

The UNION

Get Ready to Meet the King!

God Calls His Church to
Truth, Faith and Holiness

2019

Joan H. Richardson

The UNION

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CHAPTER 5

The Keys to Freedom

⁷ But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised ⁸ (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), 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, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. (Galatians 2:7-9 NASB)

Saint Peter

Peter opened the gospel to Jews in Jerusalem and to the gentiles in Caesarea, having received the keys to the kingdom from Messiah Yeshua. When Peter declared the Word, he made the narrow way accessible to all nations. By the Sea of Galilee, Yeshua had commanded him to feed His sheep, and in obeying, Cephas [Peter] became a worthy minister of the gospel, particularly to the Jews for whom Messiah had come—His own sheep. Peter's congregations were not mainly gentiles but Jews.

¹⁵ "But you," He asked them, "who do you say that I am?"

¹⁶ Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God!"

¹⁷ And Jesus responded, "Simon son of Jonah, you are blessed because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father in heaven. ¹⁸ And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the forces of Hades will not overpower it. ¹⁹ I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:15-19 HCSB) [Nathaniel was the first disciple to call Yeshua the Messiah (the Christ) and the Son of God. Martha of Bethany declared it before her brother Lazarus rose from the dead man's tomb.]

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Jesus had given Simon Peter—the emotional, at times, weak disciple—the name Peter,¹² from the Greek word, *petros*, which is translated, “rock.” It became his new name, yet think of the New Jerusalem, with its walls of twelve foundations, named after the twelve apostles. The word used to describe an enormous boulder, however, is *petra*, as the ancient city, Petra, which was hewn in massive rock.

Peter was the impulsive disciple, but Jesus Christ called him *Petros*, “a rock,” which symbolizes stability and strength; in the same way, before Abraham could have children: “*As it is written, ‘I have made you a father of many nations.’ He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were.* (Rom. 4:17 NIV)

But the Lord’s play on words used the variant, *Petra*, also meaning “rock,” alluding to the disciple’s confession of Jesus as the Son of God. The *Petra* is God in His Son as the only true Salvation. [Cf. Rom. 4:17 also.] The Savior would establish His church on the Rock of God with us, *Immanuel*, the only begotten Son. If anyone says, “God has no Son,” he speaks from the spirit of anti-Christ because the Son of God is the foundation of our faith. (See 1 John 2:22-23)

Do not fear, do not be afraid;
Have I not told you from that time, and declared it?
You *are* My witnesses.
Is there a God besides Me?
Indeed *there is no other Rock*;
I know not *one*.” (Isaiah 44:8 NKJV) –The Word of the LORD

Jesus first named him *Cephas* when He met and gathered His closest disciples to travel with Him: *and having looked upon him, Jesus saith. ‘Thou art Simon, the son of Jonas, thou shalt be called Cephas,’ (which is interpreted, A rock. (from Jn. 1:42 YLT)*

When the Father revealed the identity of Messiah to Peter, he spoke the founding doctrine of the church. Jesus told Peter he had been blessed to receive such a revelation, reminding him that he was a *petros*; but the Son of God was the Rock, the *Petra*, in the Word of his revelation.

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Soon after that, Jesus prophesied His rejection by the leaders in Jerusalem and His approaching death and resurrection. Simon Peter rebuked Him for saying those things. *But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan! for thou art an offence to me: (See Mat. 16:23)* Had Yeshua perceived that he'd wanted to impress his fellow disciples?

Peter had taken the Lord aside to speak to Him, positioning himself in front of Jesus, facing the disciples behind Him. Jesus turned from Peter to see them, but Peter saw them as he was speaking to Jesus, so that they also heard Peter's words. Who was Peter's audience, the Lord, or his peers?

Immediately, Jesus told Peter that he was speaking words from Satan. When the Lord said, "*Get behind Me, Satan!*" He commanded a disingenuous Peter to join the others behind Him. He then told them all to follow Him—denying themselves, their egos, selfish wills, and desires by carrying a cross daily:

³³ But when he had turned about and looked on his disciples, he rebuked Peter, saying, Get thee behind me Satan: for thou savorest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of men. ³⁴ And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. ³⁵ For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. (Mark 8:33-35)

A man with a revelation might consider himself greater than his brothers; his pride opens the door for the devil to use him. Had Peter thought his epiphany made him the leading disciple? Had he neglected to believe Jesus' words, which would have prevented his sin? He'd be an apostle like the others, but he had given Satan opportunity by vying for a place above his brothers.

