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**YPS**  
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## The Breaking of Bread

'Oh! No. It's Sunday morning and we're going to the breaking of bread meeting once again. Are we really going to sing the same old hymns, listen to the same half-dozen brothers praying the same words? What is the point of it all? Why do we spend an hour or more each week with long prayers followed by long silences? Wouldn't our time be better spent doing something else? And why do we do it anyway?'

Ever since the Lord Jesus sat down with eleven of His disciples in a room upstairs in a house in Jerusalem, Christians the world over have remembered the occasion. We find the very first Christians in Jerusalem continuing steadfastly 'in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship and in breaking of bread and in prayers', Acts 2. 42. There are times when the phrase 'breaking bread' means sharing a



meal at home, Luke 24. 35; Acts 2. 46, but in the context of formal gatherings or meetings of believers, which is what we have in the list in Acts chapter 2 verse 42, the breaking of bread was obviously the commemoration of the Lord's Supper, a re-enactment of the meal the Lord had with His disciples 'the night in which he was betrayed'. Some denominations call it taking 'communion', or 'the Holy Eucharist'. Some celebrate it occasionally, some once a month and some once a week; only one denomination never

## Breaking Bread

does it at all. Some take the opportunity to have an hour or more of worship before the bread and cup are taken, some tack the remembrance on at the end of a sermon. How do **you** 'break bread'? What attitudes should we show when we do? We should break bread:

### Obediently – *'This do ...'*

That night, the final night before His sufferings on the cross, the Lord Jesus took some bread, broke it, and said to His disciples, 'Take, eat, this is my body'. Then He took a cup of wine which He gave to them, saying, 'Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood', Matt. 26. 26-29. The apostle Paul took up this incident

when he wrote to Christians in the assembly at Corinth and reminded them that the Lord had said, 'Do this in remembrance of me', 1 Cor. 11; Luke 22. 19. Our Lord instructed His disciples to do certain things. They were to go into all the world to preach the gospel, they were to baptize believers in the name of the

Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and they were to teach converts to 'observe all things that I have commanded you'. One of these commands was to take bread and wine, in the same way as He had done with His disciples. That is why the 'breaking of bread' is such an important occasion. We are obeying our Lord when we pass around the bread and the cup.

### Pensively

#### – *'in remembrance ...'*

There is nothing supernatural about the bread and the wine. Although our Lord told His disciples, 'This is my body ... this is my blood', He meant it in a figurative way. When we give thanks for the bread and the cup, nothing happens to them: they remain bread and wine. We do not believe for a moment that a priest has the power to change these emblems into the actual body and blood of the Lord Jesus. No. The bread is a symbol of His body that was given for us; the cup is a symbol of His blood poured out for us. There is no salvation for us, then, in taking the bread and the wine and we certainly do not bow before the emblems because they have become God's body. We only take and break the bread or drink from the cup to remind ourselves of the immense cost by which we were saved. In taking the bread and the wine, we remember the Lord Jesus. That is why many assemblies



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of Christians give themselves an hour or more of open worship before they take the bread. During this time, hymns that speak of our Lord are sung, passages of the Bible that speak of Him are read and believers pray publicly, leading the rest of us to remember the Lord Jesus.

### **Reverently – ‘of me...’**

This remembrance service is not the time to sing of our trials and troubles, or to sing hymns of testimony or even hymns of hope. It is not the time to stand up and pray for one another, neither is it the time to pray for people to be saved, important though such prayers may be. This remembrance service is the time when all our thoughts should be concentrated on the Lord Jesus and His sufferings, His death and His resurrection. The breaking of bread is the meeting convened to remember and concentrate on the Lord Jesus Himself. From beginning to end we meditate, sing, read and pray about Him. He is the centre and focus of our worship. Brothers who look for hymns to announce should remember the purpose of the gathering – to remember Him and Him alone.

### **Regularly – ‘as oft as ye eat this bread and drink this cup...’**

We would not say that the words ‘as oft’ in this passage teach that we must do it often. They mean

‘whenever’ you break bread, you show the Lord’s death. But it is probable that believers in New Testament times met together to break bread on the first day of every week. It would appear that Paul, arriving in Troas too late on the first day of the week and possibly not knowing where the believers met in that city, waited for seven days until, ‘upon the first of the week the disciples came together to break bread’, he was there and preached to them, Acts 20. 7.

This breaking of bread meeting appears to have been held in the evening, because Paul preached until midnight. We are not told whether this was the evening that started the Lord’s Day or that ended it, because we do not know whether the disciples in Troas were following a Jewish or a Gentile day.

