

PART 2

THE RITUAL— WHY DIDN'T THE JEWISH DISCIPLES TEACH IT?

*All truth passes through three stages: First, it is ridiculed;
Second, it is violently opposed. Third, it is accepted as self-evident.*

—Arthur Schopenhauer (1788–1860)

If the Messiah had wanted his followers to keep an ongoing ritual of Communion in which we eat bread and drink wine in his remembrance, surely he would have provided clear instruction for this. Also, surely his Jewish disciples would have gone out teaching this ritual. In this chapter, we will carefully consider any possible scriptural evidence of this supposedly important ritual. But first, a few historical dots need to be connected for us to see where our present-day Protestant ritual originated.

Setting the Stage

In “Setting the Table 1,” we saw that the early Messianic Jews firmly adhered to the understanding that Jesus was crucified on the 14th day of Nisan as the true Passover, and therefore he could not have eaten the Passover at the Last Supper on the previous night. Their adherence to this day caused them to be mocked as Quartodecimans (Fourteenters) by the Romans and subjected to persecution.

Course 1 presented proof from the scriptures that Jesus, in his parable at the Last Supper, held and broke one leavened bread—which makes sense since this meal was the night *before* the Passover, when leavened bread was perfectly legal. Of course this raises the question that if Jesus was teaching a ritual with *leavened* bread, then why do Roman Catholics and Protestants use *unleavened* bread in their rituals? Course 2 showed that the followers of the Messiah understood that his instruction was given in figurative language (in parables), meaning that we, the believers, represent the pieces of the one bread and are the members of one body—the spiritual body of Christ.

We saw no fewer than 50 reasons why the Last Supper was not the Passover (in the chapter of the same name). The only way to fit the New Testament events into the Passover template is with the Last Supper *not* being the Passover but instead with Jesus being slain on the 14th day as the fulfillment of the Passover (covered in the

“Template Challenge”). These proofs support the scriptures that present Jesus and the disciples eating regular bread at the Last Supper, and this opens the door to question the unleavened bread ritual that has been handed down through the centuries. Now we will examine the scriptures to see if the ritual of Communion was indeed what the Messiah taught and wanted.

The “Great Commission”

In what commentators call the “Great Commission,” Jesus specifically told his disciples to go out to “all the nations” and to teach them “**all that I commanded you**”:

^{NAS} Matthew 28:19a “**Go therefore** and make disciples of **all the nations**

^{NAS} Matthew 28:20 **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you**; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

With such clear instruction from the Messiah, surely these Jewish apostles and various scripture writers would not have neglected to teach this supposedly important ritual of Communion to the nations (if in fact it was a holy ritual commanded by the Lord). Although Jesus commissioned his disciples to teach “all that I commanded,” this still would have implied that they teach what he *meant* and not just what he said, for on the night of the Last Supper, he also told them the following:

^{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.

Right after the Last Supper, when Jesus finally spoke plainly to his disciples, they specifically commented on this, exclaiming to him:

^{NIV} John 16:29b “**Now** you are speaking clearly and **without figures of speech**.

At the Last Supper the Messiah had given many statements in parables, for he knew his disciples could not bear to hear the new truths at that time while they were still locked into their Old Covenant traditions and methodology. But as he said after supper, he knew that when they received the outpouring of God’s spirit at Pentecost, the meaning of his statements would be revealed to them:

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

^{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.

The spirit of God would take the Messiah’s statements at the Last Supper and reveal the fullness of what he meant in his parables:

^{NIV} John 16:14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and **making it known to you.**

So we have to determine—from what the apostles would later go out and teach—which of the things Jesus taught at the Last Supper were to be understood *figuratively* and which (if any) were to be taken literally.

When we see what the Jewish apostles went out and taught—that now *we* are the body of Christ (see Course 2)—it quickly becomes evident that they understood the Last Supper teachings concerning the bread to contain *figurative language*. Roman theologians, however, would later interpret the teachings literally, resulting in the creation of their ritual of Communion.

As we’ve seen, the Messiah’s teachings were filled with figurative language and parables. For instance, right after the Last Supper, Jesus said he was the grapevine and that his disciples were the branches that needed to stay connected to the vine or they would dry up. Nowhere does Jesus say, “This is a parable,” and nowhere does the Bible qualify that Jesus did not actually become a grapevine (John 15:1–14). In the same way, Jesus mentioning the bread and fruit of the grapevine at the Last Supper does not mean that these words were to be taken literally to become a new ritual. We do not conduct a ritual of holding hands and pretending to be branches connected to a grapevine based on what Jesus said, yet we have been told to eat a wafer of bread and drink a little cup of grape juice in the belief that this is what the Jewish Messiah wanted for “communion” with God.

Since we are taught in the scriptures to prove all things (Titus 5:21), we will now go through the books of the New Testament to see if the scriptures prove a ritual of Communion, or if this ritual was in fact passed down from Rome as a tradition of man.

The Apostles: Did They Teach or Even Mention a Ritual?

Did John the Beloved Teach This Doctrine?

We will begin with John, who (along with Peter and James) was one of the inner three closest to Jesus. John was “he whom Jesus loved” and the one who leaned on his chest at the Last Supper (John 21:20). Despite being so close to Jesus, John completely omits this Last Supper account of the supposed ritual where the Lord shares the bread and the fruit of the vine. Nothing whatsoever is mentioned in the Gospel of John that would cause anyone to think they should keep this ritual.

Although Rome misunderstood the Messiah’s words concerning his flesh and blood in John 6:53–63 to apply literally in their ritual, these scriptures were meant as spiritual truth (as we saw in Course 11). John mentions nothing about a ritual with bread and fruit of the vine, and nothing at all about a recurring Blessed Eucharist or Communion service. Nor is this supposedly important ritual mentioned in 1, 2, or 3 John. When John writes to the seven churches in Asia in the book of Revelation, he has a great opportunity to teach these churches all about this ritual and how to perform it correctly, yet he writes nothing of it. John never even touches on this continual ritual that the Messiah supposedly commanded and thus fails terribly (if we are to believe that the Messiah commanded this ritual).

Surely Peter the Apostle Taught This Ritual?

