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Communion (Part 1)



Individual Topics - Steve Gregg

In "Communion (Part 1)" by Steve Gregg, different views on the practice of Communion, also known as the Eucharist, among various Christian denominations are discussed. While the Catholic view involves the transformation of the bread and wine into the literal body and blood of Jesus Christ, Protestant views are more varied. The speaker emphasizes the importance of faith and critical analysis of religious texts while questioning the Biblical support for the Catholic view of transubstantiation, ultimately stating that the Eucharist is a commemoration and remembrance of Christ rather than a literal consumption of his body and blood.

Transcript

Today, in this session and the next one, I'm going to be talking about something that we do not have any recorded lectures about at our website. I'm talking about the Eucharist, or what some Christians call Communion. In particular, the fact that in much of history, the institutional church had a very different view of this subject and the denominations that have been around for that long still have this very different view than that which I can find in Scripture.

Now, I'm not desirous to be contentious over such things. I would like to do exactly what the Bible teaches us to do and believe about those things, the things that the Bible gives us reason to believe. That's my only intention.

And what I find so strange is how the church for so many years could have thought some of the things they think and how many Christians still do think them when, I mean, I'd be willing to think them, but they seem very out of character from what the Bible teaches in general to me and I can't find any Scripture in support of what the common view is. Now, that's been true of a number of traditional things, of course, lots of different subjects, but the matter of the Eucharist or Communion is a subject that has been much more central to, in the thinking of most Christians, than other subjects that I've had trouble understanding where the tradition came from about. I remember reading many years ago C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* and he was talking about church and he said, you know, the main focus of a church gathering is taking Communion, the Communion of the

Saints, the Eucharist, the bread and the wine and so forth.

And I remember thinking, well, I don't find that to be so, I don't find it to be so in Scripture. I don't find it to be so in my own life. Now, if it is so in Scripture, then maybe I should adjust my life so that it becomes more central in my own life too, but I just can't see where they're getting it.

Now, of course, Lewis was not a Catholic, he was a, kind of a Catholic, he was an Anglican, he was an Episcopal or Church of England Anglican, and their views are very much like the Roman Catholics in this matter. And the Eastern Orthodox Church makes up a very large portion of Christendom also and they take a very similar view. Even the Lutheran Church, which of course branched off from Roman Catholicism, and the Reformed Churches take a view that's at least more like the Catholic view than anything I can find, frankly, in Scripture.

And I understand, I think the Methodists also take something of view like that. Now, the Catholic view is that Jesus instituted something for the church to do all the time and where something supernatural happens when the church doesn't. That we take bread and we take wine, but that we're not really taking mere bread and wine, we're taking bread that after the priest is consecrated has changed into something else.

Now, you can't tell that it's changed and they know that, they insist upon it, you don't. But the Roman Catholic view is based on the Aristotelian Greek idea that all material things have two existences. One is called in their accidents and one is in their substance.

This is a philosophical thing I won't go very deeply into, but Aristotle believed that all material things, us and other material things, chairs, tables, everything, have what they would call their accidents of their existence is the physical properties that you can measure and touch and weigh. The things we see are the accidents of something that exists in a more idealized form. Its substance is the non-physical and there's somehow they're related and I mean this goes really beyond me because the Bible doesn't teach this and Aristotle wasn't a Christian, so I don't specialize in Aristotelian thinking, but the Catholics take the view that when the priest consecrates the wine and the wafer, that what happens is that the substance of those things change into the literal body and blood of Jesus, but the accidents of their existence, that is the part you can measure, the part you can analyze in a lab, the part you can taste or feel, those don't change.

It's the substance that changes, not the accidents, which of course gives them the ability to say even though we have claimed that this is really the body of Jesus, a human flesh, and that this is really no longer wine, it's really blood, you know, if you would analyze them in laboratory, if you'd eat them, if you'd swallow them and then vomit them up and then analyze them, you find it's still just bread and wine. There's nothing different about them than before you arrived at church and so they say, well, that's that we don't expect that to change, that's just the accidents. They don't change, but the substance does.

In other words, we've got something miraculous and supernatural taking place, but it can't be tested. It can't be observed. You'd have to take it by faith.

Well, okay, I'm willing to take things by faith. I've never observed, I've never seen angels, but I believe they exist. The Bible says they do, so I believe it and therefore we can accept by faith things that can't be seen.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. However, Paul said faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. The only way I can have faith in things I can't see is if God has said something that gives me reason to believe that.

I don't just make up things about the unseen realm and just say, I see it that way, I just see it that way, I'm going to teach that, I'm going to practice that. I'm not that kind of person. I don't want to be sure about anything that God hasn't said if it can't be verified otherwise.

Now, God hasn't told me how much I weigh or how tall I am. I can measure that, but if I can't measure whether a wafer has become human flesh in its invisible substance or whether a glass of wine has become human blood in its invisible substance, that cannot be tested. I have to take that entirely by faith and the only way I could take it by faith is if God said it.

Faith comes by hearing the Word of God. So this is what we have to look at. I want to look at the scriptures that are used to suggest that God did say that.

There's about two and I believe they're very mistaken in the way they've been taken by the tradition. But what's interesting is this view of the Catholics, which means that the elements actually become the body and blood of Jesus, this is called transubstantiation. So the substance is transformed, it's trans-substance and that's strictly the Catholic view.

Now, the Eastern Orthodox view is very old and they don't necessarily use the word transubstantiation normally. They consider it not even worth trying to explain what happens. They believe the real presence of Jesus is in the wafer and in the cup and they call it a mystery.

