

THE SCRIPTURAL PRINCIPLE OF FOOD

Peter Hay, prepared for Apostles Fellowship series, 31 January 2021

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Introduction

In our Bible study session today, we will continue on our subject from the last couple of weeks. In this season, the Lord has been addressing us regarding our communion practice.

The nature of an *agape* meal

We have been called to forsake our sacramentalism and to *return to first love*, which has its fundamental expression in the context of an *agape* meal.

In our last Bible study, we considered the necessity for Christians to actually eat and drink together, publicly and from house to house.

Let us summarise the key points that we looked at last week. First, we noted that breaking bread by eating and drinking meals together, publicly and from house to house, is a fundamental aspect of our fellowship, or participation, in an *agape* meal.

It is helpful to note that the meal itself that we eat is not the whole *agape* meal. This meal has the four foundations of fellowship, which are definitional of the *agape* meal. Act 2:42.

Second, the physical meal that we eat and drink together is not 'turned into' the body and blood of Jesus. Neither is the 'blessing' of Christ's life received by partaking of physical bread or wine, food or drink; be they emblems or be they a meal.

Third, eating and drinking a meal together in the name of the Lord is the practice of those who belong to the house of the Lord. It is an actual, or substantial, participation in His house, as part of the *agape* meal. We note that the culture of a household has its most fundamental expression at the mealtime.

And the final key point is that we *come* to Christ, which means 'eating His flesh'; and we *believe* in Christ by the faith that comes by hearing the word, which means 'to drink His blood', as we receive His word and speak by faith with one another over the *agape* meal, which is the Lord's table.

They are four of the key points that we looked at last week.

Today, we will build on this content and further consider the subject of food, and *how* we eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood. We will specifically focus on the spiritual food that belongs to the sons of God as we participate in the *agape* meal.

Our desire for natural food that provides energy

Let us begin by considering the *purpose* of food. In the natural creation, we know that *food provides energy* to nourish natural life, enabling us to function.

Our life is not entirely sustained by food because, even if we were to eat all the time, we are still ageing and we will still die. But we do need energy to be able to function, or to engage, in life.

Our 'appetite', then, is our 'desire' for food. So our appetite is our *desire* for food, so that we obtain the energy to function.

This appetite, or desire, drives, or motivates, us to consume food so that we can obtain energy to engage in life in a particular way.

Eating was part of God's creation

The principle of eating food to nourish our life was a fundamental feature of God's creation. So, eating was not part of the Fall; eating was part of the creation.

According to Their Everlasting Covenant, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit multiplied life by creating natural life and then sustaining it by feeding it with the energy derived from food, which was also created by God.

'The Lord planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and *good for food*. The *tree of life* was also in the midst of the garden, and the *tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.' Gen 2:8-9.

God established natural and spiritual food

From this passage, we note that there are three types of food.

There is *natural food* to nourish and satiate the first man, which was Adam - 'Out of the ground the

Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and *good for food*. So, this food satiates the natural, or the first, man.

The second type of food is the tree of life – *the fruit of the tree of life*.

And the third type of fruit is the *fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil*.

We have considered this previously, and t we wrote on this quite extensively in Part 7 of *The Steps of Salvation*. God established *the tree of life* to provide *spiritual food* for *mankind*, while He established *the tree of the knowledge of good and evil* to provide *spiritual food* for the *angelic order*.

The food that God provided was commensurate with His purpose and plan

The *nature* and *effect* of the food that God provided was *commensurate with His purpose and plan* for the angels and for mankind. That is a key point.

It is not that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was there to tempt mankind; that is complete nonsense.

It was a food that was provided for the angels, and there was a food provided for mankind; and the nature of that food and how it was to be eaten, and for what purpose, was commensurate for those two discrete orders of God's creation.

God's Royal Law of love – the energy source for the administrations of mankind and the angels

As we consider sacramentalism and what we are turning from, it is important to understand that the *energy source* for *both* administrations – the angelic and that of mankind - is God's Royal Law of love.

There are not two different *energy sources*; but there are two *contexts* and *purposes* for that food.

Today, the purpose is not to talk about the nature of angels or their function or anything like that. We are talking about their *food* because, in the Fall, we ate of that food. The angels were created to *uphold* and *serve* the Law of God.

