

The Culture of the Kingdom The Bread of Life

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The early church continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. These were the four cultural norms of the kingdom to which the early church was immediately introduced upon the inception of the church itself. We've been exploring what is meant by these four things that quote, "They steadfastly continued," within. "They continued..." steadfastly means "with regular, deep, knowing involvement" as opposed to casual dalliances. Well what exactly was it that they continued steadfastly in? What was the breaking of bread? In an earlier broadcast we talked about the very motif of food, of bread and saw that what it was, was that God was showing us – from The Garden, from the time of the Garden of Eden on – God was showing us there were two types of bread: there was bread that brought death and bread that brought life. When a person attempted or made some effort to sustain himself by what he could do, by his or her own activities, the ends thereof are the ways of death. "There's a way..." a proverb tells us, "There's a way that seemeth right unto a man but the ends thereof are the ways of death because the way of a man is not in himself it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps." Man needs food from God.

Now the Scriptures speak of the table of show bread and we were discussing that in the last time, where in the book of Exodus when God begins to give the law of Moses together with all of the attendant ceremonies, He instructed the creation of a table overlaid with gold upon which vessels (or plates) of gold were to be put and twelve loaves of bread were to be placed every week. Here we have the juxtaposition between the manna that they could collect every day and they were told to collect and to eat manna every day, except on the sixth day when they were told to collect manna sufficient for two days because on the seventh day there would be no new fresh manna; that was the day of rest, that was the sabbath. But at the same time that they were eating this kind of bread everyday, they were charged to create twelve loaves of bread every week - not for eating in the way in which they ate manna – they were to put these twelve loaves on the table for show. And these twelve loaves were called "The Bread of His Presence".

At the end of their sojourn in the wilderness and in the book of Deuteronomy the eighth chapter, God says to them, "I took you through this vast and trackless desert to teach this

one thing: that man shall not live on bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." In short, there was a bread that you could go and collect and eat and that would sustain your physical bodies but there was a bread that was put upon the table different from the one that you went and collected and ate and that bread was to show the presence of God because there was something else to the human that needed feeding. The human does not only have a body that needs to be fed, the human has a spirit that is in just as desperate a need for food. But this spirit is fed by God himself. So God comes as bread to the spirit. But before the season when the Holy Spirit would be released from heaven to bring the revelations of heaven to feed the human spirit, to transform the human being into a son of God who was born as an infant but who would grow to maturity so that that mature son of God would handle the affairs of the Father with the maturity of a seasoned son in the like pattern of Jesus Christ, before that would happen that son would have to be fed first with the milk of the word and then with strong meat and would be taught to walk in the spirit and would be taught by a spiritual father who himself had learned how to walk in obedience to the Spirit of God after the pattern of Jesus who learned obedience by the things He suffered but who also grew in favor with God and man and came to be the perfect representation of God the Father on the earth so that by the time of His baptism by John, God would present Him as, "My Son in whom I am well pleased," and by the time of the Mount of Transfiguration, the event at the Mount of Transfiguration, what would be added is, "I'm speaking exclusively through Him; not Moses, not the prophets but through My Son."

So this is the evolution and this is the significance of bread; that there is one bread for the body and one bread for the spirit and it's different. God himself, the bread of His presence – feeds the human spirit and whoever seeks the kingdom does not primarily seek bread for the body; we seek first the kingdom and the righteousness of God and all the things for which our bodies have a need will be added to us. Nowhere is this notion more clearly delineated than in and around the sixth chapter of the book of John and the eighth chapter of the book of Mark. Now I'll review the events of both of those chapters. In the sixth chapter of the book of John, Jesus feeds the five thousand. The young boy had five barley loaves, small loaves, and two small fish and he brings them to the Lord; Jesus feeds a multitude. And then strangely enough, after feeding the multitude, Jesus has His disciples collect up twelve baskets full of fragments.

