

Participating in His Body and Blood

All the verses in this teaching will be read from the English Standard Version.

When speaking of the celebration of the Lord's supper, most English versions of the Bible translate the Greek word *koinōnia* (κοινωνία) as "communion." The ESV and some other versions take a different approach.

1 Corinthians 10:16:

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation [*koinōnia* — wholehearted sharing] in the blood of Christ?
The bread that we break, is it not a participation [*koinōnia* — wholehearted sharing] in the body of Christ?

Properly understood and practiced, communion involves our wholehearted *participation*. It's not just that *Jesus Christ* had a perfectly whole body and sinless blood; it's that even in *our* mortal bodies, we can "take it all in" in our hearts and minds. That's the kind of wholehearted sharing that is truly life-changing.

To more fully share in the sacrifice of Christ's body and blood, we need to understand both how he was like us, and how he was *not* like us.

THE PART HE TOOK

Jesus Christ was like us.

He knew what it was like to be human, to experience suffering and temptation.

Hebrews 2:18:

For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Jesus Christ was also *not* like us.

He had a body like ours — for Mary was his mother; but *not* blood like ours — because God was his Father.

Hebrews 2:14a:

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook [Greek μετέχω *metechō* — took part] of the same things,...

He did take part with us in the flesh — in his body. He did not, however, take part with us in the same blood.

Matthew 27:4 affirms that Christ's blood was "innocent" — not tainted or stained in any way by the corruption of sin.

Being both like us and *not* like us, Jesus Christ was in a unique position to become our Redeemer.

He was made like us in every respect so he could atone for our sins.

Hebrews 2:17:

Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

He experienced the suffering of death for us all, dying in our place.

Hebrews 2:9:

But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

HIS BLOOD AND BODY

Unlike us, Jesus Christ's blood was sinless. Furthermore, his body with its sinless blood was like Adam's in the beginning: perfectly whole.

What a magnificent specimen of a man he must have been!

Hebrews 4 teaches us that Jesus Christ, sharing in flesh like ours, is able to sympathize with our weaknesses.

Hebrews 4:15:

For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

Tempted as we are in every respect, yet without sin, he knew what it was like to be human, for he was a man. Yet his Father had called him to do even more. God, in His infinite wisdom, love, and mercy to mankind envisioned a time when His only begotten Son would subject his body and soul to His Father's will and suffer and die in order to make us whole in every regard.

THE CAUSE OF CHRIST'S SUFFERINGS

God's will was indeed for Christ to redeem mankind, but that does not mean that God was the cause of Christ's sufferings. We know from Hebrews 2 that the devil is the one who has the power of death.

Hebrews 2:14b:

... that through death he [Christ] might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

Sickness has the same source as death: the one who has the power of death, the devil. In the original paradise, Adam and Eve did not know sickness or death because there was no sin. Not until Eve was deceived by the serpent and Adam went along and disobeyed God did sickness and death arise. Understanding this, we come to the realization that the devil was the cause of Christ's sufferings.

In reading the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ's sufferings, it is critical to understand a figure of speech in common use among the Hebrew people: the idiom of [permission](#).

The Hebrews would routinely use active verbs to indicate, not that the one acting actually *performed* an action, but rather that they *allowed it* to occur. This is particularly important to understand in Scriptures where it appears, from the use of the active voice, that God is the One acting. Frequently, rather than acknowledging the devil as the one behind a certain calamity, the Old Testament frames the action as if God initiated it.

There are many instances where the Old Testament states things that we know cannot be literally true, based on our knowledge of scriptures like Hebrews 2:14.

For instance, the verse in Numbers 11:33 that states “the Lord struck down the people with a very great plague” would, taking into account the idiom of [permission](#), be better rendered “the Lord *allowed* the people to be struck down with a very great plague.”

Likewise, when 1 Samuel 25:38 states that, “the Lord struck Nabal, and he died,” we understand by the idiom of [permission](#) that what is being indicated here is that “the Lord *allowed* Nabal to be struck, and he died.”

THE PURPOSE OF CHRIST’S SUFFERINGS

Isaiah 53 prophesies in detail about the sufferings that Christ would endure and their purpose in the plan of redemption.

Isaiah 53:3:

He was despised and rejected by men,
[a man of sorrows \[pains\], and acquainted with grief \[sickness\]](#); and as one from whom men hide their faces
he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Isaiah 53:10a:

Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him;
he has put him to grief [or, [he has made him sick](#)];...