We remember that the Royal Law of God is the energy source for both administrations. And, for that purpose, they are mighty in power, great strength and wisdom. That food was to sustain them in that work; to enable their fulfilment of that purpose.

That was *not* the predestination for mankind. If you have in your mind that, when you die, you become like an angel, that is not true. And we should be very clear about that.

The predestination of mankind is to be *the sons and daughters of God*.

For mankind, remembering that the Law of God is the energy for both administrations, the Law of God was not something that we were to serve and execute.

For mankind, that Law was to be *written on our hearts*. We were to be *born of God's life*, and *God is love*.

So, the Law of God was to be written into the hearts of the sons of God, as the Holy Spirit poured the love of God into their hearts.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was for the angels; the tree of life was for mankind. The energy source for both is the Law of God.

The difference between the fruit of the trees is in how the two administrations relate to the Royal Law of love.

The administration of the *angels* is *serving it*; but the *predestination of mankind* is to actually have that love written in them, and for them to *participate in the fellowship of Yahweh*.

The role of the angelic order of creation

Let us consider the food that belongs to angels and to mankind in a little more detail.

The angels are ministering spirits who were created to uphold and perform the word of the Lord within creation, as *servants to the heirs of salvation*. Heb 1:14.

So, even though they were full of power and might and wisdom and strength, they were created to uphold and perform the word of the Lord as servants to the heirs of salvation.

What was unique about the angels, compared with us, is that the angels were created *fully complete and perfect* on the day of their creation. No more were they to grow; and they did not have to emerge to where they were appointed.

They were *created for* their appointment. Eze 28:15.

Let us refer to some Scriptures that communicate this to us.

'Bless the Lord, you His angels, who excel in strength, who *do* His word, *heeding* the voice of His word.' Psa 103:20.

So, angels still listen to and receive the word of the Lord, which is the communication of His Royal Law. And they are performing the word; they do His word.

And they are full of strength, excelling in strength. The angels are great in power and might. 2Pe 2:11. They are impressive, aren't they?

Paul wrote, 'Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?' Heb 1:14. That is their role; they are the servants to the heirs of salvation.

Now, the knowledge of good and evil belongs to the angelic order of creation. The fruit of this tree is to sustain them in their work of maintaining and upholding the laws of the natural creation, in accordance with the word, or Law, of God.

Lucifer fell from the angelic order and deceived Eve

Lucifer was one of the chief angels of this order before he fell.

To highlight the relationship between the function of angels and the nature of their food and where it was, it is helpful to refer to some Scriptures from the books of Ezekiel and Genesis.

'You [referring to Lucifer] were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God.' Eze 28:12-13.

The administration of which Lucifer was a chief figure had a presence in the garden of Eden. There needed to be a food source to sustain and nourish them for their work. Lucifer was made perfect, full of wisdom, strength, power; and he was in Eden.

When he attempted to deceive Eve to partake of this food, Eve listened to his voice. 'So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate.' Gen 3:6.

That *food* was to support the work of the angelic administration and was commensurate with *their* creation.

Eve had seen that, and she went to misappropriate, or interface with, if you like, the Law of God in a way that was servicing her own desire now.

The tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the food for the angels. I know that is a little brief, but it is recognising that that food was fit for purpose.

We obtain our inheritance through the principle of seed life – the way that Yahweh lives

Let us consider the food that belongs to the tree of life – the spiritual food for mankind.

Mankind was not created in the likeness of angels. God created man in His own image and likeness. Angels were created perfect; fully, complete functionally.

As I was thinking about this, I thought that that is an amazing reality for us – we are not created like the angels; we are created *in the image and likeness of God*. Man's destiny is to be born of the divine nature – God's own nature, His own life – and to live by this life in the fellowship of Yahweh.

So, while the angels were perfect on the day of their creation, the fulfilment of God's plan for the sons of God is through the principle of *seed life*.

We have made this very important point. The process by which mankind is to obtain what was predestined for them is through *the process of seed life*.

God did not do that because it was a novel point of distinction from the angels. The reason why we obtain our inheritance through the principle of seed life is because *seed life describes the nature of God's own life*. It is not simply a different process; it is the way that Yahweh Himself lives – by this principle of seed life.