Now in the event around the feeding of the four thousand, which is a different event and it happens later in time, the one recorded in Mark 8, in that event Jesus feeds four thousand and they're in the boat after the feeding of the four thousand and Jesus asks them this question, He says...He asks them about bread and the disciples had forgotten to bring bread, this is from Mark 8:14, "The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for the one loaf that they had with them in the boat," and verse 15 Jesus says, "Watch out for the leaven of the pharisees and of Herod," the disciples obviously didn't understand what He was talking about so they concluded that this discussion had come about

because they had no bread. Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them, "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see and understand, are your hearts hardened? Do you have eyes but fail to see and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember when I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied, "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many baskets full of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven," He said to them, "Do you still not understand?" Well the question is: "Understand what?" Our focus, on the feeding of the five thousand and on the feeding of the four thousand, normally is on how many people are fed. His focus – the Lord's focus – in both instances, when He reviewed those instances in Mark 8, was on "How many baskets full of fragments did you pick up?" When they fed the five thousand they picked up twelve baskets; when they fed the four thousand, they picked up seven baskets full. What is going on? Well to understand this we must pursue further the things Jesus was speaking about in the sixth chapter of John. You recall after He had fed the five thousand, the multitude followed Him around and the next day caught up with Him in the city of Capernaum and they basically said, "When do we eat again?" And He said to them, "Do not labor for the bread that perishes," and they said, "Well Moses fed our fathers in the wilderness," and He said, "Don't seek to be fed in this way, there's more to life than this kind of bread." "I am the bread of life," He goes on to say, "whereas your fathers ate manna in the wilderness, they have died. But if you eat of Me you will live forever because I am the bread of life that has come down from heaven."

So the obvious question is, "What is the difference between bread like our fathers ate in the wilderness, manna, and this bread that You're claiming imparts life?" Well to understand that one has to understand what we were speaking about earlier: there's bread for the body and there's bread for the spirit. They were focusing upon eating enough bread for the body so that they didn't have to work anymore, like Moses and their fathers in the wilderness, their daily bread was supplied by simply going out and gathering it; there's no toil involved, they didn't have to go to work to earn money to buy food. But Jesus was saying there is another kind of bread that is all the more important and it is bread for your spirits. And so when they said, "What do we do to get this kind of bread?" He said simply, "Believe on the one who has been sent and I am that Bread that has been sent, if you'll eat of Me you will live forever," and they were thoroughly offended because to them 'eating of Him' was perceived carnally and they were offended at the notion of cannibalism. But He was not in the least talking to them about cutting off chunks of His flesh and ingesting it, that would begin and end in the realm of physical food. And the Lord's supper - the bread does not transubstantiate to become the flesh of Jesus, that would begin and end in the carnal. The wine does not transubstantiate to become blood, that begins and ends in the carnal. No, they're symbolic of something greater and that is they're meant to be food for the human spirit. The revealed person of Christ is food for the human spirit, it's not chunks of His flesh that would become food for his body, it's the revealed Christ who is food for the human spirit. And He was saying

to them, "Who I am cures that which was lost when Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because what Adam did then was to feed his own soul, denying his spirit bread that came from the tree of life. When that happens, man dies.

As long as the emphasis is on ingesting any substance within this human body, then we're still in the realm of death. The knowledge of good and evil did not bring life to man, it brought condemnation because man with the knowledge of good and evil is condemned because he is incapable of being good apart from God. Because the evil one said, "You shall be as gods." How successful can a man be at being God if he is in opposition to God? He dies. This is what sin was. Sin was eating the wrong food, sin was encouraging the soul....sin, the original sin was encouraging the soul to live in opposition to God and the whole metaphor was eating from the wrong source. Because you see, life itself is considered to be sustained by eating. God, in creating man, gave him a body, He gave him a soul, and He gave him a spirit and each one may be sustained. The body is sustained by physical food, the soul is sustained by the will of the man - the food that the man generates for himself - and the spirit is sustained by the presence of God. The soul may be sustained by the spirit if the soul is subject to the spirit.

So when man initially existed in The Garden of Eden, his soul blindly followed his spirit and there was no need to feed the soul independent of the feeding of the spirit. But when his soul exerted independence from God and ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil it brought condemnation to man because he knew what good was but he could not sustain it himself. It was the first introduction of law, to man; it was the way that man was condemned by what he knew. You see, knowledge is not benign. When you know, then there is a standard by which your conduct may be measured. If you know what good is and you know what evil is, then you're no longer innocent for your actions then may be categorized as good or evil based upon your actions. But apart from the Holy Spirit restraining man, his ways are very apt to be continuously evil, "The wages of sin is death because man cannot be sustained by the food of his own intelligence once he knows the difference between good and evil because it's that knowledge of good and evil that measures what he's doing as being either good or evil. You see he's no longer innocent and the loss of innocence is also the loss of life because the heart is the basis of mans judgment and if a mans heart may be judged accurately by whether he's good or he's evil, unless he's consistently good then he is subject to the judgment of being evil. But if you're heart is pure, then your actions cannot be judged as good or evil because you're living in a level above good and evil, that is you're living in the Spirit. That is why Romans 8:1 says, "The law of the Spirit is life in Christ Jesus," and it sets you free from the law that says, "If you sin you will die," the law of sin and death is the law based in knowing good and evil because if you know what is good and you're not doing it then you're being judged by the standard of good as being evil and there's condemnation in that but there is now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk by that standard. We walk by a different standard and it's the standard of life because we