The Catholics try to kind of explain it. The Eastern Orthodox, they believe kind of the same thing, that when you take the bread and you're really imbibing the body and the blood of Jesus. That's sort of a miraculous thing.

And yet they are, Eastern Orthodox are much more comfortable with the idea of appealing to mystery. It's a mystery. We don't try to explain it.

It's just a mystery. But again, they don't, you have to have some scripture in order to believe that something's so counterintuitive. You can call it a mystery, but most people

just call it nonsense, unless there's something in the Bible that says it is so, or it can otherwise be verified.

So, although the Eastern Orthodox are not exactly on the same page with the Roman Catholics in their explanations, they both believe, and therefore the majority of the church has believed for many centuries, that when you are taking this Eucharist communion, this Lord's Supper, you are taking in the actual body and blood of Jesus, in a sense. And Luther had a view that was not called transubstantiation, but you know, Luther didn't fall very far from the Catholic tree. He did break from the Catholic church on things substantial enough to make them decide that they had irreconcilable differences, but he was very Catholic, not entirely, but very Catholic in terms of the communion.

Like the Catholics, he believed it was a central issue in a church meeting, a church gathering, and he had a modified transubstantiation view. He called it consubstantiation. Now, transubstantiation, you understand the form of that word, substances transformed.

Con is a Greek word that means with. So consubstantiation is the view that the real body and blood of Jesus is with the unchanged elements. Luther did not believe that the bread and the wine become the body and blood of Jesus, but he did say something that makes almost no more sense than that, it seems to me, and that is, he said, the real body of Christ is above, below, beside, and through the bread.

So you can't eat the bread without taking in the body of Christ too. And the Reformed churches have one or another variation on this too. So a huge number of Christians, virtually all the Christians throughout the Middle Ages, and even since the Reformation, many of the Reformed people have at least a view that when you eat the bread and the wine, you're doing something more than just putting food in your mouth.

You're actually experiencing a grace, that's what a sacrament is, the Roman Catholics call it a sacrament. Sometimes they call it the sacrament. They have seven sacraments in the Catholic Church, but they've considered that their Eucharist is the most important sacrament.

And a sacrament is an act, a ritual act, by which it is said grace is given to you. You receive grace through it. Now, really, I'm not sure how the Protestants deal with this.

I mean, I grew up a Baptist, which isn't in any of those traditions. We didn't believe it was a sacrament, but we called it an ordinance. In the Baptist Church, it's called an ordinance, where you believe in two ordinances, baptism and communion as Baptists.

But in the Catholic and Protestant churches, especially the Catholic, they have quite a few sacraments of which this is the most important. In other words, they've got a whole

bunch of rituals in their church, and this ritual is really fundamental to salvation itself. In fact, the whole idea of being excommunicated means to be kept away from communion, from the table.

And since Jesus said, whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life in him, and they interpret that to mean when you're at the Catholic Mass, you receive eternal life by eating the body and blood of Jesus. So you have to keep doing that, because after all, I guess it wears out, has a shelf life or something. So you have to do it every week and every festival day on the church calendar.

And in the Catholic church, you can take communion every day. You can do the, you know, a lot of Catholics who live near a Catholic church, get up every morning before they go to work and go take, you know, the Eucharist every morning, or the Mass, as it's called. And to see, to recognize how central they think this is, Catholics go to Mass.

That is their church service. They call the Mass. But the word Mass is really referring to the Eucharist.

They can go take the Eucharist or the Mass, take a Mass every morning if they want to. They don't go to a prolonged church service every morning, but just go and meet with a priest and do this. So this has become really fundamental to historical Christianity.

Now, one of the things that I've always wondered as a non-Catholic is, first of all, when did this view begin to come into the church, and what scriptures were the basis for it? Now, I always knew a couple of them because I read the Bible enough to know there's some scriptures that kind of sound that way. And the main two would be, of course, John chapter 6, where Jesus said, I'm the bread of life. You need to eat my flesh.

You need to drink my blood to have life. If you don't eat my flesh and drink my flesh, drink my blood, you have no life in you, and so forth. And so if that is talking about the Mass or the Eucharist, then, I mean, that would be a pretty important proof text for what they believe.

I'm going to argue that that's not what it means. It's not referring to the Eucharist, but we'll get to that in due time. The other scripture that they use primarily is, of course, the Lord's, the Last Supper.

And this is recorded in the Synoptic Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. I mean, Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John, interestingly, doesn't contain the Last Supper.

Interestingly enough, in the upper room, the night before Jesus was arrested, and the last supper he had with the disciples, John passes right over it. In chapter 13, he gets them in the upper room, and it says, a supper being ended, Jesus got up and he washed their feet. So it just skips over the whole supper, which is a strange thing, if that's like the fundamental thing about salvation is this, eating this supper.

John makes no reference to it at all. Frankly, I don't think the Book of Acts makes mention of it very much. And I only know of maybe two places in Paul's writings where he even alludes to it.

Now, if this is really what church is all about, if this is really what salvation really is, eating the physical body and drinking the physical blood of Jesus, it's interesting how scarce mention of it is in the Bible. And when it comes to John chapter 6, there's certainly no reference to a meal or the Last Supper. There's a reference to Jesus talking to people who had been fed the 5,000 the previous day, and they came back the next day because they wanted another meal.

And he said, listen, you're not here for the right reasons. You need to not labor for the food that perishes, but you need to labor for the food that endures to eternal life. And so they started talking about that.

And eventually he got really controversial saying, I am the bread from heaven, you need to eat me, eat my flesh and drink my blood. And they took him quite literally. And so it got really into some pretty wild statements.

