

COURSE 2

THE BODY OF CHRIST DID NOT MEAN A RITUAL

In this Course we will consider what the Jewish apostles taught concerning the *spiritual* body of Christ. We will also see how this connects to the Last Supper parable, in which the Messiah broke one bread into pieces and spoke of it *figuratively* as his body.

When Rome rejected Jewish idioms and understandings, it used scriptures that the Messiah spoke of in a symbolic sense, but it then misapplied them by interpreting them literally. Below is one scripture that the Messiah meant as figurative spiritual truth that was taken literally in Rome:

^{KJV} Matthew 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread,⁶⁵ and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; **this is my body.**

The Roman Church eventually came to teach that Jesus wanted us to remember him in a ritual where we partake of bread that is literally the Messiah's body. When the Protestants left the Catholic Church, they continued the ritual, albeit in a slightly different form. First Martin Luther formed his consubstantiation⁶⁶ belief, and later Protestants mostly taught that the Messiah only wanted us to remember him as we eat unleavened bread that *represents* his sinless body; the bread does not change into the Messiah's body, as the Catholics taught.

Early Messianic Jews, however, understood that the Messiah was only speaking in parables and figurative language when he broke the one bread into pieces, for right after supper Jesus told them so:

^{NAS} John 16:25 “**These things I have spoken to you in figurative language**; an hour is coming when I will speak no more to you in figurative language, but will tell you plainly of the Father.”

65 The Greek word for bread is singular, as in “a bread.”

66 Luther's idea of consubstantiation was that the bread in the Communion ritual contained Christ's flesh, yet it did not completely change into it (as the Catholics taught).

Jesus had presented so many parables on the night of the Last Supper that when he finally spoke without them, the disciples noted this change:

^{NIV} John 16:29 “Then Jesus’ disciples said, ‘**Now** you are speaking clearly and without figures of speech.’”⁶⁷

The early Jewish disciples did not teach a new ritual; of course they never believed that the pieces of the one bread were Christ’s physical body, for they understood the Messiah’s figurative instruction. They then went out teaching that **we** the believers make up the spiritual body of Christ:

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 12:27 Now **you** are Christ’s body, and individually members of it.

^{NAS} Ephesians 5:30 because **we** are members of His body.

Below, Paul shows that he understands the Messiah’s figurative teaching, and that when Jesus broke the one bread into pieces, it showed forth how we members will receive spiritual nourishment in the New Covenant:

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 10:17 **Since** there is **one bread**, **we** who are many are **one body**; for **we all** partake of the **one bread**.

So where did the Jewish disciples get this teaching that **we** are the body of Christ? When Abraham died, the Jews did not become the “body of Abraham.” When the prophet Elisha died, the Jews did not become the “body of Elisha.” These New Covenant disciples were teaching that **we** are the spiritual “body of Christ” and individually members of it because this is what they understood from the Messiah’s Last Supper instruction.

“This Is My Body,” But What Is This?

Sometimes when we attempt to interpret the scriptures, it’s best to work backward. By this I mean that we must first examine what the disciples *taught* about the “body of Christ” (i.e., that we believers are the spiritual body of Christ)—then see if this points back to what Jesus himself taught at the Last Supper or elsewhere—to show that they understood the meaning of his parables:

⁶⁷ According to the *UBS Greek-English Dictionary*, the Greek word translated into English as “figures of speech” in the verse above means “parable, figure of speech, proverb.”

^{KJV} Matthew 26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread,⁶⁸ and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.

In the Matthew scripture, Jesus first broke a single bread into pieces, which he gave to his disciples to eat; *then* he told them, “this is my body.” Notice that it was *after* Jesus broke the one bread into pieces that he said “**this** is my body.”

Mark brings out this progression quite clearly:

^{NAS} Mark 14:22 And while they were eating, He took *some*⁶⁹ bread, and after a blessing He broke *it*; and gave *it* to them, and said, “Take *it*; this is My body.”

So the progression is as follows:

1. Jesus took *a bread*, singular.
2. Then Jesus gave a blessing.
3. After this blessing, *he broke* the one bread into *pieces*.
4. He then gave the pieces of the one bread to the disciples.
5. He *then* said, “take, **this** is my body” as they partook of the bread.

Was Jesus really teaching a ritual of Communion in the way that the Roman Church believed and as the Protestants accidentally took along in a changed form?