have eaten, not from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, we've eaten from the tree of life. Jesus then said, "I am the bread of life that comes down from heaven, if you eat of Me you will live." Why? "Because your innocence will be restored because you're in Me and I am in the Father. So you have not departed from the Father to establish your own standard of good and evil. So if you're in Me, you've been "re" presented to the Father; I present you again to the Father." Jesus is not only the representation of the Father, He is the "re" presentation, the presenting again of the Father and we're presented to the Father as innocent in Christ.

Now in this story of the feeding of the five thousand and the feeding of the four thousand, when Jesus had them collect up the twelve baskets full, what He's saying to them is this, "I am that bread from heaven which bread was formerly represented," it was represented in a previous time by the twelve loaves on the table of show bread, the bread of His presence. "While you were eating manna, God required you.." speaking to the Israelites of old, "While you were eating manna, God required you to keep before your faces that there is more to your life than bread and more nourishment that is required than manna could give you. My presence is the nourishment that sustains you forever. And there were twelve loaves on the table signifying the bread of His presence; the food that comes from His presence.

How many baskets full did the disciples of Jesus collect when Jesus instructed them – following the feeding of the five thousand – when Jesus instructed them to collect up the fragments? The answer: twelve baskets. What is the message? The message to them, understood in the next day, John 6, the day after He had fed the five thousand, the message is this: "Yes, you came and I fed you like God fed your fathers in the wilderness a long time ago but you were not interested in who I actually am, you're just interested in having another meal. But who I am is the Bread that sustains you because I am the bread that was symbolized by the twelve loaves on the table; I am the bread of the presence of God. I am the bread which if you will eat will give you life, it will restore you to God, will remove the curse of the fall, will present you again to the Father in the One who is bread from heaven. I am that bread." But because twelve baskets full were collected, He's saying to that multitude that day, "All that I really am remains uneaten. Collect back up the fragments and what you will see is none of who I am was eaten while they ate their fill of bread miraculously produced like manna was given in the wilderness. So gather up the fragments and it'll tell you whether that generation has received Me or not. And what is the verdict? They did not receive Him. "He came unto His own," John 1:11-12 says, "and His own received Him not but as many as receive Him, to them He gives the power to become the 'huios', the fully mature sons of God.

So when He said, "Gather up the fragments again," this is what He's saying, "Although this generation does not eat the bread of My presence, there will come a generation that will." What generation would that be? The answer: the generation that receives the

revelation of this mystery. Behold, I show you a mystery, this generation will eat the bread of His presence and be restored to our fellowship with the Father through the Son.

The breaking of bread then is when we meet to together, the Christ that is in each one be shared with the other. Our fellowship is not about how we meet to have potlucks, that's how the household of God is arranged. And the breaking of bread is not about having the Lord's supper, the breaking of bread is how the life of Christ that is in each of us might be broken and distributed in our conversations together. The true fellowship that the Scriptures speak about, the word fellowship that we call meeting together to eat, that's actually the fellowship of the Spirit which is how the Body of Christ is arranged. But what we call fellowship is actually the breaking of bread, the bread that is broken is the bread of His presence in each of us. So our meetings together, these kinds of meetings should not be about lectures from the pulpit. The early church did not meet congregationally, the only time the early church met in this fashion was to hear an apostle. The normal meeting of the church early on was from house to house. So we're going to have to change the culture of the church - from the culture of congregational meetings run by pastors - to fellowship that meets in such a setting as would allow The Bread of His Presence to be broken and distributed that the people of God might have an abundance of food for their spirits. And I want to continue on this point when we come back.

I'm Sam Soleyn, we'll take a break and we'll come back and discuss this further. God bless you, I'll see you then, bye bye.