrifices to God. "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased" (Hebrews 13:15-16).

In closing, was the man Melchizedek in the reading the preincarnate Christ? Hebrews 7:3 says about him that he was "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, he remains a priest perpetually." However, later in verse 15 the author make the point quite clearly that Melchizedek is a type of Christ, something that points to the later Messiah Jesus. "And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the **likeness** of Melchizedek" (Hebrews 7:15, emphasis added). So was Melchizedek Christ in the flesh? Maybe, though this isn't explicitly stated in the Scriptures. What we do know is that he points to Christ by representing an eternal priesthood that Jesus now carries for us.

As we move onto the second reading, hopefully each of us recognizes the principle of giving to God as demonstrated by Abram after his victory in rescuing Lot from the ungodly kings who surrounded him and took him captive. Our giving to the church, charities and those in need demonstrates that we understand the source of victory is God and He owns it all. We are to our time, talents, and treasures held loosely in our palms and let God take from them as He sees fit. As Christians we are not like the people of Pompeii who perished while grasping their possessions before trying to flee the volcano.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading from 1 Corinthians deals with Saint Paul's teaching on the celebration of communion.

Second Reading:

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 NAS95 23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; 24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." 25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." 26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

In the reading, Saint Paul spoke about the celebration of the communion meal. He said, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26, emphasis added). This teaching placed a clear time limit on the celebration of this important ordinance. As we look forward to the return of the Lord we, like the Jews on the evening of the Passover, walk in obedience to the Lord's commandment to celebrate communion

until He returns.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper is a very important ordinance given to us by the Lord Jesus before He returned to heaven. Each time we celebrate communion we commemorate Jesus' death on the cross for us on which He gave his body and poured His blood for us. Jesus instituted the communion celebration during His Last Supper with the disciples on the eve of the Jewish holiday known as Passover. This important feast commemorated the Jews deliverance from the final plague brought against the Pharaoh as recorded in Exodus 12. On the solemn eve many millennia ago, the Hebrew people were instructed to slaughter a lamb and mark their doorway with its blood. On that evening, the Death Angel passed through the land and killed the firstborn of every living thing, both human beings and animals, except those whom had followed God's commandment in faith by marking their doorways with the symbol of the Lamb of God. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, in which the Jews eat bread without the yeast rising agent, follows Passover. The absence of leaven is symbolic of the Jew's rapid flight from Egypt immediately after that first Passover evening in which the lamb was slaughtered in obedience to God command for the salvation of each household. The absence of leaven also came to be associated in later Jewish thought with the purification from sin, i.e. leaven is sin, such as Jesus noted when He said to be on watch for the "leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6). The symbolism is clear; Jesus is *our* Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God that takes away our sin. John the Baptist said about Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus is the "Lamb slain since before the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

What does this reading mean for our lives? First, God calls us not to forsake the assembly together in the communion service (Hebrews 10:25). As we celebrate communion from now until the day the Lord Jesus returns we look back to the one sacrifice that He made for our sins. Second, we can recognize that we are saved by grace through faith in God (Ephesians 2:8-9) the same as Moses and the other believers in the Old Testament. They looked forward to Jesus through the symbols of God's supernatural provision through manna and the healing by faith in God by humbly kneeling before the bronze serpent. The elements of communion are the way in which we remember Jesus' body broken for us and His blood shed to pay the debts for our sin. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26). This truly is a celebration, for though our sins are scarlet, we have been washed as white as snow through this sacrifice. We now live in response to this great and precious gift. May you not only celebrate communion, but each day, with a joyful and thankful heart.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading from Luke 9 records Jesus' feeding of the five thousand. This is the only miracle that appears in all four of the Gospels. The total number of people fed would have likely been over ten thousand as the crowd numbered five thousand men not counting women and children.

Jesus' feeding of the five thousand along the shores of the Sea of Galilee marked the beginning of a series of turning points in His ministry that we can identify by following the parallel accounts from

the Gospel of John. One of these crucial points of decision for the crowds of followers is evident in the easy to remember verse 6:66 in John's Gospel, "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." These turning points came about as the people began to determine in their hearts whether they are true followers of Jesus. Another of these is in the previous chapter of John where it says, "For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18). This is where the rubber meets the road; the true followers of God are those that recognize Jesus as God in the flesh, the Messiah, rather than just a miracle doer who they thought would deliver them from their Roman oppressors.

Gospel Reading:

Luke 9:11-17 NAS95 11 But the crowds were aware of this and followed Him; and welcoming them, He began speaking to them about the kingdom of God and curing those who had need of healing. 12 Now the day was ending, and the twelve came and said to Him, "Send the crowd away, that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside and find lodging and get something to eat; for here we are in a desolate place." 13 But He said to them, "You give them something to eat!" And they said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish, unless perhaps we go and buy food for all these people." 14 (For there were about five thousand men.) And He said to His disciples, "Have them sit down to eat in groups of about fifty each." 15 They did so, and had them all sit down. 16 Then He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed them, and broke them, and kept giving them to the disciples to set before the people. 17 And they all ate and were satisfied; and the broken pieces which they had left over were picked up, twelve baskets full.

As the story progressed, we know from the parallel accounts that Jesus asked Philip (who was from this region) to provide for the crowd. We know from that account that Philip responded to Jesus stating that to buy that much food would require the amount of 200 days' wages. This was a significant amount but worthless that far away from the city and in light of the huge size of the crowd. Nevertheless, the people had followed Jesus some distance away from the city and saw Him as One Who would provide for them, so it was natural for Jesus to accommodate their needs through His disciples. In this case, the people found out that God was the true multiplier of things. Again, we know from the parallel account in John that the people did indeed recognize Jesus as a Prophet, seemingly the One prophesied about in Deuteronomy 18:15. However, they misunderstood the role of the Messiah (John 6: 14 – 15). The people saw in Jesus a political ruler Who could free them from their poverty and Roman oppression. In the end, twelve baskets were left over corresponding exactly to the count of Jesus' disciples. Each disciple was left with one basket to highlight Jesus' ability to provide in the midst of impossible circumstances. God provided the food regardless of the people's faith and used this sign to point to the True Messiah Jesus.

We too may have misunderstandings about how Jesus' power should be used in the world. Though we should ask God to provide for our circumstances we have to recognize that like the people of the biblical era we often want God to use His power for our comfort, security, and advancement. We need to be careful to let God be God and not expect Him to be our personal "Genie in the bottle"

performing miracles on demand. Nobody stands above Him for He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords and His purposes are beyond understanding. Even though the people in this story wanted Jesus to become their civil King, Jesus ministered to them to meet their spiritual needs instead. One day Jesus will return to rule and reign on the earth and fulfil the expectations of a perfect ruler.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. The Book of Hebrews opens as follows. "*In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe*" (Hebrews 1:1-2). With this passage in mind, move forward in the Book and study the context of Hebrews before and after chapter 7. What do you find regarding how Jesus really is the eternal priest/king that fulfilled the requirements of the Law and how He is our eternal High Priest that makes intercession for us (1 Timothy 2:5). What impact should / does Jesus' intercession make on your perspective and response the challenges, blessings, and your inadequacies?

2. In the Gospel lesson, Jesus called upon God's miraculous power to perform a miracle to provide for people's basic needs and at the same time to confirm Himself as the Messiah. It is evident from reading the synoptic Gospels that His disciples didn't understand the miracle until Jesus explained it to them some time later after feeding a second large crowd. What ways have you missed understanding the miracles of God in your own life? List two or three ways in which God has recently provided for you that you may have taken for granted. Tell God your thankfulness for His provision and ask Him to point out to you ways in which He continues to do so.

Going Deeper

Another figure that prefigured this ministry was Joseph in the Book of Genesis, then later on King David, also of the tribe of Judah. Do your own study on these people and see what amazing parallels you can draw between them and Jesus.

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass, visit this web site:

http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/052916.cfm

The Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ

Lectionary: 169

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass-Study-Notes-for-Sunday_05-29-2016.pdfDownload

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 8-23-2015



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **8-23-2015**. This week the readings focus upon the theme of God calling people to walk in a personal relationship with Him. In the first reading from Joshua, we see a challenge issued by God to forsake the false gods the people's ancestors served. In the second reading, Saint Paul teaches about the relationship between man and his wife and the mystery of how this parallels that between the Father and the Son. In the Gospel lesson, we study a story where Jesus' followers came to a point of decision concerning His identity as God in the flesh, the promised Messiah, the nature of whom they misunderstood.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from Joshua who was the successor to Moses after the Exodus and the one who led the Hebrew people across the Jordan after Moses' death. The reading today provides an overview of the monumental charge from Joshua to serve the One true God.

