

FAITH IS ACTION

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COMMUNION

THE MEAL THAT HEALS





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“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.

“After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do show the Lord’s death till he come.” (1Cor.11:23-26).

PAUL’S REVELATION

Paul was not at the Lord’s Supper in the upper room with Jesus and the 12 disciples, but he received a personal revelation from Jesus of what was said and done that night. Thus, he gives some details that the four Gospels did not record.

As a strict Jew, Paul had celebrated Passover scores of times, but now as a born again Christian, he truly understood what Jesus was instituting in this commandment to His Church. He trans-

formed the Jewish Passover to the seal of the New Covenant. That night of the Last Supper with Jesus, His disciples did not recognize the significance of what was taking place as they lifted the bread and cups to their mouths! But Paul did and in 1Cor.5:7, he declared, *“For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us.”*

Passover— Hebrew PAY-SOCK. Greek: PAS-KAH—referred to the animal sacrifice—to the lamb.

The original Hebrew meaning meant to spare—*God spared the Israelites firstborn in the land of Goshen on the night of the first Passover.* The Jews are to eat the Passover lamb every new year on the 14th day. This is to memorialize the day when the Hebrew slaves left Egypt during the *Miraculous Midnight Express.* They were to eat with unleavened bread. They would leave in such a hurry they would not have time for the bread to rise. But there is a significant symbolism here: in Scripture, *leaven symbolizes sin.* Only the Lamb can take away sin!

John 1:29: *“Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”* 1Peter 1:18-19: *“Forasmuch as you know you were not*

redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold.... But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot.” This is what Jesus wants us to remember when we take communion: “I Am Your Lamb! My blood is your redemption. My body is your healing bread.”

THE MIDNIGHT EXPRESS

The road to the Passover began in Egypt, made a stop in Bethlehem, and ended in Jerusalem.

After nine terrible, tormenting plagues against the land of Egypt, Pharaoh hardened his heart again, refusing to let the Israelites go free. The Egyptians had endured their rivers turned into blood, frogs, lice, flies, diseased dying cattle, boils, hail with fire, locusts, and three days of dense, terrifying darkness. In every case, God spared the children of Israel, and none of these touched them in their ghetto at Goshen. The tenth plague would be the coup de grace: The death angel would slay all of the firstborn in the entire land of Egypt. From the palace to the prison, to the camp of Goshen, all firstborn would die at one time as the angel of death passed through. Even the firstborn of all cattle would die! While God had spared the Israelites in the first nine plagues, *this time they had to do something to be spared death.*

Exodus 12:3-7: *“Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall*

take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house.... Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year: you shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats:” It had to be in the prime of life and healthy, without blemish inside out. At age 33, Jesus was killed in the prime of life, and Isaiah prophesied that He was sinless, and there was no deceit in His mouth (Isa.53:9). Peter stated: “Who did no sin; neither was guile found in his mouth” (1Pet. 2:22). This is why Jesus was qualified to be the Lamb of God to take away the sins of the world, because sin cannot atone for sin. The plagues judged the gods of Egypt and delivered the Israelites out of bondage. But it was the Lamb that healed them, “and there was not one feeble person among their tribes” (Psalm 105:37).

“And you shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side posts and on the upper door post of the houses, wherein they shall eat it.” (Read all Exodus 12.)

They had to slay the lamb and strike its blood on the doorposts of their homes. The blood was protection from judgment. Jesus said in John 10:9: *“I am the door of the sheep.”* His blood upon the doorposts of our hearts protects us from the judgment of sin.”

“You shall eat it in haste—it is the

Lord's Passover [not the Jews!]. For I will pass over you when I see the blood. The plague shall not come upon you when I smite the land of Egypt.... And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where you are: and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt” (v.13).” The blood of the lamb sealed the door of their houses, and the plague could not enter in. They were *not spared* because they were Jews! But because of the lamb's blood! They were divinely protected from the first nine plagues, but this time they had to be behind the blood.

Sometimes children of the righteous are spared evil because God honors the prayers of praying moms and dads. But in order to be protected from eternal death, they must be under the covering of the blood of Jesus Christ—our Lamb! I personally believe that all the Israelites would have died that night, because God had told Moses at the burning bush to tell Pharaoh: *“Thus says the Lord, Israel is my son, even my firstborn. And I say unto you, Let my son go that he may serve me, and if you refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay your son, even your firstborn”* (Ex.4:22-23).

Up front, before any of the plagues, God made His intentions clear. God claimed Israel, the seed of Abraham collectively, as His first-born son from among the nations, and He demanded Pharaoh to let them go free.

