

## COURSE 4

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# BREAKING BREAD SPIRITUALLY— THE PROGRESSION

The events leading up to God's spirit being poured out upon the believers (Acts 2) help to define the *breaking bread* that took place among them. In this Course we will look closely at those events and see the progression that shaped this idiom among early Messianic believers.

Since the scripture tells us that God led the Messiah to almost always speak in parables, wouldn't it make sense that the God-inspired New Covenant scriptures contain truths that are also somewhat hidden but revealed to those whose hearts are open to Him?

In the Old Covenant as well, many of God's teachings could be understood only spiritually. The learned man reads, but he cannot understand:

<sup>JPS</sup> Isaiah 29:11 And the vision of all this is become unto you as the words of a writing that is sealed, which men deliver to one that is learned, saying: 'Read this, I pray thee'; and he saith: 'I cannot, for it is sealed';

Paul speaks of this as well:

<sup>YLT</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:13 which things also we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Holy Spirit, **with spiritual things spiritual things comparing,**

<sup>YLT</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:14 and the natural man doth not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for to him they are foolishness, and he is not able to know *them*, **because spiritually they are discerned;**

In Course 3, we saw the progression from priests breaking bread (Showbread) in the Temple to Jewish families breaking bread in their homes to Jews in the New Covenant breaking bread spiritually. We also saw why Acts 2:42–46 makes no sense when interpreted as a new Roman ritual or as a church picnic.

Now we'll more closely examine the events leading up to the breaking of bread, as written in the Book of Acts (chapters 2 and 20) from the perspective of the Jewish

disciples of the Messiah who entered the promised New Covenant. As we go through these scriptures, keep in mind the Jewish history we've covered concerning breaking bread, from the twelve breads of the presence to Isaiah's and Jeremiah's references, all the way to the Talmudic references to breaking bread. Then, we'll overlay this with the New Covenant understanding of how all the natural things in the Tabernacle/Temple were used to bring out spiritual truths (as listed in Setting the Table 4).

### An Overview of the Progression

Later in this Course we'll delve into greater detail, but first let's start with a brief overview of breaking bread among first-century Jewish believers, divided into the following five phases. We first see Jesus breaking natural bread, which in the Jewish natural-to-spiritual idiom leads to the understanding of breaking bread spiritually—a sharing of God's word, with His presence and the Messiah spiritually in the midst. Whenever we see the breaking of bread in the New Covenant scriptures, an element of the miraculous is often connected to it.

#### *Phase 1: Jesus Miraculously “Breaks Bread” Twice to Feed the Multitudes*

Jesus “broke” five breads (Mark 6:41), then “broke” another seven breads (Mark 8:6), thus breaking twelve breads in total in the two events. He fed the multitudes with these *twelve* breads that he “broke” out to them. At one of these miraculous feedings Jesus compared himself to the manna, the “*bread* from heaven.” He then declared that he was the true *bread* and the living *bread*.

Shortly after the second miracle, Jesus spoke of the “leaven” of the Pharisees (meaning their false teachings). The disciples, however, thought he was speaking of natural bread—the remaining bread that they had forgotten to bring along. He then reminded them of the (twelve) breads that he had broken at the two events, and said, “How is it that you do not understand” (Matthew 16:6–12; Mark 8:13–21).

After one of the breaking-bread miracles, Jesus told the people to gather up remaining pieces of bread, “that not any be lost” (John 6:12). This pronoun “any” can mean “anyone, anything, someone, something...”<sup>107</sup> Was Jesus literally caring for the pieces of bread, or was he pointing forward to what the remaining fragments represented—the scattered twelve tribes of the Diaspora?

<sup>NAB</sup> James 1:1 James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the **twelve tribes** in the dispersion, greetings.

107 *UBS Greek-English Dictionary*, pp. 182–183, s.v. “**τις**.”

Eventually the twelve apostles (including Judas's replacement, Matthias) would go forth to gather the *spiritual* "pieces" of the bread, the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Before his death, many Jews had believed Jesus was the Messiah (John 12:19), then thousands more came to believe at Pentecost, and then another five thousand (Acts 4:4), as well as a great company of Temple priests (Acts 6:7). Then these disciples wrote letters, calling out to the Jews of the Diaspora (James 1:1, Peter 1:1) as they sought to bring in the pieces of the bread, that "no one be lost." Ultimately this extended to all people being called from all nations.

***Phase 2: Jesus "Breaks Bread" at the Last Supper in a Parable***

At the Last Supper, Jesus held one bread, then broke it into pieces, gave it to those present to partake of, and then said, "This is my body." The original Greek text clearly shows that Jesus did not mean that the one bread he held was literally his body, but that the broken pieces represented his spiritual body and pointed to the spiritual bread that he would provide in the New Covenant. Christ's spiritual body would be the true presence bread, as he manifests in and through his spiritual body (with the believers as members of his body). From this Last Supper parable, the apostles came to understand what Jesus meant, so they went forth teaching that *we* are now the body of Christ spiritually, and individually members of it (as covered in Course 2).

