

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

Returning Intimacy and Power to the Father's Children

*"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for,
it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.
For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*
(Matthew 18:19,20)



SECTION 2 - LESSON 17

The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots:
Blessing Food To Make It "Holy"
Displacing Communion As Covenant Renewal
Rise of the Hellenized "Holy Man"
Construction of the Hellenized "Holy Place"
Interpersonal Discussion Replaced by Pulpit Sermons
Worship Becomes A Soulsh Experience



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The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots
Blessing Food To Make It “Holy”

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it...”

(Matthew 26:26).

Plato’s dualism brought forth a custom that you probably have followed since your earliest memories: blessing your food at mealtime (and probably “the hands that prepared it!”). This practice came about because the physical substance of food was considered evil; it had to be spiritualized through prayer to make it good.

It’s fully appropriate to *thank God* for your food; in fact, it was commanded of the Israelites (see Deuteronomy 8:10) to demonstrate their awareness and appreciation that all good things come from His hand. This is the Hebraic pattern: to *bless God with a grateful heart*. During the Last Supper, the celebration of the Passover, Jesus followed the pattern of His ancestors (Matthew 26:26, above).

Many Christians, in error, bless the *food* they’re about to eat in an attempt (unconscious or not) to make the food holy by prayer. Our Hebraic forefathers would never pray to “make holy” that which God had already created and

declared to be “good”!

Don’t be fooled by the traditions that have developed because of dualism. If God has made that which you’re about to eat and has provided it for your benefit, it must be good already! Hebraic prayer focuses only on *blessing God*, the Creator and Provider of all our needs. For example, “***Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth and fruit from the vine.***” God alone is worthy of thanksgiving and praise.

Do you believe that physical matter is evil? Yes or No? Do you bless the food, or bless God? How might you change your prayer before meals?

The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots
Displacing Communion
As Covenant Renewal

“And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.’

In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you’” (Luke 22:19,20).

Hellenist dualism has invaded Christendom with a sinister enslavement pertaining to sharing in the Lord’s body and blood. For centuries, the primary effect of blessing physical objects has prevented most Christians from sharing communion in their homes.

Within the early Hebraic Church, groups of extended spiritual family gathered in their homes as the apostles had taught, sharing in communion together. They gathered the first day of the week especially to celebrate their union in Christ and their union with one another as His redeemed by sharing the loaf and the cup.

The impact of Hellenized Gentiles who became followers of Jesus changed that. Dualism viewed bread and wine as too “earthly” to be the body and blood of Jesus. The physical elements had to be spiritualized. A “holy” man, the priest, had to be present in a “holy place” in order for the bread and wine to become spiritually acceptable before God.

During the fourth century, a distinct priesthood had become entrenched within Christianity. Not only were these men singled out as “holier” because of dualism. They were also patterning the obsolete Levitical priesthood of sacrificial offerings that Jesus had fulfilled! Thus, the “sacrifice” of the Mass—the perpetual offering of Jesus at the altar—became embedded within Roman Catholicism.

The elements of bread and wine were declared to become the body and blood of Christ through *transubstantiation* in order to represent the holiness of God.

Only the priests, those who had separated themselves from the world’s defilement, could carry out this consecration.

Transubstantiation states that even though the bread and wine still appear to be a physical substance, they in fact become the body and blood of Jesus ***by means of the priest’s prayer***. Sharing communion was transformed into a “sacrament” under the control of the priests. To be “ex-communicated” meant that you were forbidden to receive the sacrament of communion, and were out of fellowship with other believers.

Transubstantiation added to the host of sacramental controls that only the “holy” clergy could conduct on behalf of the “common” congregants. The system of clergy control through sacraments would keep worshipers subjugated for centuries.

In later centuries Lutherans would change Roman Catholic transubstantiation to *consubstantiation*, in which the body and blood of Jesus *co-exist* with the substance of the bread and wine. Still later, other Protestants would declare communion to be no more than a “spiritual commemoration”.

Yet “spiritual commemoration” as though you were recalling a historical act would deny the seriousness of obedience to Jesus’s command: ***“Then Jesus said to them, ‘Yes, indeed! I tell you that unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you do not have life in yourselves’*** (John 6:53).

Since Jesus never violated “a jot or tittle” of the Torah, He was not referring to ingesting human flesh and blood, which would transgress God’s Word (see Deuteronomy 12:23). When Jesus shared this discourse, His hearers wanted Him to provide them with endless physical

bread as God had supplied manna to their forefathers in the desert.

