

# Breaking of Bread is a Covenant

by Zac Poonen

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*This sermon delves into the concept of covenant in the Bible, starting from the covenant with Noah symbolized by the rainbow, highlighting the seriousness of sin and God's judgment. It progresses to the covenant with Abraham marked by circumcision, emphasizing the symbolism of death and cutting off. The sermon then explores the covenant with Israel through Moses, involving the shedding of blood. Finally, it culminates in the establishment of the new covenant by Jesus during the Last Supper, focusing on the significance of breaking bread and drinking the cup as a solemn agreement to die to self and live for Christ, building the church.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 9:12, Genesis 17:10, Exodus 24:8, Matthew 26:26, 1 Corinthians 11:25, 1 Corinthians 11:27, Luke 24:30

**Topics:** "Covenant", "Sacrifice and Redemption"

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## Description

This sermon delves into the concept of covenant in the Bible, starting from the covenant with Noah symbolized by the rainbow, highlighting the seriousness of sin and God's judgment. It progresses to the covenant with Abraham marked by circumcision, emphasizing the symbolism of death and cutting off. The sermon then explores the covenant with Israel through Moses, involving the shedding of blood. Finally, it culminates in the establishment of the new covenant by Jesus during the Last Supper, focusing on the significance of breaking bread and drinking the cup as a solemn agreement to die to self and live for Christ, building the church.

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## Transcript

From the beginning of the Bible, we read the word covenant. Now, that's not a word we normally use in our English language nowadays. Nowadays, the word we use is agreement.

It's the same thing, covenant or agreement. It's a very solemn or secret and serious agreement between two people. And, for example, one of the earliest times that that word was used is in Genesis chapter 9, where we all have seen a rainbow.

All you children have also seen a rainbow. Do you know that that's a sign of a covenant God made more than 4,000 years ago? Much longer, earlier than that, maybe 5,000. When there was a flood on the earth, and holy Noah, he made an ark, and only his family was saved.

And like we say, we all descended from Adam. We also all descended from Noah, because all the others were destroyed because of their sin. So that's one of the earliest examples in the Bible of God hates sin so

much that he wiped out thousands of people on the earth with a flood.

We read things like that. It must make us hate sin, because God hates it so much. He hated it so much that he was willing to kill hundreds of thousands of people and leave only one family alive.

And it says there that Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, or favor. And that shows how God's looking for even one person, one man, one woman, who is willing to stand for him in the midst of a very corrupt society, even today. Jesus said the last days will be like the days of Noah.

That means there'll be a lot of very filthy, evil people hating one another, like in Noah's day, they killed one another, like all the wars and all going on, and exploiting people for money and all types of things. But in the days of Noah, there was a man and his family, Noah, that stood for the Lord. And so the last days are going to be like the days of Noah.

God's expecting to find here and there families, not just individuals. Noah was not an individual. He was a family man with three sons, and they were also married.

And Noah and his wife and his three sons and their wives, eight people. And it took about 100 years to build the ark. As the Lord said, I give 120 years patience.

And if the world doesn't change, I'm going to destroy it. And one thing we see that Noah was about 600 years old. Those children must have been 300, 400 years old or something.

But they obeyed their father, all those three sons, and worked with him to build the ark, when he said, this is the only thing that will remain when the world is destroyed. That's what we preach also. When this world is destroyed, only those who belong to the church, church means those who have committed their lives to Christ, not just here, but in different parts of the world, from different groups, those have really personally committed their life to Christ.

That's the only thing that will remain. So in Noah's time, the Lord said to make a covenant with you that I will never again destroy the world with a flood. He said in Genesis chapter 9, verse 12, this is the covenant, the sign of the covenant, Genesis 9, 12, that I'm making between me and all of you and every living creature.

I put a bow in the cloud. And that's the first instance of a covenant. And then later on, we read that God made a covenant with Abraham.

And for that also, he gave a sign. In Noah's case, it was a rainbow. And the rainbow, if you notice, it's like a bow.

In fact, the word in the original is a bow, just like a bow and arrow. But the interesting thing about the rainbow is that it's pointing upwards, which means the arrow is fired up. It was one way of God saying, I'm going to take the arrow for the sin of man.

Remember that whenever you see a rainbow. It's a bow pointing upwards, indicating that the arrow goes to God. He was in symbolic form taking, I'm going to take the punishment for man's sin.

It's amazing. And then the next time there was a covenant was when Abraham, God made a covenant with Abraham. And there, there was a sign of the covenant was circumcision.

