

Sermon Preached

By

Elder Enoch Ofori Jnr

On the Occasion of

The LORD's Memorial Service

(14th Nisan)

Date: Wednesday, 29th March, 2018 (Sundown)

Hebrew Calendar: 14th Abib/Nisan

“Eat, this is My Body; Take, Drink ye My Blood of the New Covenant”

Red-Blood Nights of Redemption

It was a solemn evening. The nail-biting moments of betrayal, trial, suffering and death were approaching menacingly. Like the Passover of old, it was “a night to be much observed” (Ex. 12:42). Back then, actual Paschal lambs were slain and eaten with unleavened bread and bitter herbs, with the blood of the lambs daubed on the doorposts of the Israelites (Ex. 12:6-8).

Israel's redemption was close at hand. After a prolonged challenge to God who had brought upon the Egyptians a series of plagues, the Pharaoh was unnerved but would still not let Israel go!

There remained one last judgment to strike the land of Egypt – which would make Pharaoh send Israel packing out of his country in the dead of night! That was the judgment of Passover night – but redemption to the people of Israel!

Destruction and deliverance in the same night; death and life same night. On the Egyptian side is destruction; in the camp of Israel is redemption.

What the difference was the lamb, the lamb's blood put on the doorposts! The blood on the doorposts was to serve as a sign to the destroyer YHWH would send through the land of Egypt not to enter the homes of the Israelites but ‘pass over’ them on his way to “smite all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast” (Ex. 12:11-13, 22-23). We learn in Psalm 78 that the destroyer was actually “a company of destroying angels” deployed over the land of Egypt:

“He sent over them His fierce anger, fury, indignation and trouble, with a company of destroying angels to clear the path for His wrath.

“He did not spare them from death, but gave them over to the plague, striking all the firstborn in Egypt, the firstfruits of their strength in the tents of Ham.

“But His own people He led out like sheep, guiding them like a flock in the desert.

*He led them safely, and they weren't afraid, even when the sea overwhelmed their foes.”
(Tehillim [Ps.] 78:49-53 (JB).*

The redemption secured by the blood could neither be stopped by the sea nor overturned by Pharaoh and his army in pursuit of Israel. It was a complete redemption for the children of Israel. Just some hours ago they were huddled in their houses, after having eaten the roasted lambs with unleavened bread and bitter herbs and painted their doorposts red with blood. And now they were free. Death had literally passed over their heads in the chill and silence of the night.

Uplifting as it was, as beautiful as it was, it was an event which foreshadowed a greater redemption story.

And now hundreds of years later, in the “upper room” of a house in the city of Jerusalem, Jesus and His Twelve Apostles are sitting in a circle taking a meal. It is AD 31, and the whole city is caught up in the excitement of the approaching feasts of the Passover and of Unleavened Bread. (See Matt. 26:17-20; Luke 22:7-14).

However, this particular Passover (Hebrew Pesach) was no ordinary Passover as had been celebrated for centuries. This Passover would see the offering of “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36), Yeshua, as the true sacrifice, whom the Passover lambs slain down through the centuries, year after year, prefigured.

And He pre-enacted that offering of His holy life – His body and blood – in the ceremony of the Lord’s Supper. The Israelites physically ate the roasted lambs and daubed their doorposts with their blood. Similarly, the Apostles would eat the flesh of the true Lamb and drink His blood but only *mystically* by eating the symbols of His body and blood:

“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” (Matt. 26:26-29; also Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-20).

As death passed over the firstborns of Israel, so death just passed over the heads of the Apostles and the “many” of subsequent generations who would come to trust in the shed blood. This was because a Lamb took their place, died in their place, and the blood warded off the angel of death. (See John 5:24).

In both instances, the means of redemption is the Blood because BLOOD is LIFE:

“For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:11; see also Heb. 9:22).

This is the very point Christ was careful to stress: “Drink ye all of it. This is My blood of the new testament shed for many for the remission of sins.”