Of course, his disciples knew that the pieces of bread were not really pieces of the Messiah’s human body; this is evident from what they would later teach about the “one bread” and “the body of Christ.”

No, *This* Is Not the Flesh of the Messiah

The details of Rome’s (and later Luther’s) ritual can be vexing, especially to those not brought up in this ritual, but to understand how we have arrived at where we are today, it is necessary to briefly go over certain aspects of this history.

In reference to Matthew 26:26 above, the Greek scholar and commentator R. C. H. Lenski (1864–1936) acknowledged that the Greek words for “this” and “bread” do *not* agree in gender, and therefore “this”—as in “this is my body”—*cannot refer* to the one bread that Jesus had previously held:

68 The Greek for bread is singular, “a bread.”

69 Notice that “*some*” is italicized, showing that it doesn’t appear in the Greek; in the Greek language, bread is singular—“a bread.”

we must note that **τοῦτο** is neuter, and hence cannot grammatically or in thought refer to **ἄρτος** which is masculine.⁷⁰

The Greek word **τοῦτο** above means “this” and **ἄρτος** means “bread.” All four scriptural accounts of “this” and “bread” at the Last Supper show the exact same truth (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and 1 Corinthians 11:23–24), for these words do not harmonize grammatically in the Greek. Therefore “this” cannot refer to the singular “bread” that Jesus held before breaking.

According to Lenski and more importantly the established rules of Greek grammar, the Greek word for “this” cannot refer to the one bread; otherwise both words would have the same gender.

Commenting on these Greek words in the Last Supper scripture in Luke 22:19, Lenski added:

The English “this” and “bread” hide this distinction in gender, yet no real student will ignore it⁷¹

Despite being an excellent Greek scholar, Lenski was too close to Luther’s teachings on the ritual of Communion. As such, he believed that the revelation concerning this distinction in gender was that the bread had actually changed to now contain Christ’s flesh, which in his thinking would explain why “this” does not align grammatically with “bread.” However, the Jewish disciples in the Messiah’s day would not have believed such a thing.

Lenski then went on to quote from Luther’s doctrine of *consubstantiation*—the belief that Christ’s flesh is somehow contained in the ritual Communion bread:

“This” means, “this bread which I have now consecrated by blessing and thanksgiving”; or more tersely, “This that I now give to you”
“It is no longer mere bread of the oven but bread of flesh, or bread of body, that is, bread which is sacramentally one with Christ’s body.”
Luther.⁷²

Luther’s idea that somehow the bread had turned into “bread of flesh” to be eaten by the faithful certainly does not have a first-century Jewish ring to it. And Lenski’s (and Rome’s) interpretation does not correctly explain why “this” and “bread” do not harmonize grammatically, because it does not provide a true reason.

70 Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel 15–28*, p. 1025.

71 Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel 12–24*, p. 1047.

72 Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Matthew’s Gospel 15–28*, pp. 1025–1026.

To put this in some historical context, the writings of the Jewish prophets do contain some things that would be bizarre if interpreted literally. This scripture from the Prophet Isaiah is one such example as we saw earlier:

^{KJV} Isaiah 60:16 Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, **and shalt suck the breast of kings:** and thou shalt know that I the LORD *am* thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob.

The Jewish scribes of course never taught that this should be literally fulfilled. And in the same vein, when we read the Messiah's words at the Last Supper, we need to consider the Jewish idioms and understandings of his first-century followers. Would it make sense that the Messiah would want them to remember him by eating a piece of bread that they were to believe was a part of his human body? Or would it make more sense that they knew it was another parable spoken in figurative language that pointed forward to the intended spiritual truth?

The Lord desired to open their minds to truly understand the scriptures:

^{NAS} Luke 24:45 Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.

So what did Jesus mean when, after breaking the one bread into pieces, he said, “*this* is my body”? What does “this” really refer to?

One reason “this” does not harmonize with “bread” is it was no longer a single bread when Jesus spoke those words, but rather various pieces of what had been the one bread.

As the disciples shared the pieces of what was once the one bread, this act spiritually pointed further to the truth of how the *spiritual* body of Christ would function in the New Covenant. Each believer is symbolically and spiritually a part of the one bread; each is a member of the one spiritual body. As we fellowship together, we spiritually receive Christ in and through one another, the symbolic pieces of the one bread.