If this ritual were something the Lord really wanted, surely it would have been taught by Peter (another of the Lord’s inner circle). The Jewish Peter wrote two letters (1 and 2 Peter) to the scattered Jews, providing another excellent opportunity to teach this important new ritual to those Jews. He begins his first letter as follows:

^{NAS} 1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, **scattered**³⁶⁶ throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen

So this is Peter’s big chance to obey the Lord, teach the nations all that Jesus commanded, and use his letters to teach this supposed ritual to the scattered Jews in the Diaspora. However, Peter completely drops the ball, for if we search 1 and 2 Peter for any teaching on this supposed ritual, we see that he never mentions bread, wine, grape juice, or the importance of keeping any ritual of Communion. Nor does Peter mention the Blessed Eucharist. So are we to believe that all these people whom Peter addressed missed out on this important ritual that Jesus commanded? Or is the truth rather that Peter knew exactly what Jesus meant at the Last Supper, and that he was not teaching a new ritual?

366 The Greek word translated as “scattered” is *diaspora*.

Twice Peter speaks of Jesus's blood, yet never in connection with the ritual. In fact, in one of the references Peter tells the Jews of the Diaspora to be "sprinkled" with Jesus's blood, something Jesus never said to do in any scripture. Yet Peter says to do this to *obey* the Lord:

^{NAS} 1 Peter 1:2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may **obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood**: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.

Was this scripture really something Jesus commanded? Or was this instead what Jesus *meant* at the Last Supper, aligning with the existing Jewish natural-to-spiritual idiom in which the blood sprinkled on the people under Moses pointed spiritually to applying Christ's blood for sanctification under the New Covenant?

The Jews of the Diaspora would have understood that Peter was not speaking of a new ritual of literally sprinkling blood, but rather making a connection to the way in which Moses sealed the first covenant. So Peter does not even qualify his statement to them. The concept of Moses inaugurating the first covenant by the sprinkling of blood was very familiar to these first-century Jews:

^{NAS} Exodus 24:8 So Moses took the blood and **sprinkled it on the people**, and said, "**Behold the blood of the covenant**, which the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words."

If the Roman Catholics are right and we are to keep this ritual, then the only time we would ever have Jesus's blood available to sprinkle on one another would be during the ritual of Communion. So why do we not obey Jesus and do this? No church—Catholic or Protestant—follows this command literally by having the members sprinkle one another with wine at their ritual of Communion, because they understand that Peter is speaking spiritually in this scripture. Yet when they then turn around and consider the words Jesus spoke at the Last Supper, they accidentally take his words literally, as if this were a new ritual that the Jewish Messiah wanted. This begs the question—why would Peter completely omit this supposed commandment from the Lord to carry out a ritual when he writes to these scattered Jews?

The answer, of course, is that Peter never thought the Lord wanted such a ritual, so he never even mentioned it.

Let's Check James—Surely He Will Follow the Lord's Commandment, as He Also Writes to the Scattered Jews

^{NAS} James 1:1 James, a bond-servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes who are dispersed³⁶⁷ abroad, greetings.

Okay, this is a good start. James is writing to those in the nations as Christ asked; surely he will tell them of this most holy and important ritual. However, we quickly see that James “fails” to teach this ritual, just as Peter and John “failed” to do. James does not once mention bread, wine, grape juice, the Blessed Eucharist, or anything about a ritual of Communion.

So we know that the Lord's inner circle (Peter, James, and John) wrote absolutely nothing in the scriptures about going out and keeping the Last Supper teachings as a ritual of Communion. You would certainly think that those three men who were closest to Jesus would teach this important ritual if the Jewish Messiah had commanded it. Why didn't they obey the Lord, who, according to the scripture, told them to teach the nations “to observe **all** that I commanded you” (Matthew 28:19)?

What about the Other Gospels?

We have already seen that the Gospel of John mentions nothing about the ritual, but some may say, “What about the three other Gospels, don't they teach it?” It is true that the synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—explain what Jesus said and what the disciples ate at the Last Supper. But throughout his life Jesus spoke of many things in the form of parables that were meant to be understood *spiritually* instead of literally. Let's look at the Gospel accounts of Matthew and Mark (we'll get to Luke later) to see if either of them says that we are to keep this Last Supper teaching as a new and perpetual ritual.

Surely Matthew Obeyed the Lord's Injunction and Taught This Ritual?

No. Matthew also says nothing about the Lord wanting everyone to eat bread and drink grape juice in a continuing ritual. He does recount the events of the Last Supper—that Jesus broke a bread, poured a cup of grape juice (fruit of the vine), and gave these to the twelve to eat and drink—but not once does he say that Jesus wanted everyone in the future to act this out in a ritual of Communion. He never even ekes out a “do this.” If the Lord wanted this ritual to be taught and performed by all believers throughout history, Matthew completely failed to communicate this. If Matthew (and the other Gospel writers) wanted to inform us that this was a ritual

367 The Greek word translated into English as “dispersed” is again *diaspora*, so the verse reads “to the twelve tribes, those in the Diaspora . . .”

to be followed from then on, he simply had to say something like, “This holy ritual of the Blessed Eucharist shall be performed by all believers forever, using unleavened bread, amen.” But he says *nothing* about continually performing any such ritual.

How about Mark—Will He Teach It?

Surely Mark will come through for us? No. Upon reading Mark’s account, we see the exact same failure to teach the ritual as in John, Peter, James, and Matthew. In Mark, we see the same basic account of the Last Supper as in Matthew, whereby the Lord gives the twelve apostles the pieces of the bread and the grape juice (fruit of the vine) *without a word* about a ritual of Communion. Mark’s account simply says that the disciples ate bread and drank fruit of the vine, *but nothing more about all the nations keeping it in the future as some kind of ritual with unleavened bread.*

Why do these Gospel writers fail so miserably to teach this as a recurring ritual? The truth is that they are not failing, because they never thought that the Lord wanted such a ritual, because the Lord himself never desired it. Some have tried to see this ritual in the book of Acts, when the apostles were supposedly having a ritual of Communion—either in the Temple or going from house to house in Jewish Jerusalem. However, we saw the impossibility of that in Courses 3 and 4, where we viewed “breaking bread” through the spiritual idioms of the first-century Messianic believers.

What about Paul’s Letter to the Romans and Others?

The Roman Catholics are very big on this ritual, so surely the former Pharisee Paul taught them all about it in his letter to the Romans?

No. Even Paul did *not mention a Last Supper ritual* in his letter to the Romans, nor grape juice, fruit of the vine, the ritual of Communion, or the Blessed Eucharist. He didn’t even mention bread to them. So the Roman Catholics must have received their teaching from some other source.

Paul also wrote to the Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians, and again failed to teach the ritual to the believers in these cities by saying nothing about the Last Supper or keeping this supposed ritual with grape juice and unleavened bread. If Paul wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, as most believe, once again he failed by saying *nothing* about a ritual or how to conduct it.