***Phase 3: Jesus Becomes Invisible Just as He "Breaks Bread" Right after His Resurrection***

Right after his Resurrection, Jesus walked with some of his disciples, but God withheld their eyes from recognizing who he was (Luke 24). Then Jesus entered their home, and in the moment when he began breaking bread and giving it to them, they immediately recognized him—and he vanished from their sight (Luke 24:30–31).

***Phase 4: Jesus Reappears and Is Recognized "in the Breaking of the Bread"***

These same disciples then ran to where the apostles were gathered in Jerusalem and explained that they had just seen the resurrected Messiah and that they had recognized him "in the breaking of the bread." Amazingly, at the exact moment they were speaking about recognizing him, Jesus again miraculously appeared in their midst (Luke 24:33–36). So Jesus became invisible in the "breaking of the bread," then appeared again (in their midst) in the "breaking of the bread."

***Phase 5: The Disciples Go Forth in God's Spirit "Breaking Bread" Spiritually***

Several weeks later at the Festival of Pentecost (Acts 2), the disciples—who were symbolically pieces of the one bread—were filled with God's spirit, essentially becoming what the presence bread/Showbread pointed to. By the time the book of Acts was written some 30 years later, a common idiom and understanding existed

that the “breaking of the bread” meant experiencing Christ and the word of God in the fellowship of the believers. This was what the priests sharing the presence bread in the Temple had pointed to. By now the disciples understood that they were living in the promised New Covenant and were fully accustomed to the natural-to-spiritual idiom of breaking bread.

### The Bread That *We* Break

Paul speaks of the bread that we break and shows that it is spiritual bread, meaning the fellowship of the believers in the spiritual body of Christ:

<sup>YLT</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:16b the bread that **we** break—is it not the fellowship of the body of the Christ?

In the very next verse, Paul shows that we are (figuratively) pieces of the one bread that Jesus held and then broke at the Last Supper, that we are the members of the one body (of Christ), and that we all—the fellowship of the believers—feed on and partake spiritually of this one spiritual bread:

<sup>NAS</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:17 Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.

We must remember that the Bible is a few thousand years of history condensed into one book, and therefore we are given only short bits of conversation. We can be sure that after Jesus became invisible (while breaking bread) and then reappeared just as the disciples were discussing the breaking of the bread, many hours of heated debate would have ensued as to what this all meant. The disciples would surely have talked about the Lord, saying that whenever two or three are gathered in his name he is there in the midst (Matthew 18:20). They would have discussed what Jesus meant when he broke the bread and fed the multitudes in the two miracles with the twelve breads. They would have contemplated what the Messiah really meant when he broke bread at the Last Supper and said its pieces were his body. They would have considered what the twelve breads that the priests broke in the Temple every Sabbath pointed to. They would have come to understand that, as pieces of the one bread, they essentially represented the “breads of the presence,” for after Pentecost they knew that God’s spirit dwelt within them:

<sup>NAS</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

This is how their natural-to-spiritual idiom of breaking bread would have developed, whereby they would know that God's spirit was present as they gathered together and broke bread spiritually.



As we turn to look at Acts 2, it's worth mentioning again that scholars largely agree that the Book of Acts was written around 30 years after the Crucifixion and God's spirit falling at Pentecost. By this time, the believers were very familiar with the spiritual idiom of breaking bread, which had already been well established long before the Book of Acts was written. These believers would have had those three decades to ponder and discuss these events and to understand the idiom concerning both natural and spiritual breaking of bread.

<sup>NAS</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; **then the spiritual.**

It is essential to understand all the spiritual teachings concerning breaking bread that led up to Acts 2, as well as the more than 1,500 years of this Jewish idiom, for only then can we understand the true meaning of these scriptures:

<sup>NAS</sup> Acts 2:42 And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the **breaking of bread** and to prayer.

<sup>GNT</sup> Acts 2:42 ἦσαν δὲ προσκαρτεροῦντες τῇ διδασκαλίᾳ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ **κοινωνίᾳ**, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς.

The Greek word *koinonia*, translated here as “fellowship,” is the same word used above in 1 Corinthians 10:16 for fellowship (sometimes translated as “communion”). The believers were *not* continually devoting themselves to a Communion ritual, but to the true spiritual communion that they were experiencing with God's very presence dwelling among them.

It must be remembered that in the long history of the Jewish nation, the believers had never before experienced God's spirit dwelling directly within them, although He was often with them from a distance. This was a powerful new experience for them. In the Old Covenant, their sins were never fully expiated, and thus the high priest would have to enter the Temple with the blood of the sacrifice each new year on the Day of Atonement. However, in the New Covenant we are sanctified and brought near to God by the true sacrifice of the Messiah. So this would have been a

shocking phenomenon in their time when, on the day of Pentecost, God began filling them directly with His Holy Spirit.

Getting back to Acts 2:42, there is only one other place in the Bible where this exact same Greek word for “breaking” occurs, and that is in Luke 24:35, which took place seven weeks earlier, on the day of the Resurrection:

<sup>NAS</sup> Luke 24:35 And they *began* to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them **in the breaking of the bread**.

Young’s Literal Translation translates this verse as:

<sup>YLT</sup> Luke 24:35 and they were telling the things in the way, and how he was **made known to them** in the breaking of the bread,

Then Jesus immediately appeared again in their midst, right as they were speaking about the breaking-bread experience:

<sup>NAS</sup> Luke 24:36 And **while** they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst.

