

Transformational Communion

Lesson 2: Communion Bread

Vocabulary:

concept	concern	malice	punishment
feast	to quote	wickedness	prophetic
condition	to appear to be	sincerity	verse
to warn	common	in mind	disease
false	batch	to examine	to bear (past: bore)
to preach	to rid (something of something)	to consider	wound
ministry	to be misled	traditional	to renew
circumcision	commitment	celebrate	rejection
to fulfill	to celebrate	in remembrance of	to the full
salvation	honesty	to relate	to recommit
faith	purity	to declare	to remain

Introduction

In the last lesson, we learned that the **concept** of Communion began in the Old Testament when God rescued his children from Egyptian slavery. The night before their escape, during the first Passover **feast**, the Jewish people had to leave their homes so quickly that they didn't have time to bake bread with yeast. Over time, this yeast became a symbol for sickness, poverty, misery, and sin. We learned that sin is a spiritual condition in all mankind that causes physical, emotional, *and* spiritual suffering, sickness, poverty, and misery. Just as yeast spreads throughout dough to make bread, sin like sickness can also spread to others and cause them to sin and experience suffering as well.

Communion: Bread and Yeast

This concept of yeast is also carried into the New Testament as a symbol of something that works through the hearts of people. In the New Testament, however, we see that yeast represents things that are good, as well as things that are bad. Jesus compares the kingdom of God to yeast that works through dough (Matthew 13:33), while at the same time he **warns** his followers of the yeast, or unbelief and **false** teachings, of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:1-6, 12; Mark 8:12-21).

When Paul **preaches** against a false teaching that is spreading throughout the church, we see how he compares this false teaching to yeast. During the time of Paul's **ministry**, there were people teaching that Christians must still follow the physical requirements of Jewish Law, such as **circumcision**, to be saved from sin. Since Jesus **fulfilled** all the requirements of these physical laws and for sin, his followers were no longer required to follow these physical laws. They served only as symbols of the spiritual laws and truths that Jesus would bring into the world (Matthew 5:17, Ephesians 2:14-18, Romans 10:4). Paul didn't want Jesus's followers to return to the physical requirements of the Law, but rather trust in Jesus for their **salvation**. This trust is also called **faith**. To express his **concern**, Paul **quotes** what **appears to be** a **common** Jewish phrase: "A little yeast works through the whole **batch** of dough" (Galatians 5:9). In other words, he instructs the church to **rid itself** of this false teaching so that Jesus's followers are not **misled** to believe something that Jesus didn't teach.

Paul again uses this quote when referring to sexual sin that is spreading within the church in Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:1-8). He refers to sin as “old yeast” and refers to **commitment** to what is right and true as “new yeast.” In this reference, he reminds the church that Jesus was the sacrificed Passover lamb and that they should **celebrate** the Festival by turning away from sin and turning toward **honesty** and **purity**: “⁸ Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with **malice** and **wickedness**, but with the unleavened bread of **sincerity** and truth” (1 Corinthians 5:8).

What are some of the differences between “old yeast” and “new yeast”?

How can spreading the wrong yeast (unbelief, false teaching, or sin) into a community of believers hurt the community? Have you ever seen this happen in your relationships, groups, or church?

Just as we learned that the “old yeast” in the Old Testament represents sin that causes physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering, sickness, poverty, and misery, we see these ideas continue in the New Testament to include unbelief and false teaching. Yet we also see “new yeast”: good yeast representing holiness, sincerity, truth, and even the kingdom of God itself. This is what we need to be spreading!

Communion: Jesus’s Body and the Bread

With these thoughts about yeast **in mind**, let’s **examine** what Jesus says in Luke 22, when he celebrates the Passover meal with his followers the night before he is to die on a cross. During what is now called the “Last Supper,” Jesus says something that would have been **considered** very strange to his followers during this **traditional** Jewish Passover **celebration**. Jesus takes the bread without yeast, gives thanks to God, breaks it, and gives it to his followers saying, “This is my body given for you; do this **in remembrance of me**” (Luke 22:19).