He said that in Genesis 17 and verse 10. He told Abraham, this is my covenant between me and all your family, and your children, grandchildren, all your descendants. And we shall be circumcised, verse 11.

And there again, it's a cutting off of something. It's a picture of death to something, cutting off. So in all these instances, you see a symbol of death or cutting off something.

And later on, we read when God made a covenant with Israel through Moses. And there again, he said, you must shed blood. And there are a number of places where it says, you must bring a bull or a lamb and cut it and shed its blood.

And that's the blood of the covenant. That's how agreement between God and man is always symbolized by some form of death. So finally, when Jesus came, he established what we call the new covenant.

The old covenant was what God made with Israel. But when Jesus established a new covenant, also, you'll find, starting in Genesis, sorry, Matthew, in chapter 26. At the last supper, while they were eating, Matthew 26, verse 26.

While they were eating, Jesus took some bread. And after blessing it, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, take, eat, this is my body. And it's more fully expressed in other gospels, my body broken for you.

Now, when Jesus said that, he had not been crucified. But there was something within his body that had been broken for 33 and a half years. And that was his own will.

He said, I've come from heaven, never to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me. So that was what was broken inside his body. Because when he broke this bread, his body was not broken.

Yet he said, there's something broken here. In my body, my will has been broken. And he said, this is my blood of the covenant, which is going to be poured out for the forgiveness of sins, verse 28.

Again, he uses that word covenant. So that's the first time Jesus used the word covenant. In his whole life on earth, an agreement.

So remember this. You know, if you were to go to a court, older people can understand this. And you sign an agreement.

Maybe you take a loan from a bank, you sign an agreement that I'll pay it back with an interest. Or when you buy a house, if you pay in advance, you make an agreement that within such and such a time, I'll pay the balance. And that's a very solemn thing.

Now, nobody will go to a court, no sensible person will go to a court and sign an agreement without reading exactly what is it saying, what am I committing myself to? Only a very foolish person will just go and sign it blindly. And yet, I know that, as I did it myself, so many, many believers, they break bread and break up without any understanding of what it means. And it's not an agreement at all.

There's absolutely no agreement, it's a ritual. This is what Christianity has become, an empty shell with the inward reality absent. And this is what made people like me and others who got fed up with the Christianity, that it was an empty ritual without any content, full out of dead churches and full out of dead systems that just went through rituals.

And even, take for example, the songs we sing. How many of you can say, when you sang the song today, all the songs, that you recognized the presence of Jesus here and you were telling him, Jesus, your blood and your righteousness are my dress. I think if you're honest, you say, I wasn't even aware of Jesus here.

I was just singing a song, a song that I'm very familiar with. Now, I'm not trying to condemn you. I'm just saying, I did it like that for years and years and years and years.

Till I woke up one day and said, Lord, why am I singing? Is it just some sing-song session somewhere like in the world? They have music sessions, meaningless. Just I like the tune and I like the words. I'm not singing it particularly to anybody.

But it's not to be like that in a church. Jesus said, where two or three are gathered together, there I am in the midst of them. It's very, very important to realize that if Christ is not here, there's not a church.

We're wasting our time. We're just singing songs and listening to a message and going home. That's how it is in 99% of churches or more.

And we've sought to break away from that and have reality. That's how CFC churches were started. We want reality.

We don't want a ritual. Ritual versus reality. That was the issue.

So we want reality. That means when we sing, we want to sing to Jesus directly to him. When we break bread, it's an agreement between Jesus and me.

He said, this is the blood of the agreement that you and I are making together. Would you go to a court and just sign something blindly? The other fellow signed it and you just signed it without even seeing. What exactly am I signing for? Well, I'll tell you what you're signing for this evening when you break bread and drink the cup.

You are signing for being willing to die to yourself every day to your self-will when you're tempted tomorrow. Remember that you broke bread today. You signed an agreement today with the Lord that I am going to put myself, life which rises up in anger when someone does something that hurts me or puts me down.

I remember, oh, I signed an agreement last Saturday night with the Lord saying I would die to my self-will. That's a serious thing to sign an agreement in a court and not keep it. Or sign an agreement in a bank saying I'll pay this on so and so day and not keep it.

It's much more serious. But because the Lord is merciful and doesn't come hard on us like a bank will come and say give me your money because you didn't keep your part of the agreement or a court will send people to jail for not keeping the agreement they signed for. The Lord doesn't do that.

But that doesn't mean we can take advantage of it because one day the Lord will come and he'll set all the accounts straight. And it's going to be a very difficult day for people who didn't take an agreement seriously. So I've repented of all the years in my younger days as a born-again Christian because nobody told me straight is what I'm telling you right now.