But Jesus, the **“true bread from heaven”**, was far more concerned with their *spiritual* well-being. For their spirit to be alive for eternity with Him, they’d need a transformation of focus: absorbing *His very life* into themselves!

To be *alive in Jesus* would call for identification with His forthcoming death and resurrection as their atoning sacrifice: **“Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood lives in me, and I live in him”** (John 6:56). The promised Spirit of Christ (Romans 8:9) would live in any who were willing to turn from their sin and call upon Him as their Messiah and Lord.

Jesus dispels the notion of ingesting Himself by differentiating not only the substance of the “bread” but also its effect: **“So [I am] the bread that has come down from heaven — it is not like the bread the fathers ate; they’re dead, but whoever eats this bread will live forever!”** (John 6:58). Jesus was referring to an *ongoing, internally-motivated relationship* with Himself that far surpasses the need for daily food. And that sort of staying power in a life journey with Him would require far more than a “commemoration” of His last Passover meal!

Wherever the earliest followers of Jesus gathered, they remembered the sacrifice and victory of Jesus as they shared the bread and wine.

**They knew they were partaking
of His body and blood
in a very real spiritual sense
because Jesus had said so!**

**Nothing had to be “made holy”
by a “holy man”.**

Just as He had confronted His apostles who had had difficulty trying to mesh the physical dimension with the spiritu-

al truth behind it, Jesus confirms *our* need to grasp this reality through His Spirit in us: **“It is the Spirit who gives life, the flesh is no help. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and life”** (John 6:63).

You may remember the concept of *Hebraic Logic* that we mentioned in Lesson 8. Because of their deep awareness of God in their lives, these Jewish followers of Jesus didn’t have to understand the perceived disparity between the Law and what Jesus spoke. They took Him at His Word!

The apostle Paul admonished the Gentile followers of Jesus in Corinth about the serious nature of partaking of the *body* (which he would have taught them represented the sacrificial Passover Lamb) and *blood* (the required ratification of the New Covenant) of Jesus in a communal gathering:

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.

A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep [died] (1 Corinthians 11:23-30).

Notice the consequences of *failing* to examine your heart and your relationship with those with whom you’re sharing this proclamation of our Lord’s sacrifice on our behalf: a judgment that brings about illness and even death!

Communion was definitely more than just a *spiritual commemoration*!

It would never have occurred to these followers of Jesus that some human intermediary had to *make* the bread and wine “holy” in order for it to become spiritualized. Nor would they have thought they needed a “holy” place in which to share communion, since the Lord’s last Passover supper had taken place in a home setting.

“They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts” (Acts 2:46) because they were following the pattern of their risen Lord. They simply believed what Jesus said: ***“This is MY Body... This is MY blood.”***

A key Hebraic principle about communion has been lost because the dualist influence never dealt with *covenants*.

The Hebraic followers of Jesus recognized that, as they shared the body and blood of Jesus, they were renewing their Covenant with the Father.

The earliest followers of Jesus knew from the Older Testament that God’s covenants with man need to be renewed from time to time. **Covenant renewal** reaffirms that the stipulations under which the covenant was initially agreed to are still viable.

Renewing a covenant was a serious enactment, for those who *broke* a covenant could face death (see, for example, Ezekiel 17:15). That’s why Paul is so forceful in his warning to the Christians in 1 Corinthians 11:23-30. In their casual observance of covenant renewal, they were guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. For some, that sin was resulting in death.

From God’s perspective, partaking of

communion as covenant renewal is still valid today. Sadly, the majority of Hellenized Christians are oblivious to the reality of this truth. Remember, when you receive the body and blood of Jesus in your spirit, you are *renewing your Covenant* with our Father through the ratification of Jesus’s blood.

The precious *covenant renewal* with our Father calls us to remember that which Jesus has accomplished on our behalf until He comes back for us. And at that time, Jesus will share with us the 4th cup of the Passover celebration, the “cup of consummation”, which He’ll drink with us in His Kingdom! (See Mark 14:25.)

[Please see our [Jesus In Your Home Video, Section 2, Segments 7 & 8: The Gospel Of The Covenant](#), or our Hebraic Article, [The Gospel Of The Covenant Is The Pilgrimage To Salvation](#), for more on covenant renewal.]

Describe what you have believed receiving communion to be. Do you need a “special” person to conduct communion in your midst? Yes or No? If your answer is “Yes”, describe why.

Describe how you ensure that you (and your family, if applicable) have no unconfessed sin before you partake of communion.