I mean, he eventually was getting more and more offensive language near the end of the conversation. He said, you need to munch on the flesh of the Son of Man. You know, I mean, that's the word he used in the Greek at one point.

And this is very offensive to Jews. Not only were they not cannibals, but they couldn't drink blood of any kind. They couldn't even accidentally take a little bit of blood in their meat.

They had to drain all the blood out of their meat before they could eat it. So, I mean, eating blood was hugely offensive to all Jews. Certainly, cannibalism is offensive to almost all civilized people.

So no wonder people got offended when Jesus said it. But I believe we can see from the context when we read it, he wasn't talking about literally eating his literal body or blood at all. We'll get to that later.

The other thing, of course, is the Last Supper itself, where Jesus did say, this bread is my body. This is my body. This broken few eat it and remember it's a made.

Then he said, this cup is the new covenant in my blood, or some gospels say this cup is my blood that is shed for you and drink that in remembrance of me. So these words, which are found in the Synoptic Gospels at the Last Supper, are considered to be very important. In fact, Luther, who, as I said, believed in consubstantiation, which is only, you know, a hair's breadth away from transubstantiation, as near as I can tell.

He had a conference with another reformed leader in Switzerland, Zwingli, who was the

Martin Luther of Switzerland at about the same time. Luther in Germany was heading up the Reformation there. Zwingli contemporarily was heading up the Reformation in Switzerland.

And they thought, hey, we see most things alike. Why don't we get together and see if we can merge our two movements? And so they got together and Zwingli believed that the bread and the wine of communion were only symbolic, that they didn't become the body and blood of Jesus. They did not have anything supernatural take place.

It's just bread and just wine, and there was never anything else than that from beginning to end. It was a memorial, he said, of Christ's death. It's a memorial meal, but has no supernatural aspects to it.

Well, Luther couldn't agree with him on that. Luther pounded on the table, and it's recorded, he said, but it says, this is my body. This is my blood.

And in other words, taking that statement at the Last Supper very literally. He just couldn't get past his literalism on that. And so they split up and they never worked together.

In fact, Luther didn't hold very good feelings towards Zwingli after that, apparently just because that wasn't different. When Zwingli died in battle sometime after that, and news came to Luther, his response was, serves him right. So here, two guys who are so close together about everything against the Catholic world, they couldn't get together because they disagreed as to whether the elements of communion were just a symbolic memorial, or whether something supernatural was invested in them.

Now, if something supernatural is, then that's what we call a the Roman Catholics would certainly object to you suggesting that bread being said to turn into a body and wine into blood. If you said that sounds like magic, which is kind of what it sounds like to me, they'd be offended. They say, what, don't you believe in miracles? Actually, I do.

I believe in miracles, not only in the Bible, but I think there's been miracles since biblical times. I've not, I have no problem with miracles, but I've never seen a miracle in the Bible or anywhere else that was done by God that you couldn't witness it. In fact, miracles were done as signs to confirm the word.

That's what the purpose of miracles was. And if you can't see it, you can't verify it. You just trust me, this isn't bread anymore.

Still tastes like it, still crumbles like bread. You know, it looks like bread to you, but trust me, it isn't. Miraculously, its invisible substance has become, you know, a body.

Okay, well, I mean, I don't know very many people who should be, shouldn't be skeptical about that. That sounds kind of gullible unless you can verify it. And God has never been

on record doing any miracles, you know, with physical objects and so forth that couldn't be observed in the physical world.

So this would be a very unique miracle, a unique miracle, and yet very little is said about it in the Bible at all. The specifics of it, of bread and wine turning into body, but are not mentioned in the Bible anywhere. And certainly, you know, if it is as important as so many people think to our salvation to take this, and this is how grace comes to us, that's you really receive the body and blood of Jesus into you when you do it, you better do it a lot.

I just wonder why so many Christian writers, writers of the New Testament had almost nothing to say about it for the most part. And now let me tell you what one writer did say, and that's Paul. There's two times, both in 1 Corinthians, that Paul says something about the communion meal.

There's no question about that the Christians did eat together, apparently on either a daily basis or maybe a little less often than that, but in the book of Acts, they ate daily together in Acts chapter 2. But in 1 Corinthians, Paul takes it for granted that they all know what he's talking about when he talks about the bread that we bless and the wine that we bless has this significance, but he didn't say it turns into the body and blood of Jesus. Interestingly, 1 Corinthians 10, I guess this is verse 14, therefore my beloved, flee from idolatry. Boy, that's relevant to this, it seems to me.

I speak as to wise men, judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, certainly he's talking about the communion meal, no one would disagree about that. 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, though many, are one bread and one body, for we all partake of that one bread.

Now what's interesting about this is that Paul says that when the cup is blessed and the bread is blessed and we eat it, it is the communion. Now the word communion, the word *koinonia* in the Greek, it means fellowship. As we take this bread together, it's an act of fellowship.

He doesn't say it's an act of working a miracle that something changes into another substance. He said, no, when we do it, it's a commemoration of our fellowship. We're in fellowship with Christ in his body because we are his body and in his blood because of course we benefit from his blood, all of us the same.

Fellowship means sharing together in something. Now we share in the body of Christ, but now he could have meant that in a Catholic way, that is when we eat the body of Christ, we're all sharing in it, but he doesn't. He says, we're the bread, we're the body.

It's like he diverts away from any discussion of what happens to the bread and the wine.

It's more, this is an act of fellowship. It's a fellowship meal in Christ because we are the bread.

We are his body and apparently he's speaking or alluding to a practice of everyone taking a piece off one loaf of bread and eating it. So that whole loaf of bread is now all of us. My piece and your piece and your piece all were one loaf.

