

Acts 2:42

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“The Breaking of Bread” **Acts 2:42**

INTRO:

We are exploring the local church. In our study over the last two weeks we explored what the infant church did as it took its first steps. In **Acts 2:42** we learned they were devoted to and busy about *“the Apostle's teaching.”* They also involved themselves in *“the fellowship.”* They were committed to a personal and corporate fellowship with the living God and with each other. We cannot share together in common with each other if we have no connection with one another. The fellowship was, in the final analysis, a sharing together in doing His will.

Today, we will continue on to the third element of their activity. They continued in *“the breaking of bread.”* As we explore this aspect of the life of the local church, our study will fall into two divisions.

- I. The History of Breaking Bread***
- II. The Significance of Breaking Bread***

I. The History of Breaking Bread

“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” Acts 2:42

A. *“The breaking of bread,”* most probably referred to the practice of the Lord's Supper.

B. This Lord's supper was precious to this church because of how it was instituted. We read of how our Lord Jesus began the practice in the Synoptic Gospels. In **Matthew 26:18-19** the Lord Jesus sent his disciples to find a place to ***“keep the Passover.”*** At this point in the process the disciples were clueless that this Passover would be different from any other Passover they ever kept. In a real sense, it was the last Passover and the first Lord's Supper.

1. All of the details of the meal are not given to us. In **Luke 22:17-20** we read a little more detail.

“Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, ‘Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.’ And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave

it to them, saying, 'This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.'"

The first clue the disciples might have had that this was not like the other Passovers they had experienced was when Jesus did not drink of the first cup. There is some question as to which of the four cups of wine drunk in the Seder this is. It is probably the cup of sanctification at the beginning.

2. Later in the feast, He took the bread and said something which had to shake up the disciples.

"This is my body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

The unleavened bread no longer was to symbolize the deliverance of Israel from Egyptian bondage. Instead, it was to represent the sinless life of the incarnate Son of God and His body being given for us! Then He took the cup of blessing at the end of the meal and again changed the liturgy.

"This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you."

The cup of blessing is the cup that we now drink in the Lord's Table.

3. The Passover was fulfilled because the final Passover lamb was about to be offered. The Apostle Paul observed, *"For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us."* A new feast was begun, the Lord's Table. The members of the first church in Jerusalem took seriously the command of the Lord to do this in remembrance of Him! They continued breaking bread, reminding themselves of what He did.

II. The Significance of Breaking Bread

A. This was for the infant church, but is this something we are also supposed to do today as God's church? The answer is an unequivocal yes! The Apostle Paul helped us to understand the significance of this symbol when he explained it to *"the Church of God which was at Corinth."* (1 Corinthians 1:2)

1. In 1 Corinthians 10, the Apostle Paul wrote about meat offered to idols. There were some who thought their liberty in Christ meant they could freely go to the idol feasts and partake and nothing could be wrong with that. Surely, if idols were not gods, one cannot be harmed by something that was offered to a nothing.

2. At verse 16, the Apostle pointed out that there is an identification involved in eating something dedicated to a god. To make this point, the Apostle drew on the symbol of the Lord's Table.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread."

3. I changed the NKJV a little so we can see a little more clearly what Paul was saying here. I used the word **“fellowship”** to translate the Greek word, **“koinonia.”** The word means **“to share together in common.”** Therefore, Paul wrote, the cup of blessing that we bless in the communion service is our sharing together in the blood of Christ.

4. Let us then take the first phrase in **verse 16** and look at it closely.

“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the fellowship of the blood of Christ?”

There is considerable discussion as to why Paul reverses the order here, but it seems clear it is to make a point. It is significant that when our Lord instituted the Lord’s Table, He said, **“This is the new covenant in my blood.”** We enter into a covenant relationship with the Lord through His blood at salvation. We also enter the fellowship of the church through the shed blood of Christ. Because He died and shed His blood as the propitiation for our sins, we can have fellowship with one another in the church and we have fellowship with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

5 Therefore, as we take part in the cup of blessing, we are celebrating the fact that we all participated in the death of Christ. We are showing that in the language of **1 John 1:7** **“the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”** This is a very precious statement.

6. Additionally, when we take of the broken bread we are also making a statement about our relationship to Him whose body the bread represents.

“The bread which we break, is it not the fellowship of the body of Christ?”

We share in His body in many ways. First, we share in that the righteous life that the bread represents has been credited to our account. Second, we share in His body in that we have become a part of **“the church which is His body!”**

7. Paul underlined this in the very next verse.

“As the bread is one, we who are of the body should be one.”

Now before we get some kind of ecumenical vision here, remember he is writing to a divided local church. Where do you think he wanted this principle applied? So, the first area of significance that Paul draws out of the Lord’s Table is that it speaks of what happened to us. It celebrates all the blessings and privileges we enjoy because Jesus saved us!

B. The second exploration of why **“the breaking of bread”** is significant is found one chapter later in **1 Corinthians 11:18-32**. This passage includes some scathing rebukes and clear instructions.

1. First, the rebuke. **Verses 18-20**. There were divisions and so when they came together as a church to celebrate the Lord’s Table, although they went through the motions, it was not the Lord’s Table that they celebrated. It was something that God disowned.

2. In the very familiar passage, **verses 23-32**, we read Paul's clear instructions about how we are to partake of this important picture of God's grace to us. Because we read this in detail every time we come to the Lord's Supper in this church, let me just hit the high spots and then try to draw some applications to all of this.

3. ***“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’” In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’”***

In **verse 23-25**, the Apostle Paul once again reminded us of the historical nature of this celebration. We do what we do in the way that we do it because we are repeating the example of the first celebration of the New Passover meal. We must not forget what took place in that upper room before Jesus died.

4. Then, in **verse 26**, we are reminded that this is to proclaim to our hearts, our fellow believers, and to any present the reality of our Lord's sacrificial death for our sin. We look both backward and forward. We proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. And He is coming.

5. Finally, in **verses 27-32**, the Lord's Table must be approached with reverence and recognition of what it all pictures. God judges those who misuse His symbols.

“Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”

This represents something very special to the Father. We must never take it lightly!

Now how do we apply all of this?

“They continued steadfastly in the breaking of bread.” What did that mean? It meant, first, that they recognized the importance of obeying the command of the Lord Jesus to observe this supper.

Second, they had a great desire to show to the world that they were that one body. The unity of the body is connected to a whole hearted allegiance to the leading of the Holy Spirit Who indwells the body.

Are we committed to the Lord?

Are we committed to one another because we are committed to the Lord?

Only in this way can we partake worthily of the Lord's Table.

Only in this way can we glorify Him as we ought to as His church here in Lansing. May God help us do this!

Hymn# 178 ***O Sacred Head, Now Wounded***