They also had to eat the lamb with unleavened bread before they left. When God codified the Passover in the wilderness, He commanded that for seven days prior, they could only eat unleavened bread (vv.15-20). *They could not even have a crumb of leaven in the house.* Today, Jews thoroughly clean their houses—Is this where “Spring Cleaning” originated? They go to the house with a brush and dustpan gathering up the smallest crumbs. Some will sell their baked goods, etc. to their Gentile neighbors and then buy them back after Passover is over.

Leaven is better known as *yeast* which is created by a process of fermentation. Bacteria, which is a living organism, inside the dough converts to carbohydrates, causing gas bubbles to form, which causes the dough to rise. In Scripture, leaven symbolizes *sin*—God does not want the bacteria of sin in our lives.

At midnight, the death angel passed through the land, and all the firstborn died including Pharaoh's son. Pharaoh told Moses: *“Get your people and get out of Egypt!”* All the Egyptians pressed them to leave, saying, *“We all be dead men.”* Maybe they thought they were next.

After 430 years of bondage, God brought them all out in one night! *“This is the night to be observed every year for all generations”* (v.42). At Passover, the Jews commemorate *the death of Egypt's firstborn* that freed them from slavery. We commemorate *the death of God's Son*, that freed us from Satan's bondage.

Jesus, the Lamb of God commanded us to commemorate His death with communion. The Passover of the Jews was just a shadow of the Passover Lamb to come. Jesus was the one casting the shadow. We have a Passover Lamb whose blood was shed for us. We have the unleavened bread of His Body broken for us.

NEXT STOP: BETHLEHEM

Bethlehem is the birthplace of Jesus. On that night of His birth, angels appeared unto lowly shepherds with the announcement: *“Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord.”* The city of David is *Bethlehem* which is two Hebrew words: BET = HOUSE. LECHEM = BREAD, and means *House of Bread*. Jesus was born in the house of bread!

He declared in John 6:51-53: *“I am the living bread come down from heaven; if anyone eat of this bread, he shall live forever, and the bread that I shall give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world... Except you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”*

The Bread of Life is not a thing—it’s a Person! This was a strong hint of what Jesus would say at His Last Supper with the disciples when He blessed the bread and gave it to them and said: *“Take eat, this is my body which is broken for you.”* Now, instead of eating a lamb, we eat the communion elements like Jesus did, which represent His blood and His flesh—His Body. And if we don’t, we

have no life in us and no guarantee to go in the rapture—resurrection. Four times in John 6, Jesus said, *“And I will raise him up at the last day.”* In order to be raptured or resurrected when Jesus returns, you must take communion at least once a year.

Another fascinating facet of the Bethlehem birthplace of Jesus: The shepherds the angels came to were not ordinary shepherds. They raised special sheep—the lambs that were to be offered up as sacrifice in the Temple at Jerusalem. The lambs they bred that were sent to Jerusalem to die on the altar of sacrifice had to be perfect and without spot.

Our Lamb—our Lord was born in Bethlehem where all sacrificial lambs were born! And He died in Jerusalem on the altar of His cross where all Temple sacrificial lambs died. Both in His birth, and in His death, Jesus, our Messiah, proved to be the worthy Passover Lamb. His Blood provided the price for our redemption and His Body for our healing. *Communion is the meal that heals!*

THE BREAD OF HEALING

In Matthew 15:21-28, a Gentile woman came to Jesus requesting healing for her daughter. She cried out: *“O Lord, Son of David, have mercy upon my daughter who is grievously vexed of the devil.”* *Son of David* was a Messianic, covenantal title, but she was not in the covenant of Abraham’s seed, and she had no covenantal rights.

Jesus ignored her, but she continued to cry after Him until she got on the disciples' nerves.

They misinterpreted His lack of response for apathy—that He didn't care. But Jesus said: "*I am sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*"—you do not qualify. But she came and *worshiped* Him, saying, "*Lord, help me.*" John 9:31 says, "*We know God does not hear sinners, but if anyone be a worshiper of God, him he hears.*"

Jesus said: "*It is not right to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs.*" Shocking?

Not in the culture of that day: Sheep referred to Israelites. Dogs referred to Gentiles. She did not get offended—she actually agreed! "*True, Lord, I do not qualify to receive the bread that belongs to the children—the Jews. But even dogs are allowed to eat the crumbs from their master's table.*"

In the Greek text, the word refers to *little dogs*, that is, *house dogs*, not outside dogs. Little dogs eat crumbs from the master's table. By using this terminology, Jesus opened the door, and she walked right in! She got the revelation! "*I know I am a dog, but I'm a little dog who can eat the crumbs from the children's bread. That's all my daughter needs to be healed. Just give her a crumb!*" Jesus said: "*O Woman, great is your faith. Be it unto you, as you will.*" That very hour, her daughter was made whole!