First Reading:

Joshua 24:1-18 NAS95 1 Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel and for their heads and their judges and their officers; and they presented themselves before God. 2 Joshua said to all the people, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods. 3 'Then I took your father Abraham from beyond the River, and led him through all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his descendants and gave him Isaac. 4 'To Isaac I gave Jacob and Esau, and to Esau I gave Mount Seir to possess it; but Jacob and his sons went down to Egypt. 5 'Then I sent Moses and Aaron, and I plagued Egypt by what I did in its midst; and afterward I brought you out. 6 'I brought your fathers out of Egypt, and you came to the sea; and Egypt pursued your fathers with chariots and horsemen to the Red Sea. 7 'But when they cried out to the LORD, He put darkness between you and the Egyptians, and brought the sea upon them and covered them; and your own eyes saw what I did in Egypt. And you lived in the wilderness for a long time. 8 'Then I brought you into the land of the Amorites who lived beyond the Jordan, and they fought with you; and I gave them into your hand, and you took possession of their land when I destroyed them before you. 9 'Then Balak the son of Zippor, king of Moab, arose and fought against Israel, and he sent and summoned Balaam the son of Beor to curse you. 10 'But I was not willing to listen to Balaam. So he had to bless you, and I delivered you from his hand. 11 'You crossed the Jordan and came to Jericho; and the citizens of Jericho fought against you, and the Amorite and the Perizzite and the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Girgashite, the Hivite and the Jebusite. Thus I gave them into your hand. 12 'Then I sent the hornet before you and it drove out the two kings of the Amorites from before you, but not by your sword or your bow. 13 'I gave you a land on which you had not labored, and cities which you had not built, and you have lived in them; you are eating of vineyards and olive groves which you did not plant.' 14 "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." 16 The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; 17 for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the way in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. 18 "The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."

After forty years of wandering in the desert under the leadership of Moses, the people who were still alive migrated across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Upon entering the land they encountered many obstacles the foremost of which was their immersion into a culture of idolatry which wasn't too different from that which plagued Abraham's father Terah (v. 2). Joshua presented to them the heart of the matter by saying, "choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living" or the One true God (v. 15). This was God's call to the people

for a relationship with Him with the terms of the relationship being to serve Him alone and not the gods of the surrounding nations. The people answered that they would indeed serve the Lord God and not the gods of the Amorites.

We know from reading the rest of the Scriptures how short-lived the Hebrew's promise was not to serve other gods and in effect creating a division between the true followers of God and the rest of the people. Because of their disobedience, God later sent foreign nations to invade their land including the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, and finally the Romans. Joshua was in the first camp, saying "but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (v. 15). As we will see later in the Gospel lesson, Jesus confronts the people with a similar decision. Will they follow Him, or instead follow their religious traditions? Will they follow the Father God, or their father the devil? Will they enter by the narrow road, Jesus, or follow the broad road to destruction (Matthew 7:13)?

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Ephesians 5. The context leading up to this passage is a treatise on how Christians should relate to one another. Saint Paul's teaching then zeros in on the model of submission between a husband and his wife, linking this as a reflection of the relationship between God the Son and God the Father, as well the church to Christ.

Second Reading:

Ephesians 5:21-33 NAS95 21 and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. 22 Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. 24 But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, 26 so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless. 28 So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; 29 for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, 30 because we are members of His body. 31 FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. 32 This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. 33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

The big idea in the reading is the nature of the relationship that exists between the believer and God. In the same way that the Jews in the first reading had a decision to make regarding their spiritual direction, all believers, not just Christian husbands and wives, have to come to grips with their personal relationship to God and how He calls them to live out this relationship with Him. Paul opens the reading by saying that everyone (married, unmarried, widows, and widowers) must "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (v. 21). This is the foundational concept upon which he

builds his explanation of biblical submission between and woman and her husband, which parallels the mysterious relationship that exists between Jesus and the Father (v. 32). Because "the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28) we too are to serve others in mutual submission to God ("in the fear of Christ," v. 21). This includes not only wives serving their husbands, but husbands serving their wives and everyone serving each other in the church family. For Paul said in 1 Corinthians, "But now there are many members, but one body" (1 Corinthians 12:21).

Continuing upon the relational concept in the reading, Paul described how the husband is the visible leader of the family by using the word translated "head" (v.23), which in the original Greek connoted "something that can be seen and taken a hold of." The idea is that the wife is to voluntarily place herself under the leadership of her husband. In the same way that Jesus is equal to God the Father, but different in His role, so the wife is equal in status to her husband, but different in her role. Jesus' submission to the Father does not make Him inferior (Philippians 2:6-11), only obedient. So, too, the wife's submission to her husband in the Lord does not make her inferior to her husband, but it does allow her to be obedient to God. This model of the harmonious union between one man and one woman goes all the way back to the Book of Genesis: "FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH" (v. 31). The unity between the man and the woman in marriage parallels the mysterious relationship between Christ and the church (v. 32). The Bible is clear that both the man and woman are called to be in mutual submission to God, while the woman is to submit to her husband and the man to God as the final authority. The man is called by God to be the visible ruler of the family by first separating himself from the headship of his own father (v. 31). This is the man's conscious point of decision to leave his earthly father and join with his wife in a new relationship that leads to unity under his Father God. It's as if God tells the man, choose whom you will serve.

As we move onto the Gospel lesson, we will see how Jesus' teaching of the crowds resulted in their coming to their own point of decision regarding whom they would serve.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

Today's reading from John marks an important point in his Gospel concerning a point of decision and division. The reading contains the famous John 6:66 passage, the numbering of which brings with it the idea of the mark of the Antichrist, the great divider who is to come in the future who will separate the true believers from among everyone in the world. The concept comes from the Book of Revelation. *"16 And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand or on their forehead, 17 and he provides that no one will be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. 18 Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty-six"* (Revelation 13:16-18). In the End Times the people will be given one final choice regarding who they will serve. At this point God will make a clear division between the followers of God and the only other choice, the followers of the AntiChrist. In the Gospel reading, Jesus' teaching reaches a similar

climax in which Jesus calls the people to a personal relationship with Him. Although they are not outright called to decide to which camp they belong, a clear division occurs beginning in John 6:66 which begins the separation of the wheat and the chaff (Matthew 3:12). God uses these moments of decision to reveal His true followers such as the occasion in which Saint Paul stated, "For there must also be factions among you, so that those who are approved may become evident among you" (1 Corinthians 11:19).

Gospel Reading:

John 6:60-69 NAS95 60 Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" 61 But Jesus, conscious that His disciples grumbled at this, said to them, "Does this cause you to stumble? 62 What then if you see the Son of Man ascending to where He was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him. 65 And He was saying, "For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted him from the Father." 66 As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" 68 Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

This story in John marked the beginning of several such points of decision in which the people were challenged to choose between the ways of God by following Jesus or the ways of man by following false religion and their own traditions. In this reading, the people came to the point of decision when they had heard Jesus' prior statements about Him being the "bread which came down from heaven" (John 6:58). The conflict that the people had with Jesus that caused their grumbling (John 6:43) was that they were familiar with Jesus' father Joseph and also his mother (John 6:42). Jesus was calling Himself God and since they knew his earthly parents, they reasoned that He could not be God. The people also misunderstood the nature of the Messiah because just a few verses later they said, "However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from" (John 7:27). This point of division continued into the group of His twelve disciples, for Jesus knew that one of them (Judas) had already separated himself from Him. The grumbling of the larger group of disciples then resulted in a separation of the true followers of God and everyone else. As this separation occurred, Jesus presented to the twelve a challenge causing Peter to take a stand for Jesus, affirming everything that Jesus had been saying about Himself. "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God" (vv. 68-69).

This passage teaches us that belief in Jesus is the way to eternal life. Some of the Jews were offended that Jesus, a mere man in their eyes, would claim to be God. However, if He was the Messiah, then His demand for their belief and loyalty was justified. In some sense, everyone has to come to terms with Jesus' claim to be the only way to eternal life. Some will be like the offended Jews, who stumbled over what they saw as far-fetched claims and rejected Jesus' lordship over their

lives. But others respond like Peter and say: "Lord" (which is a good way to start a sentence when you are talking to God in the flesh) . . . "You have the words of eternal life" (vv. 68-69). May we continue to believe in Christ as Lord and let Him work in us the type of life that leads to eternity with the Father.