Have you ever experienced consequences from partaking of communion lightly or with known sin in your heart?

In view of what we've just shared about communion, has your understanding changed? Yes or No? If yes, as you renew your covenant with our Father in Jesus in the future, how will it be different for you?

The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots *Rise of the Hellenized "Holy Man"*

"But you have this in your favor: You hate the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate..."

Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans"
(Revelation 2:6,15).

We discussed this topic in an earlier lesson. This system of clergy dominance—the elevation of an intermediary between our Lord and His children—is the **Nicolaitanism** against which God wars. (See Revelation 2:6,15.)

[For further examination, explore our Hebraic Article, **I Hate Nicolaitanism**; also our book, **Pastoring By Elders**.]

By relying unquestioningly on the writings of the Hellenized "Church Fathers" and on centuries of revisionist writings through Church Councils, today's Christian colleges and seminar-

ies are gripped by a malignant Greek influence. They've failed to apperceive the Hebraic foundations upon which the Newer Testament was founded, and have given way to a major flaw, professional clergy.

Plato's dualism penetrates the seminarian pursuit of a "spiritual calling" as a clergyman.

According to the *Random House Dictionary*, "clergy" is defined as a group or body of ordained persons in a religion, as *distinguished from the laity*. Note that this word is never found in Scripture!

If you recall, because of Plato's influence the Hellenist culture viewed manual labor as degrading. Individuals were encouraged to seek the higher life of spiritual pursuit. As a result a clergy class modeled after the Greek pagan priesthood developed throughout Christendom. Yet, it's important to recognize that the clergy role and responsibilities were derived from *pagan priests*.

Tragically, the pattern of true biblical elder who served a shepherding role of **zaken** (zah-KEN) in the earliest Church was forsaken. The older, wiser men who had represented the Father's care for His children and were known in their faith community as men of God passed from influence. They were replaced by young, educated and inexperienced men. Dualist thought viewed these younger men as less tainted by the world because they were on a higher spiritual level.

The dualist influence continues today. Hellenized seminaries infer or even teach that those who choose to engage in full-time ministry as an occupation spiritually transcend those in secular vocations because of their "higher call".

Our Hebraic ancestors recognized the worth of a manual trade. They recalled that *before the Fall*, Adam and Eve had been given work in the Garden to care for it (see Genesis 2:15). Even rabbis were expected to participate in a trade: Jesus was a carpenter; Paul, Aquila and Priscilla were tentmakers; noted Jewish teachers Hillel and Shammai were wood-cutter and carpenter, respectively.

Anchor this truth so that *you* won't give in to feeling that you're a "second class citizen" in God's Kingdom:

Setting aside an individual for some "higher spiritual call" is a direct result of Hellenism within the Church.

The pastors of the earliest Church, who were the biblical elders esteemed for their maturity and wisdom, had jobs. Those who were beyond physical ability to work were supported by their families.

Did you know that the root word for "work" and "worship" is the same in Hebrew: *avodah*? When you put into practice Paul's direction to "***strive eagerly to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business and to work with your hands***" (1 Thessalonians 4:11), you're worshipping God in your gratefulness to be able to sustain yourself and to bless your family.

Physical labor is no disgrace! Heed the Hebraic encouragement of A.W. Tozer in his classic, *The Pursuit of God*:

It is not what a man does that determines whether his work is sacred or secular, it is *why he does it*. The motive is everything. *Let a man sanctify the Lord God in his heart and he can thereafter do no common act*. All he does is good and acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For such a man, living itself will be sacramental and the whole world a sanctuary. *His entire life will be a priestly ministration.*¹

Are you in a faith community in which clergy exist? Yes or No? If yes, describe the biblical foundations for the existence of clergy.

If you're in a faith community with clergy, do you expect them to live a *holier* life than you do? Yes or No? How does your view affect your own responsibilities for personal holiness?

How are you able to serve God in your occupation (even motherhood) in such a way that you are worshipping God?

The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots Construction of the Hellenized "Holy Place"

"The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands" (Acts 17:24)

"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you?" (1 Corinthians 3:16).

The majority of Christians today take for granted that their Sunday worship should take place in a “holy building” set aside for that purpose. But erecting a special “temple” in which to encounter God with others has more to do with Plato than with Jesus. As well, “holy” buildings are a throwback to the Covenant of Moses and the Levitical priesthood.