The following scriptures relate this account of them first recognizing Jesus as he took out bread and broke it out to them:

<sup>NAS</sup> Luke 24:30 And it came about that when He had reclined *at the table* with them, He took the bread and blessed *it*, and breaking *it*, He *began* giving *it* to them.

<sup>NAS</sup> Luke 24:31 And their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight.

His invisible presence in the breaking of bread was the beginning of the spiritual fulfillment of the promise he had previously made:

<sup>NAS</sup> Matthew 18:20 “For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst.”

About seven weeks after the Messiah’s Last Supper bread parable and after he was revealed to them in the breaking of bread, we come to Pentecost. Here, God’s spirit is poured out on the believers (Acts 2), and again we see them *breaking bread*:

Acts 2:42 “continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

So let’s look again at Acts 2:42 through the eyes of the first-century Jewish believers who had grown up going to the Temple at the time of the daily sacrifices, and for the morning and evening prayers and the scripture reading that followed. As we saw in Course 3, the *Encyclopedia Judaica* describes this well:

### The Daily Service

In the second Temple, **prayers**, blessing and **Pentateuchal readings** were added to the Temple service. After the offering of the incense, the priests gathered together on the steps of the entrance hall and blessed the assembled people with the Priestly blessing (Tam. 7:2) . . .

During the offering of the incense the people used to gather in the azarah for prayer. The libation of wine at the conclusion of every tamid sacrifice was accompanied by levitical singing. After the service the members of the division of Israelites deputed to accompany the daily Temple services **gathered for Scripture reading and prayer**.<sup>108</sup>

This description with prayers and Pentateuchal readings fits perfectly with that given in the Book of Acts, where the fellowship of the believers is described as the “breaking of the bread” (which was a spiritual depiction of sharing God’s word) and the prayers:

<sup>YLT</sup> Acts 2:42 and they were continuing stedfastly in the teaching of the apostles, and the fellowship, *and* the breaking of the bread, and the prayers.

<sup>GNT</sup> Acts 2:42 ἦσαν δὲ προσκατεροῦντες τῇ διδαχῇ τῶν ἀποστόλων καὶ τῇ κοινωνίᾳ, τῇ κλάσει τοῦ ἄρτου καὶ ταῖς προσευχαῖς.

In the Greek, there is no “*and*” (italicized by me, above) after “the fellowship”; this has been incorrectly inserted into the English translation. I believe that by dropping “and,” this Greek construction is revealed to be appositional,<sup>109</sup> showing that their “fellowship/communion” *was* the “breaking of the bread and the prayers,” just as we saw in the quote from the *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

108 *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 15, p. 974, s.v. “Temple/The Daily Service.”

109 Walvoord and Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary (New Testament)*, p. 360.

Continuing in the Jewish idiom of drawing out spiritual truths from the natural service in the Temple, believers were now breaking bread figuratively with the Messiah spiritually in their midst as they met at Solomon’s Porch in the Temple (Acts 3:11; 5:12)—the same location where the Messiah had often taught (John 10:23).

In his work *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, Daniel B. Wallace examines this Greek construction in Acts 2:42 and shows two options<sup>110</sup> for understanding it. I believe that the first option he gives is the correct one:

Either this pattern of worship was well known in the early church because it was the *common* manner in which it was done, or . . .<sup>111</sup>

Wallace writes this not to connect it to Jewish history but to demonstrate a result of the structure and wording of the Greek text. But we see from the earlier quote of the Daily Service in the Temple that this service in the form of Pentateuchal readings and prayers was the common method of worship in first-century Jerusalem. We also know that early believers in the Messiah continued this same method of worship for some time with extra emphasis, revelation, and spiritual understanding. Additionally, they experienced powerful miracles, which often happened among them as God’s spirit moved:

NIV Acts 2:43 Everyone was filled with awe,<sup>112</sup> and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

It is clear that in the natural-to-spiritual idiom of these early believers, the spiritual fellowship/communion (*koinonia*, Acts 2:42) meant the sharing of the word of God (breaking the true bread) and the prayers.<sup>113</sup> And we see that the New Covenant believers used this same idiom by referring to the time of the scripture reading and sharing as “breaking bread,” meaning sharing God’s word as it came from Moses and the prophets, but also sharing Christ and his words—the bread of heaven, the bread of life.



This term “breaking bread” was so common among the believers that it was also used to denote their gathering together on the first day of the week (our Sunday) to share and hear God’s word:

110 The other option Wallace gives is “. . . or Luke was attempting to convey that each element of the worship was the only one deserving of the name (*par excellence*).”

111 Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics*, p. 225.