Once more, after the resurrection, when the Lord told him how he would die, John was there, and, *Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? Follow thou me. (Jn. 21:21-22)* Sibling rivalry is ancient, and His children can fall into it; but to follow Christ, we must reject self-consciousness, redirecting our wills to the will of God. We must put sins

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to death to follow Yeshua; thus we reckon our former nature on the cross in His body. To enter Christ, we must put all self-centered ways to death; then we can walk in His Spirit.

Though he correctly identified Jesus as Messiah, the Son of God, Peter was not the first to realize it: Nathaniel said the same of Him when he first met Jesus. However, Peter opened himself to temptation and fell. Then Yeshua made it clear: God Himself was in Christ—the only Rock—declaring, ... *upon this rock, I will build my church.* (See Mat. 16:18) Believers would establish their faith on the only Rock—God in His own Son, our Savior.

He is the foundation of the church: *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.* (1 Cor. 3:11) The Word of God is the same Rock on which Moses stood; God hid Moses in the cleft of that Rock when He passed before him. The Rock in the wilderness of Horeb supplied water for the Hebrews as they journeyed; that Rock supernaturally moved with them as the manifestation of the unchanging Rock of living water. Moses delivered the lyrics of a song to the people, not singing but speaking, till he finished:

³ Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. ⁴ He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. (Deuteronomy 32:3-4) [He would publish—broadcast—His holy, unspeakable Name!]

² The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was on my tongue. ³ The God of Israel said, The Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men *must* be just, ruling in the fear of God. ⁴ And *he shall be* as the light of the morning, *when* the sun riseth, *even* a morning without clouds; as the tender grass *springing* out of the earth by clear shining after rain. (2 Samuel 23:2-4) – David [The Rock of Israel is YHWH; His name is in His Word.]

As time passed, when Roman soldiers martyred him by inverted crucifixion, Peter's uncompromised confession was His Savior, the Rock of Israel. Finally, his faith was as solid as a rock as Peter followed Jesus in his death. Others have declared the faith, facing trials and persecutions beyond description to conform to the high calling of God in Christ Jesus:

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Stephen, the first Christian martyr,¹³ witnessed to the Jews in Jerusalem who stoned him to death. Before dying, “*Look,*” he said, “*I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.*” (*Acts 7:56 NIV*) Stephen did not shrink from death; his faith was certain. They beheaded James the son of Zebedee, along with one of his captors who, upon seeing the faith of James, also confessed Messiah as his Savior. Matthew was pinned to the ground and beheaded. They cast James [Jacob], one of Jesus’ half-brothers, from the temple tower and then smashed his head with a club. Matthias was stoned and beheaded. Pagans crucified Andrew on an X-shaped cross in Asia. Mark was dragged to pieces in Alexandria where he spoke against their idol Serapis. The Romans beheaded Paul after his confinement in Rome, and Thomas¹⁴ was speared in India. Jude, James’ brother, was crucified in Syria. Bartholomew was beaten and crucified. The Greeks hanged Luke from an olive tree in Athens. John was exiled to the island of Patmos after being boiled in a vat of oil and emerging unharmed. While in exile, John was caught up into heaven after which he wrote *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*. Years later, according to Foxe, the Romans released him, and John returned to Ephesus where he died in AD 98. Of the original twelve, John was the only apostle who died of a natural cause.

Since the first apostles were slain as eyewitnesses, the integrity of their words, sealed by their shed blood, provided future generations with the gospel. Their steadfast confessions of the Son of God set the first foundations of the walls as examples for us. They built their lives on Yeshua as the unchanging Truth, making us one in Him by the same faith.

The Lord foreknew Peter would waver under the fear of persecution. In His darkest hour, three times he denied he had anything to do with Jesus. Then before Pentecost but after His resurrection, He saw Peter in his boat, maybe broken by his sin and without a vision, fishing. (How Peter loved fishing!)

For his sake, Yeshua appeared at the water’s edge that day. Though Peter had turned to his love for fish, Christ exhorted him to be a shepherd who would feed His sheep—not a fisherman, catching fish. The Shepherd entrusted His own sheep to Peter, not that he was a great man, but that his weakness was an

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opportunity for the glory of God. Yeshua said, *Feed My lambs; Shepherd my sheep; Feed My sheep.* (See Jn. 21:15-19) God had sent Jesus to Jews, His sheep; He called Peter to feed and care for them. Later, He called Paul as the minister to the gentiles.

