

Communion

Lesson 2

Matthew 26:26

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

I. Harmonization

- a. We should pay attention to **every part** of the ceremony. We can do that by examining each of the parallel passages found in the synoptic Gospels and then correlate them with Paul's epistle to the Corinthians which addresses the same subject.
 1. **Mark 14:22** *And as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is my body. KJV*
 2. **Luke 22:19** *And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. KJV*
 3. **1 Corinthians 11:23** *For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. KJV*
- b. Although **John** (John 13) mentions all the circumstances preceding this event, and, John 14:1-30, details the circumstances which followed the breaking of the bread, he passes over, without mention, the actual meal.
- c. From the harmonized view supplied above we see the first institution, nature, and design of what has been since called the **Lord's Supper**.
- d. Verse 26. [As they were eating] The question here is what was being eaten? It was either an ordinary supper, or the paschal lamb. According to some commentators, the meal being eaten **may not** have been the Passover meal at all.
- e. This question arises when we compare the synoptic Gospels with the sequence of events recorded by the eyewitness John, which shows that the actual Passover was yet **future** at the same time that Jesus was being examined by Caiaphas. *John 18:28 Then led they Jesus from Caiaphas unto the hall of judgment: and it was early; and they themselves went not into the judgment hall, lest they should be defiled; but that they might eat the Passover. KJV*
- f. It is impossible to know for certain whether Jesus, who was **THE** Passover, ate the Paschal lamb or if he instituted a unique spiritual Passover meal with his disciples. We can know this:
 1. Jesus **intended** to eat the Passover with his disciples. *Matt 26:19-20 And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the Passover. Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. KJV*
 2. The Passover meal was often celebrated on at least **two** days due to the number of sheep that had to be sacrificed.
 3. The setting of the date on which the celebration was to take place was dictated by the rising of the new Moon and was declared by the **Sanhedrin** when the new moon could not be witnessed.
 4. As he had done with the Sabbath, Jesus had the **authority** to establish new practices and to provide a new understanding of the commands of God. *Matt 12:8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day. KJV*
 5. It is quite conceivable that the actual Passover of that year was **not** eaten or celebrated by anyone in the congregation of Israel due to the rending of the veil of the temple, the terrible earthquake, and unnatural darkness, which was over the whole land of Judea.

II. The Bread

- a. [Jesus took bread] There can be no question about the fact that Jesus took **unleavened** bread, because there was no other kind to be had in all Judea at this time.
- b. The Jews were commanded to purge away all leaven from their houses; anyone who sacrificed the Passover, having leaven in his dwelling, was considered to be **cut off** from the congregation of Israel.
- c. This observance was so **strict** that the people either provided entirely new vessels for baking, or else had a set for the purpose, which were dedicated solely to the service of the Passover, and never brought out on any other occasion.
- d. Finally, it is inconceivable that Jesus, who had condemned the leavening of the Pharisees on several occasions, would have ignored the **significance** of eating leavened bread on this most seminal event.

III. Characteristics of the Leavening Process

- a. Yeast or leaven, is a bacterial fungus and is, therefore, an appropriate symbol for **sin**. It grows in bread just as sin grows in an individual life or a local church.
- b. According to **Webster's 1828** Dictionary, Leaven is: A mass of sour dough, which, mixed with a larger quantity of dough or paste, produces fermentation in it, causing it to rise and rendering it light.

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- c. A little yeast will affect the **whole** loaf, just as a little sin can ruin the spiritual life of a soul or a church in which it's tolerated. Jesus often used this term to draw a picture of the effects of spiritual compromise. *James 4:4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God. KJV*
- d. Leavening is a **mixture**. Leaven is not part of the original but it must be added for the desired effect. Bread will never rise without adding yeast. Adding anything other than truth to truth destroys the purity of that truth. *Ps 12:6 The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times. KJV*
- e. Leavening is **fermentation**. In other words, the breakdown of complex molecules in organic compounds. In like manner, spiritual breakdown occurs in the believer who has allowed into his soul any foreign doctrine or practice. *1 Kings 11:4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. KJV*
- f. Leavened bread will increase 3 - 10 times the original size. This gives the **appearance** of solid growth due to added mass when actually the growth is light and lacks substance. *Matt 23:4-7 For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. KJV*
- g. Leavening represents a **corruption** of the original. Leaven spreads through the entire substance causing change. However, it takes hours for bread to rise. Spiritually, leavening is insidious; it is a gradual process with harmful effects. *Ex 34:12-16 Take heed to thyself, lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land whither thou goest, lest it be for a snare in the midst of thee: But ye shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves: For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God: Lest thou make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and they go a whoring after their gods, and do sacrifice unto their gods, and one call thee, and thou eat of his sacrifice; And thou take of their daughters unto thy sons, and their daughters go a whoring after their gods, and make thy sons go a whoring after their gods. KJV*
- h. Leaven is a bacteria, or something living **independent** from what it leavens. Likewise, spiritual leaven operates in the believer as though something living is occurring but, it is reflective of a departure from the purity of the truth. *Gen 3:6 And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. KJV*

IV. Practice of The Lord's Supper

- a. In terms of our practice of the Lord's Supper today, if we desire to **emulate** as closely as possible this divine ordinance, then, we should use unleavened, unyeasted bread. There are good reasons for thinking this way.
- b. The design of God was evidently not only to point out the body of Christ as bread; our source of sustenance, but also He identifies the disposition of sincerity and truth **required** in those who should partake of this spiritual bread.
- c. We should understand that he, who comes to the table of God with malice or ill-will against any, or, with ruptured relationships, is not **prepared** to partake of it. *Matt 5:23-24 Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. KJV*
- d. Partaking of the Lord's Supper with unconfessed sin, is to eat and drink **judgment** to oneself, because, in doing so, we have failed to discern that the Lord's body was sacrificed for this very purpose; that all sin might be destroyed.
- e. Being **prepared** to partake of this ordinance implies such purity that the clearest light can discern no stain in one's soul, and that truth, and true holiness, are embraced as the guides for one's choices and behavior.
- f. For this reason, the use of common bread in the commemoration of the Lord's Supper is unfit, or **improper**, because it does not carry these same uncommon significations.

V. Application

- a. While the use of common bread may lack the significance of unleavened bread, the more important point is the condition of the heart of the communicant.
 1. How do you prepare yourself to partake in the Lord's Supper?
 2. Do you fail to discern the Lord's body that was broken for your sin?
 3. What do you need to do to be better prepared to participate in this commemorative experience?