One day while I was driving, I happened upon a man walking in the afternoon along the road who seemed to be in a hurry to get somewhere. He was wearing black wingtip shoes, which kind of stuck out to me. I had never seen this particular man before. My spirit prompted me to pull beside him and offer him a ride, which he gladly accepted. He told me that his bicycle had broken down and that he was on his way to work at the local supermarket. I encountered this man several times over the course of the next few months and each time he presented himself in such a kind, godly way that I actually began to think that he was an angel. As he found out more about my faith he began to praise and glorify God for all that He had done in my life. Perhaps it was because I didn't know him very well, but each time we met I sensed his close relationship with God. It also helped that his real name was Angelo! It wasn't until I met his wife that I finally understood he really was just a man (see Matthew 22:30).

After several encounters with Angelo, it really got me thinking about how **I** come across to the random people that I meet. Does my public persona match how I come across to people personally? How about my persona on Facebook; does it match what I truly believe? Considering Facebook, it seems to me to be okay to post that you are attending a Saturday afternoon wine tasting session; however, it is problematic when all that a person posts is about food and wine.

Like Angelo, when people meet us we should exhibit the markings of a follower of Jesus Christ. Which path are you **continuing** to choose in your daily walk with God? Joshua said in the first reading, "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD," "choose for yourselves today whom you will serve" (Joshua 24:14, 15b). Paul said in the second reading to "be subject to one another in the fear of Christ" (Ephesians 51), a behavior which can only be done through the empowerment of God's Holy Spirit as a new creation in Christ. Finally, Jesus said, "You do not want to go away also, do you?" (John 6:67b). Each day we have to choose the forsake "Egypt" and choose the pathway to walk with God. Although we make certain bad choices at times that dishonor God, the Scripture says that "if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. What have been some of the turning points in your life, especially as you consider your relationship with God? How have you turned from being offended by Christ's radical call on your life to a place of surrender and submission to His lordship? Are there areas of your life that you are still wrestling for control? How might these passages help you to surrender anew to His lordship?

2. If someone watched your life, choices and attitudes, to whom or what would they attribute your

devotion, worship and loyalty? What things would they see to show them that you are choosing this day (and every day) to serve the Lord? What things would give a conflicted and confusing message to them of your heart's true home?

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site:

http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/082315.cfm

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Keywords:

Wheat and the chaff, John 666, AntiChrist,

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 8-16-2015



Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **8-16-2015**. In the first reading, we look at the Book of Proverbs where we see the concept of wisdom personified. The second reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians and focuses upon the behavior of those enlightened by God through faith in Jesus Christ. We close with a continuation of Jesus' lesson from last week in which Jesus called Himself the "living bread that came down out of heaven" (John 6:51).

Introduction to the First Reading:

The book of Proverbs is full of true, wise sayings about everyday life and relationships. It is similar to poetry in that it often uses figurative language to make its point. Many of the Proverbs were written by King Solomon, considered the wisest man who ever lived. God blessed him with great wisdom and riches, and early in his life he followed God faithfully. Later he sinned against God by marrying many women who followed after false gods. Sadly, Solomon followed their idolatrous ways. These Proverbs however, were given by God and are still a source of great wisdom today.

The Book of Psalms provides us with an insight concerning wisdom. Psalm 119:102-104 says:

I have not turned aside from Your ordinances, For You Yourself have taught me. How sweet are Your words to my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth! From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.

First Reading:

Proverbs 9:1-6 NAS95 1 Wisdom has built her house, She has hewn out her seven pillars; 2 She has prepared her food, she has mixed her wine; She has also set her table; 3 She has sent out her maidens, she calls From the tops of the heights of the city: 4 "Whoever is naive, let him turn in here!" To him who lacks understanding she says, 5 "Come, eat of my food And drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 Forsake your folly and live, And proceed in the way of understanding."

In Proverbs Ch. 9, the writer uses personification (giving human traits to a nonhuman object or idea) to describe wisdom. She (Wisdom) has built a strong house, indicating that wisdom gives us a strong and secure place from which to live. She is like the mistress of the house who prepares all good things for us to enjoy and invites us in to freely partake of it. Wisdom is available to us if we will only forsake our foolish ways and come and dine. Since God is the source of all wisdom, the food we must consume to get wisdom is His Word—the Bible.

Believers grow in their knowledge of God by developing a deeper understanding of God's Wisdom as revealed through the Bible. As we move to the second reading, we will see how Saint Paul calls believers to express their wisdom through godly expressions of spiritual songs, hymns and psalms. These are activities which happen during the fellowship of believers in the church and they help us

to grow in our knowledge of love of the Lord Jesus.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Saint Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. It begins with the adverb "therefore" which means we must understand the meaning of the verses immediately before to which Paul is referring.

Second Reading:

Ephesians 5:15-20 NAS95 15 Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, 16 making the most of your time, because the days are evil. 17 So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord; 20 always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God, even the Father;

The "therefore" refers to the fact that as believers in the Lord Jesus we are "children of the light" (Ephesians 5:8b-c) who were formerly in darkness (v. 8a). Since we are children of the light, we are to produce fruit in keeping with the light, "for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (v. 9). Though we live in evil times (days, v. 16b) we are called as believers to be good stewards of the light that we have through our knowledge of God's word in the Bible. Our understanding of the Bible is how we know God's will (v. 17b). We must let worldly things like wine get in the way of our walking in the truth of the Lord (v. 18), for being drunk is the behavior of the sin darkened unbelievers. One of the ways in which we can express our love for God and also to grow in the knowledge of Him is through "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (v. 19). God also calls us to be thankful for the things that God has bestowed upon us (v. 20).

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

In the Gospel reading, we continue the discourse that Jesus had with the crowds concerning his teaching as He being the "bread which came down from heaven." The people to whom Jesus was speaking were misunderstanding both the nature of the Messiah as well as to His identity as the One to whom they were listening.

Gospel Reading:

John 6:51-58 NAS95 51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." 52 Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For My flesh is true food, and My blood is

true drink. 56 He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. 58 This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever."

Once again we return to the chapter where Jesus refers to himself by a spiritual metaphor—the bread of life. Many people were following Jesus. They saw his miracles, and they were excited about what Jesus had done and curious about what Jesus would do next. They wanted to be part of his entourage. But was that enough of a commitment to call themselves true Christians? Jesus is going to shock the crowd with a stunning metaphor, designed to separate the curious from the true disciples: *"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day (John 6:54).* As bread gives life through its nourishment, so Jesus gives life to all who believe in Him. Bread provides its physical benefit, not when it is sitting on the table but when it is taken into the body. Jesus provides his spiritual benefits not to the followers who are merely curious but to those who make a full commitment to Him from the heart. Romans 10:9 says, "*If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved*." Eating in this case is not physical consumption but belief from the heart that provides the spiritual benefit of eternal life.

Many could not understand the spiritual nature of Jesus' words. They missed the metaphors, and His talk of eating flesh and drinking blood was offensive to them. They demonstrated the principle that the words of Jesus cannot be understood through human wisdom alone, and no one can come to Jesus unless the Father grants it (v. 65). These disciples, blinded by their own sin, walked away and no longer followed Him. As Jesus continued His teaching, He began to move deeply in the hearts of the crowd causing them to move closer to the point of decision that we will see next week in John 6:66. In the reading today Jesus once again used the "I am" phrase, something which His hearers would have understood as a claim to divinity. Jesus told the crowd at least one year before His final Passover meal at what we call the "Last Supper" that it wasn't the bread that would save them, but rather their belief in Him. The manna in the Exodus was something created divinely by God which fell from the sky at night for the Hebrews to collect each day (except on the Sabbath). Even though this special "bread" came directly from God, those that ate this physical provision from God still died physically (v. 58b). In contrast, those that "feed" upon Jesus are the ones that believe in Him as the Messiah, which is the only way to eternal life (John 14:6). If we read a few verses later in this section, Jesus explained the spiritual analogy He was using by calling Himself the bread of God. He said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). The people misunderstood His spiritual metaphor and stumbled upon His identity as the one and only Messiah of God. The Jews evidently understood that they were prohibited by the Law from the drinking blood. Leviticus says, "You shall not eat anything with the blood" (Leviticus 19:26a). This prohibition from a blood meal was repeated in the New Testament so as not to create a stumbling point with the early Jewish believers. The proclamation in the Book of Acts reads, "that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell" (Acts 15:29). The practice of consuming blood would have been deeply offensive to the

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Jews because of their immersion in the teachings of the Mosaic Law. Jesus, aware of the legalistic Pharisees in the crowd, used this metaphor to further deepen the divide that existed between the true and false followers of God.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. Describe in what ways Jesus was truly wisdom personified, taking into account the relationship between the words of Jesus in the Bible and the person of Jesus?