112 The Greek word translated into English as “awe” can also mean fear, dread, terror, reverence (for God), etc.

113 See also Luke 1:8–17 for the incense offering.

<sup>YLT</sup> Acts 20:7 And **on the first of the week**, the disciples having been gathered together **to break bread**, Paul was discoursing to them, about to depart on the morrow, he was also **continuing the discourse till midnight**,

The stated reason for their gathering was “to break bread”; again this did not mean natural but *spiritual* bread, as they could thus delve more deeply into the scriptures while among Messianic believers of like understanding. Many believers were still going to the Synagogue on the Saturday Sabbath<sup>114</sup> and also meeting the following day where they could more freely share their understandings in the Messiah. This was the very purpose of their gathering: to share the word of God and partake of the spiritual nourishment, as verse 11 continues:

<sup>YLT</sup> Acts 20:11 and having come up, and having broken bread, and having **tasted**, for a long time also having talked—**till daylight**, so he went forth,

These spiritually minded Jews were not breaking bread in a ritual until daybreak, nor were they sharing an all-night Christian picnic; they were tasting spiritual food and the true bread that Paul was sharing as they gathered together. The *UBS Greek-English Dictionary* shows that this word “tasted” can also mean “experience.” This same Greek word translated as “tasted” above is also used in the following scriptures, where it speaks of *spiritually* tasting or experiencing:

<sup>NAS</sup> Hebrews 6:4 For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have **tasted** of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit,

<sup>NAS</sup> Hebrews 6:5 and have **tasted** the good word of God and the powers of the age to come,

The Jews were familiar with this Greek word because it was the same one used in the Greek Septuagint when David told the people to “taste” and see that the Lord was good:

<sup>NAS</sup> Psalm 34:8 O **taste** and see that the LORD is good; How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Type text here

<sup>114</sup> Acts 9:2, 20; 13:5; 14:1; 26:11, etc.

David speaks again of tasting below, showing their common Jewish idiom of spiritually tasting God's word:

<sup>KJV</sup> Psalm 119:103 How sweet are **thy words** unto my **taste!** *yea,*  
*sweeter* than honey to my mouth!

These men of God were not gathering together in Acts 20 with the main purpose of eating natural food or to celebrate the “Blessed Eucharist” ritual until daylight. The Greek shows that they were coming together to *spiritually* break bread, and it was their conversing and experiencing the word of God that constituted the breaking bread:

<sup>YLT</sup> Acts 20:11 and having come up, and having broken bread, and having **tasted**, for a long time **also** having talked—**till daylight**, so he went forth,

According to the *UBS*, the Greek word translated as “also” above can also mean “and so.” This definition fits much better in this context, where it means “**and so** having discussed till daybreak, so he went forth.” Their breaking bread referred to tasting and experiencing the word of God, which they shared and discussed until daylight.

No Roman Church existed at this time, so the ritual of Communion was not something these Jews partook of. Nor did Jesus ever say anything about a Communion ritual. These were men and women of God who had recently been filled with God's spirit, believers who were coming to share the words of the Messiah and to fellowship in spiritual things. Ultimately they came to fully understand that Yeshua (Jesus) and God's spirit would be in their midst in the spiritual breaking of bread.

This also aligns with the spiritual “meals” of which they were partaking in Acts 2:

<sup>NAS</sup> Acts 2:46 And day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their **meals** together with gladness and sincerity of heart,

The Greek word for “meals” was often used for spiritual meals. It is also used in the scriptures below where it is translated as “food,” again meaning spiritual food:

<sup>NAS</sup> Hebrews 5:12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid **food**.

<sup>NAS</sup> Hebrews 5:14 But solid **food** is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Using another Greek word for food, Jesus shows this same concept of spiritual food:

<sup>NAS</sup> John 4:34 Jesus said to them, “My **food** is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.

And one more example from Paul:

<sup>NAS</sup> 1 Corinthians 3:2 I gave you milk to drink, not **solid food**; for you were not yet able *to receive it*. Indeed, even now you are not yet able,

Below Paul shows the believers receiving spiritual nourishment as members of the spiritual body stay connected to one another. He further shows that nourishment comes from the head, then to and through the “joints and bands” (the Greek means “ligaments and connections”) in the body:

<sup>KJV</sup> Colossians 2:19 And not holding the Head, from which **all the body by joints and bands** having **nourishment** ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.

Once again, this concept of spiritual food was a common idiomatic way of speaking in the New Covenant, one well understood by the early Messianic believers.

As John Lightfoot states:

“There was nothing more common in the schools of the Jews than the phrase of ‘eating and drinking’ **in a metaphorical sense**.”<sup>115</sup>

It was only as the church was taken over by Rome that these words were reinterpreted as a natural (literal) ritual called Communion, the Blessed Eucharist, or Mass. However, neither God nor the Messiah was seeking a natural ritual, but true spiritual fellowship and communion:

<sup>NAS</sup> John 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and **We will come to him**, and make Our abode with him.

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115 Lightfoot, *Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica*, vol. 3, p. 307.

<sup>NAS</sup> 1 John 1:3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed **our fellowship<sup>116</sup> is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.**

### What, Regular Bread during the Festival?

At this point, let's turn our attention to a potentially huge problem that I have never seen addressed. Luke 24 states that Jesus breaks bread, and this occurs right during the Festival of Unleavened Bread. Since the Last Supper was not the Passover,<sup>117</sup> there was no problem with Jesus eating regular bread, as all the scriptures say. However, the events in Luke 24 take place a few days into this seven-day Festival during which, according to the law, all leaven was forbidden lest one be cut off from the nation (Exodus 12:15, 19).