What did Passover mean to Jesus’s Jewish followers according to their tradition? Why would Jesus’s words be strange to them during their Passover celebration?

Consider all the Old and New Testament representations for bread *without* yeast. What is Jesus saying about himself?

What do you think Jesus wants us to remember? Why does he want his followers to “eat” his body?

Jesus’s act of taking the bread made without yeast and **relating** it to his own body **declares** to his followers that his body is the perfect and eternal sacrifice not only for their sins, but also for their physical, emotional, and spiritual suffering, sickness, poverty, and misery. Just as the Passover “bread of affliction” reminded Jesus’s Jewish followers of their escape from Egyptian **oppression**, Jesus’s bread of life would continually remind his followers that they are free from sin, Satan’s oppression, God’s eternal **punishment** (Hebrews 10:1-14), and the physical Laws of the Old Testament. Now God’s children could place their full faith in Jesus’s one sacrifice as full payment for their lives and live in true unity with him.

Jesus wants his followers to remember these truths every time they take this bread. He wants his children to bring their sufferings to him because he cares for them and wants to heal them from their pain. In a **prophetic verse**, written in 700 B.C.E., about Jesus's death, Isaiah said this: "In fact, it was our **diseases** he **bore**, our pains from which he suffered...and with his **wounds** we are healed" (CJB).¹ Jesus wants his children to bring not only their sufferings but also their sins – to confess their sins to him and turn away from sin so they can be healed by his grace and keep their sin from hurting others. Is there a conflict to resolve, an apology to make, a sin of someone else to forgive? Is there a false belief to release and a truth to embrace? Do we need to **renew** our trust and faith in Jesus? For all this and for our healing, Jesus died; and by his wounds, we are healed.

In Greek, the word "remembrance" [Gk: *anamnesis*] suggests that Jesus is asking his followers to remember all these things with a heart of love and affection for him, not a heart of fear or **rejection**. He wants us to remove the yeast of sin and sickness and to spread the good yeast of faith, trust, holiness, sincerity, love, and truth among his followers and to those who do not yet know him. Jesus died to give us "life **to the full**" (John 10:10, NIV), and we can **recommit** our lives to him in these ways every time we eat the bread of Jesus's body! This is why Jesus calls himself the "bread of life" (John 6:35), and says, "Whoever eats this bread will live forever... (6:51)." When we come to eat the "bread of life" in this way and with this heart, we will certainly **remain** in Jesus all the days of our lives and help others to remain in him as well!

This Week:

Write in your journal:

1. Take some time to consider the following:
 - a. Are there any false beliefs or teachings I am holding onto (doctrines, beliefs about myself, beliefs about others, beliefs about a situation, etc.)?
 - b. Are there any sins in my life that I am not taking seriously and need to confess, including sexual sin, impurity, dishonesty or deceit, hatred, anger, unforgiveness, or some other sin that the Bible would call wickedness?
 - c. Are there any physical, emotional, or spiritual sufferings I am experiencing right now that I can share with the Lord?
 - d. Are there any other areas in your spiritual life where you need to recommit to Jesus?
 - e. What would honesty, truth, and sincerity look like in my life and in my relationship with other believers who know me?
2. Take the needs you listed above to Jesus in prayer and ask him for his healing, help, and direction. If you are ready to turn away from your sins, praise and thank Jesus for his forgiveness.
3. Share what you discovered about yourself with a trusted Christian friend. Ask them to pray for you as well.

¹ Isaiah 53:4-5, Complete Jewish Bible, translated by David H. Stern, 1998, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+53%3A4-5&version=CJB>, accessed May 12, 2023; See also Chabad.org, The Complete Jewish Bible, Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 53, https://www.chabad.org/library/bible_cdo/aid/15984, accessed May 12, 2023.