Though Peter's complete transformation came through years of trials, his endurance became the most impressive attribute of his character. If we stagger at the thought of severe persecution, we can look to Peter and be encouraged by the weak, unreliable, wavering disciple who became a steadfast witness, retaining the faith, and proving Christ's *strength is made perfect in weakness.* (See 2 Cor. 12:9)

When we receive what God has said, nothing can separate us from Him, but He wants us who want Him, even when the way is hard. We must *work out our salvation with fear and trembling* (See Php. 2:12): *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.* (Mat. 7:14) Jesus said His kingdom is not observable but exists in the unseen hearts of believers.

The Keys of the Kingdom

When He gave Peter the keys to the kingdom, Jesus chose him as the first to take the gospel to the Jews in Jerusalem and to the gentiles in Caesarea. What are its keys? They are words of revelation, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding that open the gates of the Kingdom of Heaven to all who believe.

Fifty days after His resurrection, on Pentecost [Shavuot], the Holy Spirit *came upon* one hundred twenty of the disciples as they waited for the Lord's promise for empowerment. Suddenly the wind of the Spirit rushed into the room; appearing as tongues of supernatural fire, He touched each head with a holy anointing. That morning, they spoke languages to Jews from many nations. The Spirit had come upon them, filling them as they praised God and boldly declared the gospel with understanding for everyone.

The Spirit equipped Peter with words that surpassed the power of his sword. When Peter held the sword in his heart, not in his hand, he preached to those he had previously feared, telling them they had condoned the crucifixion of their Messiah. He wielded the sword of the Word with conviction and clarity, and his audience was cut to the heart, spiritually circumcised. Repentant, they believed and worshiped the Savior they had

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rejected. As they confessed their sins to God, they were baptized [immersed] in water—as the token of the new covenant, buried underwater to rise in newness of life. The Spirit empowered them with life from heaven. And they were all Jews:

³⁷ Now when they heard *this*, they were pierced to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brethren, what shall we do?” ³⁸ Peter *said* to them, “Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God will call to Himself.” ⁴⁰ And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” ⁴¹ So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were added about three thousand souls. (Acts 2:37-41 NASB)

Thousands of Jews turned to faith in Yeshua, many of whom were Jewish priests (See Acts 6:7), but the persecution continued. Pressured by leaders, synagogues rejected Jews who believed Yeshua was Messiah, but after the stoning of Stephen, the opposition waned. At that time, Peter went to Joppa and stayed at the home of a man named Simon.

Meanwhile, a Caesarean named Cornelius, a devout gentile who believed in the Hebrew God, had a vision: the angel of the Lord appeared to him, telling him to find Peter who was in Joppa at Simon’s home. The following day, Peter prayed on a rooftop,

¹⁰ And he became very hungry, and would have eaten: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance, ¹¹ And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: ¹² Wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. ¹³ And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. ¹⁴ But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. ¹⁵ And the voice *spake* unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, *that* call not thou common. ¹⁶ This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into

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heaven. (Acts 10:10-16) [Unclean beasts came and returned to heaven for God made all foods clean by saving the gentiles.]

When Peter followed Cornelius' servants and entered the gentile home, it was something he had never done. By this act of faith, Peter unlocked the second awakening to the gospel; this time, the God of the Jews, whose gospel first came to His own, now welcomed the gentile nations. Peter's faith fulfilled biblical prophecies to spread the salvation of YHWH to the entire world! The Holy Spirit strengthened the faith of Jews and gentiles together. Filling them with the oil of joy, His fire burned in their hearts to spread the Word to the world, and everything changed.

Though Peter had introduced the new covenant to gentiles, years later he would stumble into the hypocrisy of turning to the legalism of the former covenant in order to please the Jews who were still living under the law. He began to lead freed Jews and gentiles into the same false teaching. Though Christ had chosen him to ignite the spiritual awakening, Peter fell into his own fallibility until the Holy Spirit in Paul boldly interrupted him:

¹¹ When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. ¹² Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³ The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

¹⁴ When I saw that they were not acting in line with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter in front of them all, "You are a Jew, yet you live like a Gentile and not like a Jew. How is it, then, that you force Gentiles to follow Jewish customs?"