And He used unleavened bread (Heb. *matzah*) to represent His body and the “fruit of the vine” to represent His blood. Those symbols were not chosen randomly but deliberately because He knew they could ideally symbolize His sacrificial death for us. He, for instance, called Himself the “True Vine” (John 15), and not a fig or an apple. Likewise, He personifies the unleavened (bread without yeast or leaven) whose dough is not allowed to rise, being symbolic of His holy character devoid of sin and/or sinful pride (John 8:46; Heb. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:21-22).

So then, the quality common to both emblems (the “fruit of the vine” and unleavened bread) is the lack of fermentation.

In the Greek text, instead of the word “*oinos*” used for wine (which bursts wineskins in Matt. 9:17/Mark 2:22 suggesting fermentation), the word used is “*genēma*” denoting fruit, offspring or produce. The Greek term for vine, on the other hand, is “*ampelos*”. Accordingly, the fruit (juice) of the vine given to the Apostles in a cup by the Master, on the eve of His death, was not fermented grape juice which would have rendered it wine (“*oinos*”) but fresh grapes squeezed into a cup (see Gen. 40:11). Having not undergone fermentation, the fresh juice of the grapes (which the vine plant produces) perfectly symbolized His holy, unblemished blood. And the red-blood colour of the pure grape juice reinforced the purity of life and blood He was giving away so that we might have life! In Deut. 31:14 we read:

“Butter from cows and milk from sheep, with fat of lambs and rams of the sons of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat. And you drank the blood of the grape” (KJ21; see also Gen. 49:11).

The High Price of Divine Love

That night in the upper room, where He offered His twelve disciples the emblems of His body and blood, was a night He had looked forward to all His earthly life (see Matt. 20:28). Thus He said to them:

*“With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer.
“For I say to you, I will not any more eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God”
(Luke 22:15-16).*

Barely 24 hours later Yeshua, the Christ, would be offered up as a sacrifice for sin, for the Gospel of John makes it clear that the disciples partook of the *matza* (unleavened bread) and the fruit of the vine before the actual feast of the Passover began (John 13:1-3) so that His death and the slaying of the Passover lambs would happen at the same time. He was, of course, the true and ultimate Passover “sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7).

Of all that He did on earth, the offering of His body as a sacrifice for sin was the high point of His earthly ministry. He was foreordained from the beginning to be the perfect atonement for sin (Gen. 3:15; Gal. 4:4-5; 1 Pet. 1:18-20). He is the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 who is “despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not. Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions; He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on Him

the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is dumb, so He opened not His mouth” (vv. 3-7).

He was the perfect body prepared by the Most High to be the once-and-for-all sacrifice for sin:

“Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me:

“In burnt offerings and sacrifice for sin Thou hast had no pleasure.

“Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God.

“Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law;

“Then said He, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second.

“By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:5-10).

The body prepared for the manifestation of the Messiah in the flesh was not an angelic or superhuman body but the regular body of a descendant of Abraham (Heb. 2:14-16) stripped of His divine glory. Namely, “He took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Php. 2:6-8).

Only that the Son of man, Yeshua Messiah, was without sin. Having been conceived in the womb of Miryam (Mary) by the Holy Spirit of God without the role of an earthly father, He was without the stain of sin, and never sinned for even once!

Even so, He was subject to all the weaknesses of the frail human body. He could get tired, get hungry, and feel pain and grief.

And so in His human flesh, Christ felt the trauma of the impending painful death. It was not a night of merrymaking. Moments later, in the Garden of Gethsemane, He sorrowfully told His disciples, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me. And He went a little further, and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt” (Matt. 26:38-39).

The “cup” of suffering was symbolized in the Old Testament by the bitter herbs the children of Israel were to eat along with the roasted lamb and unleavened bread. The death which awaited the Messiah would be humiliating and painful, but it was worth it. While He hanged on the tree, in the throes of a cruel death, He would be given a sponge soaked in vinegar (which is bitter in taste) put to His mouth. When He had received it, He said, “It is finished and He bowed His head and gave up the ghost” (John 19:28-30). For Israel, it was to remind of the bitter slave life they lived under Pharaoh. For us, it’s a reminder of the bitterness of sin – a bitterness which would lead to the joy of salvation.

