

TRUE COMMUNION: A LOVE MESSAGE TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

Communion is spoken of much in religious circles as a way of maintaining a relationship with God. Let's look at the word itself. Wikipedia describes the origin of communion: "The term is derived from Latin *communio* (*sharing in common*). *American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*. This basic meaning of the word predates its Christian uses. In Ancient Greek, *κοινωνία* could apply to a business partnership, to fellowship of life in marriage, to a spiritual relationship with divinity, to comradely fellowship between friends, to a community or society". Robert Porter Lynch & Ninon Prozonice Papanicolas: *How the Greeks Created the First Age of Innovation*.

Communion has come to be associated most commonly with its religious meaning and ceremony. The occasion of what is called "the Lord's supper", or "the last passover" is what is widely accepted as the basis for what is celebrated in Christianity as the communion service or as it is also described "the ordinance of communion". Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, one who referred to himself as one ".....born out of due time" (1 Corinthians 15: 7), though he was not physically present at the above mentioned passover of Jesus Christ with his disciples, nevertheless was able to witness this event and describe it in 1 Corinthians 11, even as Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John did in their gospel writings, all being in perfect agreement. This is an indication that Paul, though not physically present, was yet a partaker of all that went forth, therefore being in communion with Jesus Christ and his disciples. Paul on the other hand was dealing with the Corinthians, showing them that the carnal way they were approaching the Lord's supper, as a way of commemorating the Lord's death, made their service of none effect, and was actually leaving them open for judgment, because of their carnal approach to spiritual things. Take note of how the communion of one who was not even physically present at the Lord's passover with his disciples was far superior to the service that many of the Corinthians were rendering in their outward communion service. Why? Because of the heart condition of many of them in not considering the importance of the sacrifice they were supposed to be commemorating. (1 Corinthians 11: 20-22).

Paul went on to relate how he had received the Lord's supper in the spirit. Though he was not there in bodily presence, he was certainly there in spiritual presence. His account of the proceedings are strikingly similar to and in agreement with the other four gospel accounts of the Lord's passover. In fact, Paul gives us a bit more insight into the matter. (1 Corinthians 11: 23-34). ".....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 supper the Lord spoke in the same manner concerning the cup saying ".....This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me". (v. 25). When Jesus spoke of his body as being "broken for you", what did he mean? When he showed the disciples to eat, was he speaking of his physical flesh? When he showed them to drink of the cup, was he speaking of his physical blood? If Jesus' ultimate reference was to physical elements (bread, body, fruit of the vine, blood), there is no way that Paul could have been in communion with the other participants. But I say to you that the very fact that the Spirit of the Lord brought Paul to that service testifies to the fact that he was in communion with Jesus Christ and his disciples in that service. One of the meanings of communion is fellowship and this is certainly pointing to fellowship in the spirit, and that is what true communion is about.

John recounts in chapter 6 of his gospel an earlier ministry of Jesus Christ about the same subject in which Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world". (John 6: 51). "The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man

give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the son of man, and drink his blood, you 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 shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers ate manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live forever". (John 6: 52-58). Jesus, in referring to himself as the "son of man" was giving those among that group who wanted to know, and all who should believe on him, who he really was, and who was really speaking to them by way of the man Jesus. Jesus used this term in reference to himself much, speaking in a mystery. As the Lord has just recently unfolded this mystery to his people, we now understand that the term "son of man" refers to that Christ spirit who raised Jesus up to the point where he could be "Christed", or declared to be the Christ, the anointed Man of God. The term "son of man", when we understand it, gives life to the process of how Jesus was brought to the place of becoming the Christ of God, or the anointed Man of God. (Acts 10: 38). Jesus was really declaring by the reference "son of man" that he was brought forth by the Spirit, making him the Christ of God. This Christ was showing us that he is our daily bread, our sustenance, our very life.(Colossians 3:4)

When God gave Israel instruction as to what she was allowed to eat and what was prohibited (see Leviticus 11) the general categories were beasts, flying fowl, and creatures that creep upon the earth. Those that were allowed for consumption were never to be consumed with the blood remaining in their flesh. (Leviticus 7: 26-27). Jehovah was always, by way of his statutes and judgments, seeking to make a difference between Israel and the rest of the world, in order to draw the surrounding nations to himself. But this called for serious consideration and preparation on each person's part as to his/her heart condition in approaching a holy God by way of his holy laws and statutes. As far as the consumption of human flesh or blood was concerned, we should consider the restrictions God made as to the taking of human life and even the burial traditions to understand that human flesh or blood were not to be partaken of in Israel's economy. There are several instances in the Old Testament where the people of Israel, because of the judgment of God, were found eating their own children because they were in such oppression by their enemies! (Jeremiah 19:9; Lamentations 4:10). This was a testimony as to the utter shame and depravity that Israel had been brought to via her whoredoms and idolatry that God would allow her to come to such a state.