So we're all one loaf, he says. But it's interesting that he would bring it up one of the very few times he even mentions communion and would say something like that about it, that it's really, we're the body. And he doesn't mention anything about magic or supernatural miracles or anything like that related to the bread.

I think it's more of an emblem that we are sharing together in the body and blood of Jesus as being his body. Well, that doesn't help much towards the transubstantiation idea. And I wanted to, again, I want to look at the verses they use and then critique them and say why I think they're making a mistake.

But I first want to talk about how this idea happened to arise because it came from somewhere. Of course, those who believe it would say, well, it came right from the last supper. Jesus is the one who taught this.

This is his body. This is his blood that we're eating and drinking. But it's not evident from anywhere else in the Bible that this was to be taken literally.

And we have to realize too that taking Jesus literally was the big mistake that a lot of people did make. Although John doesn't record the last supper, he does record the bread of life discourse. John does record the statements of Jesus in John chapter 6, where Jesus said, you have to eat my body and drink my blood.

One thing that's interesting about that, he speaks as if there are people who are doing it. He says, whoever eats, that's present tense, my body and drinks my blood has, present tense, eternal life. Okay, so he's talking about something that there were those presently at that time that he was speaking that had or were eating and drinking, as he's talking about, and had eternal life as a present tense thing.

But he said that a year before the last supper. John chapter 6 is around Passover time, a year before the Passover that Jesus died at and had the last supper. So he's telling us that there were people there in the crowd who had eternal life because they were doing what he said you have to do.

They were eating his flesh and drink his blood, and yet he had never instituted the Eucharist, yet it would be another year before he did. So it's hard to argue that this has something to do with the Eucharist. It does mean something and we will analyze it later, but that's one thing.

John brings that up and, interestingly enough, the Jews who heard him for the most part took him literally, just like Catholics do. They said, how can this man give us his body and his blood to drink? Now we have to notice in John there's sort of a trend in John's record of the life of Jesus that Jesus said things, people took him literally, and every time they did they were wrong. I mean, think about it.

It starts way back in John chapter 2 when Jesus said, they said, by what authority do you do these things? What sign do you show us? He said, I'll tell you what, destroy this temple and in three days I'll raise it up again. And they said, it took 46 years to build this temple, how will you raise it up in three days? Now he didn't correct them, but John tells us he was talking about his body. He's talking about the temple of his body.

Now they took him literally when he said temple. They thought he was talking about really a temple. In John chapter 3, Nicodemus comes to him and Jesus says, you have to be born again, or he wants to be king of God.

What did Nicodemus say? How can a man go back into his mother's womb and be born again? He said, that which is born of the flesh is flesh, that which is born of the spirit of spirit, you can't, it doesn't matter to go back in the womb and be born again, you can't do that. You have to be born of the spirit, he said. In others, Nicodemus took him literally about birth.

The Jews took him literally about destroy this temple. Both cases, he was not talking about being physically born or destroying the physical temple. In chapter 4, he meets the woman of the well and he says, you know, if you knew who it was that was asking you for water, you would ask him and he'd give you living water.

And, you know, he drinks the water of Agape, will never thirst. And she said, whoa, give me this water, so I don't have to come back to the well all the time. She took him literally.

He started talking about real water, but he wasn't. Later in that same chapter, John 4, the disciples bring some food to him. He says, I have food you don't know about.

And they took him literally. What? Did someone bring him food? It was what they said. Who brought him food? And he said, him, them, them, he corrected.

He didn't correct some of these strangers, but he corrected them. He says, my food is to do the will of him that sent me and to finish his work. Then we come to, of course, chapter 6, eat my flesh, drink my body.

They took him seriously, literally, but they were mistaken. When Lazarus died in John 11, we read that Jesus said to the disciples, our friend Lazarus is asleep. We're going to go wake him up.

They took him literally. Oh, if he's asleep, he'll be better. And Jesus said, well, he's dead.

You know, we're talking death here. This was very common in John's gospel to record Jesus making statements that were not literal. People mistook him for being literal.

And that's a main feature that people often mistook Jesus for being literal. Likewise, John chapter 6, when he says, eat my flesh, drink my blood. What he actually says at the end of that discourse is in John 6, 663, he said, it's the spirit that gives life.

The flesh profits nothing. The words I speak to you, they are spirit and they're alive. Now notice he just said, you're taking me literally about my physical flesh and blood, but the words I'm saying, it's a spiritual thing I'm talking about here.

The flesh that doesn't give life. The flesh profits nothing. It's the spirit that gives life.

I'm not talking about eating physical flesh. That wouldn't help anything. In other words, Jesus in John 6, as in many other places in John, is making statements that if you take them literally, you could really go far afield, but you're not supposed to take them literally.

Sometimes he explains them, especially to his disciples. Other times he leaves them to be uncorrected. In fact, the Catholics often say, well, if Jesus didn't mean it literally, and these people were taking it literally, how come he didn't correct them? He must've meant it literally or else he would have corrected them when he knew they were taking them literally.

Not so. He did correct them. He says the words I'm speaking are spirit.

They're alive. The flesh doesn't profit anything. It's the spirit.

I mean, he makes it very clear. I'm not talking literally. I'm talking spiritually here.

So, you know, this is a mistake commonly made, obviously, in church history is to take literally what he did not intend literally. And we'll talk about the words of institution as they call it at communion in a moment. But I want to find out how a Bible that didn't teach this came to be interpreted as teaching it and then became universally the view of almost all the sectors of the church and remaining so for, you know, over a millennium without any serious challenges.