Paul also wrote two letters to the Thessalonians, and nowhere did he mention that they should be eating unleavened bread or drinking the fruit of the vine in a ritual.

What about Paul’s letters to his student, Timothy? Paul warned Timothy to not teach any of the strange doctrines that were floating around at the time:

^{NAS} 1 Timothy 1:3 As I urged you upon my departure for Macedonia, remain on at Ephesus, in order that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines,

Was Paul warning against those who might question the ritual? How could he be, since no one taught the ritual. Sadly for those wanting it, we do not see any instruction from Paul to Timothy—or to any of these several cities that Paul wrote to—on how to celebrate this supposedly important ritual. There is a complete lack of direction as to whether regular bread is fine or if *matzah* (unleavened) should be used, or how often the ritual should be kept. In short, nothing is mentioned about eating bread or drinking fruit of the vine in a ritual. Nor is there anything in Paul's letter to Titus about performing this Blessed Eucharist or how to do it properly, and nothing about bread or wine. Nor is there any mention about a ritual of Communion in Paul's letter to Philemon.

Have We Missed Anyone?

What about Jude—did he mention the ritual? No, in fact, Jude also completely failed to teach it.

Of the 27 books of the New Testament, we have now covered 24, and not a word or hint suggests that we are to keep this ritual of Communion, or how often, or with what type of bread (regular leavened bread such as at the Last Supper, or unleavened bread as most churches teach today). If Jesus had truly wanted this ritual to be taught to all nations and he had commanded his disciples to teach it, then the Jewish apostles have turned the Great Commission into the “Great Omission.”

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul mentioned nothing about a ritual of Communion or about eating bread and drinking from a cup in a Blessed Eucharist.

So now only two books are left in the whole Bible that could possibly tell us to keep this important ritual: Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and the Gospel of Luke. We have already seen in Courses 5, 6, and 11 what Paul meant in 1 Corinthians chapters 10–12, so here it suffices to remind the believer that Paul was speaking *spiritually* throughout those chapters. He said that *we* are the body of Christ (not that the ritual bread was his body), and individually we are members of Christ's spiritual body (Course 2). Paul said we all partake from the one bread, and that the one bread (which Jesus broke and shared) showed that *we* are all members in one body (1 Corinthians 10:17). He said nothing to the effect that the bread in a ritual was Christ's human body. All of this shows that Paul understood Jesus was speaking in parables at the Last Supper.

“Do This,” but Do What?

Those who are hoping for proof of this ongoing ritual are down to one book in the New Testament: the Gospel of Luke. Happily for those who want this ritual, we have a tiny shred of evidence. The totality of proof for a continued ritual of Communion from the Gospels is found in these two words—“do this”—from Luke 22:19 (in boldface below). However, even here we are given no instruction, such as to “do this

in a new ritual with unleavened bread”; the Lord just tells his disciples to drink from the cup and to eat from the bread:

^{NAS} Luke 22:17 And when He had taken a cup *and* given thanks, He said, “Take this and share it among yourselves;

^{NAS} Luke 22:18 for I say to you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine from now on until the kingdom of God comes.”

^{NAS} Luke 22:19 And when He had taken *some* bread *and* given thanks, He broke *it*, and gave *it* to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; **do this** in remembrance of Me.”

^{NAS} Luke 22:20 And in the same way *He took* the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.

The question is whether Jesus meant “do this” literally, or was he yet again speaking spiritual truth in figurative language?

Remember from Course 2 that the Greek word for “This” (as in “This is my body” from verse 19 above) does not align grammatically with the Greek word for “bread,” which shows that Jesus was speaking spiritually. He was *not* saying “this bread is my body, and I want you to eat my body (only symbolically for Protestants) in a new ritual.”

Remember, too, the multitude of examples where Jesus or the apostles said something in the natural that was to be taken spiritually, as seen in “Setting the Table 4.” There we listed many examples, such as Paul telling the Hebrews that “we have an altar” that was understood spiritually by the churches; we do not literally go out looking for the lost altar of Paul to offer sacrifices on. The same is true when Jesus spoke of himself as the bread of life; he was speaking of something in the natural but intended spiritual truth with his use of figurative language.

So now we would have to consider whether “this do” or “do this” (depending on the translation in Luke 22:19) is meant to be taken spiritually or naturally. In 26 of the 27 New Testament books, no evidence exists whatsoever that the followers of the Messiah taught a ritual of Communion. So against this overwhelming lack of evidence, are we now to interpret these two words in Luke as a natural ritual that is important to keep? Or instead should we see that Jesus wanted the disciples to “do this” *spiritually*,³⁶⁸ fulfilling the meaning behind the figurative language he used in his Last Supper parables?

368 As covered in Course 2 in the section “‘This Do,’ But Do What—a New Ritual?”

^{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.

It's important that we see Jesus not as a Roman Catholic priest teaching a new ritual at the Last Supper, but as the first-century Jewish Messiah teaching spiritual truth using figurative language. If Jesus intended to teach a new Roman or Protestant ritual, then Luke (like the other three Gospel writers) failed to get the full information across to us. The two Greek words translated as “do this” say nothing about the disciples keeping this as a new ritual, nor do they say anything about all people on earth throughout all time keeping this as a *ritual*. Neither do they give any specifics, such as how often the ritual should be kept or with what kind of bread.

It is true that “do this” is also found in 1 Corinthians 11:23–25, but the same rules of Bible interpretation apply there as well. As mentioned earlier, Course 5 made it clear that Paul was teaching spiritual truth based on what he received from the Lord, and was not teaching a ritual. Jesus was also not teaching a ritual. He was teaching *spiritual* truth in parables. Jesus wanted the disciples to understand—and then go out teaching—that the bread he broke into pieces showed that we are members of his spiritual body. He wanted them to understand that we are to partake of God's love in and through one another; this is how he will provide spiritual sustenance in the New Covenant.

The fruit of the vine that he poured out represented his shed blood that would provide the New Covenant. This blood would flow spiritually in the spiritual body, providing cleansing from sin (1 John 1:7), and it would symbolize the spiritual life provided in the New Covenant, of God's love and His spirit. We “do this” and remember the Messiah as we fulfill what he *meant* in his Last Supper parables, by sharing and fellowshiping among the members of the spiritual body with Christ and God's presence in the midst. These are the kinds of things the followers of the Messiah taught. This is what they knew the Lord wanted, which is why we did not see any of them teaching the ritual.