The vinegar was literally another form of bitter herbs. But in the bitterness of death – the death of the Lamb – came life to those for whose sakes the Lamb was slain. Finally, He accomplished it – He had brought complete redemption for sin by His death.

Jesus the Christ was on a divine mission distressing and poignant in its execution but glorious in its results.

Love prevailed. The Father overlooked the shame the death of His Son would necessarily entail out of His love for us. That was how He could best love us. Short of the sacrificial death of His only begotten Son, His love for us would be less than perfect. “For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:7-8). “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Pet. 3:18).

That show of perfect love bringing us true redemption came at the price of the ignominious death of His Son! He made Him the propitiation for our sins (1 John 2:2) in a public display – putting Him to public shame whereby He demonstrated to all the world that the perfect ransom for sinful mankind has been paid:

“Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus; Whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in the forbearance of God He passed over the sins previously committed, For the demonstration, I say, of His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:24-26 NASB).

Until the sacrificial death of Yeshua Messiah in a public execution, God simply passed over the sins people committed not remitting them even when they offered animal sacrifices, because “it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). But now not any more. A fitting and perfect ransom has been found in Jesus, a Lamb without blemish (1 Pet. 1:19), and therefore God can righteously (or lawfully) forgive sin. And He has placed that evidence before the eyes of the world with the public execution of His Son!

What a great God of love we serve (1 John 4:8) – willing to sacrifice His only begotten Son for the salvation of fallen mankind!

And the equally loving Messiah was in on the plan all along:

“As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; So that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life” (John 3:14 NASB).

And the final event which set the stage for this great sacrifice leading to eternal life was the Lord’s Supper. Solemn, quiet, heavy with emotion, and yet tinged with joy of accomplishment. That supper was an enactment of the redemption that is in Jesus whereby His blood is drunk and His body eaten!

And He was emphatic that His disciples continue the ceremony after His departure.

Divine, not Human, Institution

The exact words of Christ were, "...this do in remembrance of Me." He meant follow the exact pattern I have established on the occasion of this special supper. The operative word is "this"!

What?

"And He took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves:

"For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come.

"And He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me.

"Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:17-20).

It is a pretty simple ceremony: Take the cup of the fruit of the vine and share it among yourselves. The red grape juice pressed into the cup represents His blood shed for us. In the same way, take the bread (without leaven) and share it among yourselves. The bread represents His body given to us.

These are the exact same materials we must use and partake of to commemorate the Lord's death. Otherwise, we risk falling into the trap of doing the work of God deceitfully:

"Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully [or carelessly] ..." (Jer. 48:10).

So then, the replacement of the fruit of the vine with alcoholic or fermented wine or some other fruit juice other than the plain fruit of the vine is unacceptable and may likely invite a curse rather than a blessing.

The same goes for the use of leavened bread or even biscuits in place of unleavened bread. Leavened bread simply does not qualify to represent the holy body of the Lord Jesus.

When is the ceremony to be held and at what time of the day?

It's to be held during the season of Passover which is marked annually. In the case of the Lord's Memorial, it's to be held at the beginning of 14th Nisan (the first month on Yahweh's sacred calendar) at sunset as the 13th day draws to close (see John 13:1-2; see also 18:1-3). It's not an event for the morning or afternoon but evening after sunset. That's why it's called "Supper", being an evening meal.

In the light of the above self-evident truth of scripture, it's curious that many contemporary churches celebrate the Lord's Supper in the morning or at high noon and/or on a weekly basis, using fermented wine and leavened bread.