Well, I have some quotes from church fathers, and this may be helpful. This is why I wish I had prepared a presentation so you could read these words. It's awfully hard to follow them entirely when I'm just reading them to you, but I'll read them slowly and I'll remind you of what's in them after I've read.

So these notes will be posted probably at Matthew713.com before very long, probably before I get home. They're not there now. So you just have to listen.

And I apologize for that. Ambrose, who was after the time of the conversion of Constantine, he's the one that Augustine was so impressed with and became a Christian because of here he states what is really the Catholic view. He lived from 340 to 397, so it's close to close to the year 400 when this is the view the church had.

It says, but this bread is bread before the words of the sacraments. When consecration has been added from bread, it becomes the body of Christ. Let us therefore prove this.

How is it possible for that which is bread to be the body of Christ? By consecration. In whose words then is the consecration? Those of the Lord Jesus. Before the words of Christ, the cup is full of wine and water.

When the words of Christ have operated, then it is made blood which redeems people. Now that's that. Ambrose was a very major Christian thinker in his generation in the fourth century and no doubt was expressing the view of the church in the fourth century.

So this is only, you know, three and a half hundred years after the time of Christ and the church is clearly on this track. But were they before that? It's kind of hard to tell. In many cases it seems obviously we're not.

Other times it's not so clear. For example, they often said things like the bread is the body of Christ and the wine is the blood of Christ, but that's just what Jesus said too. The question is, is that a literal statement from him and from them? Or is it, did Jesus not mean it literally and they didn't either? I mean, if they just quoted the words of Jesus about it without adding any interpretation, it's hard to know what they thought about it.

Just like it's hard to know what anyone's going to think about it reading now without any interpretation. But let me just read some things about the idea of the real presence. This idea that the real presence of Christ is in these elements and you're eating the real body of Christ if you do it.

Now, Ignatius was very early. He lived from 50 to 117 AD. So his life span, the gap between the first and the second century, he was born while there were probably, well, certainly some of the apostles were still alive when he was born.

Now his writings, I have to say, he has seven letters that he wrote as he was traveling to Rome to be martyred. And in his letters, he has a lot of innovations that you don't find in the Bible that are practices of the church of his time, including the role of a bishop who had to supervise everything that happened and so forth, which was not the case in the Bible. In fact, in the Bible, there wasn't even an individual bishop.

There were elders who were the bishops in every church. But things do change after the apostles go, even the cats away, you know, the mice play. And so this is something that he said, Ignatius.

Oh, I need to say, but scholars who study Ignatius have said they're not sure how much of Ignatius' works as they've come down to us are untampered with. More than most of the church fathers, we have a lot of writings from church fathers, but more than most of them, scholars think that some interpolations have been since his time. And therefore, some of the things I say have changed in his writings from what the Bible says might not have been him.

We don't know, but they could be someone inserted later in the church to get the church's current ideas across. I'm not going to say that happened with this passage, but that's something that needs to be held into consideration. But here he says, and this food is called by us Eucharist.

Now the word Eucharist is the Greek word. It means Thanksgiving. So all that it means is Thanksgiving, which is a far less spectacular meaning than a magic thing where one substance turns into something else or non-living substance turns into living flesh and so forth.

I mean, if that's what they believe, that's what they should have called something like that, because that's quite counterintuitive. And they, you'd have to get that across to people by emphasizing it a lot, but it's just, it just means Thanksgiving. This is a Thanksgiving meal.

This food is called by us Eucharist. It is not lawful for anyone to partake of it other than one who believes the things which have been taught by us to be true and was washed with the washing of remission of sins for regeneration, referring to baptism, and lives in the manner Christ taught. We receive these elements, meaning the bread and wine, not as common bread and common drink.

In the same manner as our Savior, Jesus Christ was made flesh through the word of God and had flesh and blood for our salvation, even so we were taught that the food for which thanks have been given through prayer is the flesh and blood of that of Jesus, who was made flesh. For the apostles in his memoirs, which are called gospels, it says, delivered to us what was commanded them, that Jesus took bread and gave things to do this for my memorial. This is my body.

Now notice he quotes Jesus' words, this is my body, and he actually says, once it's been prayed for, we take it as the body and blood of Jesus, in agreement with what Jesus said. Now that doesn't, he didn't say anything about it changing. He didn't say anything about the bread is no longer bread and the wine is no longer wine.

He just says, we take it as, I mean, if you'd added the word as an emblem of the body and blood of Jesus, it wouldn't have necessarily changed anything in his name. He didn't say it, but he might well have meant it that way, but he does say at the end, because Jesus said, do this for my memorial. Of course, as it comes to us in Scripture, it's do this

in remembrance of me, but I mean, if you think about it, all the church fathers are going to say this is something we do in remembrance of Christ.

That's a very different thing than saying we're eating Jesus himself. I mean, they might believe that too, but to me, that's the thing you'd think they would emphasize most, because that is, again, so peculiar and frankly, seemingly superstitious, unless you have some real, you know, strong biblical reasons for it, and we don't have any evidence necessarily that they were believing in transubstantiation. We eat it as the body of Christ.

We drink it as the blood of Christ, because that's what Jesus indicated by it, but he didn't indicate necessarily that it changes into those things. We'll talk more about what Jesus said and what it means in a bit. Irenaeus died in 202 AD, and his writings are usually dated from about 165 to 170 AD, so he's a very important, very important church father.