One could ask—when Jesus says in Luke “*do this* in remembrance of me”—how these disciples could “remember” Jesus if they did not keep doing this as a Communion ritual? However, many Protestant churches keep this ritual just twice a year, so do they therefore only “remember” Jesus twice a year? Most Catholic churches and some Lutherans have a Communion ritual at every service; shouldn't the Protestants also “remember” Jesus *at every service* if this ritual is how Jesus wanted us to remember him?

The Protestants would argue and say “No, we remember Jesus every day and at every service; it is the ritual we only do twice a year.” So, by their own admission, one can remember Jesus *without* performing rituals of eating unleavened bread and

drinking grape juice. Jesus wanted us to remember him as we fulfill what he *meant*, which was the true spiritual communion in God's love.

The Azymites Shed Light on the Protestant Ritual

There is a very important part of history, although often ignored or untold, that sheds light on the true origins of the Protestant ritual with unleavened bread. In Course 1 we saw that Jesus held one regular leavened bread at the Last Supper, so why do the Catholics and Protestants both keep a ritual today using *unleavened* bread?

History is clear that the Roman Catholic Church made a change in their ritual from regular leavened bread to unleavened bread sometime around the 9th to 11th century. Prior to this time Rome, along with the Greek and Eastern Churches (those of them that actually kept this ritual), used regular leavened bread. In fact the Greek and Eastern Churches derided the Romans for making this change, calling them "Azymites" (meaning "unleavened ones" in Greek). So the resistance to Roman decrees that had begun with the Asiatic Fourteenthers in the east (see "Setting the Table 1") took a new turn when the Greek and Eastern Churches ridiculed Rome's change to unleavened. Rome's new focus on certain aspects of their ritual came to the forefront, which contributed to the ultimate separation between the Eastern Churches and the Western Roman Church in what came to be known as the Great Schism.

Those Greek and Eastern Churches that kept this as a ritual had always used regular leavened bread. To the Greeks, the "risen" bread (from the leaven that expanded the dough in the heat, aerating it when baked) was symbolic of the risen Christ. At the time of this controversy and name-calling, the Greeks wrote to Rome stating that their word for bread (*arton*) was derived from their Greek word αἶρω (pronounced "airo") meaning "elevated" or "raised up" (from which we get our English word "air"). *The Catholic Encyclopedia* preserves part of this letter that was written to Rome:

You call bread *panis*; we call it artos (ἄρτος). This from airoel (αἶρω), to raise, signifies a something elevated, lifted up, being raised and warmed by the ferment and salt; the azym, on the other hand, is as lifeless as a stone or baked clay, fit only to symbolize affliction and suffering.³⁶⁹

Most Protestant Bible encyclopedias mention nothing about this Roman change to unleavened bread in their ritual, and nothing about the Azymites. The following quote from McClintock and Strong, however, does mention them. Furthermore, it states that there was no history of using *unleavened* bread in the Latin Church before this late change took place:

369 Herbermann et al, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, p. 172, s.v. "Azymites."

Azymites: (from *à negative* and ζύμη, *leaven*), a title applied by the Greeks to the Western Church, because it uses unleavened bread in the Eucharist. The **Greek Church has always maintained the use of leavened bread** (*Conf. Ecc. Orient.* c. 9). The practice in the Latin Church of consecrating with unleavened bread was one of the charges brought against that Church by the Greeks in the middle of the eleventh century, and there does not appear to have been any dispute on the subject between the two churches much before that period. Indeed Sirmondus maintains that **the use of unleavened bread in the holy Eucharist was unknown to the Latin Church before the tenth century**, and his opinion has the support of Cardinal Bona (*Per. Litur.* i, 23), Schelstrat, and Pagi. — Bingham, *Orig. Eccles.* bk. xv, ch. ii, § 5.³⁷⁰

After the Protestants left the Catholic Church, they took along this same unleavened bread ritual that originated in Rome, but left off certain aspects of it in stages. Luther dropped transubstantiation (the belief that the bread and wine are turned into Christ's flesh and blood), but he could not let go of a literal understanding of John 6:53 and thus taught consubstantiation, the sad belief that the flesh and blood must still somehow be contained in the bread and wine. Obviously, neither Rome's nor Luther's interpretation would have aligned with the first-century Jewish concept of what Jesus meant in these parables.

Zwingli, a leader of the Reformation in Switzerland in the early 1500s, also continued to keep the unleavened bread ritual, believing it was what the Lord wanted, but he taught that it was just symbolic and that the bread and wine did not change. For this "outrageous" belief, Luther said Zwingli was of the devil. Most Protestants today who follow Zwingli's lead in the ritual (believing that bread and wine are symbolic and do not change substance) would therefore be of the devil, according to Luther.

It must be remembered that most of the earliest Protestants were men (some were priests or monks) who had grown up in the Roman Catholic Church. When they protested and departed from the Catholic Church, they accidentally brought along this unleavened bread ritual while dropping the disturbing belief in transubstantiation. Although the Protestant cry was "back to the Bible," it is clear that this unleavened bread ritual did not come from the Bible, for Jesus held one regular leavened bread at the Last Supper (as Course 1 proved). Prior to Rome's change, there was no history of a ritual with unleavened bread or any such instruction given in the scriptures from which these Protestants could draw.

370 McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, vol. 1, pp. 577–578, s.v. "Azymites."

This information is not meant to denigrate those original Protestants, for we owe a great debt of gratitude to those brave men, many of whom gave their lives so that we could have the freedom to choose our own beliefs. It is only to point out that the Protestant ritual grew out of the Roman ritual, and did not come from the scriptures. Thus we should distance ourselves from it as we move forward to the true scriptural communion, a spiritual communion that God desires with His people.

The Catholic Encyclopedia claims that the Roman use of unleavened bread in their ritual became obligatory in the ninth century, and it also provides more information on the Azymites:

Azymites (α , privative and ζύμη, leaven), a term of reproach used by the schismatic Greeks since the eleventh century against the Latins, who, together with the Armenians and the Maronites, celebrate the Holy Eucharist with unleavened bread. Since reviling is apt to beget reviling, some few Latin controversialists have retorted by assailing the Greeks as “Fermentarians” and “Prozymites.” There was, however, but little cause for bitterness on the Latin side, as the Western Church has always maintained the validity of consecration with either leavened or unleavened bread. Whether the bread which Our Lord took and blessed at the Last Supper was leavened or unleavened is another question. Regarding the usage in the primitive Church our knowledge is so scant, and the testimonies so apparently contradictory, that many theologians have pronounced the problem incapable of solution. **Certain it is that in the ninth century the use of unleavened bread had become universal** and obligatory in the west....³⁷¹

Whether *The Catholic Encyclopedia* is correct and their change to unleavened bread occurred in the ninth century, or if the McClintock and Strong quote is correct and the use of unleavened bread in their ritual was unknown before the 10th century, the same point is true. Prior to this period, the Church in Rome (along with Greek and Eastern Churches) kept the ritual with regular leavened bread.