Thus, “this” that we are doing—partaking of the pieces of the one bread—points to the New Covenant provision where “this” is the spiritual “body” and the spiritual fellowship among the believers that occurred for them after Pentecost, as we will see in later Courses.

What the Apostles Taught about Us Being the Spiritual Body

In looking at what the disciples taught, we see that the Messiah's use of the word “this” shows figurative truth along these lines:

This act of the believers gathering together and sharing sustenance (spiritually, the one bread, Christ the bread of life) is what my spiritual body is. It's where I will dwell, "for where two or three of you" (as pieces/members of the one bread) "are gathered together in my name" there I am in the midst (Matthew 18:20).

Or:

You, as the believers with God's spirit within, will be my spiritual body on earth. When I am resurrected, and you are filled with God's spirit, I will be with you—even in you—spiritually; you will be members of my spiritual body and I will dwell spiritually in my body. That is what "this" points to.

Clearly, this is what Paul understood and taught:

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 12:27 Now **you** are Christ's body, and individually members of it.

So, as individual members gather and partake of the one bread—Christ the bread of life—these believers function figuratively as members (or "pieces") of Christ's spiritual body.

Again, the key here is that it's *not* the one bread that Jesus previously held and now broke into pieces that is "my body." Rather, it's what the pieces of the bread point to and what we are doing—coming together and sharing spiritual sustenance. This sustenance from God is made possible by the shed blood of Jesus, which cleansed all believers and gave us the legal right to enter God's presence. This shed blood was represented at the Last Supper by the fruit of the vine and provided the spiritual life in the New Covenant.⁷³

Thus, what Jesus showed in this Last Supper parable points to how his disciples, acting as spiritual members of his body, would operate in the New Covenant and of course, how believers today are to function as members.



On the very evening of his figurative instruction at the Last Supper, Jesus said:

^{NAS} John 16:12 "I have many more things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now.

It must have been a source of some grief to Jesus—the promised Messiah sent from God—that his disciples were not yet in a ready state to receive all that he had for them.

73 See Course 11 ("Jacob, Moses, and the Fruit of the Vine") for more on this.

It is sad when people cling so steadfastly to their traditions that they shut out even the Messiah when he desires to bring them new truth.

However, when they were later filled with God's spirit at Pentecost, they would come to understand these spiritual concepts and the parables that Jesus had taught them:

^{NAS} John 16:13 “But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, **He will guide you into all the truth**; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come.

^{NAS} John 14:26 “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, **and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.**

Paul was an especially zealous apostle and received abundant revelations from the Lord (2 Corinthians 11:5; 12:7; Galatians 2:1, 6, 9, 11), which included the *one bread* that Jesus held and broke at the Last Supper.

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;⁷⁴

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 10:17 **Since** there is one bread, **we** who are many **are one body**; for we all partake of the one bread.

Here, Paul reminds the Corinthians that “since” Jesus held one bread and broke it into pieces at the Last Supper, *we*—the pieces of the one bread, the spiritual members of his body—are spiritually all one body, the body of Christ.

The Messiah's words showing that he was the bread of life (and that believers were pieces/members of the one bread) may seem strange in our modern idiom. However, in Christ's day those who were spiritually minded would have drawn a connection to the twelve temple breads (later called Showbread in English). In the covenant with Moses, the highest order of priests received sustenance every Sabbath from these twelve breads, which represented the twelve tribes. Under the New Covenant, Jesus has made us priests (Revelation 1:6), and we feed spiritually on the one bread that is now many members by sharing God's love and sustenance through spiritual fellowship and in the sharing of His word.

74 Again, the Greek version is singular, meaning “a bread.”

1 Corinthians 10:17b For we all partake of the one bread

They also would have recalled the manna that fell under Moses, called the “bread of heaven.” When Jesus said that he was the *true* bread (John 6:32), it showed that these various breads throughout Israel’s history pointed to his teaching and spiritual provision.⁷⁵

Many more scriptures that come directly from what Paul understood from the Last Supper parables contain the same truths presented in various ways. Here are just a few examples:

^{NAB} Romans 12:5 so **we**, though many, **are one body** in Christ and individually parts of one another.

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 12:14 For **the body** is not one member, but many.