This is not what the Master entrusted to the church. Yet it's not entirely surprising. Even in the apostolic age, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper had begun to take on the corrupting influences of men. In the Corinthian Assembly, it had degenerated into an occasion for selfish indulgence where the 'haves' brought sumptuous meals and ate to their fill, while the have-nots went

hungry. In rebuking them, the Apostle Paul reminded them of the core elements of the Lord's Supper and how these ought to be used as the only proper and fitting memorials to the Lord's death:

*“When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper.
“For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken.
“What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not.
“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” (1 Cor. 11:20-26).*

The Apostle Paul faithfully recapitulated the ceremonial form of the Lord's Supper as Christ instituted it. It was a night event – the “same night” in which He was betrayed He broke the bread and gave them to eat. This bread was not leavened but unleavened bread (see 1 Cor. 5:7). Then He took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood.” And what was literally in the cup? We know from the Gospels that it was the fruit of the vine.

Even so, the Apostle's worry stemmed not just from their irreverent approach to organizing the ceremony but their apparent lack of appreciation of the spiritual significance of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. It's not merely about eating and drinking – for some to make a show of it – but what it represents. It illustrates a deeper spiritual truth – what believers have become as a result of the death of Christ whereby He gave His body and blood for our salvation. “Wherefore”, the Apostle Paul warns us, “whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor. 11:27-30).

Partaking the Lord's Supper in an “unworthy manner” tells us it's the spirit of the partaking that matters, not the letter. One must be worthy beforehand, as someone who gives due recognition to the body of the Lord represented by the bread. The essence is to “remember” the death of Christ and what that death has made us.

For this reason, where the correct materials for the celebration of the Lord's Supper are not available (such as tropical West Africa where vine does not grow), it is not our place to replace the emblems of the Lord's Supper (being unleavened bread and the pure fruit of the vine) with some other items to possibly incur a curse but to remember His death yearly on 14th Nisan at night. (This is not to be confused with the movable feast of Easter, an old pagan festival grafted onto the death of Christ).

After all, the ceremony is meant to illustrate our spiritual fellowship or communion with the body and blood of the Lord Jesus whereby He imparts to us His life:

“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” (1 Cor. 10:16-17).

“That one bread” which we all eat is the body of Christ and “the cup of blessing” His blood. By eating the bread and drinking of the cup, we become like Him in essence; we ingest Him, and He permeates our lives to the core of our being. We become one body (conforming to His image) from eating the one and the same bread. (Remember the old saying ‘you are what you eat’?). In the end, our individual carnal traits and sinful habits vanish but “Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:10).

Christ’s Sacrifice Makes us Unleavened Bread

This is the truth the Apostle Paul explained to the believers in the church in Corinth when one of their number had sexual relations with his father’s wife and the church would not be bothered! Rather than disciplining the brother, they were puffed up with pride in their toleration of the brother’s transgression, the Apostle charged them (1 Cor. 5:1-2). He then ordered his expulsion from the church on the basis of the ‘passover principle’ that leaven cannot coexist with the unleavened!

During the holy season of the Passover (which includes the feast of unleavened bread), beginning at sunset 14th Abib (or Nisan), the Israelites were to rid their houses of leaven and only eat unleavened bread until the twenty-first day of the month at evening – a seven-day period. Whoever refused to remove leaven from their house and ate anything leavened, instead of unleavened bread, was to be cut off from the community of Israel (Ex. 12:15-20).

But isn’t the punishment too harsh? Capital punishment for merely eating leavened bread, which one would eat anyway for the rest of the year minus the seven days of the passover/feast of unleavened bread holyday season?

In its role as a shadow of the realities of Christ’s ministry (Col. 2:16-17), the Passover ritual of life without leaven – except for unleavened bread – pointed to a higher form of unleavened bread which would come as a result of the sacrifice of the true Passover Lamb, Christ. This was the truth which was lost on the Corinthian brethren in their failure to sanction the sinning brother but which the Apostle brought to their attention.

He wrote:

“Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

“Leaven” may not mingle with “unleavened”, and here Paul is using the terms (leaven and unleavened) in a metaphorical sense. The subject matter is not the actual celebration of a festival but their toleration of the brother who had intimate relations with his stepmother, committing a grave sin. In this sense, “leaven” must mean more than what it means literally.