As an aside, these same facts expose the unleavened bread Communion ritual of the Jehovah’s Witnesses as well as the Mormon Communion ritual and that of other sects, revealing that they were all offshoots of the Roman Catholic ritual. It shows they all misunderstood the Messiah’s teaching when he used regular bread in his parables, for neither he nor the early disciples ever taught this ritual, nor did they want it.

371 Herbermann et al, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 2, p. 172, s.v. “Azymites.”

Why Make This Late Change to Unleavened Bread?

After having conducted their ritual with regular leavened bread for several hundred years, why would Rome make such a dramatic change to unleavened bread?

History shows that sometime around the ninth century new words began to be applied to the Roman ritual, beginning with *transitio*, then later *transubstantiatio*, and eventually *transubstantiation*. The *New Catholic Encyclopedia* writes of a “new epoch” in the Catholic Eucharist during this period, when these Latin words for transubstantiation were starting to be used in connection with their ritual:

Medieval Period. A **new epoch** of reflection on the Eucharist opened up in the 9th century. The outstanding figure in this period was PASCHASIUS RADBERTUS (d. c. 859), who clearly set forth **the Catholic teaching on transubstantiation.**³⁷²

McClintock and Strong attribute the first probable usage of the Latin term *transubstantiatio* in connection with their ritual to Peter Damili around the beginning of the 11th century, although *transitio* had been in use some time before that:

Probably the first to make use of the word *transubstantiatio* was Peter Damin (*Expositio Can. Miss. cap. vii; Mai, Script. Vet. Nov. Coll. VI, ii, 215*), A.D. 988–1072; though similar expressions, such as *transitio*, had previously been employed.³⁷³

Although these new Latin words first came into use around the time of their “new epoch” of teaching on transubstantiation, the first official Roman Church document that declared their bread and wine “changed” was written in the 11th century:

The most important of these was the Roman Council of 1079, which for the first time in an official document declared that the bread and wine were “substantially changed” into the body and blood of Jesus (*Enchiridion symbolorum*, 700).³⁷⁴

The first written appearance of the actual term in an official Roman Church document was in 1215 at their fourth Lateran Council, where bread and wine are spoken of as being “transubstantiated” into the body and blood of Christ.

372 *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14, p. 158, s.v. “Transubstantiation/Medieval Period.”

373 McClintock and Strong, *Cyclopedia*, vol. 10, p. 526, s.v. “Transubstantiation.”

374 *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14, p. 158, s.v. “Transubstantiation/Medieval Period.”

With this new epoch and new focus on transubstantiation, Rome also decided to switch its ritual bread to unleavened at this time. The most likely explanation for this late and drastic change is that with their focus on the bread being *transubstantiated* into Christ's sinless flesh, it should be unleavened. They certainly did not get this new teaching from the Bible, for we saw Jesus held one regular leavened bread in his parable at the Last Supper (since it was not the Passover).

The only other possible reason for such a major change in their doctrine is that, coming to the realization that (since they believed) the Last Supper was the Passover (where unleavened was required), Jesus would have taught the ritual using unleavened bread. But this isn't much of an explanation since, from about 350 AD onward, most churches believed the Last Supper was the Passover, yet this did not hinder them from using regular bread in their ritual all those years.

Regardless of the true reason for Rome's change to unleavened bread, we can see from history that this was where the Protestant ritual originated, for prior to Rome's late change in the ritual, no other foundation existed for a ritual using unleavened bread. All the apostolic writings refer to regular leavened bread at the Last Supper (as Course 1 made clear), and the early, mostly Jewish writers of scripture did not teach this ritual.

So the last question to consider is this: If the apostles and all the early Messianic believers had taught the importance of such a ritual using unleavened bread (and the Last Supper had been the Passover, as we have been told), how could all the churches from Rome to Greece and farther east have got it completely wrong by using regular leavened bread for some 1,000 years? And furthermore, why was there not a single remark by any teacher, church writer, or historian about the error of this? Why was it only when Rome switched its ritual from using regular bread to unleavened bread that this controversy occurred? The reason is that neither the Messiah nor his early followers taught that we were to keep this as a ritual—with unleavened bread or otherwise—and that's why there was no controversy prior to the 9th century.

A Few More Points from the First-Century Jewish Idioms

Rome interpreted the “breaking bread” that the disciples wrote about in Acts 2 and 20 as early evidence for its ritual, as we saw in Courses 3 and 4. But the proofs listed in those Courses showed the impossibility of the first-century Jewish disciples in Jerusalem going around from house to house conducting a ritual of Communion—or doing so in the Temple. God had told Moses that anyone who ingested blood would be cut off from the nation, and the Talmud stated that even the high priest would be whipped should he ever ingest blood. Remember that the Temple authorities were going to kill Paul when they wrongly believed he had brought an uncircumcised Gentile into the Temple.

Yet despite all this, those who teach this ritual would want us to believe that Acts 2 showed the followers of Jesus meeting in groups to conduct a blood-drinking ritual—whether literally (Roman Catholic) or figuratively (Protestant). And furthermore, that the Temple authorities, Pharisees, and others were absolutely fine with the new ritual and that they allowed those who partook in it to freely enter the Temple. The reality is that this simply would not have happened. The Jewish idioms of the day would never have allowed for such a ritual in Jerusalem to go on completely uncontested, with no word from anyone.

The Jewish disciples even warned the Gentiles who were coming to God that they should **abstain from blood** (Acts 15:20, 29; 21:25). There's no point in warning people against something they would never do, so obviously the Gentiles were sometimes ingesting blood (possibly while eating meat or for other reasons). And when the Jews wrote to the Gentiles, they did not say, "Abstain from blood except during the ritual, because then it is fine to ingest it." No—a new ritual of Communion that involved eating bread (as the Messiah's body) and drinking grape juice (as his blood) would never have gone over in first-century Jerusalem.

The Jewish idiom of the natural to spiritual makes it clear that first-century believers were breaking bread *spiritually* by fellowshiping among the believers, sharing the word of God, and partaking of Christ the bread of life in and through one another. The "breaking bread" of the first-century Jewish believers was not a ritual.