There are a few possible ways to explain this. One plausible explanation is that such a ruckus was happening in the Temple, what with darkness covering the land until the ninth hour, the veil being torn in half, the earth shaking, and rocks splitting (Matthew 27:51), that the authorities decided to choose the option allowed by God to defer the Passover to the second month. The Talmud gives an example of a Passover being thus put off for a month when a man was crushed in the Temple.<sup>118</sup> Because of his death and the ritual uncleanness it caused, the Passover was celebrated on the 14th day of the second month instead (Numbers 9:1–14).

However, another option exists that I believe is the actual answer to this problem. We know that the disciples eventually understood that, after the Resurrection, they were no longer under Old Covenant law since the shed blood of Christ had now brought them into the promised New Covenant. The most obvious way that Jesus could show them this on the day of his Resurrection was by bringing out regular leavened bread and breaking it out to them. It was during this time of shock in seeing regular bread during the Passover Festival that God opened their eyes to recognize Jesus, and then, before they could even react, he disappeared. Then these two disciples ran out of the house to tell the apostles in Jerusalem how Jesus was made known to them during the *breaking of the bread*, and as they said this, he immediately appeared in their midst, just in case there were any questions!

This breaking of regular bread would not have been a sin, for after the Resurrection, the believers were no longer under the law of Moses but the promised New Covenant.

116 The Greek word for “fellowship” is *koinonia*, which is often translated as “communion.”

117 See “Course 1: Last Supper Ritual or Parable? The Messiah Held One *Leavened* Bread,” “The Three Major Greek Keys That Unlock the Gospels,” and “50 Reasons the Last Supper Was Not the Passover.”

118 Babylonian Talmud, Book 3, Tract Pesachim (Passover), ch. 5, pp. 119 and 121, <http://sacred-texts.com/jud/t03/psc09.htm>.

This would have been the most obvious sign that they were no longer under the restrictions of the ceremonial law with all its sacrificial offerings, purification rituals, and other regulations for the body (Hebrews 9:10). Jesus really did not need to say anything more, for the disciples would eventually put all these spiritual clues together and understand them as they went forward. No one could accuse the disciples of sinning, for they had run out of the house as soon as they saw the bread; if the authorities had wanted to accuse the resurrected Jesus of sin, they would have had to find him first.

Although the disciples were slowly coming to understand that they were no longer under the law of Moses, for some time they continued their activities in the Temple as they had always done, offering the same required sacrifices and purifications before entering. Here we see Paul giving notice of such:

<sup>NAS</sup> Acts 21:26 Then Paul took the men, and the next day, purifying himself along with them, went into the temple, **giving notice of the completion of the days of purification**, until the sacrifice was offered for each one of them.

For these spiritual Jews, their entire lives had revolved around the Temple, and when the Messiah and the New Covenant came, this did not change immediately. Eventually, however, they would understand that they were no longer under the law of the first covenant, yet to enter the Temple they still needed to follow protocol according to the law, as enforced by the Temple authorities.

Many commentators think this was all just a plan to make it look like Paul and the Jewish believers really kept the law when in actuality they were not keeping it. They think the transition from the Old Covenant into the New Covenant was immediate. I do not believe this, since the believers clearly did continue keeping various aspects of the law for some time, and the big debate in Acts 15 was only whether the *Gentiles* should be circumcised—not whether the Jews should continue this practice. It was Paul who moved most quickly out of the ceremonial law, as he had received the most revelation.

It was true, as he was accused of doing (Acts 21:20, 21), that Paul taught Jews in foreign lands that they did not need to be circumcised or to follow the law of Moses, for he understood better than those in Jerusalem just how far out of the law the believers were to come. Those living in Jerusalem would not have fared well if they had boycotted the sacrifices (those refusing the Passover were cut off according to the law), taught against circumcision, refused the Sabbaths, or tried to enter the Temple in any kind of ritually impure state. So while he was teaching and sharing the word of God in Jerusalem, the Jewish Paul also observed the tenets of the law as required by the authorities for any Jews entering the Temple:

<sup>NAS</sup> 1 Corinthians 9:20 And to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Law, as under the Law, though not being myself under the Law, that I might win those who are under the Law;

### **The First-Fruits Offering Before Eating the Bread in the Promised Land**

Under the law of Moses, when the Israelites entered the Promised Land, they were to give a sheaf of wheat as a first-fruits offering to God *before* they could eat any grain or *bread* from the Promised Land. This offering was to come soon after Passover, on the morrow of the first Saturday Sabbath that followed (i.e., Sunday). Thus, this would have happened in the Temple on the very same morning that Christ was raised. Christ arose sometime before sunrise on the third day after his crucifixion, just as he had told his disciples he would (Luke 24:1 and 21; Mark 16:9).

<sup>NAS</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20 But now Christ has been raised from the dead, the **first fruits** of those who are asleep.

This scripture reveals that the Messiah's Resurrection actually fulfilled the "first-fruits" offering. At some point, the Pharisees changed this offering from the morrow of the Saturday Sabbath to the morrow of the 15th-day Sabbath of the Passover Festival (i.e., the 16th day of Nisan). But God raised the Messiah as the true first fruits on the morrow of the Saturday Sabbath, as He had intended from the beginning.