¹⁵ "We who are Jews by birth and not 'Gentile sinners' ¹⁶ know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. (Galatians 2:11-16 NIV) [Paul referred to the new birth that makes a man a Jew; here all who practice sin are considered gentiles. The law of Moses

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had regulations and ordinances to divide Jews from gentiles, but they had broken the Mosaic covenant, so the Savior came.]

The natural man cannot please God, no matter how many prayers are spoken. The “good works” of our mortal nature are cut off by self-righteous pride. Only the blood Jesus shed for us can atone for such sins. We receive His atonement by faith, and He washes us clean; finally, we can live as new creations in Him.

A Second Blessing

The Lord conferred another blessing on Peter:

And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:19)

After Jesus blessed Peter, He blessed His other disciples in the same manner. While with them in Capernaum, He said,

¹⁸ Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. ¹⁹ Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. ²⁰ For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:18-20)

Binding and loosing deals with disputable matters that affect personal convictions. In matters of binding or loosing, we must not judge our brothers. This authority never changes the moral laws of God and can never be used to alter His commands to believers. Most disputable matters concern mutual convictions, i.e., as a believer agrees with another believer, they each must be convinced in their own minds, yielded to the Word, including the moral laws of God. Finally, decisions on the issues in question don't make one believer holier than another whose convictions differ; we remain in the union. The Bible exhorts us to refrain from making judgments against matters not judged by the Word:

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¹ Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters. ...

⁵ One man considers one day more sacred than another; another man considers every day alike. ⁶ Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind. He who regards one day as special, does so to the Lord. He who eats meat, eats to the Lord, for he gives thanks to God; and he who abstains, does so to the Lord and gives thanks to God. ⁷ For none of us lives to himself alone and none of us dies to himself alone. ...

¹⁰ You, then, why do you judge your brother? Or why do you look down on your brother? For we will all stand before God's judgment seat. (Romans 14:1, 5-7,10 NIV)

Simon, a magician, became a believer in Christ. Then Philip baptized him in Samaria while immersing other new believers in the name of the Lord Jesus. When Peter and John arrived to pray for them to receive the Spirit, observing the laying on of hands and the subsequent baptism of the Spirit, Simon wanted to buy it,

¹⁹ saying, "Give this authority to me as well, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands may receive the Holy Spirit." ²⁰ But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! ²¹ You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²² Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, the intention of your heart may be forgiven you. ²³ For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity." (Acts 8:19-23 NASB)

The Price of Purgatory

If Simon thought he could purchase the gift of God with money, what happens to those who think they can buy the grace of God with money, purchasing the prayers of priests for the favor of God? Did the disciples pay Jesus for His prayers? But these ideas are normal to Roman Catholic thought; these things don't alarm them, because they have been raised to believe them, indoctrinated. Many Protestants are also persuaded to believe false teachings, unaware of their precarious spiritual condition.

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The RCC believes there is a place called purgatory, a place of purging, situated between hell and heaven, where sinners must pay penance for their sins in a sort of netherworld until they receive the sufficient number of prayers to rescue and deliver them into heaven. The idea is far off the mark of the Scriptural truth. If that teaching were valid, extortionists, pornographers, drug lords, murderers, and every rich Catholic could purchase the grace of God, but taking money for the grace of God is an evil practice of the Roman Catholic Church.

⁸ For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁹ not of works, lest any man should boast. ¹⁰ For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.
(Ephesians 2:8-10)

The Holy Spirit works within our hearts by His grace, changing us into the likeness of Messiah as we believe. By the miracle-working power of His Spirit and His Word, we gain the right to become children of God, created for His good works.

⁴² And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. ⁴³ And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise. (Luke 23:42-43) [His Spirit is everywhere.]

⁴ For we that are in *this* tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. ⁵ Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing *is* God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. ⁶ Therefore *we are* always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: ⁷ (for we walk by faith, not by sight:) ⁸ We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. ⁹ Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. (2 Corinthians 5:4-9)

No amount of personal flagellation or suffering can wash away our sins and grant us grace with God. That way of

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thinking negates the cross. If we buffet our bodies by fasting, it is for discipline and self-control. Otherwise we fast to focus on God alone as we pray in intimacy with Christ. Our sufferings discipline the nature of our flesh as the spiritual man matures, but all of this occurs in the land of the living, not the dead.