Since the Ritual Was Not Taught, How Then Did It Begin and Gain Its Foothold?

Some may question how the longstanding Jewish concept of a coming Messianic Banquet (or Feast) could be turned into a ritual with a small morsel of unleavened bread and a Dixie cup of grape juice.

The above scenario is not what the Lord's Supper pointed to, for in Course 6 we saw that the Lord's supper pointed to the same Messianic Banquet/Feast that had been a continual part of Israelite history. It pointed to a *spiritual* Feast—a wedding Feast (Revelation 19:7, 9) with the sharing of God's love and partaking of the fruit of the spirit. God has far more in His storehouse for His people than a thin wafer of unleavened bread and a sip of grape juice. His spiritual Feast will fulfill the third annual Jewish Festival (the Ingathering), where we partake of the fruit of the spirit and God's *agape* love as we make ourselves ready as the promised spiritual bride.

Personally I am not that interested in how the ritual developed, but I would like to touch on a few considerations for others who may want to delve more deeply into this. It's fairly easy to see how it probably began. All the Roman theologians had to do was fail to understand the Jewish idioms of speaking the natural and *meaning the spiritual* (as covered in "Setting the Table 4") and then apply the *natural*

interpretation to John 6, the Last Supper, and 1 Corinthians chapters 10 and 11, and presto, you have the ritual of Communion and the Roman Catholic “breaking bread.” However, all of those sections of scripture were to be taken spiritually, just as when Peter wrote we should be sprinkled with Christ’s blood or when Jesus said the apostles were branches of the grapevine. They were meant as spiritual truth and not to be interpreted naturally as future Roman rituals.

The *agapais* (Greek for feasts of God’s love) among the early believers began as *spiritual* partaking of the one *spiritual* bread that fulfilled the meaning of the Messiah’s figurative language at the Last Supper. But over time the Church lost its initial spiritual love—as well as its understanding of the Jewish idioms and the scriptures—and the Church reverted into ceremonialism:

^{NAB} Revelation 2:4 Yet I hold this against you: you have lost the love you had at first.

We know that when the Church began losing its light and the moving of God’s spirit, it descended into darkness and ritualistic observances—such as the introduction of prayers to Mary, Mary becoming the Mother of God, etc.—that were not from the original Jewish believers. Paul had warned that, after his departure, grievous wolves would enter in. He saw that no one was coming behind him to carry the torch, and it did not take the churches long to lose the spiritual life and fall back into church liturgy and ceremonialism. The following Alfred Edersheim quote seems to say it all:

Ceremonialism rapidly develops, too often in proportion to the absence of spiritual life.³⁷⁵

Many new doctrines and rituals entered in after the Fourteenthers—those mostly Jewish believers who wanted to continue to keep the 14th day special—were persecuted and rejected.³⁷⁶ Emperor Constantine saw Christianity as “our religion,” so it’s not surprising that Rome would have its own communion as well, one that was completely different from any Jewish concept of communion with God.

We must become better at understanding the first-century Jewish idioms, otherwise we run the risk of putting scriptures together and coming up with doctrines that Jesus did not teach and did not want. As one minister suggested when warning people about this very possibility, taking the verse where Judas went out and “hung himself” (Matthew 27:5) and joining that to the scripture where Jesus says “go and do the same” (Luke 10:37) would create a bad outcome by misconstruing the scriptures.

375 Edersheim, *Life and Times*, Book 5, ch. 10, p. 492.

376 See “Setting the Table 1.”

It must also be remembered that whenever an early church writer mentions the Greek word “communion,” this does not mean or prove that this Roman ritual (or any other ritual) was being celebrated. The Jews who translated the Old Testament into the Greek Septuagint used this same Greek word, and it continued to be used by Jews for all those years before the time of Christ; certainly to them it did not mean a Roman ritual. The same is true for the Greek word “eucharist,” which simply means “thanksgiving”; the Jews used this word eucharist for hundreds of years before the New Testament was written, and it never referred to a Roman ritual. So when Paul and the other Jewish scripture writers use these Greek words, we must not assume a later meaning that originated in Rome when such a meaning did not exist in Paul’s day.

Early Picture of the Roman Ritual Coming In

Tertullian, the son of a Roman centurion, was often called the founder of *Latin* Christianity. It was from this form of Christianity that the Latin term *Quartodeciman* (Fourteenther) originated. Historians tell us that it was Tertullian who coined the term “Trinity” or *trinitas* in Latin (as we saw in “Setting the Table 2”).

Below, Tertullian provides one of the earliest writings (around AD 200–225) for what looks like an actual *ritual* of Communion, giving a picture of the ritual that does not exist in the Gospels or in any writings of Paul. In this passage he refers to the people no longer being allowed to handle the bread and wine in their ritual, lest some of the Lord’s body fall to the ground:

It was heretofore tolerated in some places that **communicants** should take each one his portion, with his own hand, but now we suffer none to receive this sacrament except at the hand of the minister **We are concerned if even a particle of the wine or bread, made ours, in the Lord’s Supper, falls to the ground, by our carelessness.** In all the ordinary occasions of life we furrow our foreheads with the sign of the Cross, in which we glory none the less because it is regarded as our shame by the heathen in presence of whom it is a profession of our faith.³⁷⁷

Does this text have a first-century Jewish ring to it, or does it sound more Roman Catholic in origin? *The Catholic Encyclopedia* quotes Tertullian to substantiate the Catholic ritual of Communion, while admitting that certain aspects of it are not found in scripture:

377 Roberts and Donaldson, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, vol. 3, p. 103.

Tertullian explains: “When you have received and reserved the Body of the Lord, you will have assisted at the Sacrifice and have accomplished the duty of fasting as well” (De oratione, xix). Tertullian’s list of customs observed by Apostolic tradition **though not in Scripture** (De cor., iii) is famous: the baptismal renunciations and feeding with milk and honey, fasting Communion, offerings for the dead (Masses) on their anniversaries, no fasting or kneeling on the Lord’s Day and between Easter and Pentecost, **anxiety as to the falling to the ground of any crumb or drop of the Holy Eucharist**, the Sign of the Cross made continually during the day.³⁷⁸

We can see that the Roman ritual takes Paul’s teachings in 1 Corinthians chapter 11 literally—as a natural ritual—as does the Protestant ritual. Yet the Catholic ritual is carried to such an extreme degree so that **one must fast from the previous night** (thus the body of Jesus is kept separate from common food in your stomach):

That Holy Communion may be received not only validly, but also fruitfully, certain disposition both of body and of soul are required. For the former, a person must be **fasting from the previous midnight from everything in the nature of food or drink**.³⁷⁹

Not All Quotes Are What They Appear on the Surface

We will not go into a lot of quotes from those called “Church Fathers,” because Jesus specifically said that the men who were the foundation stones of the assembly were *not* to be called “fathers.” Instead, we must build our doctrine on the “foundation of the apostles and prophets” and on Christ the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).