2. The Gospel reading followed a series of miracles that Jesus performed for the crowd including the multiplying of the loaves and fishes. Yet we know that many of the people in the crowd did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah (John 6:66). What miracles from Jesus have you experienced in your own life? Why are your experiences different from the people in the Gospel narrative?

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site:

http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/082315.cfm

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 8-9-2015

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **8-9-2015**. This week we open with the first reading from First Kings in which we find the great Prophet Elijah running away from wicked Queen Jezebel. The story reminds us that God will provide for us in order to accomplish the works that He has in store for us. Then we move to the second reading from Ephesians, which helps us to see what the contrast is between living as a child of the world and living as a child of God. Then we close with the continuing study on Jesus in John 6 where he confronts the unbelieving people by calling Himself the "bread of God."

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from First Kings and deals with the Prophet Elijah who was a mighty man of God in a dark era in Israel during the decline of the theocratic kingdom. This period followed the time of the Judges in which the Scripture said, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). There were bright spots in this age and one of them was the prophet Elijah. Elijah was perhaps best known for the incident recorded in First Kings 18 during a time of severe famine in Samaria. According to the Scripture Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal as to whether they could bring fire down on their sacrifice by calling on their god while Elijah would offer his sacrifice to God and ask Him to send fire to complete his burnt offering. The Priests of Baal began calling upon their god and cutting themselves in order to invoke a response, but failed miserably. Next, Elijah was so certain the God would act upon his request that he soaked the wood with water (1 Kings 18:33). He prayed a simple prayer and asked God to bring down fire on the sacrifice. With a dramatic display of power, God burned up not only the entire sacrifice, but the fire licked up the water as well. Afterwards, Elijah had the Priests taken captive and then put them to death (v. 40). What an amazing victory Elijah had that day! After such an important victory one would think that Elijah would have continued his momentum and never suffered from any sort of

worry. If God could light even wet wood on fire in front of the pagan priests Elijah could accomplish anything by calling upon the only true God in prayer. At least that is what one may think. Leading up to today's reading, soon afterwards the Scripture records that Elijah fell into a period of deep anxiety because of the actions of a certain ungodly woman named Jezebel. Jezebel was the evil wife of King Ahab, a king of Northern Israel. Immediately after Elijah's victory over the Prophets of Baal, wicked Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah saying, "So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time (1 Kings 19:2b). His response was to flee for his life because of Jezebel's threat. "And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there. But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, 'It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers'" (vv. 3-4). Later, Elijah fled even further into the mountains to hide in a cave (1 Kings 19:9). How could such a mighty man of God, who had just witnessed God's dynamic power in the victory over the Prophets of Baal find himself holed up and worrying in a dark cave? If a mighty man of God like Elijah could suffer with anxiety, it's no wonder that Christians can also fall into patterns of worry.

This leads us to today's reading in which we find Elijah on the run from wicked Queen Jezebel.

First Reading:

1 Kings 19:4-8 NAS95 4 But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree; and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, "It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers." 5 He lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, "Arise, eat." 6 Then he looked and behold, there was at his head a bread cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again. 7 The angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, "Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you." 8 So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.

Even though Elijah was fresh from his mighty victory, he fled in fear to the wilderness and asked the Lord to take his life (v. 4). God responded to his prayer in a different way by sending an angel to provide fresh food for him (vv. 5-6). After Elijah ate and rested the first time, the angel came back to him again and caused him to eat a second time (v. 7). Subsequent to these two meals, Elijah traveled without food for forty days and nights until he reached Mt. Horeb (v. 8). Evidently, God miraculously delivered Elijah through this extended period of fasting in a similar way that He did when Jesus Christ fasted for a forty-day period (Matthew 4:2). We are not told whether the bread that God provided to Elijah allowed this extended fast but in all likelihood the two meals given to him were for the purpose of lifting his spirits to the point that he continued on his journey to Mt. Horeb. These things happened at the end of Elijah's earthly existence, as shortly after these events he appointed Elisha to be his successor and was then taken up into a cloud.

What can we learn from the reading? Even though we may despair of living because of the impossible obstacles we face, God will provide for us when we call upon Him. He may or may not use his angelic helpers in the way that He did for Elijah, but we can trust that God will not leave us or forsake us (Deuteronomy 31:6, Hebrews 13:5). God knows in just what manner and quantity to provide for us the things that will move us to the next step in accomplishing the plans that He has for our lives.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Ephesians 4 and shows us the contrast between life as a non-believer and a believer in Christ. It reminds us that our hearts need to be in right relationship with God in order for our outward behavior to reflect God's value system.

Second Reading:

Ephesians 4:30 – 5:2 NAS95 30 Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. 1 Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; 2 and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

Saint Paul called the people in the Ephesian church not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God by carrying out sinful thoughts in their hearts and engaging in ungodly behaviors. The emphasis for changed behavior is a changed heart. A changed heart comes from being in a right relationship with God through faith in Christ. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ, we are "sealed for the day of redemption" by the Holy Spirit (4:30, see also 2 Corinthians 1:22; 5:5; Ephesians 1:13-14). God has placed upon each believer the seal of redemption through His Holy Spirit and this invisible marking is His certification that He will deliver upon what He has promised. What this means is that we are now inhabited by the very presence of God through His Spirit. Where we go with our thoughts and with our body, we take God with us. Because God lives in us, we are a new creation, the old way of life has gone and a new way of life has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Holy Spirit helps us to see our lives and the world from God's perspective. We can now make decisions based on God's value system, which is in sharp contrast to the world's value system.

Christians are not to have any part in the ungodly behaviors that are associated with the unbelieving world. These behaviors are generated from a "me-first" mentality that is easily offended, resulting in bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, slander and malice. You can see the progressive nature of sin as it takes on more and more momentum to divide us from others and actually engage in hurtful ways of interacting with others. This is a reflection of the value system of the god of this age, the devil, who is the father of those who do not have God as their father (John 8:44).

Instead, Paul called the people to emulate God through the model of Jesus Christ who willingly sacrificed Himself, not as a victim, but through His own choice (John 10:18). When we receive God's

kindness, tenderness, forgiveness and love, we become children of God (John 1:12) and our hearts are shaped by this new value system. We begin to do things more like God our Father and less like our former father. Titus 2:11-13 corroborates this when it says: "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age as we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearance of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us, to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people of his very own, eager to do good (NIV)."

This means that "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it" (1Corinthians 10:13). In the same way that God provided for Elijah's physical and emotional needs when He asked, God will also provide the things we need in order to serve Him. This includes the ability through His power to forsake the ungodly behaviors that Paul listed in the reading.

How can we apply this to our lives? This reading is helpful to consider as we interact with others throughout the week and before we partake of communion. God's love transforms how we approach relationships and the community of believers. Communion has in its very word the idea of common unity. The church comes together to participate in remembering God's way of interacting with us, which is typified by Christ's sacrifice on the cross for our sins. As a result, our way of interacting with others changes as well. Communion reminds us of Jesus' admonition in Matthew's Gospel about asking forgiveness from a person we may have offended before we bring an offering to God. "Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering" (Matthew 5:23-24). When we partake of communion we shouldn't grieve the Holy Spirit of God (Ephesians 4:30) by clinging to ungodly feelings towards others and bringing this into the celebration of remembrance of our Lord's death which took the place for the penalty for our sins. Instead of coming with thoughts of wrath, anger, slander, and bitterness (vv. 30 – 31) we have been changed so that we can come with minds cleansed from these things and present to God hearts filled with kindness, tenderness forgiveness, and love (vv. 32 – 4:1).

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading is a continuation of the story that was started last week. The context is Jesus' teaching of the crowds that followed him after His feeding of them through the multiplying of the loaves and fishes in the closing of Chapter 5.

Gospel Reading:

John 6:41-51 NAS95 41 Therefore the Jews were grumbling about Him, because He said, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." 42 They were saying, "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph,

whose father and mother we know? How does He now say, 'I have come down out of heaven'?" 43 Jesus answered and said to them, "Do not grumble among yourselves. 44 No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, 'AND THEY SHALL ALL BE TAUGHT OF GOD.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father, comes to Me. 46 Not that anyone has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; He has seen the Father. 47 Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. 50 This is the bread which comes down out of heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. 51 I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh."

The main point of Jesus' teaching is that belief in Him is the only way to obtain eternal life and be restored to right relationship with God the Father. Repeating our statement from last week, Jesus' point in this particular teaching wasn't whether or not He is spiritually present in the elements of communion. These issues were not even a part of the mentality of the Jewish people that He was addressing.

