

THE BREAKING OF THE BREAD

Garland M. Robinson

It has been said that ALL references to “breaking bread” in the New Testament mean nothing more than a common meal and never refers to the Lord’s supper. As a result, it is denied that the “breaking of bread” in Acts 2:42 and “break bread” in Acts 20:7, refers to the Lord’s supper. What does the Bible say?

There are five verses that mention breaking bread: Luke 24:35, Acts 2:42, Acts 2:46, Acts 20:7, 1 Cor. 10:16.

In **Luke 24:13-35** (after his resurrection), Jesus sat at meat with some disciples where He took bread and brake it (v.30). They later told the apostles how that Jesus was known of them in **breaking of bread** (v.35). This was obviously a common meal. The kingdom/church had not yet been established (cf. Matt. 26:29; Acts 2).

In **Acts 2:42** we read, “*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in **breaking of bread**, and in prayers.*” This verse summarizes the practice of the brethren after the establishment of the church. Notice the spiritual nature of every item: doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3), fellowship (1 John 1:3-7), breaking bread (Acts 20:7), prayers (Acts 12:5). The Greek uses the definite article “the,” making the phrase to read, “*the breaking of the bread.*” It refers to not just any bread, but to a specific bread, a special bread. The definite article is not used when a common meal is under consideration. This verse is obviously a reference to the Lord’s supper.

Acts 2:46 describes the conduct of Christians in Jerusalem in the early days of the church. They continued “*daily with one accord in the temple, and **breaking bread** from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of*

heart.” “Daily” indicates the frequency of their meeting together. Grammatically, it does not modify “breaking bread.” Notice also there is nothing in the phrase “breaking bread from house to house” that indicates a church assembly (which is where the Lord’s supper is to be observed; cf. 1 Cor. 11:20-30; Acts 20:7). Breaking bread is explained in this text as eating meat (food, nourishment). It is translated “food” in Acts 24:17 and James 2:15. Acts 2:46 obviously refers to a common meal.

Acts 20:7, “*And upon the first [day] of the week, when the disciples came together to **break bread**....*” This verse also specifies a specific, special bread with the word “the” attached to it in the Greek text as in Acts 2:42. This was a church assembly on the first day of the week when they came together to worship. Their purpose was to break the bread, i.e., eat the Lord’s supper. Their assembly was not just what they decided to do in their local situation. They were following the decrees (Acts 16:4) and *tradition* (2 Thess. 3:6) of the apostles. This is a divine example regarding worship on the first day of the week in observing the Lord’s supper.

First Corinthians 10:16, “*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?*” Notice how this verse connects the communion, the breaking of bread and the Lord’s table (v.21) together as one. What further proof do we need?

The very fact that Jesus took bread, broke it, and instituted the Lord’s supper is a clear and undeniable fact (Matt. 26:26; Mark 14:22; Luke 22:19). When studying

the five verses that speaks of “breaking bread,” how could anyone deny that breaking bread is not only used to refer to eating a common meal (Luke 24:35; Acts 2:46) but also is used to refer to eating the Lord’s supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16)?

The phrase “breaking bread” is a figure of speech called a *synecdoche* where a “part stands for the whole.” That is, break-

ing bread includes both the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine. It is simply a reference to the “Lord’s supper” (1 Cor. 11:20), the “Lord’s table” (1 Cor. 10:21), the “communion” (1 Cor. 10:16), and “break bread” (Acts 20:7).

The Lord is with us every Sunday when we meet together to break bread in His kingdom/church (cf. Matt. 26:29).