I went to hundreds of breaking of bread services and not a single preacher told me what I'm telling you right now. You are making an agreement today to die to yourself every day. I wish somebody had drilled that into my head.

I had to discover it myself from the Bible. Like a lot of truths that I changed my life I discovered myself. I never found a book that said that.

I never heard a message that preached that. I'm thankful that the Lord opened my eyes to see it from Scripture. It's written here.

But a lot of people don't read the Bible carefully. And I decided, well, whatever's changed my life I'm going to first pass on to my children. My first responsibility is my family.

Teach them all what it means to make an agreement with God. And then wherever I go, those who have years to hear tell them what this means. And not only this, but everything else in the New Testament.

So it's something we must bear in mind. It's a solemn agreement. And today, when we break bread and drink the cup, I'm signing something.

I'm putting my signature to something today. Lord, I mean this. It's more serious to me than signing something in the court or in a bank.

I want to die. I want to share. Jesus said, this is my body broken for you.

There's something inside this body that is broken. It's will. And I'm taking part of that when I break the bread and eat it.

I'm saying, Lord, I want my will to be broken too. Now, I don't mean that tomorrow. It's a ritual.

It's a worthless, empty ritual I'm going through today. And that's what we've done for many years in the past. But I trust it will be different from today.

I know from the time that this became real to me, like a revelation from heaven. Breaking of bread has been very meaningful every time I take part. I remember in the early days in our church when I felt it was becoming a ritual.

We'd break bread once in six months. I see you guys are not, in CFC Bangalore, I see you guys are not serious about doing this. So why should we break bread at all? We don't want to go sign agreements before God and not mean it.

I think some of you are not taking it seriously. So we won't break bread. For six months, we didn't break.

So if you take it seriously, next time we break bread, we mean it. But I believe we should come to the place where I'd be willing to break bread every day. I am today, definitely.

The place where I can break bread every single day and say, Lord, I mean it. I want to die to myself because it changed my life. And if you take it seriously, it will change your life too.

Let's turn to 1 Corinthians 11. This covenant between Christ, God, and man. 1 Corinthians 11.

In 1 Corinthians 11, there are two symbols in this chapter. The first is the symbol of the veiling of the head in the first half of the chapter. The second is this breaking of bread.

The first is a symbol of being under the authority that God has placed over me. It says a woman covers her head to say that I am under the authority of my husband. And my husband's glory has got to be covered in the church.

And so I'm covering my head. The man does not cover his head because he says my man is the glory of God. Verse 7. 1 Corinthians 11.

7. The glory of God must not be covered. Do you folks understand why men don't cover their heads and women cover their heads? Let me explain it to you very simply. Here it is.

A woman. Verse 6. Sorry. Verse 7. A man should not have his head covered because he is the image and glory of God.

And the glory of God must not be covered in the church. So a man does not cover his head. It's symbolic.

Just like the breaking of bread is symbolic. But it says here in the same verse the woman is the glory of the man. And the glory of the man must be covered in the church.

And that's what a woman is saying when she covers her head. So a woman who says I won't cover my head is actually saying no. The glory of man must be seen in the church.

It's quite a rebellious statement. That in the church the glory of man must be seen. She doesn't realize it because nobody's ever taught her what it means.

A lot of things like this. A lot of people take baptism without even knowing what it means. Do you want to your children to go to school and study mathematics without ever understanding it? They're saying I went to school.

No. I still don't understand anything in mathematics but I went to school. That's how many Christians are.

Reading the Bible or going to meetings. They hardly understand anything. They're happy.

I mean if your children went to school like that they'd fail right in grade 1. But we won't tolerate that in school. They must understand. We take them out of a school that doesn't teach properly.

And that's how I tell people to get out of a church that doesn't teach you properly what the Bible teaches. So here it's so simple. It's just one verse.

The glory of God must never be covered in the church. The glory of man must be covered in the church. That's all it means.

Men don't cover their heads. Women cover their heads. It's that simple which a 10 year old can understand.

But yet it's quite likely that some of you if you're honest are hearing that for the first time in your life. That shows the condition of Christianity. And in the second part of that 1 Corinthians 11 it speaks of the breaking of bread.

This is again a symbol. The covering of the head is a symbol. The breaking of bread is a symbol.

Sometimes people say oh well symbols don't matter. Well if the Lord says it doesn't matter I agree. But if the Lord commands us to take baptism.

Baptism is another symbol. There's nothing in that water. It's a symbol of I'm dead and buried to my old life and I'm living a new life.