Healing is the children's bread! Are you a child? Is Jesus your

Passover Lamb? Is He your healing bread? Remember, this was *before the cross!* Before, Jesus instituted the New Covenant: "*This is the cup of the New Testament, my blood shed for you for the remission of sins. This is My body broken for you. The stripes on My back are for your healing!*"

THE BREAD OF LIFE

John chapter 6 records Jesus' discourse with the scribes and Pharisees the day after the miracle of the feeding of the 5000. Incredibly, even after this notable miracle, they asked Jesus *for a sign so they could believe on Him!* (vs.30). They boasted that Moses gave their Jewish fathers in the wilderness a sign when he gave them "bread from heaven"—*the manna*.

Jesus corrected them! "*Moses did not give you that bread from heaven, but my Father gives the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which comes down from heaven.*" (i.e. Jesus!) The Bread is not a thing—it is a Person! Three times Jesus repeated: "*I am the bread of life.*" They were upset when He said this. But they were about to get more upset!

They said: "*Give us the bread,*" thinking of the manna in the wilderness. Then Jesus told them that *they had to eat His flesh and drink His blood!* He said repeatedly: "*The bread I give is my life.*" They thought He was talking about cannibalism! But He was talking about coming into covenant relationship with God through the communion.

Communion is the seal of this

new covenant relationship. When we take it, we are eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Jesus, our Passover Lamb. We must partake of it at least once a year, or we have no spiritual life in us, and we will not be raised up in the resurrection.

THE WARNING

The church at Corinth was experiencing schisms and divisions, which Paul sternly corrected in his two letters to them. (Bible scholars believe there was a third letter that may have been lost.) This may account for some of the stern words of damnation he issued concerning taking communion in 1Cor. 11:27-33. It is not to be taken irreverently, that is not discerning that one is partaking of the body and blood of Jesus Christ. It is not to be taken casually and certainly not if one is living a sinful life. Our bodies are the temple of the Lord, and we are to keep them sanctified.

Moreover, we are to understand that our brothers and sisters are also the body of Christ, and we cannot do them wrong and come to the Lord's table. When we wound one of our brothers or sisters in Christ, we are wounding Jesus. If we have anger, unforgiveness, and bitterness in our hearts, we must get it out before we partake of the Lord's body.

If we fail in any of these areas, we are in danger of not discerning the Lord's body, and we would be taking the communion irreverently.

Paul said that because of this, some of the saints were sick and weak in their bodies, and some even died prematurely.

"Whoever eats and drinks unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." *Unworthily*—ANAZIOOS—*improperly; not in a proper manner; corresponding to the nature of the event.* This is a solemn event—not a party! Jesus said that we are remembering *His death*—not *His resurrection*.

If you are born again and walking in the light of the gospel, *you are not "unworthy."* It was understood that Paul was writing to believers—not sinners. (We know that sinners are in eligible to take communion.) If the blood of God's Lamb has been applied to your life, *you are worthy!* Hebrews 2:11: *"He that sanctifies and they that are sanctified are all of one."* You are just a sanctified as Jesus is.

THE FLIP SIDE

If taking communion irreverently can cause sickness and premature death, what will taking the communion reverently, in faith, honoring the broken body of Jesus, and the stripes upon His back do for our bodies? Instead of taking damnation and death, we are taking healing and life!

Centuries before the cross Isaiah 53:4-5 prophesied: *"Surely, he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our*

iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

“*Griefs and sorrows.*” Unfortunately, the English translators mis-translated the Hebrew words for *griefs and sorrows*. The Hebrew word for *grief* is **CHOILY** which means *sickness and disease*. The Hebrew word for *sorrows* is **MAKOB** and means *pain*. These both refer to *physical sickness and physical pain*, yet many theologians say they refer to emotional pain, mental pain, and spiritual pain.

In verse 5, the Hebrew words can be translated: He was *pierced* for our transgressions. He was *crushed* for our iniquities. He was *scourged* for our peace, and by His *wounds* we are healed. The Hebrew word for *healed* is **RAPHA**. It is the same word in Exodus 15:26: “*I am the Lord that **heals** you*” or as we like to say: “*I am Jehovah **Rapha**.*” It means *to heal, to cure*, and can even mean *doctor*. The Hebrew words clearly refer to *physical healing*, not spiritual. Both Matthew and Peter in the New Testament make it clear that they refer to physical healing.