We know from the idiom of permission that God didn’t crush Jesus Christ, make him sick, or cause him to die; but He did *allow* these things to happen so that Christ could ultimately

destroy the one who had the power of death by means of his atoning sacrifice, dying in our place once and for all.

HEALING IN THE ATONEMENT

There is healing in the atonement. Our redemption is not just spiritual, but physical. By his sacrifice, Jesus secured the healing of our bodies.

Isaiah first prophesied of this, and Peter later confirmed it as an accomplished reality in the age of grace.

Isaiah 53:5:

But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and **with his wounds we are healed**.

The Christ would be pierced, crushed, chastised, and wounded. But there was a purpose for that suffering.

1 Peter 2:24:

He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. **By his wounds you have been healed**.

I have often wondered why Isaiah and Peter both speak of “his wounds” in the context of our healing.

What is it about Christ’s **wounds** that was so pivotal in securing our physical redemption? Why doesn’t it say “By his pains” or “By his sickness” you have been healed?

The answer has to do with Christ’s sacrifice as our Passover.

1 Corinthians 5:7b:

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

It was the wounds he suffered *as our Passover lamb* that secured our physical redemption.

Isaiah 53:6-8:

All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned—every one—to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people?

The Lamb of God was oppressed, afflicted, stricken, and ultimately cut off out of the land of the living. It is because of that sacrifice and with those wounds that we are now healed.

Jesus Christ bore what we could not, so that we could be sprung loose and set free, physically as well as spiritually.

With this understanding, Christ's words at the last supper take on new meaning.

“MY BODY”

First, let’s consider what he told the disciples gathered with him about his body.

Matthew 26:26:

Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is *my body*.”

What was he talking about?

His body, which was whole in every part — not anyone else’s.

And what was he saying about it?

“TAKE IT.”

Meaning, take it to yourself.

God knows we don’t have our new bodies yet, that our bodies are still subject to sickness and death.

But Jesus Christ gave his body for you so that you, at your point of need, can *receive the wholeness in your body that he had in his body*.

“MY BLOOD”

Now, let’s consider what he told the disciples about his blood.

Matthew 26:27-28:

And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “**Drink of it**, all of you,

for this is **my blood** of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

What was he talking about?

His sinless blood — not anyone else’s. No one else’s blood would do.

And what was he saying about it?

“DRINK OF IT.”

Meaning, join with me as full co-heirs in this new covenant.

Verse 29 is revealing.

Matthew 28:29:

I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”

What was he telling these disciples? Not only that he would rise, never to die again, but also that they too would share with him in that eternal life with the Father.

What a message of hope and deliverance!

HIS BODY, OUR WHOLENESS

Part of wholly participating in Christ's body is to recognize what he accomplished for us by his wounds.

The lame man at the Temple Gate Beautiful experienced this kind of magnificent healing wholeness first-hand.

Acts 3:16:

And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all.

The words “perfect health” in this verse are translated from a Greek word that means “wholeness in every part.” Previously, the man's limbs weren't fully functional; now, his physical intactness was completely restored. Not a part was missing.

None of us will have health as perfect as Jesus Christ's until we have our new bodies. In the meantime, though, the healing wholeness that is ours in Jesus Christ is a gift to us and lacks absolutely nothing. Whether we are healed in answer to our prayer to God, or as we partake in communion, or when someone ministers healing to us, we are partaking of that same life that Christ gave for us, and God restores health to us at the point of our need. “By his wounds you have been healed.”

HIS BLOOD, OUR ETERNAL LIFE

Part of wholly participating in Christ's blood is to recognize the forgiveness he accomplished for us when he poured out his life for us.

1 John 4:18:

There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear...

John 15:13:

Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Jesus died because he loved God and he loved us. When Jesus laid down his life, he stayed dead only as long as God had ordained.

Matthew 12:40:

For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

God set the stopwatch at three days and three nights, and that was all Jesus was going to be in the grave.

Acts 2:23,24:

this Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men.

God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.

God raised Jesus Christ, never to die again. Death could no longer hold him.

Hebrews 2:14b-15:

... that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,

and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Thanks to Christ's sacrifice, we no longer need be enslaved by the fear of death. Why? Because *by his body* we have our healing wholeness, and *by his blood* we have our eternal life.

What a wonderful, complete Savior is he!