This first-fruits offering and the subsequent ability to eat of "bread" in the *natural* Promised Land points forward to the spiritual bread of which the believers would soon begin partaking in the *spiritual* Promised Land. Only after the first-fruits offering (consisting of Christ himself) had been accepted by God could the believers partake of the true spiritual bread from the Promised Land:

<sup>NAS</sup> Leviticus 23:10–11 "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, 'When you enter the land which I am going to give to you and reap its harvest, then you shall bring in the sheaf of the **first fruits** of your harvest to the priest. 'And he shall wave the sheaf before the LORD **for you to be accepted**; on the day after the sabbath the priest shall wave it.

<sup>NAS</sup> Leviticus 23:14 '**Until this same day**, until you have brought in the offering of your God, **you shall eat neither bread nor roasted grain nor new growth**. It is to be a perpetual statute throughout your generations in all your dwelling places.

Thus Christ fulfilled the first-fruits typology<sup>119</sup> at his Resurrection, just as a few days previously he had also fulfilled the type of the Passover, having been slain on that pre-determined 14th day of Nisan according to God's plan (Acts 2:23). The bread that he broke out to them on this morrow of the Sabbath (Luke 24:30, 31), after which he disappeared but remained spiritually in their midst, pointed to the true spiritual bread that they could now share and partake of from the true Promised Land.

### The Lost Tribes of the Diaspora

Many people today are descended from the Israelites without realizing it. In our day this does not make anyone closer to God, but it's only to say that many were dispersed from the tribes in Israel to other nations during various wars and persecutions, and later they became a part of the countries in which they settled.

*Diaspora* is a Greek word that means "dispersion" or "scattered." It was used to refer to the Jews who lived outside the borders of Israel and Judah. We see the first-century Jewish writers of the New Testament reaching out to these dispersed Jews probably as a result, at least in part, of the parables Jesus taught when he broke bread, miraculously multiplied the twelve breads out to the hungry, and told the disciples to gather up the remaining pieces. Here we see James writing to the Israelites of the dispersion:

<sup>YLT</sup> James 1:1 James, of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ a servant,  
to the **Twelve Tribes** who are in the **dispersion**: Hail!

<sup>GNT</sup> James 1:1 Ἰάκωβος θεοῦ καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ δοῦλος  
ταῖς δώδεκα φυλαῖς ταῖς ἐν τῇ **διασπορᾷ** χαίρειν.

And here is Peter writing to these dispersed Israelites:

<sup>NAB</sup> 1 Peter 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the chosen  
sojourners of the **dispersion** in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia,  
and Bithynia,

<sup>GNT</sup> 1 Peter 1:1 Πέτρος ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκλεκτοῖς  
παρεπιδήμοις **διασπορᾶς** Πόντου, Γαλατίας, Καππαδοκίας,  
Ἀσίας καὶ Βιθυνίας,

119 In typology, the *type* is an element or event in the Old Testament that prefigures the fulfillment of it (the *antitype*) in the New Testament. Adapted from *Theopedia.com*, s.v. "Biblical typology."

In the two miracles when Jesus broke the twelve breads (five at the first miracle, then seven at the next), there may reside a few truths in these figurative pieces of bread that pointed to this gathering of the dispersed tribes.

The Talmud states that the high priest had authority over *five* loaves of the Showbread (see also 1 Samuel 21:3). After he took his portion for him and his sons, the remaining *seven* loaves were divided (broken out) among the other priests (Tractate Yoma). This is noteworthy because these numbers five and seven are echoed in the two miracles of Jesus breaking and multiplying bread. The disciples would later picture Jesus as a high priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5 and 7).

Was Jesus referring to the scattered tribes of Israel when he said to be sure to gather up the (twelve) baskets of bread fragments? (Note that in Greek the word *klasmata*, which is translated below as “fragments,” literally means “pieces of the break.”)

<sup>NAS</sup> John 6:12 And when they were filled, He said to His disciples,  
**“Gather up the leftover fragments** that nothing may be lost.”

<sup>GNT</sup> John 6:12 ὡς δὲ ἐνεπλήσθησαν, λέγει τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ,  
**Συναγάγετε** τὰ περισσεύσαντα **κλάσματα**, ἵνα μὴ τι ἀπόληται.

If Jesus did not intend this as a parable, why is he so concerned with gathering up the leftover bread? Also, the word he uses for “gather up” is the Greek word for “synagogue,” which means “gather together” as defined by the *UBS Greek-English Dictionary*. So Jesus says to “synagogue” (assemble or gather together) the pieces of the “break.”

Jesus has his disciples gather up the fragments of bread so that not “anything/any one” be lost. He is not concerned about the remaining bits of bread in a literal sense, but about the dispersed twelve tribes that represent the scattered fragments of the *spiritual* bread.

<sup>KJV</sup> John 17:12 While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, **and none of them is lost**, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.

We should not be surprised by how many baskets are filled when the disciples gather together all the remaining pieces of bread:

<sup>DBY</sup> John 6:13 They **gathered** *them* therefore together, and filled **twelve** hand-baskets full of fragments of the five barley loaves, which were over and above to those that had eaten.