The apostle Peter, as God was preparing to send him to Cornelius' house to preach the Gospel of Christ, was shown a vision of something like a great sheet descending from heaven with all kinds of fourfooted beasts, creeping things, and fowls of the air. A voice spoke to him saying, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat". (Acts 10: 13). "But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that was common or unclean. (v. 14). The voice spoke a second time to Peter, saying, ".....What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common". (v. 15). The Lord had not put the same dietary restrictions upon the gentiles as he had upon Israel, so these creatures, as Peter came to understand shortly afterward, represented the gentiles. This exchange between the Lord and Peter was repeated three times and the vision ended. Cornelius, a Roman centurion, was a devout man who prayed to God continually and was a blessing to Israel in his alms giving. Prayer is a key element in maintaining communion. Jesus Christ was in constant communication with his Father, so much so that he could testify that he always did the Father's will; that the Father showed him all that he (the Father) was doing. These events came about as a result of prayer, on the part of both Peter and Cornelius. The Lord, in response to the desire of Cornelius' heart, sent an angel to Cornelius, instructing him to send men to Joppa to find Simon Peter and to bring him to Caesarea to minister to Cornelius and to those whom he had gathered together in his house in preparation for Peter's coming. These men arrived at the house where Peter was staying at the time the vision ended, explaining to Peter why they sought him, and Peter went with them. The Spirit had

spoken to Peter to go with the men, “.....doubting nothing: for I have sent them”. (Acts 10: 20).

Jesus Christ is our perfect example as to the importance of staying in constant fellowship, or communion, with the Father. As he went about doing the work that his Father had given him to do, he was always in prayer, most of the time going off to a place of privacy for him to be with the Father in prayer. As Peter went on the journey to Caesarea with Cornelius' men, we are able to see how he by way of prayer was able to receive perfect understanding of what the Spirit had been communicating to him in the vision. As Peter kept that matter before the Lord, the Lord was able to reveal the matter to Peter, giving him perfect understanding of what the Father was doing in this particular case. Peter then preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ to Cornelius and all those in his house, showing them that, “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins”. (Acts 10: 43). As Peter delivered the gospel message per Matthew 28: 19, Cornelius and all those gentiles present in his house were baptized into Christ, receiving the Holy Ghost with the evidence of speaking with tongues, then were they baptized in water in the name of the Lord (Jesus Christ). (Acts 10: 44-48). This is that same one of whom Peter spoke in John 6: 69, saying, “And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God”. Peter and many other of Christ's disciples had just heard him teach how that he was the living bread that had come down from heaven; that it was necessary for them to eat of his flesh and drink of his blood in order to have life; that his flesh was meat indeed, and his blood was drink indeed. Many of Jesus Christ's disciples, at hearing these words, were offended and left off following him. This was the Lord's way of weeding out of his midst those that were following him in expectation of material things and not seeking spiritual life; not being willing to operate in the patience, watchfulness, and the obedience of the Lord, in order to receive understanding of his ways, even in the face of teachings which to them were revolting. And though many went back from following him, Jesus asked the twelve, “Will ye also go away?” (John 6: 67). “Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life”. (v. 68). Peter answered in faith, holding fast to the words which Jesus Christ spoke in answer to the unbelief and confusion of many. For he (Christ) summed up his teaching with these words: “It is the spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life”. (John 6: 63).