The life of a seed reveals the process of offering through which life multiplies

The life of a seed, in creation, reveals the process of *offering*.

The angels are servants, but they do not multiply the life.

For us, as the heirs of salvation, not only is seed life describing how we arrive at our predestination, but it also explains that we arrive

at our predestination *through the multiplication of the life of God through offering*.

The life of a seed reveals the process of offering through which life multiplies.

The immutable nature of the process of seed life – how the word of God comes to pass

Moreover, it describes the *process* through which the word of God comes to pass. In this regard, in the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus said that *the seed is the word*. Mat 13:18-23.

The word of God comes to pass through an immutable process. The word ‘immutable’ or ‘immutability’ may be somewhat new to you; I doubt you use it all that regularly.

‘Immutable’ simply means ‘unchanging’. It means that there is an order of things, and that order cannot be subverted or avoided. It is immutable; it is unchanging; it is dependable; it is predictable.

In relation to the immutability revealed through seed life, we note that when we have a seed, it does not go from seed to whole tree.

There is a *process* that happens for every single seed, and we do not get to the fruit - to a new plant with a fruit - unless we go through the immutable, or unchanging, process.

In natural creation, a seed follows a defined and invariable process. That is what I mean by immutable; it is an invariable process to come to fruitful maturity.

It begins with a figurative death, doesn't it? We take the seed, put it into the ground and bury it. That is a figurative death, as the seed falls into the ground and it is buried. Then it germinates and sprouts and grows in an invariable process.

So, seed goes into the ground. It germinates; that is the next process. It sprouts; that is the next process. And then it grows as it puts down roots.

The fruit that it eventually bears, through the process of the life of the seed, is *in the likeness* of the seed that was planted. When an apple seed is put into the ground, it grows up and it produces an apple tree. And the fruit on that apple tree is in the likeness of the fruit from which the seed first came.

Now, this point demonstrates the principle of offering. As that seed fell into the ground and died, it sprang up and multiplied the life of which

it had received, which the ground had received. This is the principle of seed life.

There are two factors that we need to note about seed life. One is the *immutable*, or *invariable*, nature of the *process*.

The second element of seed life is that it is the means of *multiplication*. And *that* is what we were predestined to.

The fruit of the tree of life sustained Adam and Eve – His word, as they ate, was their provision

The food of the tree of life was food that was commensurate with that way of life that was not only our means of *arriving* at our predestination, but it was also defining *the culture of the life* that we were predestined to. The fruit is commensurate with that.

While natural food provided energy for the life and activities of the first man, this was not the factor that sustained his mortal life. The mortal life of Adam and Eve was sustained through their *daily fellowship* with Yahweh at the tree of life.

They had to eat, because that provided energy for their natural bodies to do the works that were prepared for them. But the reason why they were still alive was because they had fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life every evening. Gen 3:8-9.

Of course, this was post the Fall. Yahweh came to them in the garden in the cool of the evening. And that term, ‘in the *ruach*’, literally means ‘in the breath of God’. So, it means that He was meeting ‘in the Spirit’.

‘The Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”’ Gen 3:9.

The point is that He was expecting to meet with Adam and Eve in the garden at that time, because that is what they regularly did. The cool of the day would have been about the time that the couple were preparing their evening meal, using the fruit of the trees that were growing in the garden.

I love this, because the Lord made those trees to grow, and everything that was ‘good for food’. I suspect that Yahweh was absolutely thrilled to be able to eat and have a meal with Adam and Eve, and to teach them about the amazing creation that He had grown for them to sustain them. That

is a beautiful thought – that they learned about the delight of food to sustain their natural body.

But, of all the fruiting trees that were in the garden and all the delight that that would have been, the most important was the tree of life. This fruit was a central feature of Adam and Eve's meal.

So, think about it this way. They could have collected a 'meat' fruit and some spices and herbs from the field. They cooked these meals, but the *fruit of the tree of life* was fundamental to every meal that they ate. They had all these other elements, but *that* fruit was fundamental to every element.

So, the next night, they might not have had the 'meat' fruit; they might have had the 'kiwi' fruit. But the fruit of the tree of life was being added to this meal as they were in fellowship with Yahweh each afternoon.