The passage opens with the grumbling of the Jews in disbelief against Jesus' claim to be the Messiah. They point to His human origins as proof that He could not be God's promised Messiah (v. 42). They believed that only God or possibly an angel can come down from heaven. Since some in the crowd knew Jesus' earthly father and mother they couldn't accept His statement that He came down from heaven. We know from John 7 that the people held to a tradition about the nature of the Messiah. There they said, "However, we know where this man is from; but whenever the Christ may come, no one knows where He is from" (John 7:27). Jesus cut to the heart of the issue which was their unbelief in God. Earlier Jesus had told them:

John 5:37-40 NAS95 37 "And the Father who sent Me, He has testified of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time nor seen His form. 38 You do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. 39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; it is these that testify about Me; 40 and you are unwilling to come to Me so that you may have life."

This leads us to the central point of the story: the only way to God the Father is through belief in Jesus the Son (v. 47). For "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3:36). Jesus said that they could not come to Him because the Father was not drawing them (v. 44). But we know that God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). It seems that their hard-heartedness and lack of being willing to be "taught of God" was preventing them from being drawn to faith in Jesus. If they would let themselves hear and learn from the Father, then Christ's divinity would be obvious to them. Then they would come to Him and have assurance of a life that is eternal (v. 44b). By offering resurrection life, Jesus is overtly claiming His deity. He continues to make claims of divinity by saying that He is the One who was sent by the Father and has seen Him (vv. 45-46). It is with this backdrop that Jesus makes a bold claim, emphasized by the phrase, "Truly,

truly," which is basically putting His word on the same level as Holy Scripture, infallible and inerrant. He says, "he who believes has eternal life" (v. 47).

In order to unpack this a little more, he uses an analogy that the Jews would have been familiar with from the Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the Old Testament). He harkens back to the days when the Hebrew people were in the wilderness and ate manna, which was a supernatural food that God provided for them (see Mass notes from last week). Even though they ate this supernatural food, their bodies still died. Jesus was claiming to be more than manna, He is the "manna" (or bread) that brings life to the soul (John 10:10). Being in relationship to Him who is the resurrection and the life, allows one to live eternally, even if the body dies (John 11:25). When Jesus said "and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is my flesh," he was referring to His bodily sacrifice that He would make to bring atonement for our sins. The Old Testament set a precedent for the need for a blood sacrifice for the forgiveness of sins (Hebrews 9:22). So Jesus was showing that His impending death would be that sacrifice required by the Law to forgive us of our sins (1 John 2:2).

What can we learn from this reading to apply to our lives? When we celebrate communion we remember how Jesus gave up His life to bear the penalty for our sins. When we take of the bread, we remember His body that was broken on the cross for us. When we partake of the cup, we remember Jesus' blood that was poured out for us. Before we partake of communion we should examine our hearts in preparation. We can ask ourselves if we too have become so familiar with Jesus that we overlook that He is God? In addition, when this world starts getting to us, we can look to Him for life that is truly life, realizing that this world is not our home. We walk by faith that someday we will be with Him and all things will be made right. We can also be a spokesperson for God, sharing with others the wonderful opportunity to be made right with the Father through Jesus.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. We said about the second reading:

God has placed upon each believer the seal of redemption through His Holy Spirit and this invisible marking is His certification that He will deliver upon what He has promised. What this means is that we are now inhabited by the very presence of God through His Spirit. Where we go with our thoughts and with our body, we take God with us. Because God lives in us, we are a new creation, the old way of life has gone and a new way of life has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Holy Spirit helps us to see our lives and the world from God's perspective. We can now make decisions based on God's value system, which is in sharp contrast to the world's value system.

In what ways do you bring God into your relationships? In your work life? In your relationship with you wife? In relationship to nonbelievers?

2. Reflect upon the last time you celebrated communion. Was your heart focused upon the Lord Jesus' sacrifice for you?

Saint Paul gave us a clue as to the importance of the celebration of communion. He said in 1

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Corinthians 11:30 about those who were doing so in an unholy manner, "For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep." Although his words were in the context of the full love feast he indicated the sincere need to examine our motives as we celebrate communion. In light of what we studied today, the next time you take communion examine your heart and sincerely prepare for the remembrance of Jesus dying on the cross for you sins.

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site:

http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/080915.cfm

First Reading 1 KGS 19:4-8

Second Reading EPH 4:30—5:2

Gospel Reading JN 6:41-51

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 8-2-2015

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **8-2-2015**. This week we open with a reading from Exodus, where God performed a miracle to feed the multitude of Hebrew people who had just been delivered from slavery in Egypt. We then move to the letter that Saint Paul wrote to the Ephesians, where he describes what being a Christian looks like, contrasting new life in Christ to the old way of life in darkness. Finally we conclude with Jesus' declaration that he is bread from heaven, harkening back to the manna that was described in the first reading from Exodus.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from Exodus. The Hebrew people had just been delivered from the captivity of the Egyptians. God raised up Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. As we will see, even though God performed many miraculous signs and provisions in this first phase of the Exodus the people quickly complained against Him and wanted to return to their captivity. As you read, ask yourself in what ways you too find it easy to complain about God's ways and would wish to return to captivity's predictability.

First Reading:

Exodus 16:1-15 NAS95 1 Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. 2 The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the

people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. 5 "On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, "At evening you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt; 7 and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your grumblings against the LORD; and what are we, that you grumble against us?" 8 Moses said, "This will happen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the LORD hears your grumblings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD." 9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.'" 10 It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 12 "I have heard the grumblings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'" 13 So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. 15 When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.

The Hebrew people were in an interesting transition All of their lives, they had been slaves. Now slavery is not desirable in any context, but it is predictable and structured. You don't have to make any decisions, everything is decided for you. In the midst of the oppression, though, your basic needs are taken care of. While it was not luxurious living, the Hebrew slaves had a sense of security that was no longer available to them in their new found freedom. Instead of looking at all that God had done to deliver them from their oppression and trust Him for their daunting future, they chose to rehearse the "good" points of their slavery (the security of food and shelter) and accused God of not caring about them.

This wasn't an isolated instance of grumbling, rather the text says, "The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness" (v. 2). In spite of their hard hearts, God heard the people and answered by telling Moses that He would "rain bread from heaven for you" even in the case when they did not obey Him (v. 4), which He knew they wouldn't. Moses explained to them that their complaints weren't against him but against God (v. 8). God made a special provision to provide for the sabbath by making the manna quantitatively different (a double portion) on the day before as well as qualitatively different – it would not spoil during the sabbath rest day. God then announced the miracle to Moses through the appearance of the Shekinah glory which the people saw (v. 10). In the meantime in the evening before the raining of the manna from the sky began, God sent quail to the people (v. 13). The text concluded with the people seeing the manna and not recognizing what it was until Moses explained it to them (v. 15).The word "manna" in Hebrew means "what is it." As you can imagine, this was an extraordinary way for God to provide for

His people. God seems to work in very unexpected ways.

There are many spiritual parallels in this reading between the provision of God through the manna and the person and work of Jesus Christ who, as we will see in the Gospel reading, called Himself "the bread of life" (John 6:35). In spite of the fact that the people grumbled against God He still provided food for them. The parallel in the New Testament is that in spite of the fact that most of the people didn't accept Jesus as their Messiah, God still provided salvation through Him. The manna was a very unique provision that was done only by God and could not come about by any natural means. In the same way, Jesus was God's supernatural provision and also did not come about by natural means but was instead born through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Ephesians and the context is Paul's teaching on the spiritual unity of believers in the church and the unique calling to which God calls His people to walk together in a new way outside of sensual and greedy practices.

Second Reading:

Ephesians 4:17-24 NAS95 17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Paul typified the Gentiles as unbelievers who "walk[ed] in the futility of their mind[s], being darkened in their understanding" of the true salvation that comes only from God (v. 17). Their behavior is typical of the qualities displayed in the unbelieving world, and even among the grumbling Hebrews about whom we read in the first reading. In contrast, believers are called to set aside their former practices and walk in the newness of life, being renewed in their spirits and to put on the "new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (v. 24). Like the manna in the desert on the six day which was qualitatively different, believers are also called to be different from unbelievers who by their nature embrace ungodly behaviors because of the spiritual darkness that reigns in their hearts. As believers in Jesus, we now have a new nature in us. In order to understand our new nature, we must learn the truth about our identity in Christ, which Paul says begins when our minds are renewed. This renewing of our minds is why Bible study, prayer and being with other believers is so important for our growth in the Christian life. These practices help us to begin to see things as God sees them and then our lives become

transformed as we let His ways be our ways (Romans 12:1-3).