Though great sufferings might free us from sin as a refining fire would, they can't take our guilt away. By His grace, we believe in His atonement, and Yeshua takes our sins and guilt away. Then as we receive the words of God, He makes us holy:

²⁷ And just as it is appointed for people to die once—and after this, judgment—²⁸ so also the Messiah, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him. (Hebrews 9:27-28 HCSB)

All men will face the judgment, and those who practice iniquity will face condemnation. *And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. (1 Jn. 3:5)* As we persevere in faith, we are freed from sin and death:

⁹ Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. ¹¹ Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences. (2 Corinthians 5:9-11 NKJV)

²⁰ Now therefore we are ambassadors for Christ as though God were pleading through us: be reconciled to God. ²¹ For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:20-21 NKJV)

²⁴ “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. ²⁵ Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, ²⁷ and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man.

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²⁸ Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice ²⁹ and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. (John 5:24-29 NKJV) –Yeshua

For ages, the church murdered believers who had accepted what had been passed down from the first century. The Roman Catholic Church had kept the people from the Word, outlawing its translation into languages they could understand. However, a man named Gutenberg invented a printing press, and after the Bible was disseminated, there was no way to quench its fire!

Transubstantiation

The ceremony known to Protestants as Holy Communion is called “the Sacrifice of the Eucharist” by the Roman church, which erroneously teaches the perpetual sacrifice of Christ. The dogma states that His body is broken and His blood is shed at every Mass, which disputes the truth of God.

First sanctioned by the Fourth Lateran Council¹⁵ in 1213, the doctrine of transubstantiation teaches that the bread and wine given at communion actually *transform* into the substances of Messiah’s body and blood. For more than a thousand years, this had been unthinkable till this teaching became church dogma. Pope Innocent II also put to death those who rejected the change and who believed the earlier doctrine that the bread and wine are significant representations with spiritual effects. Centuries later, the Protestants would return to the representational elements as Christ had explained them.

²³ Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴ For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; ²⁵ not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another—²⁶ He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. ²⁷ And as it is appointed for men to

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die once, but after this the judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation. (Hebrews 9:23-28 NKJV)

According to the Scriptures, the Lord Jesus suffered once to shed His blood for our sins; now He lives forevermore. Soldiers once nailed His flesh to the cross. Then His Spirit raised His mortal body and transformed it into an immortal body—from death to life! He then ascended into heaven in the same body, made incorruptible by the Holy Spirit.

If we believe Jesus died for us and broke the power of sin and death, as we take this truth into our hearts, the words we believe give us the life of His Spirit. The words that come out of our hearts, not the food in our bellies, make us clean; or else the evil in our hearts makes us unclean.

¹⁷ Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? ¹⁸ But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. (Matthew 15:17-18) – Yeshua

¹⁴ For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. ¹⁵ *Whereof* the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, ¹⁶ *This is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; ¹⁷ And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. ¹⁸ Now where remission of these *is, there is* no more offering for sin. (Hebrews 10:14-18)

When we receive the unleavened bread, we remember His death and realize our carnal man was crucified in His flesh. The broken bread represents His broken flesh and His death, resulting in the brokenness of our own flesh by our faith in His sacrifice:

⁵³ So Jesus said to them, “I assure you: Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you do not have life in yourselves. ⁵⁴ Anyone who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day, ⁵⁵ because My flesh is real food and

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My blood is real drink. ⁵⁶ The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood lives in me, and I in him. ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on Me will live because of me. ⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven; it is not like the manna your fathers ate—and they died. The one who eats this bread will live forever.” (John 6:53-58 HCSB)

Yeshua spoke in spiritual and figurative terms as He taught the people who’d followed Him to the other side of the sea. The elements of bread and wine spiritually represent His flesh and blood that atoned for us in His death. When we receive the elements, we take in [eat] the bread, remembering His flesh and receive [drink] the wine, which figuratively is His atoning blood, in remembrance of His sacrifice. Spiritually the elements are real to us, but not physically; that which is spiritual is life to its partakers, a sacred communion. His words are spirit and life.

Other such idiomatic expressions of eating occur throughout the Word: *Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.* Prov. 18:2 *Thy words were found, and I did eat them* ... of Jer. 15:16; *The wind shall eat up all thy pastors* ... of Jer. 22:22; *He said to me, Son of man, eat what you find [here]. Eat this scroll, then go and speak to the house of Israel. So I opened my mouth, and He fed me the scroll. “Son of man,” he said to me, “eat and fill your stomach with this scroll I am giving you.”* Ezk. 3:2-3a; *They eat up the sin of my people* ... of Hos. 4:8; *The sword shall cut thee off; it shall eat thee up like a cankerworm* ... of Nah. 3:15; *But He said to them, I have meat to eat that you know not of.* ... *And Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.* Jn. 4:32, 34; *I took the little book out of the angel’s hand and ate it up; and it was in my mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as I had eaten it, my belly was bitter* ... (See Rev. 10:9-10)

When the Hebrews ate physical manna in the wilderness, they ate it as their physical sustenance though the manna had spiritual implications. They died in the desert for their unbelief in the faithfulness of God.