This fruit was the central feature of Adam and Eve's fellowship meal with Yahweh each day. This daily fellowship meal was the source of *provision* for their participation in God's immutable will for them.

It is not only that the immutability is an invariable course of activity. It is that He has proclaimed, or declared, *the days which were written for them* before there was even one of them. Psa 139:16.

They were interfacing with the word of that will as they communicated with Him over dinner.

The fruit of the tree of life gave life to Adam and Eve as they *received* the word of God. It was not only the fruit of the tree of life that gave them life; it was the fact that the fruit of the tree of life was sustaining them *because it was being eaten as God was speaking to them*.

His word, as they ate, *sustained their mortal bodies* and provided them with *wisdom* and *direction* for the works that they were to do each day in the garden.

The next phase – God was to dwell in them, and they were to dwell in Him

This was to be their way of life until, in the course of God's plan, His immutable plan, they were then to be born from above as sons of God and made members of the corporate body of Christ.

And they were still to *continue to eat from the tree of life*. How do we know that?

It is because Jesus said, in the Gospel of John, that, as sons of God, they would continue to eat of the tree of life, as Christ abided in them and they abided in Him. He said to them, in effect, 'That's what it means to "eat My flesh and drink My blood".' Joh 6:53-56.

They were never going to 'progress' from eating in fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. But, instead of them being *with* the Lord in that meal, He was going to *dwell in them*, and they were going to *dwell in Him*. That was the next phase for them.

The desire, or appetite, for our own way brings death

Adam and Eve fell from the fellowship with Yahweh when *desire* was aroused within them for food *other than* what Yahweh had provided for their life.

We have said that the desire for food is an appetite. And this appetite for a food other than what Yahweh had provided was aroused within them when they gave heed, or gave their ear, or attention, *to another word* that offered them a pathway of life that they could define for themselves.

'Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise [These are all statements of developing an appetite for it.], she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.' Gen 3:4-6.

The outcome of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was that *this appetite* that had been aroused within her by giving heed to Satan's voice – that had been aroused within her for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – *became the fundamental motivating factor of every son and daughter of man*. It became the food that they craved for life.

The apostle Paul called this appetite, or desire, 'another law'. Rom 7:23.

When they ate from the fruit of the tree of life, that energy source was the Royal Law, which is

love, because the Law of God is love. 'Thou shalt love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbour as yourself.' Luk 10:27.

So, when they lost the appetite for that food, it was replaced with a desire, or an appetite, for the food, or the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which they would consume in pursuit of their own destiny to define their own name and works.

Paul called it 'another law'. It was other than the Law of love that defines the nature of relationship, or fellowship, with Yahweh and with one another.

For the woman, this appetite is for food that would satisfy her pursuit of godlikeness – that is, to create a culture and to bring forth identities in her own image.

So, then, she is driven to pursue 'food' - which would be information, engagement in activities, ideas, conversations - all around the pursuit, or the work, of defining a culture *in her own image*.

For the man, his appetite is for the 'food' that would satisfy his pursuit of the wisdom and power that belongs to cherubs. We remember that they are full of strength, power and might! He pursues this to *have dominion* over the context of his work.

That is what he is driven to do. He is either driven to assume that authority or he aligns himself with those who demonstrate that characteristic, which he desires for himself. It is an appetite! It is a drive!

To live according to this desire is to pursue and partake of what we believe will enable us to become what *we want to be*.

I will say that again: to live according to this desire, or appetite, is to pursue and partake of, or eat of, what we believe will enable us to become who we want to be.

Now, here is the scary thing. You can take the word of the Lord, and it can become to you the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because of your desire, or appetite, to have your own way through the use of that word; and it will cause you to *die*.

Implications of this appetite in the life of Christians

Now we will consider the nature of this appetite, or desire, for those who are in the church. We may try to understand how it is in the world, but what is more important is to know what that appetite means for us as Christians, because we *all* have another law.

We know that we have to put some things off, but it is helpful to think about what occurs when we endeavour to satiate that appetite.

The most obvious and acute example of this carnal appetite, or desire, for that food is *sacramentalism*. It epitomises this carnal appetite.

We remind ourselves in relation to this notion of appetite that sacramentalism is the belief that a person can obtain, or appropriate to themselves, blessing from God by eating and drinking the consecrated elements of bread and wine.