You may recall that in Lesson 4 we discussed how Jesus, as the Initiator and Fulfillment of the New Covenant, became a priest forever in the *order of Melchizedek*. This new, everlasting Priest doesn’t serve in a temple made by man. Rather, His temple is every Spirit-indwelled person who has trusted in Jesus according to the stipulations founded in the Older Testament (see John 7:38,39).

Plato’s influence that sharply separated the physical and spiritual realms is seen in the design of “church buildings”. Steeples, stained glass and high vaulted ceilings direct man’s attention upward. Here in this hushed place he can focus on leaving earthly reality behind, and strive to obtain a soulish union with a distant God “somewhere up there”.

The design of “holy buildings” appeals to man’s soul, that is, his mind, will, and emotions. He can revel in the atmosphere of beauty and serenity with a feeling of divine awe and inspiration. Yet, unless he is walking in obedient trust through the indwelling Spirit communing with his spirit, his worship won’t penetrate those vaulted ceilings.

The early Hebraic followers of Jesus understood that the one true God could be *known and experienced*. They didn’t have to hunt for him on some supposedly higher spiritual plain. God had revealed Himself through that which He had made:

*For since the creation of the world **God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse***” (Romans 1:20).

More profoundly important to us today, **our Father** also revealed Himself through His Son, Jesus. Fully man as well as fully God, Jesus is in union with His Father: “*Anyone who has **seen me has seen the Father***” (John 14:9). And the Father and Jesus continue to reveal themselves through the Holy Spirit Who abides in union within the *human temple* of each one who embraces the true Gospel.

Keep this in mind the next time someone asks you, “Where do you go to church?” If you are a Spirit-indwelled follower of Jesus, YOU are His temple, and those with whom you gather—even two or three!—are His *called-out ones*, His Church!

Does a building with a steeple and stained glass have an emotional effect on you? Yes or No? If yes, how do you change when you’re inside the building?

How do you regard yourself as a “temple” of the Holy Spirit? Has this biblical reality caused you to change in any way in your spiritual journey?

The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots Interpersonal Discussion Replaced by Pulpit Sermons

“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.

My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:2-5).

When Greek oratorical skills replaced Hebraic role modeling and interpersonal discussion, the Church suffered the loss of God’s approach to life’s difficulties: **discussion that leads to practical application of biblical truth**. Through the influence of **John Chrysostom**, a fourth century theologian from Antioch, oratory (and anti-Semitism, as we mentioned earlier) rose to new heights.

The perceived “holy man” was able to separate himself from the “laity” by *teaching at* them from behind a pulpit. The lecture-type sermon lacked discussion. Without the interaction that comes from questions and responses, Bible truth became *theoretical* and *conceptual*.

For centuries, Greek *rhetoric*, the structure and style of what is taught, has been the main teaching pattern in the Christendom. Today, modern seminary homiletics, hermeneutics, oratory—all the related fields that today’s pulpits so depend on—find their origins not in the first century Church but in the Hellenist teaching tradition.

Note: At the retreat center we frequently asked people what the previous Sunday’s sermon was about. Almost no one could remember. The Hellenized ser-

mon was conceptual but not practical, taught academically with perhaps humorous stories, but not from personal experience.

We’re familiar with the Hellenist approach to seminary education because we ourselves attended one! At our seminary, a poster in the hallway showed a man with a funnel going into his head. All the religious courses taught at the seminary were being dumped in for cognitive recognition.

Most seminaries also teach future clergy that the ideal sermon contains an introduction, three memorable points, and a conclusion. Does this sound familiar—the three point sermon? If so, ask yourself: “How much of what I hear, sermon after sermon, do I retain?” And more importantly, “How much of this type of teaching have I been able to *apply to my life* in such a way that I am more conformed to the character of Christ?”

How very opposite from the interactive Hebraic style of practical application and the informal manner in which Jesus taught His disciples! And how often we see Paul teaching people in their homes, discussing truths and applying them in such a way that they can be shared with others (see Acts 20:20, for example).

The teachers of the Hebraic stream taught from personal experience, that is, as an outflow of their way of life. The Book of Hebrews affirms that how an individual chooses to live is what qualifies him to teach: “*Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith*” (Hebrews 13:7).

You may also remember from Lesson 2, Preface, that **discussion is the Hebraic methodology of pursuing truth and applying it**. In fact, the rabbis of the

Hebraic Stream taught that whenever two or three discussed God's Word, the Holy Spirit was with them to give both *understanding* and *application*.

Jesus commends the connection of mutual discussion and agreement by promising His presence when this takes place: *"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them"* (Matthew 18:19,20).