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 12:20 But **now** there are **many members**, but **one body**.

When Jesus gives his disciples pieces of the one bread to *feed on*, we see Paul telling the Corinthians that they can all partake of and feed on the one bread in the spiritual sense, as members of the *spiritual* body of Christ:

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 10:17 Since there is one bread, **we** who are many **are one body**; for **we all partake** of the one bread.

Again, Paul is not speaking to them about a Roman ritual of eating one bread at “Communion,” but rather he is teaching the spiritual truths he received from the Lord concerning the Last Supper.

The Spiritual Body, the Spirit of God Dwells within Us

According to John 6:33 and 6:35, Christ is the bread of life. At the Last Supper, he broke one physical bread into pieces, during which he spoke in parables of those pieces representing his (spiritual) body and that we are many members of that body, because he *spiritually* dwells within us.

^{KJV} John 14:17 *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for **he dwelleth with you**, and **shall be in you**.

75 The connection of the Messiah’s teaching to the Showbread will be covered more in Courses 3 through 9.

In this scripture above and the verse below, Jesus spoke spiritual truth about things that would take place after they were filled with God's spirit at Pentecost:

^{NAS} Matthew 18:20 “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst.”

We the believers are now the body of Christ, and the spirit of God dwells within, as it has since the day of Pentecost. Jesus thus was pointing to the soon-coming time after Pentecost when the assembly would function as his anointed spiritual body.

Christ would spiritually dwell in this spiritual body, nourishing the believers in and through one another just as happens in a *natural body*, where joints and ligaments supply nutrients:

^{NAS} Colossians 2:19 and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together **by the joints and ligaments**, grows with a growth which is from God.

^{NAS} Ephesians 4:16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which **every joint supplies**, according to the proper working **of each individual part**, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

In this clear picture from these two verses, we, as members of the spiritual body, are the joints and ligaments supplying spiritual sustenance. This happens as we fellowship with one another, with the spiritual blood flow bringing sustenance and cleansing to each member in the body:

^{NAS} 1 John 1:7 but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

This occurs as we pray for one another, and as we allow God's *agape*⁷⁶ love to flow to and through one another:

^{NAS} 1 Peter 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently **love one another** from the heart,

76 Note that *agape* is the Greek word for “love,” often used for God's love.

^{NAS} 1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us **love one another**, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

^{NAS} 1 John 4:12 No one has beheld God at any time; if we **love one another**, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

Thus the giving and receiving in the spiritual body is reciprocal (“one another”). It is to flow both to and out from each member in the body because we are members “one of another”:

^{NAS} Romans 12:4–5 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually **members one of another**.

^{NAS} Ephesians 4:25 Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth, each one *of you*, with his neighbor, **for we are members of one another**.

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 12:25 that there should be no division **in the body**, but *that* the **members should have the same care** for one another.

These multiple pictures of us being members of the body all originate from the Last Supper parable, where we are the pieces of the one bread that bring spiritual nourishment (Christ dwelling within) for others to partake of. The sharing of the pieces of the one bread at the Last Supper pointed forward to this spiritual sharing and partaking after Pentecost.

Christ provides the spiritual bread and drink, and often this comes through the other members of his spiritual body. The drink that he gives is the Holy Spirit of God:

^{NAS} John 6:35 Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall not hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and **we were all made to drink of one Spirit**.

^{NAS} John 7:37–39 Now on the last day, the great *day* of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, “If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. **He who believes in Me**, as the Scripture said, ‘From **his** innermost being shall flow **rivers of living water.**’” **But this He spoke of the Spirit**, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

Thus the “living water” is to flow through each individual believer, providing spiritual drink to and through each member in the body.

“This Do,” but Do What—a New Ritual?

The Messiah wanted the disciples to do something in his remembrance:

^{YLT} Luke 22:19 And having taken bread, having given thanks, he brake and gave to them, saying, “**This** is my body, that for you is being given, **this do** ye—to remembrance of me.’”

“This do” points back to “this” that he said is his body, after he broke the bread and gave them the pieces to share among themselves. In other words, as we gather together in fellowship, as members of his spiritual body, we are to remember him and the sacrifice that he paid, which provides spiritual life for us in God’s presence. “This” that he wants us to do in his remembrance is to break bread and share it, just as he had done with his disciples, but he means for the disciples to go forth breaking and sharing the bread of life, the spiritual bread.