It is said that he studied under Polycarp, and Polycarp studied under the Apostle John, so Irenaeus has a very good pedigree in the mind of the church, and I think rightfully so, and it says, he says, but the flesh is not saved, neither did the Lord redeem us with his blood, nor is the cup of the Eucharist a participation in his blood, nor the bread which we break a participation in his body. Now, I don't really know exactly who he's addressing here, but he talks about the bread and the wine, the controversy is over whether it's a participation in his body and his blood. He doesn't speak about any controversy or even any belief that the bread is the body of Jesus and the wine is the blood of Jesus when they take it.

He just said he speaks of it being a participation in it. Well, we do participate in the body and blood of Jesus. I think we all agree with that.

We have become the body of Jesus. That's a participation, and the blood of Jesus, we certainly count on that. It says, if we walk in the light as he is light, we, you know, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ has uncleansed us from all sin.

We participate in the cleansing of the blood, but there's no reference here necessarily to any transubstantiation. It's hard to know exactly if that was lying behind any of his remarks or not. Tertullian, who lived from 160 to 225, still very early in the church history, he said taking bread and distributing it to his disciples, he made his own body.

He made it his own body saying, this is my body. That is, he says, a figure of my body. Now, that's an interesting thing.

He says, Jesus made the bread his body when he said, this is my body. Then Irenaeus clarifies, that means a figure of his body, which is a very strong suggestion that he was not emphasizing it was literally his body. It was a figure of his body.

It represented his body, and yet in the same quote, he says, he made it his body because he said, this is my body. That means he made it a figure of his body, and that's what Irenaeus clarifies. He says, that is a figure of his body, an image or a symbol of his body.

So he didn't seem to, none of these guys actually, they all said the bread is the body of Christ, the wine is the blood of Christ, but then we know that from Jesus talking too. We say the same thing too, but what do we mean when we say it? Well, they meant, apparently, it's a figure of the body of Christ and the blood of Christ. That was actually Tertullian.

Cyprian, all these are major church fathers who represented the majority view of their time. Cyprian lived from 200 to 258. He said, the cup which is offered in commemoration of him is offered mixed with wine.

Now, you know, there's not much information in there, in this quote, except to say that they offered it in commemoration of him. Again, it's a memorial. It's a remembrance of him.

If I believe that I was eating the literal body and the literal blood of Jesus every time I went to church, I would think that was, I'd speak of it more, certainly differently than just, this is a memory of him. I'm remembering him doing this. Well, wait, it's more than that, isn't it? I mean, isn't it really him? I'm not just remembering something from the past about him.

I'm, I'm like eating him at this very moment. They, to call it a commemoration or a word like that, I mean, they could still believe in transubstantiation and speak that way, but you'd think they'd speak about transubstantiation more, which is again, the more counterintuitive, weird aspect of the doctrine. And they don't make any claims about that.

They just claim it's a memory, a commemoration of him, a memorial of Jerusalem. Now, here's a guy who starts to sound like a Roman Catholic. And again, he's after the conversion of Constantine.

He's in the fourth century. We read Ambrose, who is also in the fourth century, and Ambrose spoke very much like a Roman Catholic. And so did Cyril of Jerusalem, when he said, the bread and the wine of the Eucharist before the holy invocation of the worshipful trinity was simple bread and wine.

But when the invocation is done, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine, the blood of Christ. Now, of course, that could be symbolic too, but as you go on, it sounds like he's being rather literal about this. He says, for, although he says this in the type of the bread, there is a given, there is given to you the body.

And in the type of the wine, there's given to you the blood in order that you may become by partaking of the body and blood of Christ, the same body and blood with him. Now that's interesting because in the first paragraph or the first sentence, he said, when the invocation is done, the bread becomes the body of Christ and the wine becomes the blood of Christ. But in the next line, he says, for in the type of the bread, there is given to you the body in the type of the wine, there is given to you the blood.

Notice it's the bread is a type of the body of Christ. Just like David is a type of Christ. David isn't Christ.

David didn't become Christ. He's a type of Christ. A type is something that is a pattern, something that is done previous to something or in order to represent it or to prefigure it.

So it's interesting that Cyprian, who spoke probably more like a Roman Catholic than any of the church fathers before him that we know of, he emphasizes it's a type. It's in the figure, it's in the type of the bread that we receive the blood of Christ. It's in the type, the image of the wine we receive the blood of Christ.

So again, it's hard to say that he was on the same page as the transubstantiationist, although he was contemporary with Ambrose, who sounded very much like a Roman Catholic in his view. So, of course, this is after the Roman Empire was converted. The church began to be merged with the state and everyone knows the church history knows that after Constantine's conversion, there were a lot of kind of pagan concepts that were baptized into Christianity and mysteries.

I mean, the idea of the wine becoming blood is certainly a mysterious thing. They don't talk in terms of those kinds of mysteries prior to the fourth century. So I think we could probably deduce from these records that the idea that the bread and the wine became the body and blood of Christ kind of evolved.

It was not held prior to the fourth century as near as we can document, though some of the statements of the church fathers might lead us to believe it wasn't said, this is the body, this is the blood. But again, Jesus said that at the last supper, the same words. And it's not likely that the disciples understood him literally, which means they were growing because they they're starting to understand things.

In fact, Jesus said to them in the after the meal in chapter 16 of John, I think it's verse 25. He says, and he says, these things that I've spoken to you in figurative language. But the time is coming, I'll no longer speak to you.

That's John 16, 25. So the same night in the same location, the same gathering where he said, this is my body, this is my blood and said a lot of other things. He said before this, before the talk was over, he says, now I've been speaking to you in figurative language

here up till now.

Oh, OK. So maybe we shouldn't be too quick to be literal about what he said. If he said it was figurative language.