However, I do want to consider one famous quote because it portrays the early Messianic Fourteenth Polycarp—said to be a disciple of John the Apostle—administering a Blessed Eucharist. I believe this to be a false picture handed down to us through an inaccurate translation of what was actually meant. Here is the quote, which comes from a Greek letter written by Irenaeus (a student of Polycarp) to the Roman bishop Victor, defending the Messianic custom of keeping the 14th day special:

These things being so, they **communed together**; and in the church Anicetus yielded to Polycarp, out of respect no doubt, the **celebration of the eucharist** (τὴν εὐχαριστίαν), and they separated

378 Herbermann et al, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 14, p. 525, s.v. “Tertullian.”

379 Herbermann et al, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 402, s.v. “Holy Communion.”

from each other in peace, all the church being at peace, both those that observed and those that did not observe [the fourteenth of Nisan], maintaining peace.”³⁸⁰

The original Greek words that have been translated as “communed together” are ἐκοινωνήσαν ἑαυτοῖς. The Greek words translated as “celebration of the eucharist” above simply say “the eucharist” (τὴν εὐχαριστίαν) and refer to the giving of thanks.

The meaning of this letter from Irenaeus has been disputed, with some scholars (such as Valesius) translating these Greek words as “administer the Eucharist,” indicating that the Roman bishop Anicetus allowed Polycarp to administer the Eucharist ritual on his visit to Rome. Others, such as Heinichen, say it only means that Anicetus allowed Polycarp to partake in the “celebration of the Eucharist” ritual in his church. I do not believe either view is correct here, for Polycarp was a leading Fourteenther, almost certainly Jewish (his relatives always kept the 14th day before him), and the early Messianic followers of Christ did not keep this as a ritual since they understood that Jesus spoke spiritual truth in his Last Supper parables.

We must be careful here because commentators often see these Greek words for “eucharist” (εὐχαριστίαν) and “commune/communion” (ἐκοινωνήσαν) through Roman Catholic glasses. If we wear those glasses, then we too might picture two men in Roman sacramental vestments sharing a Blessed Eucharist. However, if we understand that Polycarp was a Messianic Fourteenther who was later martyred for continuing to keep the 14th day special and for refusing to go along with Rome’s new commands, quite a different picture might emerge. We might then see that he and Anicetus “fellowshipped together” or partook in the praise and thanksgiving to God together (ἐκοινωνήσαν ἑαυτοῖς), and that Polycarp was probably allowed to share some scriptures as they “gave thanks” (εὐχαριστίαν) in the assembly together.



The Catholic Encyclopedia defines “Holy Communion” in the following manner:

By Communion is meant the actual reception of the Sacrament of the Eucharist.³⁸¹

Obviously, this definition is different from how the Jews used this word. “Communion” among the early Messianic believers did not mean sharing actual bread and wine in a sacrament, but sharing God’s love, partaking of Christ the bread of life

380 Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 2, p. 213.

381 Herbermann et al, *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 7, p. 402, s.v. “Holy Communion.”

and the word of God in and among the members in the spiritual body and in their *agapais* (feasts of God's *agape* love).

Remember the Jews used these same words in the Septuagint hundreds of years *before* the New Testament was written, and they certainly did not refer to a Roman ritual in their usage but rather to sharing, partaking, and fellowshiping. In the Septuagint (the Greek scripture below), the Jewish translators used this same Greek word **ἐκοινωνήσεν** (meaning “sharing, partaking”) that Irenaeus used above concerning Polycarp. Here in English it means that Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah, the king of Israel, were “allied” together:

^{NAS} 2 Chronicles 20:35a And after this Jehoshaphat king of Judah **allied himself** with Ahaziah king of Israel.

^{LXT} 2 Chronicles 20:35 καὶ μετὰ ταῦτα **ἐκοινωνήσεν** Ἰωσαφατ βασιλεὺς Ἰουδα πρὸς Οχοζιαν βασιλέα Ἰσραηλ καὶ οὗτος ἠνόμησεν

Clearly these two Israelite kings were not celebrating a Roman ritual of Communion. Yet when Irenaeus wrote that Anicetus and Polycarp “communed” together, many read into the text a Roman ritual. Similarly, the Greek word often translated into English as “communion” is used in the Septuagint below, where it means “fellowship”:

^{LXE} Leviticus 6:2 The soul which shall have sinned, and willfully overlooked the commandments of the Lord, and shall have dealt falsely in the affairs of his neighbour in the matter of a deposit, or concerning **fellowship**, or concerning plunder, or has in anything wronged his neighbour,

^{LXT} Leviticus 5:21³⁸² ψυχὴ ἐὰν ἀμάρτη καὶ παριδῶν παρίδη τὰς ἐντολάς κυρίου καὶ ψεύσεται τὰ πρὸς τὸν πλησίον ἐν παραθήκῃ ἢ περὶ **κοινωνίας** ἢ περὶ ἀρπαγῆς ἢ ἠδίκησέν τι τὸν πλησίον

Just as we would not assume that the translators of Leviticus meant a ritual of Communion when they wrote concerning the Israelites in their “fellowship,” we should not leap to a Roman ritual when we see Irenaeus, Polycarp, Paul, other New Testament writers, or Jewish people in general use these same Greek words. In 1 Corin-

382 The Septuagint often has different verse numbering; the above Leviticus 5:21 is the Greek for Leviticus 6:2.

thians 10:16 Paul uses this same Greek word,³⁸³ and he was not speaking of a Roman ritual there either. More than 150 years before Christ or Paul lived, the Jewish Maccabees used the Greek word “eucharist,” as preserved in the Septuagint below and translated as “gratitude”:

^{NAB} 2 Maccabees 2:27 just as the preparation of a festive banquet is no light matter for one who thus seeks to give enjoyment to others. Similarly, to win the **gratitude** of many we will gladly endure these inconveniences,