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading is from John 6 where Jesus reveals to the people the parallel between God's provision of the manna in the desert and to Himself as the "bread of life" that provides eternal life through faith in Him. Knowing what happened in the story before we pick up the reading will be helpful. The immediate context of today's reading is just after the multiplying of the loaves and fishes in the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-15). Afterwards Jesus fled from there because He sensed that the people were going to take Him by force to make Him their king (v. 15). Jesus, though, did not leave the region with the disciples on their boat, but he nonetheless showed up on the other side with them. This is why they ask Him when he got there and explains why they are confused in today's reading (v. 25). It was during this time that a storm arose and the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water (v. 19). Jesus got into the boat which was then immediately at the opposite shore (v. 21). In this instance, the text says that Jesus wasn't in the boat and never mentioned whether or not He calmed the sea (refer to Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-25, and Matthew 8:23-27). But from these other references, we know that Jesus was able to do miraculous things, which was part of Him showing His legitimate right to claim Himself as the Messiah.

Gospel Reading:

John 6:24-35 NAS95 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. 25 When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?" 26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." 30 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? 31 "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'" 32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. 33 "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

Before we study the text we need to make an important statement about beliefs regarding communion. Jesus' point in this particular teaching wasn't whether or not He is spiritually present in the elements of communion. These are matters that we leave to the church to decide as believers in many different Christian denominations believe including not just Catholics but also some Protestant denominations including Lutheran and Episcopal. The main point of Jesus' teaching is that belief in

Him is the only way to obtain eternal life through the Father God. Even though some of the people were familiar with Jesus, this shouldn't have stopped them from seeing the miraculous signs that He was doing and how His work confirmed the teaching of the Old Testament (John 6:45).

The reading is the third of many misunderstandings that the people had about Jesus and the nature of the promised Messiah. In each case Jesus uses a common symbol to describe a spiritual reality. The first time this happened was back in Chapter 3 during His discussion with Nicodemus who misunderstood Jesus' reference to spiritual birth. Jesus explained the need to be born again or from above (John 3:3). The second case was Jesus' interaction with a Samaritan woman where Jesus equated trusting Him with "living water" that would satisfy the unquenchable thirst of the human soul (John 4:6-29). The symbolism that Jesus was using here with the Samaritan woman and the water was an illustration of the eternal life that can only come through faith in Him. Like Nicodemus (and to the Jews in today's reading), this connection between a concrete substance (birth, bread, water) and a spiritual reality wasn't obvious to the woman because she asked him to give her the water so she wouldn't have to keep coming to the well (John 4:15). Jesus gave a clue to His disciples about what was to come shortly after this interaction when they urged Him to eat something (John 4:31). Jesus answered them by saying, "I have food to eat that you do not know about," and "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:32, 34).This is very similar to what happened in the story today but instead of water Jesus used the symbolism of bread. This opens the next chapter in which Jesus feeds the people with physical food to provide for their temporal needs but unveils their greater need of eternal life through faith in God's only spiritual provision: Jesus, the heavenly manna.

Paul sheds light on these allusions from Israel's past for those of us who are reading this as Gentiles, without the history of the Jewish people as our backdrop. He gave the following explanation about the water, manna, and the people's unbelief in Exodus about which we read in the first reading:

1 Corinthians 10:1-5 NAS95 1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.

Paul wanted New Testament believers to understand the spiritual heritage and to learn from the mistakes that led to disbelief and rejection of God's provision for their lives. Therefore, it is important to understand this passage in light of the broader context of Jewish history. Jesus claimed to be the promised Messiah, God's special and chosen servant to deliver people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). What they expected of the Messiah and what Jesus portrayed were two very different things. The people had a hard time accepting that God's unexpected ways (faith in the suffering servant as explained in Isaiah 53) was better than their visions of Messiah (a political ruler who would take care of their physical and material needs).

In today's story, people from among the five thousand whom Jesus fed earlier were searching for

him (v. 24) Their reaction to finding Jesus miraculously on the other side of the lake was not what we would expect. They did not ask Him **how** He got there but rather **when** He got there, trying to piece together a plausible explanation (v. 25). Jesus didn't bother to answer their impertinent question, but rather cut to the heart of the matter of their deep spiritual need. They were overcome by their desire for physical bread, but Jesus saw their more critical need, spiritual food that would lead to eternal restoration and life. They followed Jesus there because they desired to eat their fill of the bread that He gave them last time, so Jesus explained to them that their physical need for bread was minor compared to their need for spiritual restoration with their Heavenly Father that came only from God. Jesus told them that although they saw the signs He did they still didn't believe in Him as the Messiah from God, but rather approached Him as their physical provider, a sort of genie on demand (v. 26). Remember that Jesus had to flee from them right after the feeding of the five thousand because He knew that they were going to try and make Him their civil King because they saw Him as their provider. Instead of going along with their folly, Jesus instead told them, "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you" (v. 27).

Looking back to the manna in the desert, had the people not been so hard hearted they could have better understood God's provision. In the case of the manna it was collected for the first five days of the week and went bad overnight. But on the sixth day God provided a double amount of a special type which was preserved for a two day period in order to provide for a sabbath rest day. In the spiritual sense Jesus is our special manna, the one who provides our eternal Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4). The people in this story then bullheadedly asked Jesus for another sign, an attitude about which Jesus said later, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matthew 12:39). Jesus answered their request for a sign with an explanation of how God's provision of manna was similar to the spiritual nourishment that He desired to give them, if they would ask God to change their hearts so they could listen and receive God's provision to them through Christ as Messiah. We will see next week in verse 44 that Jesus continues to explain the way to God through Him by saying, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." Jesus addresses their need for restoration in their relationship with the Father by referring back to Israel's history and said, "He gave them bread out of heaven to eat" (v. 31).

The people responded to Jesus' illustration of Himself as their spiritual bread in a similar way as did the Samaritan woman saying, "Lord, always give us this bread." Jesus answered them by using language which included the information about His interaction with the Samaritan woman and the sign of the living water. This he most likely did for the benefit of His disciples who had still not understood the sign of the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 8:17 – 21). Jesus used an "I am" statement which strongly indicated His divinity, saying "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst" (v. 34). Jesus was the double provision of the special manna that didn't perish on the sixth day that nourished the people into their Sabbath rest. The work of God is not "works", for Jesus clarified this in verse 29: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." Jesus explained that the way to God was uniquely through faith in Him.

We will see this claim better next week as we study the continuation of Jesus' teaching on this matter where Jesus said, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and **believes** in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (v. 40). The heart of the matter was **belief** in Jesus as the one and only Son of the Father, the only One through Whom came eternal life. Though the people sought physical bread to satisfy their physical needs, Jesus cut to their greater need of spiritual healing which came only through belief in Him as the only way to God.

What does this mean for our lives? The main point of the reading was Jesus' profound statement that belief in Him as a type of spiritual manna was the only means of finding peace and eternal life with God. Unlike Nicodemus who seemingly believed Jesus later in his life (John 19:39), and the Samaritan woman who believed in Jesus immediately after listening to Him, many of the people in this story didn't believe and separated themselves from Him. This is evident in the infamous John 6-6-6- verse: "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." After this statement Saint Peter boldly identified Jesus as the Christ, saying, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68c – 69).

To whom will you go? Will you seek eternal life through the machinations of being a good person and observing religious activities? Will you be like the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus who surrendered their lives to the person of Jesus Christ, or will you respond like many in the crowd that separated themselves from Jesus because their Messiah didn't measure up to their expectations? Later in this discourse Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). May we be convinced from this passage to seek eternal life through faith in the One and Only means, Jesus Christ.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. What parallels do you see between the people of our day who want God on their own terms and the hard-hearted people of Israel in the Old and New Testament readings? What does the Ephesian's passage say about this way of thinking?

2. How can you be part of bringing a message of hope and light to people who are approaching God with an expectation of God being a genie on demand (and often being disillusioned with God's unexpected ways of interacting with them)? Are there areas of your own life that you need to work through disillusionment with the Lord's unexpected ways so that you can be freed up to minister to others authentically in their own struggles with surrendering to God?

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site:

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/080215.cfm

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 6-7-2015



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **6-7-2015**. This week we open with the Old Testament book of Exodus and learn about the giving of God's Law and the people's response to it. Then we move to Hebrews in the New Testament, where Jesus is shown to be our high priest, fulfilling the role pictured in the Old Testament offering of sacrificial blood to cover sin. Finally we conclude with the Gospel of Mark, and learn about the Last Supper, where Jesus clearly spoke of the significance of Communion, the offering of His body and blood. Look for a common theme in these readings.