Now, the the famous words of institution, that's what the liturgical church is called when Jesus said this of my body is my blood. They call it the words of institution because they think that's when the first time the body, the bread and wine became the body of Jesus and blood Jesus. Well, on that occasion, let me tell you several things that made me think it doesn't make sense to take him literally.

One thing is that he said he was speaking in figurative language. That's a very good reason not to take him literally. But beyond that, we have to realize that he was doing something he had done before with the disciples without those words of institution.

He was taking Passover. They were Jews every year at this season. They took Passover together.

Jesus had done so with his disciples. In fact, when they came to the upper room together this last time before Jesus died, Jesus actually said in Luke, he said, it's been with great desire, a desire to eat this Passover with you, as opposed to, of course, previous Passover, he says, before I suffer. Now, he what he did is he took the normal Passover meal.

And he changed some of the wording in the Passover meal. The common liturgy was to take some bread at the meal. And whoever was hosting the meal, usually the father of the house, he said, this is the bread of affliction that our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt.

That's the Passover ritual that Jesus was modifying. The Passover ritual said this bread is the affliction, the bread of affliction that our fathers ate in Egypt. Because of course, the Passover is a memorial of God's delivering them from Egypt in the exodus.

But no, they would be familiar with that language. Just Jesus, instead of saying this bread is the bread of affliction our fathers ate, this bread is my body. Now, when every year, the host of the Passover meal would say this bread is the bread of affliction our fathers ate, no one thought he was magically changing the bread at the table into the bread their fathers ate in Egypt.

In fact, it's not even necessarily to think that he's saying it is the bread, but it's the affliction itself. We're commemorating our father's affliction in Egypt. They ate bread when they were afflicted.

We're remembering that. But notice by saying this is the bread of affliction our fathers ate, he is not hinting, and no one would have imagined that the host of the Passover

meal would say, oh, wow, this was bread baked this morning, but now it suddenly becomes bread that was eaten 1,400 years ago. Now, of course, to say something is something else is not always taken literally.

We don't use it literally all the time. If I pulled out a picture of my family and said, this is my wife, these are my sons, these are my daughters, you wouldn't think that my wife's sons and daughters were printed on a piece of paper. You know that these are the images of them.

I'm identifying them for you on the picture. That's not really them. I would say this one's my wife, this is my older son, and no one would think, wow, your family's very two-dimensional.

Or if I was asking someone, you know, how do I get from here to I-5? And you pulled out a map, if you know what those are. I don't know if anyone remembers what a map was, but pull out a map, and there's this line on the page, and say, well, this is, you know, this is Seven Mile or whatever the street's called, and this is this street, and this line here, that's I-5. No, that line on that paper is not I-5.

I-5 is made of pavement, not paper and ink. And say, that's I-5 there. No one would say, wow, how do people drive on that thing? It's so narrow.

Now, it's obvious to say this is, in certain contexts, means this is what this represents. This is a representation, in this case, on paper of I-5. We talk that way all the time.

In fact, when she said, this is my blood, it resembles fairly closely something David said once, which I find interesting. I mean, no one would take David literally, but Jesus was speaking not really any differently than David was in this case. In 2 Samuel, chapter 24, when David was fleeing from Saul, he had a moment where he was reminiscing about his youth in Bethlehem.

And, you know, it's sort of like that Rosebud moment in Citizen Kane, you know. His life's become totally complex and messed up, and he says, Rosebud. Well, that was the name of his little sled he sled.

Oh, you know, sorry, I gave it away. If you haven't seen the movie, now you know. But when he was a kid, he had a sled, and it said Rosebud on it.

But he'd long ago left that, you know, those innocent and carefree times. Now he has a really complex, messed up situation, being pursued by the king and his armies to kill him, and he's hiding in caves. He says, boy, I wish I could drink from the well of Bethlehem again.

When he was a kid in Bethlehem, everything was nice. I wish I was drinking from that well again. And some of his soldiers decided to go to Bethlehem and get him some water

from that well, and they had to break through a Philistine garrison at the risk of their lives.

But they got some water, they brought it back to David, and he wouldn't drink it. And the reason he wouldn't is, he explains, it's 2 Samuel 23, verse 17. When the water from the well of Bethlehem was brought to David, it says, far be it, he said, far be it from me, O Lord, that I should do this.

Is this not the blood of the men who went in jeopardy of their lives? Therefore, he would not drink it and pour it out instead. Now, he had asked for the water, they took him seriously, and he, you know, he was just kind of reminiscing about his childhood. They could bring him water from the well, but it wouldn't bring back his childhood.

And he didn't drink it. They said, this water, this is the blood of those guys who hazarded their lives to get this for him. I can't drink this.

Now, he wasn't saying water had literally turned to blood. He's saying, this water that I'm looking at represents these men's lives and blood, you know, that was put in jeopardy for my sake. I can't do this.

So, I mean, say, this is their blood is the same kind of statement as this is my blood. This cup is my blood. It speaks of representation.

It doesn't speak of literalness. By the way, when Jesus said, this cup, this is my blood, which is shed for you, his blood hadn't been shed yet. In the upper room, he hadn't shed any blood yet.

How could that cup actually be turned into his shed blood, which he had not shed blood. He was going to shed his blood the next day. Obviously, he's not saying my blood has been shed in advance, so we get this cup full for you to drink.

The rest of my blood is going to be shed tomorrow, but he hadn't lost a drop of blood. The interesting thing is, when he said, this is my body, no pieces of his body were seen to be missing. You know, his body was sitting right there intact.

His blood was still in his veins. How could that have, how could they have even imagined that he meant, this is literally my body, this is literally my blood, and why would they? He's using the wording of the traditional Passover ritual. This bread is something, but it really wasn't literally.