Matthew 8:16-17: “*When the evening was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.*”

Note that He healed *all* that were sick. Matthew makes the undeniable

connection to Isaiah and that it refers to *physical healing*. The Greek word *healed* is **THERAPOOLO** (brought into English as *therapy and therapeutic*). Thirty-eight times it is translated to heal, and five times it’s translated to cure. Also, the Greek word for *infirmities* means bodily weakness, feebleness, and sickness. The Greek word for *sicknesses* means *sickness, disease, and infirmity*.

1Peter 2:24: “*Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes you **were** healed.*” The Greek word for stripes refers to a bruise, a wound that trickles blood.

The Greek word in this verse for healed means to cure, to heal, to make whole. Peter is quoting directly from Isaiah 53:5. Isaiah was looking telescopically forward to the cross, which would be 700 years later. Peter, a personal witness to the beating and crucifixion of Jesus, was looking back at the cross, stating “By his stripes you were healed.” In other words, the Holy Spirit, speaking through Peter, is saying that we were healed at Calvary. We were healed when Jesus, who had received the 39 stripes in His back, was nailed to the cross. Just like He is not going to die on the cross again for our sins, He is not going to be beaten at Pilate’s whipping post again for our healing. On that cursed tree, He paid the price once and for all for our salvation and our healing. By His stripes we are healed, because by His stripes we were healed.

This clearly proves that it is God's will to heal everyone, because Jesus already paid the price in full on the cross. As He took His last breath, He declared: "*It is finished!*" (John 19:30). This has a double meaning: He had fulfilled all the prophecies of His sufferings and crucifixion. It was also a financial statement meaning it is *paid in full!* The price for salvation for the whole world was paid in full by the blood from the wounds on His head, face, hands, feet, and side. And the price for all believers to be healed was paid in full by the blood that He shed from His back at that whipping post.

MEDICAL DESCRIPTION

The Romans first stripped the victim and tied his hands to a post above his head. The whip (flagellum) was made of several pieces of leather with pieces of bone and lead embedded near the ends. Two men, one on each side of the victim, usually did the flogging. The heavy whip was brought down with full force again and again across Jesus' shoulders, back, and legs. At first, the heavy thongs cut through the skin only. Then, as the blows continued, they cut deeper into the subcutaneous tissues, producing first oozing of blood from the capillaries and veins of the skin, and then spurting arterial bleeding from vessels in the underlying muscles. Finally, the skin of the back was hanging in long ribbons of unrecognizable bloody flesh.

Men condemned to die by crucifixion were customarily required to carry the heavy wooden crosspiece (patibulum) on which they were to be nailed, to the place of execution. Jesus started out carrying his cross (John 19:17), but it proved to be too much for Him. The patibulum weighed thirty or forty pounds and was usually strapped across the shoulders. One can hardly imagine the pain caused by the rough heavy beam pressing into the lacerated skin and mutilated muscles of Jesus' shoulders. The scourging of blood so weakened Him that He could not go on carrying the heavy crossbeam.

Jesus did not have to go to that whipping post in order for our sins to be forgiven. Not one drop of blood that He shed there saved you or me from one single sin. He had to go to the cross to pay for our sins. It was at the whipping post that He carried our griefs (sicknesses) and bore our (sorrows) pains. And it was His choice to drink the cup of sufferings: Isaiah 50:6 prophesied: "*I gave my back to the smiters and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting.*" Psalm 129:3: "*The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long the furrows.*"

GOD MADE JESUS SICK!

Now here's the kicker: "*Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief*" (Isa.53:10). Again, it is the same Hebrew word CHOILY used in verse 4 meaning: *He*

has made him sick. Why would Almighty God find it pleasing to see Jesus sick with all human diseases, sicknesses and infirmities? Why would God put all of those terrible curses on His Son? God made Jesus sick with *our sickness and disease*. This is why God will not take lightly any irreverence to His Son's broken body and shed blood at the communion table.

Years ago, my dad (R.G. Hardy) preached a message on *Gethsemane* (the oil press), how Jesus suffered in the garden of prayer amongst the olive trees. He would begin to weep as the Holy Spirit moved upon him. It was as though he was taking us into the garden with Jesus, experiencing His agony and suffering, and we wept

as we were transported into Gethsemane with our Lord. Dad would say to us: "*You will never know how much Jesus loves you by all the blessings you receive from Him. You will never understand how great His love for you is until you go with Him to Gethsemane, the garden of agony.*"

And I say: If you want to know how willing God is to heal your body; if you want to understand how much Jesus desires to be your Healer, you need to walk with Him from Pilate's Judgment Hall to the blood-stained pavement of Gabbatha where the Romans soldiers flogged His back 39 times to a bloody mass of throbbing flesh. If you need healing, that's what you should remember when you partake of communion.

R.G. Hardy
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