Christ was making it known by way of Jesus that there is no good thing in the flesh, even Jesus' flesh. Recall the occasion when a young ruler approached Jesus with this question: “.....Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Luke 18: 18). Jesus' response to the ruler is revelatory and truly remarkable, given the widely established notion in the religious world that Jesus is God. Behold Jesus' answer: “.....Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God”. (v. 19). Jesus was making it clear that he was **not** God and would not receive any accolade that belongs only to God. In short he was saying that he, Jesus was **not** good, and that he would not receive the goodness of God being attributed to him, the physical man. And this was no light matter! Had Jesus agreed with the ruler's approach to him, he would have been agreeing that there is some good thing in the flesh, when the scriptures clearly show us that there is no good thing in the flesh. (Romans 7: 18; 1 Corinthians 1: 29). Such agreement would have disqualified him as one able to offer himself as a spotless sacrifice to God for us. But when one approaches Jesus in the spirit, he receives worship on behalf of his Father in heaven. I use as an example the case of a man who had been born blind spoken of in the gospel of John, chapter 9. Jesus made clay of spittle and sent the man to the pool of Siloam, instructing him to wash there. The man did as he was told and received his sight. The man came again among the neighbours, and many who knew him, explaining to them that a man called Jesus had healed his eyes, explaining to them exactly what had been done. There was much division about what had been done to the man. Though this was a notable miracle, the religious establishment (the Pharisees) sought to discredit the work, and of course Jesus Christ, who had performed the work. The man whose eyes the

Lord had healed wound up reproving the religious leaders with these words: “Why herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth. Since the world began it was not heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this man were not of God, he could do nothing”. (John 9: 30-33). The essence of the formerly blind man's testimony (for he had received physical, and more importantly, spiritual sight) was that no matter how much the people tried to deny it, this man who had healed his sight was of God, the anointed Man of God, the Christ. The Pharisees cast him out. “Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he which talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. **And he worshipped him.** (John 9: 35-38). Take note that until Jesus found this man again, he had never physically laid eyes on Jesus, for he was still blind. But when he obeyed in faith and washed in the pool of Siloam as instructed, he received both physical and spiritual sight. That is why he was able to preach Christ to the people, having never seen Jesus. Jesus was the temple for Christ, and when he finally identified where Christ tabernacled, he worshipped him. Look at the contrast. In one instance Jesus would not even allow a man to refer to him as good. Yet in the other the man was allowed to worship him. Christ received that worship on behalf of his (our) Heavenly Father. We worship God by way of his Christ.

We partake of Christ, the Son of God only in the spirit. True communion then is to partake of the spirit of Christ. The Son of God, his Christ, is that living bread, which came down from heaven, the one that the manna foreshadowed, or was a type of, which Moses and the children of Israel ate in the wilderness. The passover lamb was a type of that lamb, “.....the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”. (John 1: 29). Men in great numbers participate in an outward communion service, knowing only Jesus the outward one and not Christ, the Son of God. One particular group espouses a doctrine known as “transubstantiation”, which states in effect that when the minister speaks the words “This is my body”, and “This is my blood”, that the physical elements of bread and wine morph into the actual body and blood of Jesus. If this were true, then those who partake of these things enter into cannibalism, a thing that Israel was found in only when she was under the most severe judgment of God. “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth”. (John 4:24).

The passover service was given by God as an everlasting ordinance to Israel and to all of God's people, signifying how Jehovah delivered his people Israel out of the bondage of the Egyptians after 430 years of enslavement, bringing them out with a mighty hand. The Lord called for each household to choose from their flocks a lamb or a goat in its first year of life, unblemished, and to set it apart from the 10th day until the evening of the 14th day, when they were to kill it and prepare it to be roasted by fire. If a lamb was too large to be eaten by one family, then two families would share the same lamb or goat, so as not to leave anything over after the supper. It was not to be boiled, or eaten raw, but roasted whole, with the head and the internal organs. They were not to break any of the bones of the animal. They were to eat this sacrificed animal (usually a lamb) along with bitter herbs and unleavened bread, not allowing anything of it to remain until morning. If anything remained it was to be burned with fire. The blood of this sacrificed lamb or goat was to be spread over the doorposts and the lintels (the top of the doors) of each house where the sacrifice was consumed. This was a sign to the destroying angel to pass over that particular dwelling and not enter in and take the life of the firstborn, for God had shown that he would pass through Egypt that night and destroy the first born of every house, of man and of beast. Israel was to eat the passover in haste, with their shoes on their feet and with staff in hand, being ready to move when the Lord gave the word. The Lord God commanded that Israel should remember and celebrate this great feast, the Feast of Passover, forever, as a reminder for all time of the great deliverance he had wrought in bringing Israel out of Egypt with a mighty hand. We truly thank God for

his goodness and for his marvelous works unto all his people!