When Jesus would again break bread at the Last Supper, this would take on another meaning, for in that parable Jesus showed them that as believers, they were the pieces of the one bread, as Paul understood:

<sup>NAS</sup> 1 Corinthians 10:17 Since there is one bread, **we who are many** are one body; for we all partake of the one bread.

During the Messiah's three-and-a-half-year ministry, God sent him only to the house of Israel:

<sup>NAS</sup> Matthew 15:24 But He answered and said, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

But in the New Covenant, after his death he became a light to the Diaspora and also to the Gentiles:

<sup>NAS</sup> John 10:16 "And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock *with* one shepherd.

Isaiah shows how the Messiah will be a light to the Gentiles and also gather the dispersed of Israel:

<sup>LXE</sup> Isaiah 11:10 And in that day there shall be **a root of Jesse**, and he that shall arise to rule over the Gentiles; **in him shall the Gentiles trust**, and his rest shall be glorious.

<sup>NAS</sup> Isaiah 11:12 And He will lift up a standard for the nations, And will **assemble the banished ones of Israel**, And will **gather the dispersed of Judah** From the four corners of the earth.

When the Messiah broke and multiplied the twelve breads, the apostles came to understand that Jesus was alluding to this aspect of his ministry of reaching out to those of the Diaspora (dispersed). This coincided with their understanding that the bread they were then breaking and multiplying was the spiritual bread:

<sup>YLT</sup> Acts 6:7 And **the word of God did increase**, and **the number of the disciples did multiply** in Jerusalem exceedingly; **a great multitude** also of the priests were obedient to the faith.

<sup>NAS</sup> Acts 12:24 But **the word of the Lord** continued to grow and to be **multiplied**.

They comprehended that the Messiah was the word (*logos*) of God manifested (John 1:14, Revelation 19:13), and by extension so was his spiritual body, the pieces of the one bread.



After the second miracle of breaking breads out to the hungry multitude had occurred and the disciples had forgotten to bring along the leftover bread fragments, the Lord shows no concern for the lost *natural* bread. However, he seems to shed additional light on the twelve breads being symbolic, possibly first connecting to the Showbread and by extension to the twelve tribes of Israel:

<sup>NAS</sup> Mark 8:8 And they ate and were satisfied; and they picked up seven large baskets full of what was left over of the broken pieces.

<sup>KJV</sup> Mark 8:14 Now *the disciples* had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf.

<sup>NAS</sup> Mark 8:15–20 And He was giving orders to them, saying, “Watch out! Beware of the **leaven** of the Pharisees and the **leaven** of Herod.” And they *began* to discuss with one another *the fact* that they had no bread. And Jesus, aware of this, said to them, “Why do you discuss *the fact* that you have no bread? **Do you not yet see or understand?** Do you have a hardened heart? “Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember, when I broke the **five** loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of broken pieces you picked up?” They said to Him, “**Twelve.**” “And when *I broke* the **seven** for the four thousand, how many large baskets full of broken pieces did you pick up?” And they said to Him, “Seven.”

<sup>NAS</sup> Mark 8:21 And He was saying to them, “**Do you not yet understand?**”

Twelve and seven were, of course, symbolically important numbers among the Jews. When one apostle (Judas) died, why not leave it at just eleven apostles? No; it was decided that it was important to add another, so there would be twelve (Acts 1:15–26).

When men full of the Holy Spirit were needed for a certain ministry, the apostles appointed seven (verse 3 below).

<sup>KJV</sup> Acts 6:1 And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration.

<sup>NAS</sup> Acts 6:2 And **the twelve summoned** the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

<sup>NAS</sup> Acts 6:3 “But select from among you, brethren, **seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom**, whom we may put in charge of this task.

They chose *seven* men to fulfill this ministry, and these chosen seven were not waiters cleaning the tables but men of God with special talents.

<sup>NAS</sup> Acts 6:5–7 And the statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, **a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit**, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. And **the word of God kept on spreading**; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Notice that these seven men were performing powerful miracles and evangelizing:

<sup>NAS</sup> Acts 6:8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, **was performing great wonders and signs among the people**.

<sup>NAS</sup> Acts 21:8 And on the next day we departed and came to Caesarea; and entering the house of **Philip the evangelist, who was one of the seven**, we stayed with him.

Among the believers, being an evangelist was one of the leadership positions that the Lord gave as a gift for the perfecting of those called out:

<sup>NAS</sup> Ephesians 4:11 And He gave some *as* apostles, and some *as* prophets, and some *as* evangelists, and some *as* pastors and teachers,

These seven men were certainly not just serving *natural* food at tables (Acts 6:2 further above), as the translation seems to imply, because they held anointed positions with God flowing through them in miracles and evangelizing. You do not need seven “men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” to serve natural food or to clean the tables. The “Grecians” mentioned in Acts 6:1, meaning Greek-speaking Jews here (according to commentator Lightfoot), could have done those things themselves.

The same Greek word translated as “ministration” (Acts 6:1 above) is translated as “ministry” *of the spirit* in 2 Corinthians 3:8 (NAS). Remember that the Messianic believers had been assembling in that part of the Temple called Solomon’s Porch, where many signs and wonders were taking place (Acts 3:11; 5:12). The apostles may have been studying the Hebrew scrolls in the Temple, or even teaching from the Hebrew, and therefore needed others to go minister the word to those Greek-speaking Jews.