The first reading is from the second book of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. As the name implies, it records the story of Israel's deliverance after 400 years of slavery in Egypt and the long journey of forty years to the Promised Land. After the exodus from Egypt and during the long journey through the wilderness, God appeared to Moses on Sinai Mountain and delivered to him the Law. The summary of it, the Ten Commandments, is in chapter 20, and the next several chapters

explain more fully the covenant God is making with His people. Laws and regulations relating to worship, offerings, sacrifices, and the building of a tabernacle for His dwelling place are given in great detail.

First Reading

Exodus 24:3-8 NAS95 3 Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!" 4 Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. Then he arose early in the morning, and built an altar at the foot of the mountain with twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Israel. 5 he sent young men of the sons of Israel, and they offered burnt offerings and sacrificed young bulls as peace offerings to the LORD. 6 Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and the other half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. 7 Then he took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!" 8 So Moses took the blood and sprinkled it on the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

We have read now about the people's response to the giving of God's Law. When Moses came down from the mountain and revealed the Law the people unitedly agreed to obey the Law completely. Moses built an altar and sacrifices were made as God had commanded, including the sprinkling of blood on the altar. It was the beginning of many years of offering such sacrifices and picturing the ultimate sacrifice of blood to be made by the Messiah centuries later. When Moses read the "book of the covenant" to the people they once again vowed to be obedient to the Law. Obedience ought to be the response of every Christian when they hear God's Word: "I will obey."

Second Reading

In the First reading, reference was made to God's covenant with His people, Israel. In this passage we read of a "new covenant." The old covenant was sealed with the blood of sacrificed animals, and the new covenant was sealed with the blood of Jesus. He is seen here as the high priest who offers the acceptable sacrifice (His death burial, and resurrection) to atone for our sin.

Hebrews 9:11-15 NAS95 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

The Old Testament priests had to repeat the sacrifices in the Tabernacle and the Temple, which were mere symbols of the dwelling place of God, for "the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands" (Acts 7:48). But Jesus entered into "the greater and more perfect tabernacle"—into the very presence of God—to present the sufficient sacrifice of His blood. So, not only has Jesus paid the price for our sin, He has also become the one mediator between man and God (1 Timothy 2:5). Therefore, Christians can rejoice that through the work of Jesus on our behalf, we have the "promise of the eternal inheritance," ever to be with Jesus in heaven.

Gospel Reading

The three readings for today all make mention of a covenant. In Exodus it was God's covenant with man that required the keeping of the Law, including blood sacrifices as a picture of cleansing. In Hebrews the writer reminds us of a new covenant that God offers to people through the sacrifice of Christ's blood that satisfied God's demands for justice. In the Gospel reading we have the account of the Last Supper with its deep, significant teaching of essential truth.

Mark 14:12-26 NAS95 12 On the first day of Unleavened Bread, when the Passover lamb was being sacrificed, His disciples said to Him, "Where do You want us to go and prepare for You to eat the Passover?" 13 And He sent two of His disciples and said to them, "Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him; 14 and wherever he enters, say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says, "Where is My guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' 15 "And he himself will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; prepare for us there." 16 The disciples went out and came to the city, and found it just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover. 17 When it was evening He came with the twelve. 18 As they were reclining at the table and eating, Jesus said, "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me–one who is eating with Me." 19 They began to be grieved and to say to Him one by one, "Surely not I?" 20 And He said to them, "It is one of the twelve, one who dips with Me in the bowl. 21 For the Son of Man is to go just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born." 22 While they were eating, He took some bread, and after a blessing He broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take it; this is My body." 23 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 24 And He said to them, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. 25 Truly I say to you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God." 26 After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

The Passover supper provided clear illustrations of God's grace and mercy to sinful men. First, it points back to the delivery of Israel from Egypt. When the angel of death fell upon the Egyptian households, their firstborn children died. But the Jewish children survived because the families had sprinkled the blood of a sacrificial lamb (representative of Jesus, the Lamb of God) on their doorposts. The celebration of Passover for the Jews is a vivid reminder of deliverance by blood. Now,

on this special night in Jerusalem Jesus uses object lessons to demonstrate that it is essential to identify by faith in His blood and body in order to receive the offered gift of salvation and a personal relationship with God. In stark contrast to this gracious offer, Jesus points out that one of the Twelve, who had walked and worked with Him, would betray Him. In fact, before the night was over, all of the disciples would fail the Master, but eleven repented and returned. We must be aware that being near Jesus is not enough; one must put His full trust and faith in Him lest he, like Judas, fall away. We must identify with Christ in His passion and ministry to fully enjoy the grace and mercy He offers.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. In the second reading we saw some powerful statements about both the identity and the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ towards believers. Study the text of this reading again and answer the questions that follow.

Hebrews 9:11-15 NAS95 11 But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. 13 For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have been defiled sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, 14 how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15 For this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that, since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

A. The author of Hebrews described how Jesus as the eternal High Priest entered not into the tabernacle built by Moses but into a far different place. Describe the attributes of the "more perfect tabernacle" (v. 11) into which Jesus entered. In what ways was this tabernacle different from the one built by Moses?

B. Verse 15 begins with the phrase, "For this reason." For what reason is the author or Hebrews referring?

2. In the Gospel lesson we read about Jesus' last supper with His disciples and His call to the disciples to reflect upon whether they would be the one who betrayed Him (v. 18). How does what you learned today about the eternal nature of the ministry of Jesus as our highly priestly King enable you to better answer a question about your own ability to take a stand for our Lord?

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site:

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/060715.cfm

First Reading EX 24:3-8

Second Reading HEB 9:11-15

Gospel Reading MK 14:12-16, 22-26

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 6-22-2014



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for 6-22-2014. The focus of the readings this week is on the background and importance of communion. We open with a reading from Exodus in which Moses recounted God's provision of manna to the Hebrew people during their desert wanderings. Then we move to Saint Paul's Letter to the Corinthians with some teaching on the communion meal and then conclude with the Gospel lesson from John in which Jesus taught the people that He was the "bread that came down from heaven" (John 6:51). As you study this week keep in mind Saint Paul's admonition to examine ourselves before we partake of communion that will be covered in the reflection questions.

The first reading is from Deuteronomy 8. The context is God's giving of the Law to Moses after they had escaped from the wrath of the Pharaoh and struggled for forty years in the desert. The main audience whom Moses addressed were those who were either born during this 40-year period or those who were under twenty when it began. This was because all of the adults where were 20 years and older at the time of the Exodus perished except for Moses, Joshua, and Caleb (Numbers 14:29). The context of the reading today is Moses final address to the people about to enter the Promised Land. "Then Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: 'Hear, O Israel, the statutes and the ordinances which I am speaking today in your hearing, that you may learn them and observe them carefully'" (Deuteronomy 5:1). He continued in the next chapter, "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it (Deuteronomy 6:1). He then proceed to recount the main points of the Law.

The reading that follows includes all of the verses that were skipped in order to provide the full context and to illuminate the complete meaning of the text.

> *2You shall remember all the way which the LORD your God has led you in the wilderness these forty years, that He might humble you, testing you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. 3 He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD. 4 Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. 5 Thus you are to know in your heart that the LORD your God was disciplining you just as a man disciplines his son. 6 Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. 7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; 8 a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; 9 a land where you will eat food without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you can dig copper. 10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you. 11 Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; 12 otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, 13 and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, 14 then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. 15 He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. 16 "In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. (Deuteronomy 8:2-16)*

Moses purpose of this address was to remind the people of God's miraculous provision and protection of them during their desert wanderings (v. 2). First, Moses recounted God's provision of clothing that did not wear out (v. 4a) as well as protection from injury (v. 4b). Second, Moses reminded the people that they were disciplined by a loving God in the same way that a father disciplines his child (v. 5). He reminded them of the manna that God provided (v. 2) a food that pointed to God's supernatural provision as well as to looking forward to His coming Son the Lord Jesus who called Himself the "Bread of Life" (John 6:35) that we will talk about later in this study. Next, Moses gave the people some insights into the nature of the Promised Land that they were about to enter (vv. 7-9) and warned them about the dangers of forgetting the Lord and His commandments (v.11). He said that if they forget the Lord by not keeping His commandments their hearts would become proud in spite of His supernatural provision (v. 14). Finally, he reminded them of how God had delivered them from the fiery serpents (v. 15) provided water for them in the desert (v. 15), and fed them manna from heaven (v.16). Both the manna and the incident of the people with the fiery serpents prefigured the Lord Jesus Christ. The latter incident was recorded in Numbers 21 in which Moses instructed the people to construct a bronze image of a fiery serpent and place it on a stick. When the people looked in faith to the healing power provided by God through the symbol, they were saved from the danger inflicted by the snakes (Numbers 21:8). Jesus said about Himself, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up" (John 3:14). People who looked at the bronze serpent with faith in God were healed. In a similar way, those who look to Jesus in faith are forgiven of their sin and given eternal life as a gift of God (Ephesians 2:8-9). In both cases the people were (or are being) saved by God's grace through faith in God.