The Jewish day began at 6.00 in the evening and went on until 6.00 the following day. If they were keeping the Jewish day and met in the evening that started the first day of the week, then it could be argued that the breaking of bread was the first meeting of the day. If they were following a Gentile, non-Jewish, day, then the breaking of bread came at the end of the day. All that we know is that believers

## Breaking Bread

met on the first day of the week to remember the Lord Jesus. This pattern of meeting on what we could call a Sunday, the Lord's Day, is confirmed by what we read in 1 Corinthians chapter 16 verse 2. Most assemblies of believers still convene a breaking of bread meeting once a week, on the first day of the week.

### Triumphantly – *'ye do show forth the Lord's death ...'*

As we break bread to remember the Lord Jesus, with the bread and wine, symbols of His suffering, on the table before us, we 'show forth the Lord's death'. In other words, we 'proclaim' it. The emblems of bread and wine are there to remind us, and all who watch us, of the death of the Lord. This is because His death is absolutely central to our Christian faith. Without the death

of Christ upon the cross for us, there would be no forgiveness for sin and no ground upon which we can hope for salvation from God's wrath. Those who do not take the bread and wine, but sit and observe us are reminded yet again of the death of the Lord Jesus. The hymn-writer has well said, there is, 'No gospel like this feast'. But it is more likely that we proclaim the Lord's death to angelic beings, whether fallen or otherwise. Angels seem to take a very real interest in church matters, as we see from 1 Cor. 11. 10, and 1 Peter 1. 12.

### Expectantly

#### – *'until He come ...'*

Once the Lord Jesus has returned for His people, or we have been 'called home' to heaven through death, we shall no longer need to be reminded of His death for us on the cross. This is because, in the first place, we shall at last be fully saved. Our souls have already been saved by trusting in the Lord's death for us, but our bodies are still alive. Seated very firmly in our bodies, like a squatter who is difficult to evict, is the old, sinful nature that quickly forgets how much it cost God to save us. When our bodies are changed, to become spiritual ones, we shall lose that sinful nature, and we shall no longer be troubled by sin.

In the second place, we shall not



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need the symbols of bread and wine to remind us of the death of the Lord because we shall see Him face to face, and when we see Him, we shall see the same print of the nails in His hands that Thomas once saw, and we shall see the wound in His side. The symbols of remembrance will then no longer be needed. We shall see 'a Lamb as it had been slain', Rev. 5. 6. So we remember Him in the breaking of bread, thinking to ourselves each week that this could be the very last time that we do it, for we expect Him to come any moment. Perhaps even today!

**Carefully** – *'whosoever shall eat ... and drink ... unworthily shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.'*

Does it matter how I break the bread? So long as I take the bread and the cup, I am being obedient to the Lord and that is all that matters. No it is not. I need to remember, when I take the bread and the cup, that I should not do so if I have the wrong attitude. There is a sense in which we might think we can never be worthy to take it. After all, we all recognize that we were sinners in God's sight and it is only by grace that we have been saved in the first place. But when the Bible talks of 'eating unworthily', it does not mean being worthy to be there. It means to eat it in an unworthy manner, or with an unworthy attitude. To break bread unworthily

is to break bread without putting myself right before God as to the sins I have committed that week, confessing them and grieving over them once more. I also break bread unworthily if I break bread without putting myself right with my fellow believers first. If I break bread like this, I am 'guilty of the body and blood of the Lord'. Mention of His blood, as well as His body, means I am showing disrespect to His physical sufferings on my behalf and I show immense disregard for them.

**Honestly** – *'let a man examine himself and so let him eat ...'*

Before I reach out my hand to take the bread and the wine, I need to think about my state before the Lord. I may very well stand before Him as a saved, baptized believer and therefore I have the right to break bread. Unbelievers never have that right and should not be permitted to break the bread in remembrance of the death of the Lord in whom they have not believed. But though my position as a saved, forgiven sinner may be right, my state before the Lord may



We rightly condemn those who confess their sins to a priest, take the communion, and then go out and carry on doing the same sins. Are we any different? Have I been living a secret, immoral life? Then unless I am prepared to judge myself for that and put it right, I should hesitate to break bread. Do I harbour any resentment against

**Solemnly** – *‘for this cause many are weak among you and many sleep ...’*

Our God is a jealous God. He is



**It is a very serious and solemn thing to break bread every week in an attitude of heart and life that is inconsistent with the God we profess to love.**

jealous of His good name and the purity of His people. If any believer regularly breaks bread in an unworthy condition, living in open sin and refusing to turn away from it, or despising and disregarding fellow-believers, he or she will bring the testimony of God into disrepute. People will say, 'Do you know what that person is like? And yet he or she is a member of that church and has never been disciplined. I would never be a Christian if it means to be like him or her and I would never become a member of that church'.