Let us visit again Paul's testimony about Jesus Christ's last passover celebration with his disciples. Paul relates how Jesus took the bread, "And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: This is my body which is broken for you". (1 Corinthians 11: 24). The body of Jesus was an outward manifestation of the passover lamb. After the crucifixion, when the bodies of the malefactors which were crucified alongside Jesus were taken down from the trees on which they were hanged, their legs were broken by the Roman soldiers to precipitate death. The Jews desired to remove the bodies from the trees before one of the upcoming Jewish high Sabbaths. But when they came to the body of Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, 'A bone of him shall not be broken' [Exodus 12: 46]. And again another scripture saith, 'They shall look on him whom they pierced' [Zechariah 12: 10]. (John 19: 34-37). God many times established in Old Testament scriptures types of his Christ, in order to confirm his word, spoken by his prophets of old, and bear witness to the truth in all who would believe him. And God demanded strict adherence to the patterns that he established. (Hebrews 8: 5).

Now the bones are the framework of the body; so if the bones of Jesus were not broken, can we rightly say that his body was broken? Not if our focus is the physical body. Again, as we have been pointing out throughout this message, we have to look to the spirit of the matter in order to receive the word of life. Christ, the very Son of God, the Bread of Life, was speaking by way of Jesus in showing that his body was broken for us. The word "broken" in this particular scripture reference is defined in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance (# 2806) as coming from the Greek word "**klao**" which means "break" (specifically of bread). The bread was the representation or type of the spiritual body. The breaking up of that spiritual body and the sharing of it with all the disciples, represent how Christ divided up his spirit to share a portion of himself with every believer in whatever measure the Father has ordained for each to receive. The spirit of Christ, the Holy Ghost in each believer, is the evidence of the believers' having received the Lord's Passover, even his Christ.

Jesus Christ also showed that we must drink his blood, because his blood is "drink indeed". (John 6: 54). Matthew's account of the Lord's Passover speaks of the drinking of the blood on this wise: "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26: 27-28). Leviticus, chapter 17 deals with the shedding of the blood of sacrificed animals, where the blood should be shed, and how blood should be handled in different situations. Shedding of blood was a serious matter and the Lord's commandments in these matters were made in order to keep Israel from idolatry by way of her making sacrifices unto devils and to ensure that she operated under his sanctified covering. The consumption of blood was strictly prohibited, yet the Lord showed that upon the altar the blood served a spiritual purpose: "And the priest shall sprinkle the blood upon the altar of the LORD at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and burn the fat for a sweet savour unto the Lord". (Leviticus 17: 6); "For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for your soul". (Leviticus 17: 11).

So here again we have words of Jesus Christ which on the surface seem to conflict with Jehovah's commandments about blood in the Old Testament scriptures. And again we must point out that it is the spirit that must give life to, must quicken, must reveal what is the understanding of this matter. Even as Jesus Christ showed that we must eat his flesh to have (spiritual) life, so it is the same

when it comes to the blood of Jesus Christ. The writer of Hebrews lays out in considerable detail the worship service, the sacrifices, and all that was required in the Old Testament for God's people to draw near to him in worship. (Hebrews 9: 1-10). Then he skillfully shows the superiority of the pouring out of the blood of Christ, which is the New Testament sacrifice, over the former way: "But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause, he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. (Hebrews 9: 11-15).

So then the redemption brought about by Christ offering himself as a sacrifice acceptable to God is eternal. It is a done deal. It cannot be undone. "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool" (Hebrews 10: 12-13). Now Christ is yet going forth in the work by way of his body, joined with the head to manifestly bring those enemies – the world, the flesh, the devil, and death under subjection to God as we walk in the overcoming power of Christ. Communion then is that body being joined with the head by way of that one and selfsame Spirit, the Holy Ghost. But as it is in a natural body, so it is with the spiritual body as far as function goes. The body cannot operate apart from the head. The head is the most honored member of the body, which gives directions to the different members. If we the members cannot connect with the head, we cannot function. We must be in communion; we must be joined in unity; we must operate as a unit. Communication of the members with the head is key. As we pray, God brings us into closer unity with the head, that we be more closely joined together in the spirit. Communion in the spirit is the closest union there is. We all who have received Christ, the bread of life, are called to unity in him, or communion. "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all". (Ephesians 4: 3-6).

It is good that we should keep in remembrance the sacrifice of Christ, approaching him and each other with reverence for what God has done in each of us. "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ, our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth". (1 Corinthians 5: 7-8).

Grace and Peace be unto you from Our Lord and from his Christ
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