So too unleavened. They are spiritual ingredients which are opposites. Leaven is sin, while unleavened bread represents righteous living devoid of the corruption (or yeast) of sin.

And the good news is that we “are unleavened” because “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us”! Accordingly, we are finished with leaven in our lives, representing our former way of life as slaves to sin, just as the Israelites were done with leaven during the season of the Passover beginning on the night of their redemption.

That’s how, we are to “keep the feast” the entire seven days. “Not with the old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

That’s neither your regular leaven nor your regular unleavened bread. They have been qualified by the terms “malice and wickedness” on one hand and “sincerity and truth” on the other. It’s an elevated spiritual feast where the leaven to be removed is called malice and wickedness and the unleavened bread to be eaten is sincerity and truth. That’s how we keep the feast in the New Testament context of spiritual worship where we worship God in Spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). It’s about our holy life in Christ all the seven days of the feast, number 7 being the number of perfection or completion. Thus our entire life in Christ (equivalent to seven days) following His Passover sacrifice is a season of unleavened bread (righteousness) and therefore no leaven (sin) is to be entertained.

Otherwise, if we keep any leaven (wilful, incorrigible sinner) in our midst, he is certain to contaminate the rest of us the unleavened dough. “A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (Gal. 5:9) as yeast, a living fungus, acts on the dough converting the fermentable sugars present in it into carbon dioxide (CO₂) and ethanol (alcohol). The resulting bread from the fermented dough is softer, lighter and tastier than unleavened bread which (without the presence of a leavening agent which makes bread rise) is leaner and harder.

Sweet to taste, soft and pleasant to the touch. That’s the flesh finding sin more pleasurable than righteousness.

Yet the season of Passover in which Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed is leaven-free; it’s sin-free and therefore we are not to associate with a so-called brother who is supposed to be unleavened but who proves by his evil deeds to be thoroughly leavened. The Apostle Paul names some of these evil habits of the leaven of sin as sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness and fraud (1 Cor. 5:9-12). Fermentation of the unleavened dough of the feast of unleavened bread is bound to occur once we harbour this leaven of a brother in our midst. “Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person” (v.13). That’s how we keep the feast of unleavened bread now that Christ our Passover has been sacrificed for us! It’s about keeping righteousness through faith in the sanctifying, saving blood of Yeshua which redeems us from “the empty way of life” (leaven) handed down to us from our ancestors (1 Pet. 1:18-20).

If any supposed believer, regardless of the warning against keeping leaven (sin) continues to eat leaven (becoming a habitual sinner) all the seven days of his spiritual life on earth till Christ’s return, he will be “cut off” from God and His Kingdom forever. Otherwise, the path of the righteous (the unleavened) shines more and more until “the full light of day” (Prov. 4:18 NIV).

Being unleavened is putting on the holy, righteous character of Christ, giving us a new spiritual identity which is heavenly in origin! (See John 6:32-33, 48-51).

The Lord's Supper and the New Creation

The connection does not seem obvious, but it's there, hidden in the rich symbolism of the Lord's Supper:

*"Take [this unleavened bread], eat; this is My BODY.
[Take], drink ye all of it. This is My BLOOD of the New Covenant shed for you"
(Ref. Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:17-18).*

The instruction to eat "the body" and "drink the blood" is evocative of the creation scene:

- a) The Bread or Body of Christ corresponds to the lifeless body of man fashioned in the image and likeness of God;
- b) The pure juice of the grapes or Blood of Jesus corresponds to the breath of life from the Almighty which makes man a living soul.

In the light of the foregoing, the ordinance of the Lord's Supper not only recalls the creation of man originally in the holy righteous image of God but also dramatizes the spiritual New Creation which Christ initiated with His death and resurrection.