The presence of Jesus as you pursue truth through discussion stirs you to put your intentions into practice! Studies show that you can retain only 20% of what you hear, but 70% of what you *discuss* and 90% of what you *demonstrate*.

That which you discuss is likelier to lead you to follow through with action than are empty words that fall to the ground forgotten.

The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots Worship Becomes A Soulsh Experience

"Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23,24).

As we've shared previously, most people have no idea that steeples, stained glass and other architectural features that are identified with "church" emanate from Hellenism. The difference between your own "earthly" dwelling and the glorious "house of God" again exalts the spiritual realm and denigrates the physical reality that God Himself formed.

Coming away to a special building helps you *feel good* about your religious experience. In fact, everything about the Hellenist influence on Christianity flows outward from *man's perspective*, since man is deemed the center of all things. Your soul, your mind, will and emotions, are catered to so that the cares of your daily life can be shelved and forgotten for an hour on Sunday.

Sadly, the Satanic trap of this deceit is that few sitting in pews ever wonder if *God* is pleased by the forms and expressions that are offered.

Over the centuries a subtle element of demonic Hellenism has sought to elevate mankind above their "earthly prison" through various forms of praise and worship. Certain forms of chant, hymns and musical instruments that are pleasing to the people of the period have become hallowed as the only approved way to worship among particular faith communities. The soulsh appeal of these styles has made them acceptable.

In recent decades a lively and expressive form of worship has proliferated in many Christian communities. This style of music has been derived from what has proved successful and appealing to secular audiences. This practice of using worldly means to worship a holy God is *syncretistic*, incorporating that which has no foundation in God's Word. Since its biblical validity is never questioned, secular intrusion has been readily accepted in worship services, regardless of whether *God* accepts it.

The dramatic beat and frequently sensual presentation are designed to induce a soulsh high. Using music to conjure a particular mood for worship is manipulative, and unacceptable to a holy God—especially when the individ-

uals leading worship are seductive in their attire and vocal style.

Note: We were gathered in a corporate time of worship when one of the elders stepped forward and asked the worship team to stop. With anguished heart he shared that the Spirit had made clear to him that unconfessed sin was rampant in our midst. A holy fear fell on us all as we dropped to our knees as a body and cried out in repentance.

Forty minutes later a cleansed and joyful congregation joined together to proclaim the praise of the One Who had revealed the darkness that had been entertained, and called us back to His wonderful light!

Just because some form of “spiritual” expression makes you feel good doesn’t make it pleasing to our Father. Remember, Eve yielded to what appealed to her flesh but defied the command of God: “*When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it*” (Genesis 3:6).

Closely connected to syncretism in worship is a disregard for the importance of *personal holiness* when you approach God. Peter apperceives Psalm 34:16 when he warns, “*For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil*” (1 Peter 3:12). What makes anyone think that our holy God, who refuses to respond to the prayers of wicked people, will accept their worship?

If you think you can “worship” our Lord while harboring unconfessed sin and iniquity, you’re ignoring vast por-

tions of biblical truth. Nor can you rely on some soulish experience as proof that you’re in God’s presence. Only *holiness* opens your spirit to worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

Our Father calls for *each person* to examine his or her own heart so that hidden sin of any sort can be confessed and turned away from, and fellowship restored. The Lord chastised the people of His day: “*These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain*” (Matthew 15:8,9). Does He have a different standard for His people today? Not at all!!!

The requirement God established in the Hebrew Scriptures as an example for us today still applies: “*Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? He who has clean hands and a pure heart*” (Psalm 24:3,4). Apperceiving your scriptural mandate for approaching God means that you’ll put aside trying to conjure up a soulish mood for worship. If you want to experience the power of God in your worship, come before Him with a clean heart!

Followers of Jesus walk in a legacy of worshipful service to our God that began with our Hebraic forefathers. Ponder the significance of each designation of His called-out ones from *God’s* perspective to get a clear understanding of why He’s seeking true worshipers:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9).

Let’s each agree with Ephesians 4:24 to “*put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.*”

**What does worship mean to you?
Describe what you believe is acceptable to
God in terms of your heart condition.**

**Have you participated in corporate wor-
ship when you sensed there was large-scale
unconfessed sin that was tainting the gather-
ing? Yes or No? If yes, what did you do?**

**Describe an instance when you were
present with others to worship and you
sensed “conjuring of mood” going on.**

Bibliography

1. A.W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Harrisburg, PA:
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