^{LXT} 2 Maccabees 2:27 καθάπερ τῷ παρασκευάζοντι συμπόσιον καὶ ζητοῦντι τὴν ἐτέρων λυσιτέλειαν οὐκ εὐχερές ὅμως διὰ τὴν τῶν πολλῶν **εὐχαριστίαν** ἠδέως τὴν κακοπάθειαν ὑποίσομεν

And the Maccabees use this Greek word “eucharist” again, translated here with the meaning of giving thanks to God:

^{NAB} 2 Maccabees 1:11 Since we have been saved by God from grave dangers, **we give him great thanks** for having fought on our side against the king;

^{LXT} 2 Maccabees 1:11 ἐκ μεγάλων κινδύνων ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ σεσωσμένοι μεγάλως **εὐχαριστοῦμεν** αὐτῷ ὡς ἂν πρὸς βασιλέα παρατασσόμενοι

These translations shed light on the quote from Irenaeus, who wrote that Polycarp and Anicetus “communed together” in a good spirit and shared in the “eucharist.” The only possible way to see a ritual of Communion or a Blessed Eucharist happening among the Maccabees, Paul, or Polycarp is to look at these Greek words through Roman Catholic glasses. Irenaeus used this exact same Greek word “eucharist” that the Jewish Paul also used below when speaking of the “giving of thanks,” and without a doubt, Paul is not speaking of a ritual:

^{NAS} 2 Corinthians 4:15 For all things *are* for your sakes, that the grace which is spreading to more and more people may cause **the giving of thanks** to abound to the glory of God.

383 Covered in more detail in Course 6.

^{GNT} 2 Corinthians 4:15 τὰ γὰρ πάντα δι' ὑμᾶς, ἵνα ἡ χάρις πλεονάσασα διὰ τῶν πλείονων **τὴν εὐχαριστίαν**³⁸⁴ περισσεύσῃ εἰς τὴν δόξαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

If we were to translate Paul's words as historians have translated Irenaeus's words concerning Polycarp, we would write the above scripture to say "that the grace that is spreading to more and more people may cause **the administration of the Eucharist** to abound," when all Paul really spoke about was the giving of thanks.

Similarly the following scripture that uses the Greek word *koinonias*, often translated as "communion" or "fellowship," does not mean that the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (James, Cephas, and John) gave the right hand of the "ritual of Communion" to Paul and Barnabas:

^{NAS} Galatians 2:9 and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas **the right hand of fellowship**, that we *might go* to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

^{GNT} Galatians 2:9 καὶ γνόντες τὴν χάριν τὴν δοθεῖσάν μοι, Ἰάκωβος καὶ Κηφᾶς καὶ Ἰωάννης, οἱ δοκοῦντες στῦλοι εἶναι, δεξιὰς ἔδωκαν ἔμοι καὶ Βαρναβᾶ **κοινωνίας**, ἵνα ἡμεῖς εἰς τὰ ἔθνη, αὐτοὶ δὲ εἰς τὴν περιτομήν·

The actual Greek words ("communed" and "eucharist") that Irenaeus used to describe what Polycarp did with Anicetus in Rome could just as easily be interpreted "they fellowshiped together, and in the church Anicetus gave way in the thanksgiving, to Polycarp." This would make for a much better translation of the original Greek.

Regardless of how some might translate this or other quotes, we should not look to ritualistic ceremonies handed down from the "Church Fathers" in Rome for our spiritual direction. Whether a pope (called Holy Father), Tertullian, or others (called Church Fathers) taught a Blessed Eucharist, this does not mean it was taught by the apostles and the early followers of the Messiah.

The True Communion Is Spiritual

Instead, we should follow the Messiah, who said to call no man father (meaning father in a spiritually exalted sense). There is no better example of neglecting one of

384 The *UBS Greek-English Dictionary* defines this Greek word **εὐχαριστία** as thanksgiving, thanks, gratitude, thankfulness (p. 77).

the Lord's commandments by turning it into a "tradition of men" than the ritual of Communion:

^{NAS} Mark 7:8 "Neglecting the commandment of God, **you hold to the tradition of men.**"

^{NAS} Mark 7:9 He was also saying to them, "**You nicely set aside the commandment** of God in order to **keep your tradition.**"

Now that we have seen that neither the Messiah, Paul, nor the early disciples taught this ritual, let's turn our attention back to what Jesus meant in his Last Supper parables and what Paul meant his spiritual teachings in 1 Corinthians chapters 10, 11, and 12. On the same night in which Jesus broke the one bread, giving pieces of it for the disciples to partake of, he also gave them the new commandment (John 13:34) to love one another (see Courses 5 and 6). The ritual of Communion has taken that commandment to love and share and turned it into a bread ritual that was a tradition of men that nicely sets aside what the Lord *meant* at the Last Supper.

The assembly must shake off the ceremonial religious spirit that has portrayed the Messiah in this false ritualistic sense. The Lord's commandment to love one another was wrongly interpreted as a ritual with bread (with condemnation attached for not being holy enough when you partake of it). God's love is eternal (Jeremiah 31:3) and His mercy endures forever (Psalm 136). He does not condemn people for failing to eat a piece of Communion bread just right—this has been a false portrayal of God's heart and His will for His people. It is not what the Messiah wanted, nor what Paul taught. And the ritual of Communion has contributed to the Church becoming somewhat of a Leah bride (focused on a dry ritual), but the greater Jacob desires a Rachel bride who seeks the true spiritual communion that God wants for His people (see Genesis 29 and 30 for the story of Rachel and Leah).

In this book's introduction, I mentioned that when I came to realize that the Last Supper was not the Passover (by seeing the weakness of the English translations and how the four Gospels harmonize), and that Jesus indeed held and broke one regular *leavened* bread, I felt in my spirit that the unleavened bread ritual had, in a way, tricked us. Christians have always been bewildered at how first-century Jewish authorities—because of their traditions—could not accept the Messiah's teachings. Now that we have seen that the Last Supper was not the Passover and what this means for the ritual of Communion, it may be our turn in the box. And hopefully we Christians will do as well, or even better, at releasing those man-made traditions and rituals that God does not want.

The time to move beyond this Roman ritual is now. God desires an intimate love relationship and true communion with every individual and with the collective

body as well. We must unite as one body and enter into true spiritual communion with God, sharing His *agape* love in and among the members in the one body, with Christ in the midst. This is what the Lord *meant* in his life-giving parables at the Last Supper and what Paul *intended* in 1 Corinthians 11, and this is what will spiritually fulfill the third Israelite Feast, the Ingathering. We must move into this true spiritual communion to become the spiritual bride the Lord is seeking.

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