So then, we eat Christ's body to put on His holy nature (or body), and we drink His blood to take in His life which is in His blood (Lev. 17:11). This life is, in turn, His life-giving Spirit, since it's the Spirit that gives life (John 6:63; 1 Cor. 15:45).

This constitutes the New Creation which is the *restoration* of the original creation of man in the image and likeness of God. This was what was dramatized at the inaugural Lord's Supper using the emblems of the Bread and the fruit of the vine. This was the same theme He spoke on in His "hard saying" of John chapter 6, which grew out of His miraculous feeding of five thousand people with just five loaves of bread and two small fishes:

*"Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.
"Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.
"For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed.
"He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in Him.
"As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me.
"This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.
"These things said He in the synagogue, as He taught in Capernaum.
"Many therefore of His disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" (John 6:53-60).*

"This" certainly is still a hard saying – a spiritual truth encased in an enigma! But certainly Jesus wasn't advocating cannibalism!

So, how does the believer eat (or possess) the Body and Blood of Yeshua Messiah in practical terms?

In plain theological language, the Body and Blood of Yeshua are ingested into the soul and spirit of man by the two-step process of REPENTANCE and the BAPTISM of the HOLY SPIRIT as captured in the words of the Apostle Peter on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out on the church:

“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

“Repentance” answers to the Body of the Messiah who is the Word of God become flesh (Jn. 1:14) and the Holy Spirit to the Blood of the Messiah. And both are gifts (see Luke 11:13; Acts 5:31; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:24-26).

The spiritual essence of the Lord’s Supper is therefore all about the New Creation in the image of God made possible by the death and resurrection of Christ. Namely “He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification” (Rom. 4:25 NIV).

In the end, we come to lose our own individual bodies and blood – all of them replaced with Christ’s, the Word of God by which we live. This means we are “dead” in our ‘true’ carnal natures, and our “life is now hidden with Christ in God” (Col. 3:3). Our corrupt sinful bodies and sin-stained blood have been jettisoned in favour of Christ’s holy body (character) and blood (Spirit). In scriptural language, we are said to have been crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20; 5:24).

The result is that we are “members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5:30). This analogy with marriage also takes us back to Eden (the time of creation) where we drink in another creation scene:

*“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof;
“And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man.
“And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.
“Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Gen. 2:21-24).*

“Bone of my bones; flesh of my flesh”, the woman taken out of the man’s body. Similar language is used in Ephesians chapter 5 about our marriage to Christ (vv. 30-32). So then, the “deep sleep” of Adam during which a woman was created out of him prefigured the death of Christ during which his side was pierced (Jn. 19:34) (just like Adam’s) and a wife made out of him bearing his body, flesh and bones. This wife is the church which He “gave Himself for it; ²⁶ That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, ²⁷ That He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (vv. 25-27). The church, the bride, possesses the same body or character of her husband. At baptism, we affirm the process of being created out of the side of our husband, when we bury our old sinful self with him in the watery grave of the flowing river carrying

our sins away so that we might resurrect with Him in the likeness of His holy nature. (See Rom. 6:3-13).

It's a wonderful truth. The same blood which redeems from sin (so we might be righteous) contains His Life which is found in by His Spirit! Thus in saving us by His Life, we are simultaneously sanctified by both His blood and Spirit flowing out in one broad stream (see John 19:34; Romans 5:10; 1 Pet. 1:2).

The conflation of the two – Body and Blood, i.e. His righteous character and Spirit – is expressed in the nature of His Spiritual Law – called “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2).

This is not a law received in the weakness of the flesh but in the power generated by the Spirit of Life in (or from) Messiah Yeshua.

Now we are extensions, nay, ‘clones’ of the Messiah, for “as He is, so are we in this world” (1 John 4:17). *By His grace*, He has reproduced His holy self in us (1 John 2:29).

And it's by means of His body and blood (Spirit). Each year as we commemorate the Lord's death, let's not forget that He gave Himself for us not only to pay the full penalty for our sins (John 19:30; Heb. 9:11-12, 24-26) but also to create us anew after His own image of righteousness. Amen!