Jesus said He is the bread that came from heaven; but unlike the Jews’ unbelief in the desert, we must take in His atonement as the bread that has spiritual significance. Soon after speaking, He took them aside and explained his words to His disciples:

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⁶³ “The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life.

⁶⁴ Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. (John 6:63-64 NIV)

If all could have believed, they would have eaten His *words*, but all of His disciples did *not* believe. When the time came, Yeshua ate the Passover in an upper room in Jerusalem with the twelve. While sharing the Seder meal and taking the bread to break it, Judas took the sop, left the room, and betrayed the Lord whose arrest came with a kiss from His betrayer that same night.

Before Yeshua shed His blood for our sins, He shared the Passover with His disciples. At the end of the meal, Yeshua said of the matzoh, *Take, eat; this is my body before they crucified Him.* He said of the wine, *Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood, before shedding His blood.* After taking the fourth cup, the “cup of redemption,” He called the wine, *this fruit of the vine*, saying He would not drink it again until the day came in His Father’s kingdom. He did not change the substances but explained their sacred significance for the first time in history:

²⁶ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed *it*, and brake *it*, and gave *it* to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. ²⁷ And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave *it* to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; ²⁸ For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. ²⁹ But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom. (Matthew 26:26-29)

Yeshua often used metaphors and similes to explain spiritual things; at the Seder, He illustrated His approaching death by alluding to Himself as the sacrificed Lamb of the new covenant. Then He prophesied that after three days and three nights in the heart of the earth, He would rise from death to announce He had accomplished His mission. We *eat* His words by *receiving* them; the elements stand for the atonement of His death and therefore affect their partakers:

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²³ For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; ²⁴ and when He had given thanks, He broke *it* and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

²⁵ In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me."

²⁶ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

²⁷ Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

²⁹ For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. ³⁰ For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. ³¹ For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. ³² But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. (1 Corinthians 11:23-32 NKJV)

When we take the unleavened bread and *the fruit of the vine*, we remember Jesus' broken flesh and shed blood that provided everlasting life. For this reason, each believer must examine his heart, judging it by confession to the Lord or even to another believer. In this way, we prepare to receive the elements in good conscience, knowing the Lord has forgiven and cleansed us from all unrighteousness according to 1 John 1:9. If there's sin in his heart and he takes the elements with an impure conscience, the Lord will judge him; otherwise he would be condemned with the world. Carefully considering our hearts, we pause for others to do the same before we take in the sacred elements that bring His suffering and death to our solemn remembrance:

¹¹ "For the life of the flesh *is* in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it *is* the blood *that* makes atonement for the soul.' ¹² Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'No one among you shall eat blood, nor shall any stranger who dwells among you eat blood.' ¹³ Whatever man of the

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children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; ¹⁴ for *it is* the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.'

(Leviticus 17:11-14 NKJV)

Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (Matthew 4:4 NIV)

We who want the truth must not rationalize the Scriptures to please ourselves. The nature of the flesh seeks its protection, resisting its destruction and shunning the cross; unless our desire for Jesus Christ overrules the resistance of our flesh, we are vulnerable to deception. However, if we eat [receive] the Word, chewing it [meditating], swallowing it [storing it in our hearts]—dying to live, believing the truth, we will be changed into His likeness.

Historically, the Roman world practiced paganism, and its sculpted images brought their cities substantial gain. Artists throughout the Empire received their income as idol makers. When Christianity threatened the trade of the craftsmen and the division of an empire, fourth century bishops compromised the truth for comfort and traded our faith in the living God for the idol worship of Rome's pagan culture.

Though some among them argued against their decisions, the majority voted to approve them; in their apostasy, they departed from the Holy Scriptures, which God had provided through His chosen people the Jews. Their councils made unholy doctrinal decisions, dividing congregations and destroying knowledge. From that time, more doctrines and teachings tumbled into heresies by more demonic deceptions. The sins of the fathers are visited on the generations that follow their patterns.