



"The value of life lies not in the length of days, but in the use we make of them."

—Michel de Montaigne

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Was Jesus Christ's Body Broken? (Part Three)

Conceptually, the image of a "[broken body](#)" is one of defeat. An image that springs to mind is of a warrior beaten and dead on the battlefield. However, [Jesus Christ](#) was not conquered; He held His head up until the end. He only bowed His head when He gave up His spirit ([John 19:30](#)). His death was a supreme victory, not a defeat.

He had finished what the Father had given Him to do, and He did it perfectly. He died after living a completely sinless life, fulfilling the [sin offering](#). He had also given Himself in complete devotion to the Father, up to His death, fulfilling the burnt offering. He had served humanity to the utmost, satisfying the meaning of the [grain offering](#). He had poured Himself out as a drink offering. His death would reconcile [God](#) and men, making harmony and fellowship possible, as the [peace offering](#) pictures.

His crucifixion was not a defeat in any way, shape, or form. He was marred beyond recognition, and people could count His bones, but Jesus Christ was unbroken.

Before the apostle Paul's recounting of the [Passover](#) in [I Corinthians 11:23-25](#), he gave other instructions that help us understand that the symbol of broken bread does not correspond with a broken body. Notice [I Corinthians 10:16-17](#):

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

Following this passage, verses 18-21 teach that a sacrificial meal joins a person in fellowship with the object of that sacrifice, whether the true God or an idol (demon). What is eaten symbolically connects the person to God or a demon. The Passover, then, unites us with Jesus Christ through a sacrificial meal.

Paul describes the [bread and wine](#) in ways that we tend not to focus on as much but are important to grasp. He writes that partaking of the cup of wine and the bread are acts of communion. "Communion" indicates sharing, participation, and fellowship. The bread is broken for the sake of sharing so that everyone can participate in the meal. Paul then clarifies that the bread is still considered to be "one bread" because we are symbolically part of "one body"—an unbroken body, Christ's body. That body is what we gather to share and join with—Jesus Christ, who is not divided (see [I Corinthians 1:13](#); [Matthew 12:25](#)).

Let us take this a step farther. When Jesus spoke about bread in relation to His flesh/body, He used it as a symbol of *life* rather than death. In fact, throughout Scripture, bread symbolizes the substance of life, the source of vitality and strength. Even in those few places that refer to the "bread of adversity" or "bread of [affliction](#)," the symbol still points toward life—just a life that is not as pleasant as one might hope. However, bread always relates to life rather than death.

In John 6, notice how Jesus Himself describes the bread that represents His flesh:

- "Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to *everlasting life* . . ." (verse 27; emphasis ours throughout)
- "For the *bread of God* is He who comes down from heaven and gives *life* to [the world](#)." (verse 33)
- "I am the *bread of life*. He who comes to Me shall never hunger . . ." (verse 35)
- ". . . that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have *everlasting life*; and I will *raise him up at the last day*." (verse 40)
- "I am the *bread of life*." (verse 48)
- "This is the *bread which comes down from heaven*, that one may eat of it and *not die* [referring to the [second death](#)]." (verse 50)
- "I am the *living bread* which came down from heaven. *If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever*; and the *bread* that I shall give is *My flesh* , which I shall give for the *life* of the world." (verse 51)
- "Whoever *eats My flesh* and drinks My blood has *eternal life*, and I will *raise him up at the last day*." (verse 54)
- "He who *eats My flesh* and drinks My blood *abides in Me, and I in him* ." (verse 56)
- "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so *he who feeds on Me will live because of Me*." (verse 57)
- "This is the *bread which came down from heaven*—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. *He who eats this bread will live forever*." (verse 58)

Could Jesus make it any clearer? Bread as a representation of His flesh (or body) is consistently and overwhelmingly a symbol of life—even eternal life. It is a figure of *living* flesh, rather than a dead body, let alone a broken body. Notice especially verse 51: The bread (His flesh) is not just something

that *leads to* eternal life; within this metaphor, His flesh is living! The picture is of living bread, indicating living flesh and thus a living body.

Certainly, aspects of the Passover do picture death. The wine representing shed blood is a clear one. Also, a lamb had to die to become the Passover meal. Nevertheless, the bread is a symbol of life, the life He gave—through living in sinless, devoted service—so that the world can have life. It is this life that He offered to the disciples at that momentous Passover. He is now living in our flesh as He abides in us. Christ's body was not broken, and the bread, broken so it can be shared, is a symbol of living flesh rather than death.

When we symbolically partake of Christ's flesh, we are taking in and being joined to His *sinless life*, not a dead, broken body. Before we can take the Passover, we must [be baptized](#) into His death, but we are saved by His *life* ([Romans 5:10](#)). Eating the bread symbolizes the living Savior abiding in us and our abiding in the living Savior.

He lived sinlessly, and we are accepted into God's presence on the basis of Christ's sinless flesh ([Hebrews 10:20](#)), for only a body undefiled by sin has blood that can pay the death penalty. But He had to live life flawlessly for that sacrifice to be effective, and we partake of that perfect life at Passover. We must eat living bread to continue our connection to our Savior, as well as to the others who are also eating of the living bread.

- David C. Grabbe

From the Archives: Featured Sermon

From the Archives: Featured Article

[The Offerings of Leviticus \(Part Five\): The Peace Offering, Sacrifice, and Love](#)

by John W. Ritenbaugh

The peace offering teaches many things, but one of its main symbols is fellowship. John Ritenbaugh explains that our communion with the Father and the Son obligates us to pursue peace, follow the example of Christ, and be pure.

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