Isn't that exactly what Eve did? Remember, the *fruit* there was still the Royal Law of God. There is energy in the fruit, or the element of it – the Spirit of the Lord.

However, Eve took it to *service her own desire* to *define her own destiny*. This is similar to us taking 'emblems' that we think will grant us blessing, and will bring approval to the way in which we decide to walk our life - sacramentalism!

This approach to the communion can be reflected in *our approach to the word of God* where we appropriate the word as a means of obtaining blessing, and of avoiding the evil of pain.

We may even use the word to try to rationalise, in our mind, or *make sense* of, our pain. Simply trying to rationalise it is *not* the *fellowship* of Christ's offering and sufferings. The machinations of our mind to try to make sense of it are merely the action of the knowledge of good and evil.

Another common implication of this carnal appetite is a Christian leader's pursuit and adoption of a *cherub-like* profile in the church. We remember that Adam reached for this food to eat it, to become 'like a cherub' – *strong, wise, charismatic, powerful, effective in the ministry of the word of God*. That sounds like the accomplishments of a great minister. However, that is not so, because that is what *an angel* is supposed to be!

How are we supposed to minister? Who is our example? It is the apostle Paul, who came 'in weakness' with 'fear and trembling lips'.

This is completely the opposite to the 'cherub' profile!

Paul was persecuted in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings so that, in that *weakness*, the grace and power of God would be *mighty* to others, whereas the cherub-like figure is the source of the power, and they communicate, or exude, this power through their own projection.

Another common implication of this carnal appetite is a Christian leader's pursuit and adoption of a cherub-like profile in the church. They mistakenly believe that their authority and qualification to minister in the church is based on, and demonstrated by, the angelic qualities of power, strength, wisdom, *charisma*, etc.

Those who are enamoured by, and follow, these leaders are hungry for the same food. In fact, if they had half a chance, they would be *like that* themselves.

Do you see how it is an appetite? People may be Christian or identify as a believer, but they may still partake of a different food!

Now, this does not mean that we don't need messengers. Rather, messengers who minister the word that enables us to have fellowship at the tree of life speak the word of God, *in Christ Jesus*; not *on behalf* of Him! To speak *on behalf of Christ* is what *an angel* does.

They do not pursue the profile of an angel but, rather, like Paul, minister in the *weakness of Christ*, which is found in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. We can be very thankful for the understanding that the Lord is restoring to us in that.

Pursuing food other than the word of participation in offering

Now, associated with this cherub ministry profile, on the one hand, is the desire to *minister* in that way. But, on the other hand, those who are 'loyal' to that form of ministry partake of, or have an appetite for, the knowledge of good and evil when they ask someone to go on their behalf or to intercede to the Lord on their behalf or to 'mediate' the gospel to them.

Speaking about the obedience of faith, Paul said, 'Do not say in your heart' [or, as the expression of your identity], "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).' Rom 10:6-7.

Now, if that is our mindset, that is the pursuit of food *other* than the consumption of the *word* that leads to *participation* in fellowship, by offering.

Moses explained that this is how the Israelites chose to live under the Old Covenant. Paul quoted Moses, saying, 'Don't say, "Who will ascend to Us?"'

That is exactly what the Israelites said to Moses. 'You go up, receive from the Lord, and bring down to us His word, and all that you say, we will do.' So, this is *our flesh* exercising, or presuming, to be able to fulfil the Royal Law of God. 'Don't say, "Who will ascend into heaven on our behalf?'

Moses explained that this was how the Israelites chose to live under the Old Covenant. Interestingly, the psalmist wrote, concerning the children of Israel and their wilderness, that God 'fed them with the food of angels' as they journeyed through the wilderness under the conditions of the Old Covenant – He fed them with the food of angels.

Moses, reflecting on this in the book of Deuteronomy, looking back, said to them that the Lord Himself 'humbled them in their wilderness'. Remember that this was the generation that did not die. This is the generation that was supposed to go in and inherit the promised land.

He said to them that the Lord humbled that generation in the wilderness so that they would know that 'man shall not live by bread alone' – by the satiation of the resourcing of himself – but that *he lives* 'by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord'.

These words were quoted when Jesus was fasting for forty days and forty nights, and the Devil came and tried to convince Him to turn the stones into bread.

To ask someone to ascend for us, on our behalf, and to mediate the word so that if we fulfil that word we will obtain a blessing, is to 'eat angels' food' – and we are denying that we are to live by *every word that proceeds* from the mouth of God. We

are responsible for hearing, and receiving, and participating.

And a person who asks, 'Who will ascend into heaven?' wants a cherub-like leader to ascend into heaven on their behalf and to 'bring Christ down' to them through doctrinal prescription or patriarchy.

In return for their allegiance to the leader and their ministry, the believer presumes that they will be acceptable to God. Their 'acceptability' to God is according to their connection with this figure. Their loyalty to the leader becomes a 'substitute', or a 'different appetite', for their own accountability to live as a son of God and to be joined to the fellowship of the Father and the Son.

Now, what about a person who asks, 'Who will descend into the abyss?' They are seeking to be *delivered* from their suffering; from their weakness; and from their condemnation, through a miraculous ministry of the Spirit of God.

It is clear that they have no faith for participation in the sufferings of Christ, so they do not understand that the Spirit has been given to them, not to alleviate their suffering – *suffering* is not even the *factor* here! – but to enable them to join *the fellowship of Christ's travail*, through which they are being brought to glory as a son of God.

Demonstrating the obedience of faith to participate; the word in our mouth; a cultural reality

Now, instead of saying, 'Who will ascend' or 'Who will descend on my behalf to minister to my need?', Paul said that they were not to speak this way.

Rather, they were to demonstrate the *obedience of faith*. He said that 'obedience of faith is revealed by those for whom the word (which is preached to them) has become a cultural reality in their lives'.

He said, '*It's in your heart.*' It has become a cultural reality through 'eating'. You have consumed it, digested it, and are applying it, as a *cultural practice* to the Lord; not to a figure.

It is in our mouth, then, as a ministry to others! 'The word is in your heart and in your mouth.' If it is in your mouth, are not you the one who is ministering bread, food, to another?

This is what we've understood as the reality of our communion together. The words and ministry

that we have one to another is *the ministry of the bread and the wine*.

This is the fellowship of 'giving and receiving' that should characterise our fellowship in the *agape* meal.

Partaking of the word because we are poor in spirit - blessing

Now, it is most important for us to recognise that our restoration to an *agape* meal is not merely a 'better' church practice or a 'more accurate' Christian rite.

Further, if we are not delivered from our appetite for the knowledge, or the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, we will take the word on the *agape* meal and we will make it *another sacramental practice* used to bless ourselves.

The issue is not the *word* – the word is true; the word is illuminated.

The issue is, 'What is driving us to partake of it?'

It is most important for us to recognise that our restoration to the *agape* meal is merely a better church practice or a more accurate rite, unless we obtain the blessing of being *poor in spirit*.

We are no longer the source or the definer or the word that we need – that is being poor in spirit. We say, 'I don't even know what I need.'

Unless we obtain the blessing of being poor in spirit as those for whom repentance has become a foundation – *turning* to the Lord so that the veil of our fleshly perspective is being removed – we will *make* the *agape* meal into a new sacramental activity.

We will not be able to help doing it; and we will not even know that we have done so!

That is the blessing which we desire, not the blessing of the elements to us. It is the *blessing* of being 'poor in spirit'.

It is 'not laying again the foundation of repentance', so that *faith* can be exercised – which is 'speaking'; participation!

Joined to the process of deliverance and established in first love fellowship

So, we must be *joined to the process* through which we are being *delivered from* the appetite for the knowledge of good and evil.

And we must be *established*, by faith, in *the fellowship of first love*, to which we were predestined by God.

Do you see that merely obtaining a better understanding of the *agape* meal will do nothing for us unless our appetite changes; unless we begin to *see*, and *participate* in eating from, the tree of life.

And sacramentalism is not only about the emblems; it is also about what drives us to *live* by *emblems*, which we superimpose on 'another' meal.

Eating from the tree of life – the spiritual food of God's word

We will now consider the nature of 'spiritual food'. What does it mean to 'eat from the tree of life'?

We know that we have to *come* to Christ so that we don't hunger; and that we need to *believe* so that we don't thirst. But how does this happen in practical terms?

Now, *the word of God* is the spiritual food that we are to eat.

Now, we may take the word of God, when our appetite is motivated by the flesh, to make our life 'blessed', which means fulfilling what we desire, and avoiding pain.

We will consider the implication of actually eating spiritual food, motivated by an appetite for offering.

Hearing, receiving, eating and speaking the food of His word

In this regard, the Lord gave directions to the prophet Ezekiel.

The Lord said to Ezekiel, 'But you, son of man.' Eze 2:8. I love that! He was speaking to Ezekiel, and Ezekiel was not born of God. But He addressed Ezekiel as 'an identity'.

He said, 'You, son of man, hear what I say to you.' And He is saying to you and me, as sons and daughters of men, 'Hear what I say to you.' This is, being given 'the *ear of a disciple*', just as Jesus was given the ear of a disciple. Isa 50:4.

'But you, son of man, *hear* what I say to you. Do not be rebellious like that *rebellious* house; open your mouth and *eat* what I give to you.'

First, there has to be an *ear to receive* what is spoken.

And then he said, in effect, 'Hearing what is spoken needs to move to *eating* what is given to us' – 'Open your mouth and *eat* what I give to you'.

'Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me.' Eze 2:9.

Is not this the right hand of Christ in which there are 'stars', or 'messengers', who are proclaiming a word to us! So, he saw that the food that he was to eat came from the hand of the Lord.

'Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were lamentations and mourning and woe.' Eze 2:10.

This is amazing because, if you are partaking of the tree of life, motivated by the love of God which is being poured into your heart, you will not be eating for the sake of obtaining the blessing and avoiding evil.

Rather, you are eating and drinking to *participate* in what He says.

And that is 'sweet in the mouth', as we delight in the word together.

But it also means *enduring* in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings that are characterised by 'lamentation, mourning and woe'.

'Moreover He said to me, "Son of man, eat what you find; eat the scroll, and go, *speak* to the house of Israel." So I opened by mouth, and He caused me to eat the scroll.' Eze 3:1-2.

You see, it wasn't him 'taking hold' of it! All he had to do was to *obey*. And how was that? Ezekiel opened his mouth.

'He *caused* me to eat it.' This is part of the demeanour of the one who is poor in spirit. When we come to hear the word, we come to present ourselves. We turn to the Lord, and He enables us, or causes us, to *eat it*.

So, we need to put away our presumption that that *capacity* is in our own hand.

'And He said to me, "Son of man, feed your belly, and fill your stomach with this scroll that I give to

you.” So I ate, and it was in my mouth like honey in its sweetness.’ Eze 3:3. That is precious, isn’t it?

‘Then He said to me, “Son of man, go to the house of Israel and *speak* My words to them”.’

This is now the word that is in his heart, which has become bitterness in his belly because he is connected to the culture of offering. It is in his mouth to proclaim as a witness and a testimony to those to whom he was sent.

This is true for us all! ‘Go and speak my words to them.’

His food indeed, His words, are Spirit and life

Now, Jesus, at the conclusion of His discussion on eating His flesh – which is food indeed – and drinking His blood – which is drink indeed – said that His words, the words that we are to eat, ‘are Spirit and life to those who receive them’. Joh 6:63.

This is an amazing passage. ‘It is the Spirit [the Holy Spirit; it’s the *Holy Spirit!*] who gives life; the flesh profits nothing.’

So, all of our endeavours to lay hold of that word, driven by our appetite to define our own life, will *profit us nothing!*

‘It is the *Spirit* who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words which I speak to you are Spirit, and they are life.’

And then He said, ‘But there are some who do not *believe*.’ This means that they haven’t *consumed* it, doesn’t it?

It is not in their heart or in their mouth as a confession, or speaking, *by faith*.

‘Having received the same spirit of faith, I *believed* and therefore I *spoke*.’ That is the evidence of *eating the word* – believing, and speaking – which is like a conversation, or a meal, with Yahweh at the tree of life.

His food is ministered to us by the Holy Spirit

Now, the Spirit and life of God is food that comes from Christ’s mouth and is ministered to us by the Holy Spirit.

‘He will take of what is Mine and make it *known* to you.’