So if we are not prepared to stop breaking bread unworthily, then God may stop us. We may fall ill and be unable to break bread for a time, or we may even die. God will deal in a very severe way with those who 'do not discern the Lord's body'. It is a very serious and solemn thing to break bread every week in an attitude of heart and life that is inconsistent with the God we profess to love. Now we need to remember that not every illness is a judgement from the Lord; Lazarus fell ill and died for God's glory and not as a judgement on his sin, John 11. 4. We also need to be sure that any such action from God does not imply loss of salvation. It may merely be God's discipline upon a disobedient child, but He is still able and willing to do it.

So, then, what should I do in that hour before the bread and the

wine are passed around? Should I be thinking of anything but the Lord? Should I be looking at the ceiling, watching fellow-believers, longing for the meeting to be over so that I can get home? No. I should be sitting in my seat in silent prayer, thinking on words of scripture that remind me of the Lord and His death for me, worshipping obediently, thoughtfully, reverently and triumphantly remembering what the death of the Lord accomplished for me and expectantly looking for the return of the Lord Jesus.

When a hymn about the Lord is given out, I should sing it thoughtfully and respectfully. When a brother stands to pray I should listen to what he says and say 'Amen', in my heart, if I am too timid to say it out loud. If I am a brother in fellowship then I ought to take my responsibility as a priest to lead others in worship, either by giving out an appropriate hymn or by praying publicly myself. Then, when the bread and wine comes round, if not before, I should break the bread and take the cup carefully, honestly and solemnly. Surely an hour is too short a time to do all these things!

# Fools in Fellowship

*Recognizing, but not being, fools.*

The Want-Mores



BY IAN REES

Meet **Miss Covetous**. She is never satisfied with what she has, is jealous of what others have and often causes trouble.

The tenth commandment states simply and clearly, 'Thou shalt not covet', Exod. 20. 17. We covet when we want what other people have. The problem with coveting is that it leads us to feel dissatisfied. Envy never leads to satisfaction, 'The eyes of man are never satisfied', Prov. 27. 20 and 'Envy rots the bones', Prov. 14. 30. Unless we are very careful, the green-eyed monster of envy can lead us to dislike or even hate others simply because they have what we don't. Sometimes envy can even lead to us using unscrupulous and sinful means to get what we want. Pilate was aware that it was because of envy that the Jews wanted to crucify the Son of God.

The tenth commandment deals with men and women coveting other *things* – another man's grand house, his pretty wife, his efficient employees, his means of transport. Ahab coveted Naboth's beautiful vineyard, and was willing to get it at all costs. He should have been satisfied with what he had. It is better to have a little with the fear of the Lord than great wealth and trouble. But we can also be envious of someone's *way of life*. We must not envy the famous, wealthy, powerful people around us. We are told not to envy 'the man of violence and choose none of his ways,' Prov. 3. 31 RV, even though he may be 'cool'.

We must not envy pop-stars, film-stars, and sportsmen nor should we envy their WAGS!

Prov. 23. 17; 24. 19. Why? Because their way of life and standard of behaviour is often ungodly and we should not want to be like them or even to spend time with them, Prov. 24. 1-2.

Nor should we envy fellow-believers who may have a *higher profile* than we do. When believers are envious of other people's position in an assembly, their influence or gifts, tremendous strain is put upon fellowships. Believers are told not to envy one another, Gal. 5. 26, for 'where envying and strife is there is confusion and every evil work' and there are divisions, strife and unspiritual attitudes, Jas. 3. 14-16; 1 Cor. 3. 3-9. Many a friendship, much good Christian fellowship and many an assembly has been destroyed by envy and by the work of Miss, Mrs. or Mr. Want-more. Surely it does not matter who is doing the work of the Lord, or who has what gift and who takes what role in an assembly, so long as the work of God is being done. Neither does it matter in the end what I have or what I do not have. It is God who gives gifts to whomsoever He wishes, 1 Cor. 12. 4-11.

Envy, or jealousy, is a powerful emotion that is irresistible in its force and can overcome and destroy anything, Prov. 27. 4. The Lord tells us that we should avoid being caught up in such emotions and with envious people, 1 Cor. 6. 11. If we want to 'keep up with the Joneses' we will find they may always be one step ahead of us and we will never be happy. Godliness with contentment is the best thing to have, 1 Tim. 6. 6.