As we saw in the first reading, the Old Testament provided many important parallels for the disciples and first Christians as they understood Jesus as the fulfillment of God's predictions concerning Jesus Christ. As we move to the second reading, we will see how Saint Paul spoke against the idolatry that was prevalent among the people of Corinth in the First Century. Paul reminded the people about the curse that was placed on them for grumbling against God as recorded in the Book of Exodus from which we read in the first reading (Exodus 16:2). Paul said, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction" (1 Corinthians 10:11) and urged the people to flee from idolatry (v. 14), "Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry." The issue that he was confronting here was the objection that some had to eating food that had been sacrificed to idols (1 Corinthians 10:18-33). The reading today is sandwiched right in the middle of this important discussion.

> *16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? 17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread. (1 Corinthians 10:16-17)*

Paul said is that in order to partake of the communion service we must be in unity together and in fellowship with God. Matthew Henry said it this way. "By partaking of one broken loaf, the emblem of our Saviour's broken body, who is the only true bread that came down from heaven, we coalesce into one body, become members of him and one another." Unlike the pagan sacrifices which were repeated and never brought and redemption to those participating, Jesus' single sacrifice resulted in

salvation for all those who believe (1 Peter 3:18). Also, unlike the continual sacrifices offered by the Jews that looked forward to Jesus, Jesus can never be sacrificed again because after he made one sacrifice for sins forever He sat down at the right hand of God (Hebrews 10:12). "By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). When we celebrate communion we remember the single, final sacrifice that Jesus made for us on the cross (Luke 22:19). We celebrate the fact that when we share in the communion cup and the bread we unite in the belief that Jesus poured out His blood and allowed His body to be broken to pay the penalty for our sin.

The Gospel lesson is from John Chapter 6. The context of the reading is after Jesus went from Jerusalem where He had healed a paralyzed man to the "other side of the Sea of Galilee" (John 6:1). It was here on the east coast of the lake that Jesus went up on the mountain near Bethsaida to teach His disciples and was followed by a large crowd (v. 2). He evidently ended up teaching this discourse in the synagogue in Capernaum (John 6:59). Jesus opened this section of teaching with a bold statement regarding His deity. He said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes has eternal life" (John 6:47). This is the core of the Gospel message, the Good News, that anyone who believes in Jesus as his or her Savior has eternal life. Next, Jesus made another of His bold statements that He was God in the flesh, the manna sent from heaven when He said, "I am the bread of life" (v. 48). The Jews would have clearly understood His use of the Greek phrase "ego eimi," translated in English "I am." Jesus is the eternal God, the preexistent One, the "bread of life" sent from God the Father (John 6:46) as the supreme and final sacrifice for sin (Hebrews 10:12). Both of these statements resulted in the objection of some of the Jews (John 6:52).

As you read, notice Jesus additional use of the "I am" phrase, and how Jesus used this to confirm His identity as God in the flesh.

> *51 "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven; if anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread also which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh." 52 Then the Jews began to argue with one another, saying, "How can this man give us His flesh to eat?" 53 So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. 54 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 "For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. 56 "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. 57 "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also will live because of Me. 58 "This is the bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:51-58)*

Jesus again affirmed His divinity when he said, "I am the living bread that came down out of heaven" (v. 51a). Next He said that the way to eternal life was by partaking of His body (v. 51b), something which was a stumbling stone to the religious Jews and Pharisees (v. 52b). Jesus answered their objection by telling them that although their forefathers ate the bread of God (manna, see Exodus 16:1-36) and later died (v. 58b), anyone that partook of belief in Jesus would have eternal life. Jesus

said, "he who eats this bread will live forever" (v. 58c). In the Jewish world there was a high emphasis given upon the value of community that occurred around a meal. What Jesus said he was in part that in order to partake of Jesus, the bread of life, you must commune with Him. One of the ways that we as believer commune with Jesus is through the communion meal.

The celebration of the Lord's Supper is a very important ordinance given to us by the Lord Jesus before He returned to heaven. Each time we celebrate communion we commemorate Jesus' death on the cross for us on which He gave his body and poured His blood for us. Jesus instituted the communion celebration during His Last Supper with the disciples on the eve of the Jewish holiday known as Passover. This important feast commemorated the Jews deliverance from the final plague brought against the Pharaoh as recorded in Exodus 12. On the solemn even many millennium ago, the Hebrew people were instructed to slaughter a lamb and mark their doorway with its blood. On that evening the Death Angel passed through the land and killed the firstborn of every living thing, both humans beings and animals, except those whom had followed God's commandment in faith by marking their doorways with the symbol of the Lamb of God. The Feast of Unleavened Bread in which the Jews eat bread without the yeast rising agent follows Passover. The absence of leaven is symbolic of the Jew's rapid flight from Egypt immediately after that Passover evening in which the lamb was slaughtered in obedience to God command for the salvation of each household. The absence of leaven also came to be associated in later Jewish thought with the purification from sin, i.e. leaven is sin, such as Jesus noted when He said to be on watch for the "leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:6). The symbolism is clear; Jesus is *our* Passover Lamb, the Lamb of God that takes away our sin. John the Baptist said about Jesus, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). Jesus is the "Lamb slain since before the foundation of the world" (Revelation 13:8).

Saint Paul said about the celebration of communion, "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26, emphasis added). This teaching placed a clear time limit on the celebration of this important ordinance. As we look forward to the return of the Lord we, like the Jews on the evening of the Passover, walk in obedience to the Lord's commandment to celebrate communion *until* He returns.

What do the teachings from the readings and Gospel lesson mean for our lives? First, God calls us not to forsake the assembly together in the communion service (Hebrews 10:25). As we celebrate communion from now until the day the Lord Jesus returns we look back to the one sacrifice that He made for our sins. Second, we can recognize that we are saved by grace through faith in God (Ephesians 2:8-9) the same as Moses and the other believers in the Old Testament. They looked forward to Jesus through the symbols of God's supernatural provision through manna and the healing by faith in God by humbly kneeling before the bronze serpent. The elements of communion are the way in which we remember Jesus' body broken for us and His blood shed to pay the debts for our sin. "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. In First Corinthians 11 beyond what we read in the second reading today, Saint Paul called for believers to make a serious self-examination before the partook in communion. "But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1 Corinthians 11:28). He warned, "Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord" (v. 27) and even went so far as to say that "For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep" (v. 30).

If you take communion this week, as yourself the following questions.

A. What does it mean to "examine yourself" before communion? List two or three things that you could bring before God in prayer this week prior to communion?

B. Read the following quote from Jesus that He said in the Sermon on the Mount.

> *"Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. (Matthew 5:23-24).*

What are some ways in which this verse speaks to the practice of examining ourselves before communion?

2. Saint Paul said the following about the communion meal:

> 1Co 11:24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me."
>
> 1Co 11:25 In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Read the following verses and answer the questions that follow. As you read, mark any repeated words since repetition of words, phrases and ideas in a narrow context is important to understand the meaning of the text.

> Hebrews 7:26-27 NAS95 26 For it was fitting for us to have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens; 27 who does not need daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the sins of the people, because this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.
>
> Hebrews 9:12 NAS95 12 and not through the blood of goats and calves, but through His own blood, He entered the holy place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption.
>
> Hebrews 9:26 NAS95 26 Otherwise, He would have needed to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now once at the consummation of the ages He has been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.

> Hebrews 9:27-28 NAS95 27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.
>
> Hebrews 10:1-4 NAS95 1 For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never, by the same sacrifices which they offer continually year by year, make perfect those who draw near. 2 Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins? 3 But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year. 4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.
>
> Hebrews 10:10 NAS95 10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
>
> Hebrews 10:10-12 NAS95 10 By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11 Every priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins; 12 but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD,

A. In contrast to the continually repeated sacrifices offered by the Jews according to the Law, how many times did Jesus offer His body as a sacrifice?

B. How many times did you count the repetition of the words "one" or "once" in this section of Hebrews? Why do you think that God placed so much emphasis upon the single sacrifice of Jesus by repeating this concept over and over again in the Book of Hebrews?

C. In light of what you learned from the Book of Hebrews, can Jesus ever be offered as a sacrifice again? How does this impact your understanding of the communion meal?

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/062214.cfm

First Reading DT 8:2-3, 14B-16A (Plus skipped verses)

Second Reading 1 COR 10:16-17

Gospel Reading JN 6:51-58

Source(s):

Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB