

For we are all partakers of that one bread

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INTRODUCTION

The Lord's Supper or the Communion is an essential aspect of Christian worship on the first day of the week -Acts 20:7. Unfortunately, in modern times, a controversy has risen on whether a church should use one loaf of bread or not, and whether or not the unleavened bread must be seen to be broken into pieces after a prayer by the person officiating. This brief addresses the matter.

THESIS

At a service for the Lord's Supper, the two items may be presented at the table as:

A. Wine

- i. One mug of wine
- ii. Several goblets of wine

B. Unleavened Bread

- i. One loaf to be broken by hand
- ii. One loaf of slice bread that is pre-cut for selection or thin pieces of bread (wafers)

Either combination of A & B is permissible. How the items are shared in a congregation is a matter of **opinion**, nobody should attempt to foist his preferred position as **doctrine**. Yet, for orderliness and decency (ease of administration/speed, health/safety consideration, etc.), it could be EXPEDIENT to adopt Aii & Bii especially when the population of those present at the service is high OR such are from different households (residences). That seems wise in this era of various viral pandemics. Let us be reasonable or discerning as we exercise our **liberty in love to promote unity**. Under the Old Covenant there was divine legislation on the number of loaves or cakes that must be presented before the Lord as "*the Shewbread*" in the Tabernacle for officiating priests to eat (Exodus 25:23,30, Leviticus 24:5-9) but there was no law on the amount of unleavened bread to be used for Passover (Exodus 12:17-20,39). Under the New Covenant, the Lord has not specified the number of loaves to be shared but left that to the discretion of each assembly. In eating together, one 'break bread' so that he won't stuff it all in the mouth at once and choke, or for other persons to get from that shared meal -Acts 27:33-36

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

"**Take eat... drink ye**" are the imperatives or command while every other thing are incidentals which may be emulated. To show that it is a memorial of Christ's crucifixion, there will be exhortation and thanksgiving at such occasion but dining is the key purpose. The elements of the spiritual meal must be shared unto the saints who have assembled and that is how "breaking the bread" may arise. Consider

how the feast was instituted. One unblemished lamb was prepared alongside unleavened bread, bitter herbs and wine as a family meal.

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

Christ gave the twelve from their prepared Passover meal hence had to share. He gave exhortation on what He was about to do so they would know it is DISTINCT from the traditional Passover. Since it is customary to pray over a meal, He did so at the new feast he just inaugurated.

It unnecessary to make issues out of non-issues, there is similarity between the following:

1. **It is immaterial whether brethren drink from one or multiple goblets during the Communion**, it is the fruit of the vine that constitutes 'the cup,' not the physical container.
2. **It is immaterial whether one big loaf is broken and shared or several small loaves are distributed unbroken during the Communion**, provided that disciples eat unleavened bread in their memorial of the Lord's death.
3. **It is immaterial whether there are multiple assembly points or a single meeting place in a locality X (city/town/village)**, all the saints at X constitute *the church at X*, and should be overseen by the same presbytery (council of Elders).

However, some consider the physical act of breaking bread to have spiritual significance BECAUSE the body of Jesus was "*broken for us*" (*pierced*) though his bones were not broken -John 19:32-34, Zechariah 12:10; 13:6, Psalms 34:20. I believe 'breaking bread' in communion is precipitated by the need to share, not because the flesh of Jesus was broken. After all, the blood of Christ was also "*shed for many*" but today, nobody insists that thanks must be offered for the wine before it is poured out into goblets from the bottle. When the church at Jerusalem grew from 120 into thousands and a multitude, the believers could not have used "one container and one loaf" for the Lord's Supper. We know that they met daily in the temple to preach but ate from house to house in fellowship. When persecution arose, they had no choice but to meet as clusters in designated houses for worship yet remained one body.

CONCLUSION

That unleavened bread is shared or divided to be eaten is paramount regardless of number of loaves or wrappers/plates. [To "eat" is to ingest whether the bread is chewed or licked or promptly swallowed; it is a spiritual meal, not a carnal one meant to 'fill the belly.' Likewise, sharing the wine for Christians to drink is what matters over the number of bottles or mugs utilized.] In the Lord's church, we are one body and partake of the same Communion. That is why Paul could write unto the 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 being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

The matter is settled once we realize that the inspired apostle used "we" and stated that WE partake of one bread. That is a reference to the universal church! Indeed, a local church with thousands of members