This is the covenant – the New Covenant of the Spirit. No longer are we saying, ‘*Everything that You say, we will do*.’ We have accepted that *we can’t*. do what He says. Thousands of years of being unable to do His will have demonstrated that!

Now we have received the Holy Spirit and He is making known to us the things which Jesus has *said*; it is the *food* becoming the capacity for our life.

The Spirit and life of God that belongs to Christ is given to us when He speaks to us as the word that proceeds from His mouth. And it proceeds from His mouth as it is proclaimed by messengers who are in His hand. This is beautiful, isn’t it? This is exactly what John saw in the book of Revelation.

We cannot eat His food apart from fellowship

This word which we are to eat is multiplied to become *food for life, in fellowship*.

I will say that slowly and then I am going to ‘unpack’ it. The word which we are to eat is multiplied to become food for life, in fellowship.

The point is that we cannot eat that food, which is the word, *apart from fellowship*.

When we endeavour to do so apart from fellowship, what are we doing? We are being driven by the appetite of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and it will profit us nothing. This is an amazing point about what it means to spiritually eat and drink.

Food for life and fellowship; giving by speaking in love

So, it is *multiplied to become food for life and fellowship*. What does that mean?

It is identities (sons of man) *giving*, as an expression of love.

So, we have received the word, which is the Royal Law of God’s love. It is the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.

Remember, we are *abiding* in Him, and He’ is abiding in us.

And the evidence of *participating* in this fellowship is the expression, as an identity, of this *love* one to another.

It is the activity of *giving by speaking*.

So, we have received the word; it is coming into our heart as a culture; and the evidence that we are *consuming* it is that we *believe* it, and that we *speak* it to one another.

The conversation of faith and the conduct of offering

So our conversation around our table, as we eat and drink our meals in the name of the Lord, is important because that speaking is *the conversation of faith and the conduct of offering*.

That is how we eat *spiritual food*.

Eating is our participation in Christ's offering and sufferings

The point to note is that simply 'receiving' the word is not *eating*. The evidence of eating is *participation*.

Paul said, 'Is it not a *participation* in the cup? Is it not a *participation* in the bread?' 1Co 10:16.

The apostle John said, 'These words which we proclaim to you from the hand of Christ Himself, you receive, so that you may have *participation*, fellowship, *koinonia*, communion, with us.' 1Jn 1:3.

This is true eating, isn't it? The evidence of eating is participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

The activity of the Law of love – laying down life for another

This is the activity of the Law of love. We have already heard that the energy, or the substance, of the food is the Royal Law of God. The evidence that we have eaten it is our *expression* of love by laying down our lives to reveal another.

This is completely the opposite to a woman who is pursuing life to create an image in her own likeness; or to a man who is pursuing the word of God in order to have dominion over his family or his workplace or just his life.

Rather, this is the activity of the Law of love, which is the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. This is the Law that we live by as we are delivered from the other law, through the lamentation, mourning and woe that characterise the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

His word grants us faith for our participation

So, if you are eating this word, and it is sweet in your mouth, remember that Jesus said, 'When tribulations come *because of the word*.'

So, as we eat this word which has written on it 'lamentation, mourning and woe', we do not look at that and say, 'I am having this trouble because I am a bad person.'

Rather, we recognise that this word is *granting us faith for participation in the sufferings of Christ*, by which our appetite for another food is being taken away from us.

And the evidence that it is being taken away from us is that we are not looking to be *alleviated* from that participation; rather, we are *obtaining faith to join it*. We are *illuminated* to our connection to His offering, suffering body.

New creation life is sustained by feeding on Christ's life through His word – the agape meal!

Natural food does not feed and sustain new creation life; and new creation life is not sustained by natural food.

We know that particularly when we are fasting, don't we? That is actually the reason why we fast.

Nor can it be transubstantiated, or changed, into Christ's own Spirit and life.

New creation life is sustained only by *feeding on the life of the Son of God* given through His word. 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.'

This is wonderfully expressed in the fellowship of an *agape* meal where, having received the word of faith, we are able to participate in fellowship, or to *speak*.

By what means can we do this? It is by *laying down our lives to reveal one another!*

This is the principle of *seed life*, to which we were predestined.

We look forward to continuing to breaking open this word together.