When Paul and the other apostles speak of breaking and sharing the *one* bread, they are not saying that the turnout was so low at the ritual that they used only one bread. Instead, they understand Christ’s parable; they are gathering and partaking of the *spiritual* bread as members of the one spiritual body:

^{NAS} 1 Corinthians 10:17 Since there is **one bread**, we who are many are **one body**; for we all partake of the one bread.

Taking this further still, Paul was also not saying that since they used only one bread at the ritual, it showed they were *one body*, whereas if more people had been present—and used five breads—they would have been *five bodies*. Rather, he is referring to the one bread that Jesus held and broke into pieces at the Last Supper; those pieces showed that *we who are many* are one body.

The book of Acts also speaks of believers breaking and sharing *the* bread, singular:

^{NAS} Acts 2:42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the **breaking of bread** and to prayer.

The original Greek for the above verse includes the article “the” before bread (which is missing in most English translations, including the one above). The Greek word for “bread” is singular here (“breaking *the* bread”). The believers were not breaking the same “one” communion bread over and over in a ritual. Instead, this shows that they understood the Last Supper parables and were sharing *the one bread*, the spiritual bread of life, as they gathered together in fellowship with one another.⁷⁷

Remember that when Jesus broke five breads and miraculously multiplied them for the multitudes, the word for “breads” in the Greek scriptures was plural. Later, when Jesus broke and multiplied the seven breads out to the multitudes, again the Greek word was plural in each occurrence. Yet, when Paul speaks about the one bread and when the apostles speak of “breaking *the* bread” (singular) in spiritual fellowship (such as in Acts), they are once again showing they understood the parables at the Last Supper.

We Remember the Messiah and the Price That He Paid

As we come together in fellowship and worship as symbolic pieces of the one bread, we remember all that the Messiah has done for us in his paying the price for our atonement and salvation. At the moment Jesus said to do this in “remembrance of me,” he was very possibly seeing the full weight of his decision to pay the penalty for all of humanity’s sins.

Facing this penalty, he became more distressed:

^{NAS} John 12:27 “Now My soul has become troubled; and what shall I say, ‘Father, save Me from this hour’? But for this purpose I came to this hour.

The wages of sin were death (Ezekiel 18:4; Romans 6:23), and this did not mean temporary death but eternal death, as in separation from God. Jesus was not so worried about physical death, as many others had faced this, but his anguish of soul was in facing eternal separation from God. The original Greek text means to deliver him

⁷⁷ Courses 3 and 4 delve much deeper into the longstanding tradition of breaking bread in the Jewish idiom, as well as these scriptures in Acts.

“out of” death; he was not “heard” by God and saved from physical death but rather was saved out of *eternal* death/separation:

^{NLT} Hebrews 5:7 While Jesus was here on earth, he offered prayers and pleadings, with **a loud cry and tears**, to the one who could deliver him **out of** death. And God **heard** his prayers because of his reverence for God.

This is why, when the full realization and weight of the decision he was making became clear, Jesus called out with “a loud cry and tears” to be saved out of death. The Greek is more along the lines of “a powerful outcry and tears.” When Jesus began to experience that he, who had known no sin, was now to *become* sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), with all penalty for sin being laid upon him, he realized that God was withdrawing completely:

^{NIV} Matthew 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, “Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”—which means, “My God, my God, **why have you forsaken me?**”

Before Jesus became sin’s ultimate sacrifice, God—who is holy—had to depart from him, resulting in the Messiah’s greatest pain, feeling totally forsaken by God. In God’s understanding of justice, however, since Jesus was willing to pay the eternal price for our sins, this sacrifice of his life alone was sufficient to pay the penalty. Thus Jesus would be lifted up *out of* death and spiritual separation from God. One just and sinless man’s willingness was sufficient to make restitution for a whole world that had fallen short.

With this in mind came the Messiah’s final words before his death:

Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit. (Luke 23:46)

Jesus asked that as often as we “this do” (i.e., fulfill the parables that he gave at the Last Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:24–26), we do this in remembrance of him. Whenever we partake of the cup of New Covenant blessings (God’s love, His spirit, etc.) and the bread of life (the word of God and fellowshiping in the spiritual body of Christ), he asks that we remember him. We remember Jesus as we worship, as we partake in the *agape* love from God for one another, and as we partake in God’s word. We also remember Jesus because all of this is provided by his sacrifice; thus we keep him in the forefront of all that we do.