### The Promise of the Messiah Was to Recover Those Who Were Scattered

In the Greek Septuagint, which was commonly read by Jews in the first century, we see God’s promises to the Diaspora (these twelve tribes of Israel who would be scattered):

<sup>JPS</sup> Deuteronomy 30:4 If any of thine that are **dispersed** be in the uttermost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee.

<sup>LXT</sup> Deuteronomy 30:4 ἐὰν ᾗ ἡ **διασπορά** σου ἀπ’ ἄκρου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἕως ἄκρου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐκεῖθεν συνάξει σε κύριος ὁ θεός σου καὶ ἐκεῖθεν λήμψεταιί σε κύριος ὁ θεός σου

<sup>NAS</sup> Nehemiah 1:9 but if you return to Me and keep My commandments and do them, though those of you who have been **scattered** were in the most remote part of the heavens, I will gather them from there and will bring them to the place where I have chosen to cause My name to dwell.’

<sup>LXT</sup> Nehemiah 1:9 καὶ ἂν ἐπιστρέψῃτε πρὸς με καὶ φυλάξῃτε τὰς ἐντολάς μου καὶ ποιήσῃτε αὐτάς ἂν ἡ ἡ **διασπορὰ** ὑμῶν ἀπ’ ἄκρου τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἐκεῖθεν συναῶ αὐτοὺς καὶ εἰσάξω αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸν τόπον ὃν ἐξελεξάμην κατασκηνῶσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐκεῖ

Isaiah showed that the Messiah would be *the covenant* to a family/nation, which the Messiah revealed would be from one father—God—and that the family/nation would then receive spiritual light to see and be a part of His kingdom.

<sup>LXE</sup> Isaiah 49:6 And he said to me, *It is* a great thing for thee to be called my servant, to establish the tribes of Jacob, and **to recover the dispersion** of Israel: behold, I have given **thee for the covenant** of a race, for **a light of the Gentiles**, that thou shouldest be for salvation to the end of the earth.

<sup>LXT</sup> Isaiah 49:6 καὶ εἶπέν μοι μέγα σοί ἐστὶν τοῦ κληθῆναι σε παῖδά μου τοῦ στήσαι τὰς φυλάς Ιακωβ καὶ τὴν **διασπορὰν** τοῦ Ισραηλ ἐπιστρέψαι ἰδοὺ τέθεικά σε εἰς διαθήκην **γένους** εἰς φῶς ἔθνῶν τοῦ εἶναί σε εἰς σωτηρίαν ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς

The Greek word for “race” above speaks of family, nation, or ancestral stock coming from one father such as Abraham. Jesus uses a similar word that the English scriptures usually translate as “born again”:

<sup>NAS</sup> John 3:3 Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is **born again**, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

<sup>GNT</sup> John 3:3 ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ, Ἄμην ἀμὴν λέγω σοι, ἂν μὴ τις **γεννηθῇ** ἄνωθεν, οὐ δύναται ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

The Greek word translated here as “again” actually means “from above.” It does not really mean “born again” but instead speaks of being birthed or generated from above by God’s spirit and then becoming part of His family/nation, whereby one’s sins are forgiven and one’s spirit, which was “dead” in sin (Isaiah 59:2), is given new life.

When Jewish writers of the New Testament wrote to these Jews of the Diaspora, they did not compel them to return to the land of Israel, for they knew that this was not how the Messiah was leading. One example was his response to the Samaritan woman who speaks at the start of this scripture:

<sup>NAS</sup> John 4:20 “Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you *people* say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship.”

<sup>NAS</sup> John 4:21–23 Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when **neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem**, shall you worship the Father. “You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. “But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father **in spirit and truth**; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.

The disciples knew that the Messiah was not called to gather all the Jews back to Israel, but rather to fulfill the covenant with Abraham by bringing them back into a spiritual relationship with God. The Jewish high priest, speaking by the spirit, confirmed that the Messiah would gather those scattered “into one”:

<sup>NAS</sup> John 11:50–52 nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish.” Now this he did not say on his own initiative; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but that He might also **gather together into one** the children of God **who are scattered abroad**.

God’s spirit gave this unction through the high priest to show that the Messiah would gather together into **one** the children of God who are scattered, and this is what the one bread at the Last Supper and the other breaking bread parables pointed to. Thus, the children of God are no longer pictured as twelve breads but as pieces of the one bread.

Initially the disciples continued speaking the Messiah’s words only to those who were Jewish, but later they would realize that the New Covenant was intended for all nations:

<sup>KJV</sup> Acts 11:19 Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, **preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only**.

In Paul's letter to the Romans, he declares:

<sup>NIV</sup> Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of **everyone** who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

Paul, of course, does not mean that one should always share the good news of the Messiah with a Jew first; rather he means that the word of God concerning the New Covenant came through the Messiah to the Jews first, but after that it goes out to all equally. And Peter came to understand that when God filled the Gentiles with the Holy Spirit, He did not show partiality; as the King James Bible reads, "God is no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34).

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