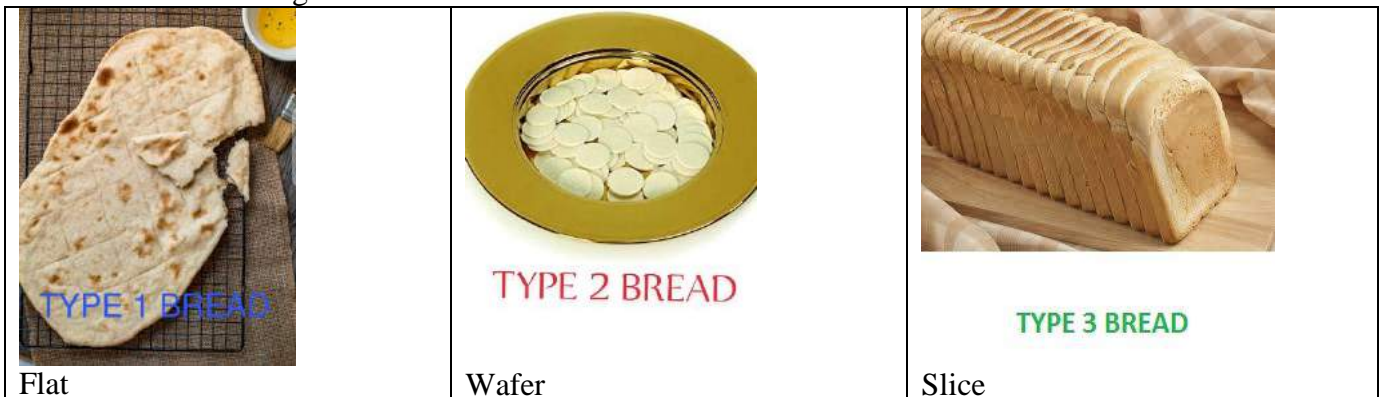
cannot use one loaf. Yet, they as a congregation still partake of the 'one bread' or universal Communion with Christ. In the Lord's Supper, to "break bread" means to 'divide and share visible bread.' Someone can **divide** something without necessarily cutting it physically. For instance, you can divide a house among inheritors by allocating the rooms therein to different individuals to own. You can divide N1000 between 5 persons by giving each N200, without mutilating a banknote. Likewise, you can divide bread between brethren by giving each disciple a piece of bread from separately baked or packaged set.

Questions and Answers

(based on discussions on a WhatsApp Group [MOG] in which I posted my view)

Part I

1. Given the following alternatives of **Unleavened Bread**



1. Do you consider any of the bread type inappropriate for the Lord's Supper and why?

Ans: No. It suffices that it be unleavened bread. Once the composition is right it is okay, whether home-made or purchased or donated from anywhere.

2. Does the physical breaking of the bread have any spirituals implication, different from that of the Lord's Supper as a whole? If it does, what is the spiritual implication? And if it doesn't, why? (Matt. 26:26, Luke 22:19; Acts 20:7)

Ans: None that is evident in scripture.

3. Is it mandatory for all partakers to observe the physical breaking of the bread? If it does why?

Ans: No! What they must observe is **sharing of bread**. The item could be divided *without necessarily breaking same physically* in their presence.

4. Is it compulsory for prayers to be offered for the bread before partaking? If it is, why? If it is not, why?

Ans: Yes. Prayers are needed so participants and observers would know it is a spiritual meal. Besides, it is customary to always give thanks before a meal.

5. Is the body of Christ considered broken while partaking of the bread during the Lord's Supper? We find in the Bible: "...this is my body, which is broken for you..." (1 Cor. 11:24 KJV)

Ans: Not really. [The body of Jesus was pierced not cut into pieces on the tree. The bread which is broken (distributed) in Communion represents his physical body which was given to save all men (Jews and Gentiles)]

Part II

The COC reject Roman Catholic doctrine, why are some of us now eating the bread prepared by the so called unbeliever?

Ans: Anyone can prepare the unleavened bread or make the wine from the fruit of the vine. I know that most of our local churches either make these items, or buy from the open market or get via donation from foreign brethren. I am not aware any reaches out unto Catholics for the items.

What a contradiction. Modernizing doctrine of Christ is been gradually becoming a method in COC, and I'm disheartened.

Can you break, or divide what has already been broken, baked into pieces again?

Ans: Yes, just try it and you'll see its not impossible! One can break (divide) bread it by cutting or otherwise.

If we are careful and logically following the given examples both by Christ and early Christians?

Ans: Examples are good so long they are associated with a command. We however, do NOT have to replicate every detail in a narrative... to follow an example. (E.g. observe at night, how to divide, use of upper room, etc.)

1. Is LS a generic or specific command?

Ans: LS is a specific command. "Eat this bread" is THE command stated by Christ.

To "break bread" is an expediency which can be achieved in different ways to fulfill that command; includes cutting a big loaf or apportioning separately baked small loaves.

2. If a command is specified, both in Items and the mode, do the observers have the right to carry it out by their own method apart from the way specified?

Ans: No. However, the command for Lord's Supper specifies only the items, NOT the mode of division. You cannot be too sure whether Jesus broke the bread by cutting with his bare hands or with his teeth, or with an hammer or saw (as an experienced Carpenter ☐), etc.

3. What does the rule of specific command teaches?

Ans: That we stay with ONLY what is specified.

In this case, what the Lord instructed is "EAT THIS BREAD... in remembrance of Me."

Are there are other commands with regards to eating the unleavened bread? The relevant precepts are that:

- i. We ought to pray always (Lk 18:1) thus, should give thanks in everything including when observing the Communion (Col 3:17)
- ii. Each person should examine self and discern the Lord's body; the occasion is a spiritual feast not a regular meal in which each takes own supper -1 Cor 11:20-28

NB: Contrary to your supposition, there IS NO NT COMMAND on:

- i. The number of loaves to use for the Lord's Supper.
- ii. HOW or WHAT MODE to adopt to break (divide) the bread.

Asaolu's Poser: Those who insist on praying before breaking (cutting) the bread into pieces, do you also consider it MANDATORY to first give thanks for the fruit of the vine before dividing the wine into individual cups? Is this the practice in YOUR congregation? If 'Yes,' why and if 'No,' why not?

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