

# Communion

## Lesson 3

### I. Introduction

- a. The Bible is own best interpreter. Man may err, and often does, but the inspired word of God is infallible and abides forever. It is like it's great Author, the same yesterday, today, and forever. It gives no uncertain response; it teaches **no false doctrine**.
- b. Christian history with its many doctrinal debates has amply demonstrated the problem of determining the **meaning** of Scripture. Questions often arise that baffle the skill and the judgment of even the most learned scholar.
- c. The major task in the interpretation of Scripture is to find out, if possible, the sense which the Spirit of truth **intended** when He inspired the writers themselves to put their thoughts in written form.
- d. Having obtained this understanding, and **comparing** spiritual things with spiritual, we may rest assured that we are being guided into the knowledge of truth as it is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
- e. Throughout the history of the Christian church, we have often been misled by men who, attempting to be wise and learned, have handled the word of God in a deceitful fashion for their own purposes, leading their followers into damnable **error**.
- f. The passages that we are examining specific to the celebration of Communion are an example of how error in **interpretation** can leaven the understanding of millions of unsuspecting believers over hundreds of years.
- g. For example, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, a common practice has been the **consecration** of the elements, as if such consecration holds mystical and spiritual value.
- h. Those who practice such rites, cite as their authority the **example** recorded in the Gospels, and 1 Corinthians.
  1. **Matt 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. KJV*
  2. **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*
  3. **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*
  4. **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*
- i. Some even maintain that a personal invocation of the Holy Spirit is essential to a consecration of the elements because in so doing, they are actually bringing about a mystical **change** in the properties of the communion elements.
- j. In spite of these long standing beliefs and practices, Scripture is exceedingly **plain** on the subject. So let us here and now, answer the questions:
  1. Did our Savior **bless** the bread and wine?
  2. And, in so doing did he intend to demonstrate a mystical **change** in the elements?

### II. The Blessing

- a. [And blessed it] Both Matthew and Mark use the word eulogeetas, **blessed**, instead of eucharisteesas, gave thanks, which is the word used by Luke and Paul in our English translation.
- b. The reading of ten separate manuscripts, including the Dublin Codex Rescriptus, and broadly supported by over one hundred other Bible scholars agree that the word in the original text was eucharisteesas, **gave thanks**.
- c. This also agrees with the Syriac and Arabic, and is confirmed by several of the early Church fathers. In any case, the terms, mean nearly the same, as both blessing and giving thanks were used in **prayer** form on these occasions.
- d. But what was it that our Lord blessed? He did not bless the bread. Those who believe He did are being deceived by the word **IT**, which is improperly supplied in our English version and does not occur in either the Greek or the Latin.
- e. In all four places referred to above, whether the word blessed or gave thanks is used, it refers not to the bread, **but to God**, the dispenser of every good thing. *James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. KJV*
- f. Our Lord was acting in conformity with the common Jewish custom, namely of acknowledging **God** as the author of every good and perfect gift, and by giving thanks before taking the bread and taking the cup. *Deut 26:11 And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, KJV*
- g. A Jew was forbidden to eat, drink, or use any of God's creatures without rendering Him **thanks**; and he who acted contrary to this command was considered as a person who was guilty of sacrilege.
- h. From this custom, as Christians, we say grace or give thanks **before meals**.
- i. The **Jewish** form of blessing, which was probably used on this occasion, in all likelihood was something to the effect of: Blessed be thou, our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread out of the earth!

# Communion

## Lesson 3

- j. Likewise, on taking the cup, a **common** Jewish prayer says: Blessed be our God, the King of the universe, the Creator of the fruit of the vine!
- k. Therefore, **no** blessing of the elements is intended in the Gospel accounts; the bread and wine were received as a blessing; sent as a gift of mercy from the hand of our bountiful Father.
- l. In the blessing or giving of thanks that Jesus offered, He blessed God, the sender, for His liberal provision and there is **no reason** to believe that any mystical or miraculous incantation was involved in the prayer of Jesus.

### III. The Breaking of Bread

- a. Next we have the breaking of bread. In this reference to bread as the **symbol** of life-giving sustenance, we see that Jesus identifies Himself as the bread of life, the source of eternal life. *John 6:48-51 I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. KJV*
- b. [And brake it] We often read in the Scriptures of breaking bread, but never of cutting it. The unleavened bread in use on this occasion was broad and thin, and was very **brittle**. Bread was broken, not cut with a knife.
- c. The breaking of the bread is significant to the ceremony because the act of breaking was designed by our Lord to **illustrate** the wounding, and breaking of his body on the cross. *1 Cor 11:24 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*
- d. It is instructive to our understanding to take heed to the fact that He **Himself** broke the bread. In other words, the Lord gave up His own body to be broken for us. *John 10:18 No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father. KJV*
- e. This self-inflicted breaking of Christ for our benefit ensures the application He intended; **everything** that needs to be accomplished for our deliverance is performed by His own hand. He is the initiator and the finisher of our faith. *Heb 12:2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. NIV*
- f. Next, He gave it to the disciples. Not only the breaking, but also the **distribution** of the bread is a necessary part of this rite. Distribution to each individual signifies the individual's participation in several ways.
- g. Christ says, "Take, eat, this is my body, broken for you" First, the communicant must himself **break** the symbolic body of Christ by breaking from the loaf his own portion, which he then consumes.
- h. This action symbolically makes the communicant an **active** participant in the breaking of the body of Christ. It is an admission of guilt which says that "my sin nailed Him to the Cross."
- i. Secondly, as our teeth crush the bread, we are symbolically demonstrating our **agreement** with those who actually beat the body of Christ prior to crucifying Him. We, like they, by our sinfulness, have railed derisively against the innocent Lamb of God. *Ps 35:15-16 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not: With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth. KJV*
- j. Even as we now count ourselves as the **friends** of Christ, as we examine our hearts before Him, we see that in countless ways in our thoughts, attitudes, words and deeds we have betrayed that friendship, and thus added to His affliction. *Ps 41:9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me. KJV*
- k. But the symbolism does not stop there and there is a **positive** aspect to be considered. By eating the bread we are also identifying ourselves with the Person of Christ; we are demonstrating our oneness with Him. *John 17:23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. KJV*
- l. By eating of His symbolic body we are taking to ourselves His **righteousness** and His right standing before God. *Rom 3:22-24 Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus KJV.*
- m. Our Lord said, Do this in remembrance of me: i.e. 'Eat this bread, broken in remembrance of my body broken on the cross; eat this bread which gives **eternal life**. *John 6:53-58 Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: KJV*

### IV. Application

- a. To what extent is your participation in the Communion service a mere corporate habit pattern?
- b. If so, make it a matter of prayer, asking the Lord to help you experience more of what He had in mind when he instituted this memorial.