This is why God spoke through Jeremiah, declaring that when the New Covenant comes, “I will no longer remember their sins” (Jeremiah 31:31–34), because

now the price has been fully paid and no more condemnation remains for the believer. When one has received God's spiritual love from another member in the body, all condemnation is shown to be a lie, and one comes to realize how great indeed His love is for each soul. A move of God's pure love is coming to the true believers, one so powerful that it will be hard to imagine. As we partake and experience that love, we must remember the Messiah and that it was because of him that we can enter God's presence and freely partake of His love.

Challenging times loom ahead, but we are also entering a period that will be "joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Peter 1:18) for those who want God. During this time, the spiritual bride will make herself ready (Revelation 19:7). The bride will not be a frigid, legalistic accuser of the brethren but instead will be able to flow—giving and receiving—in God's pure love, thus fulfilling the command of Jesus for those in the New Covenant:

^{NAS} John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you **love one another**, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

This is the same love that God showed to Israel, of which He wants us all to partake:

^{NAS} Jeremiah 31:3 The LORD appeared to him from afar, *saying*, "**I have loved you with an everlasting love**; Therefore I have drawn you with loving kindness."

God's plan meant that Jesus would not have to lose out eternally for being willing to pay the price of giving his life and soul (Isaiah 53:10). Because this sinless, righteous man was willing to sacrifice the ultimate for us and because it was also his Father's will that he go to the cross, God raised him from out of death. What possible reason would the Israelite prophet Isaiah write that it would please the Father to bruise⁷⁸ the promised Messiah? It was because God knew all the good that would come from His plan being fulfilled:

^{KJV} Isaiah 53:10 Yet it **pleased the LORD** to bruise him; he hath put *him* to grief: when thou shalt make **his soul an offering for sin**, he shall see *his* seed, he shall prolong *his* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

78 *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* defines this Hebrew word as "to crush, be crushed... be broken."

So as we fellowship with one another and figuratively represent the pieces of the one bread that was broken, we spiritually partake of the living bread as the spiritual body of Christ, with Jesus/Yeshua in our midst.

Isaiah thus wrote of the Messiah's death, but he also showed forth the Resurrection:

^{DBY} Isaiah 53:12 Therefore will I assign him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death, and was reckoned with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

God does not “assign a portion” to the dead but to the living, thus showing the Messiah would be resurrected after making his soul an offering for sin. Because Jesus willingly “poured out his soul unto death” and “bore the sin of many,” God raised him out of death.

Some may ask why the Messiah, on his last day alive, is suddenly concerned with being raised from out of death—when he had clearly prophesied he would be raised from the dead after three days. I believe the answer is found in what John the Baptist also experienced. John, who clearly knew and taught that Christ was the promised Messiah, said that the Messiah's ministry would increase and that his own must decrease. With John's ministry complete, God's spirit began to lift off of him and with that so did some spiritual understanding, such that when John was in prison and close to death he even sent two of his disciples to ask Jesus if he was really the Messiah (Matthew 11:2, 3).

Similarly, as the Messiah felt God's spirit withdrawing from him, he—who had known no sin and who had experienced unbroken fellowship with God all his life—now felt the eternal reality of becoming the sin sacrifice. Sensing God's presence departing, he cried out to be saved from eternal separation. Thus, things that he understood when God's spirit was with him became clouded when God's presence began to lift.

The Body of Christ as Anointed Tabernacle

Since Paul states that Christ is the head of the body (Colossians 2:19, Ephesians 4:15), shepherds and teachers need to be sure they are allowing him to truly be the head (i.e., leader and decision maker) in bringing forth new truths and understandings to the body.

We must allow God's word to come first and not permit human egos to rise up above the new truths that He will bring to spiritually grow and perfect the believers. Satan works to divide and conquer, but God's will is for the house of the Lord to be

a house of prayer for all nations (i.e., all races), and this is what the spiritual body of Christ provides. The Messiah was prophesied to be a light to the nations, and all believers must be prepared to carry out his will since he is the head of the body.