He's using language like you find in the Old Testament, or even Paul, when he's talking about the Jews in the wilderness in 1 Corinthians 10, he says, they all drank from that rock that followed them. He said, which rock is Christ? Now, certainly what Paul means is the rock is a symbol of Christ, but he said that rock they drank from is Christ. Of course, he didn't mean that Christ was literally a rock following them around the wilderness.

This is the normal way to speak when you're not necessarily being literal. You would speak the same way if you were being literal, of course, although you might have to clarify it. Because if I say, this coffee is my blood, drink it, no one would think I'm really, unless they think I'm really crazy, no one would think I'm saying this is literally my blood.

Unless I say, no, I really mean it. I mean, this coffee was coffee in a bar, but now it's my blood. You literally would be drinking my blood if you drink this.

I mean, no way would Jesus' words have been taken literally unless he went out of his way to say, now I mean this literal this time. I know I've been speaking in figuratives all the time, but this time I mean it exactly, precisely, literally like I'm saying. But he didn't do anything like that, and why should he? He didn't mean it literally, obviously.

By the way, if the disciples had thought at that moment that he was being literal, what would Peter have done? It was some years later that Peter was on a housetop, and a sheet was lowered in a vision to him, and Jesus spoke to him. The sheet was full of unclean animals that Jews don't eat. And Jesus spoke to him and said, rise and eat these animals.

And Peter said, whoa, wait a minute, Lord. I'm a Jew. I'm observant.

I've never eaten anything unclean all my life. How do you think he would have reacted if he thought Jesus said, here, drink my real blood. Eat my body here.

I mean, if the disciples had taken him literally, they would have fallen over back in their chair and probably run out the door. It was even years after that, like I said, that Peter balked when Jesus told him to eat unclean food. How much more to eat a human body and drink human blood? There's no way the disciples would have understood or would have been expected to understand him as being literal.

And by the way, if later Peter and the apostles came to understand, oh, it really is his blood. It really is his body that we're eating. And they're doing this regularly.

Why would Peter later say, I've never eaten anything unclean? Because in fact, human bodies are unclean to eat and human blood. And if they had come to terms with it, if they said, okay, we realize now that Jesus was being literal. I mean, this does become his body and blood as much as it makes me want to gag to think about it.

I realized that the accidents have not changed. So I'm really just eating bread and wine. It's the substance that's changed, which was a Greek idea, not a biblical idea.

But the point is, if they had come to say, okay, we really are eating Jesus' flesh and his literal blood, then he would say, therefore, we are eating something that would be considered unclean. Every bit as much as a pig or a lobster would be considered unclean to a Jew, certainly human flesh. But Peter said, I've never eaten anything unclean.

Why would he say that? If in his own mind, he believed that he'd been eating human flesh and blood, he wouldn't say I've never touched unclean things. In fact, you'd think being asked to eat unclean animals would be a small step from what you've already been doing regularly, eating human flesh and blood. So, I mean, to me, anyone who takes this literally is not very familiar with the way people talk now or then, not very familiar with how the disciples were expected to understand it or would have understood it, and not familiar, apparently, with the Passover ritual.

They're just not very familiar with anything. And people can't be blamed for that in days when they didn't have Bibles. But the bishops of the churches always had access to Bibles.

There weren't many of them around before the printing press came along, but there were some Bibles that the leaders of the church had. So they wouldn't really have any excuse, it seems to me, for thinking Jesus was being literal. And it doesn't look like that's what they did think.

When I read those church fathers prior to the year 300, it doesn't look like any of them took it to be literal body, but they called it a commemoration, a participation in the body, a community, a communion, a fellowship in the body and blood of Jesus. That's what Paul, that's the term Paul used. So I have to say these verses of institution don't do anything to the bread and wine, except make it significant as a God-ordained memorial for us to remember Christ's death and flesh and blood.

What I find interesting is how many of the Reformed churches and Lutheran churches retained this Catholic idea, which involves a bit of, I have to say it sounds like magic, because if we call it a miracle, we have to find some way to compare that with other miracles in the Bible. And it's not like any of the miracles in the Bible. I mean, there is a phenomenon in the Bible called miracles, but transubstantiation isn't like any of them, because miracles can be witnessed, all the ones that God did anyway.

So I can see how in superstitious times after Christianity had merged with Roman paganism, how some really strange ideas might enter the church that had not been there before, and that's apparently the time that we have documentation that church fathers began to talk like it was. And yet the Reformation comes along and says, no, we're going to focus solely on Scripture, only what the Bible teaches. And yet they retain not necessarily transubstantiation intact, but they still retain the idea that something other than eating food is happening when you take communion, when you take the Eucharist.

Now I'm going to give you a break because it's time to do that. We started a little late, but we're not going to take our break late so we can maintain our schedule beyond this point. I have a few more things to point out, namely what we have evidence in the Bible and the early church fathers, what communion, what the Eucharist was in connection

with something called the agape feast.

We have many references to the agape feast in the church fathers, in the Bible itself too. It was a, it seems to be a central act of Christian worship in the Bible, and apparently the Eucharist was attached to it, but there was nothing rather than an ordinary feast involved, a food. But well, I just want you to have some more documentation.

This lecture we just had covers, you know, a lot of the arguments against the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist, but we do have a lot of references in the first three centuries and in the Bible to a special kind of feast that the early Christians had. I'm not sure if they had it every time they met, but it kind of sounds like it. And we can learn a lot about it and its alternative to the Catholic idea of what was going on when they ate the bread and wine.

So we'll talk about that after we take a break.