There is one more aspect of the “body” that also applies to the body of Christ. In Greek, the word “Christ” means “anointed” (as does the Hebrew word “Messiah”). Jesus spoke of his body as the temple—meaning the dwelling place of God (John 2:18–22)—for he knew that the God of Abraham was dwelling within him. The believers (the spiritual body of Christ) are later pictured in heaven, where they are called the “tabernacle of God” (Revelation 13:6). And elsewhere the believers are called the “temple of God,” for we are now the anointed tabernacle/temple where God’s presence dwells (Revelation 21:3; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19).

This “tabernacle/temple of God,” consisting of the believers, refers to the true spiritual temple that the Messiah was to build:

^{NAS} Zechariah 6:11–12 “And take silver and gold, make an *ornate* crown, and set *it* on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Then say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts, “Behold, **a man whose name is Branch**, for He will branch out from where He is; and **He will build the temple of the LORD**.”

Joshua, the High Priest mentioned in this scripture, had the same Hebrew name (Yeshua) as Jesus, and both he and Jesus share the same Greek name as well. As we saw in “Setting the Table 2,” it was only in the English translations where they were deliberately given two different names: Joshua and Jesus. So this points to the true Branch (“Yeshua” the Messiah), who would “branch out” through his disciples (the “branches,” John 15:5) and build the true spiritual temple. Thus the Messiah would be the greater Joshua, as high priest and king, pictured in the scripture above with a crown; he would build God’s spiritual house. “Joshua” would later be translated into English as “Jesus.”

God had told the Israelites that He would dwell among them and meet them in the tabernacle, which was often called the “**tent of meeting**” or as some translations say “tabernacle of the congregation”:

^{NAS} Exodus 29:4 “Then you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the doorway of the **tent of meeting**, and wash them with water.

^{NAS} Exodus 29:42 “It shall be a continual burnt offering throughout your generations at the doorway of the tent of meeting before the LORD, **where I will meet with you, to speak to you there.**

This structure where God would meet the people and dwell among them (the tabernacle, then the temple) was also called the “house of God” and sometimes just the “house.” The Jews also understood this analogy of the outward man (the body) being a tent (tabernacle or house) for the inner man (soul and spirit) to dwell within. Paul used this idiom:

^{NAS} 2 Corinthians 4:16 Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our **outer man** is decaying, yet our **inner man** is being renewed day by day.

^{NAS} 2 Corinthians 5:1 For we know that if the **earthly tent** which is our **house** is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

^{NAS} 2 Corinthians 5:8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from **the body** and to be at home with the Lord.

Peter, speaking of his soon-coming death, refers to putting off his “tabernacle”:

^{DBY} 2 Peter 1:13–14 But I account it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting *you* in remembrance, knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle is speedily *to take place*, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has manifested to me;

Talmudic writers also understood this picture of the human body functioning as the tent or tabernacle in which we dwell. They quoted the scripture in Amos 9:11 that speaks of the raising up of the fallen tabernacle (tent) of David, and they applied this figuratively to the Messiah:

R. Na’hman said to R. Itz’hak: Have you heard when the fallen son will come? And to the question, Who is it? He answered: The Messiah. And the Messiah you call “**The fallen son**”? And he said: Yea, for it reads [Amos, ix. 11]: “On that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David, which is fallen.”⁷⁹

This Talmudic reference states that the Messiah is the promised son of David. By extension, this raised-up tabernacle could also refer to the believers being raised up as the spiritual body of Christ (i.e., anointed) where God’s spirit will dwell within.

79 Babylonian Talmud, Book 8, Tract Sanhedrin, ch. 11, p. 300, <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/t08/t0814.htm>.

When New Testament writers speak of Jesus's dead body, they refer to the "body of Jesus" (Matthew 27:58; Mark 15:43; Luke 23:52; 24:3; John 19:38, 40; 20:12). Yet when they speak of the "body of Christ," they almost always refer to the body of anointed believers (i.e., his spiritual body) as the tent/temple/tabernacle/house of God.

The point is that when the scriptures speak of the body of Christ—with Christ meaning "anointed" in Greek—it can also refer to a tent or tabernacle of the "anointed" congregation where God will meet us and dwell among us. We should keep these Jewish idioms in mind when we examine the scriptures, which also *picture the believers as an extension of the one bread of life, as pieces of the one bread, and as members of the Messiah's anointed spiritual body.*