I come up out of the water. It's a picture of being raised from the dead. But so many people go through it without understanding it.

As I said we never send our children to a school where they don't understand what they've been taught. We tell the school get rid of that teacher. My son is not understanding anything of what is being taught.

But they don't say that in a church. They're hesitant to leave a church even though they don't understand anything of what the church is not teaching them anything of what the Bible says. So here we need to understand the Lord's Supper.

Here again the word covenant comes. Verse 25. When Jesus took the cup he said this is the new covenant.

An agreement. Again that word agreement, agreement, agreement started from the time of Noah. And again just like in Noah's story the bowl is pointing upward.

Here also the agreement is where Jesus says it's my body that's going to be broken and it's my blood that's going to be shed. And I want you to see that. I'm going to be an example for you and now you you don't have to physically allow your body to be crucified or your blood to be shed but your inner life self-life you're saying I agree Lord like this bread is broken.

My will is going to be broken in my daily life when I'm tempted when I'm provoked in your home on the road, in the office, provoked I am going to die because I broke bread today. I signed an agreement with the Lord. It's that serious.

And the blood that was shed is a picture of his life. You know Leviticus 17 verse 11 says the life of the flesh is in the blood. If you drain out all the blood from a person's body he dies.

He cannot live. You don't have to do anything. Just poke an artery and drain out his blood he'll die.

You don't have to cut off his head or any part of his body. There are people who do that. The life of the flesh is in the blood.

So when Jesus poured out his blood, you know that every drop of Jesus' blood was poured out on this earth because when they finally pierced his side with a spear, blood flowed out and there was no blood left in that body when Jesus rose from the dead. When he appeared before his disciples in Luke chapter 24, take some time to read it they thought he was a spirit. And you know what he said? Maybe you should look at it.

I like to show the verses. Luke chapter 24 when Jesus appeared before his disciples and they thought he was a spirit verse 37. Jesus appeared verse 36 and stood before them and said, Peace be to you.

They were startled and frightened and they thought he was a spirit. And then he said, See my hands and feet, verse 39. Touch me and see for a spirit does not have flesh and bones no blood.

Did you notice that? We have flesh, bones and blood in our body. Every one of us. But when Jesus rose from the dead, the blood was gone.

It was only flesh and blood. He said that himself. Where did the blood go? At Calvary on the cross.

Every drop of blood was brought down for you and me for the forgiveness of our sins. So that's what we said. This is the new covenant in my blood.

I poured it out for you and you are now agreeing with me that as you and I build the church on earth you're willing to lay down your life. You're willing to pour out your life for the flesh and the blood. You're willing to pour out your life to build the church.

That's primary in your life. Everything else is secondary. You live on earth to glorify God.

You don't live on earth to make money. You don't live on earth to just enjoy yourself. God may give you money.

God may give you a lot of pleasure and enjoyment and everything. But your primary aim in life, Lord I'm signing an agreement, is to live for what you gave your body and blood for. What did he give his body and blood for? To build the church.

Church is not a denomination or it's people. You and I. We are the church. Members of a body.

That's why I'm breaking bread. So when we eat, it says here, therefore if you don't mean this it's like saying the clerk and the judge in the court says, hey listen you better read this before you sign it. Don't sign and I'm sure all of us will read something otherwise you're signing for something, you're agreeing for something you don't even know what you're agreeing to.

So it says here, verse 27, if you eat this bread and drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner you'll be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Do you know what that means? Let me paraphrase it. If you without even thinking about what you're signing just decide to eat the bread, drink the cup without even thinking of what you're doing let me paraphrase it, you will be guilty of crucifying Christ.

That's what he's saying. You are guilty, not just the Roman soldier, you're guilty of crucifying Christ. If you eat and drink this blood meaninglessly, you sign the signature there meaninglessly on that paper, we eat the bread, drink the cup how many times will you have done it? We need to repent.

Verse 28, therefore a man must examine himself and thus he must eat the bread and drink the cup. You don't have to examine somebody else, no it's not our business. Don't judge a person sitting next to you, don't judge your wife or husband, it's not your business God is the only judge you are permitted to judge one person, that's yourself a man must examine himself period judge himself and then eat the bread and drink the cup.

Have you done that? In all the past times you ate, partook of the Lord's table did you judge yourself and see what you were signing to, what you were signing up for? Well, we can start today because if you don't look at what you are signing for you don't examine yourself then you are speaking and drinking judgment only to yourself verse 29 because you are not judging the body rightly, that means you are not judging why

the body of Christ was crucified you are not understanding that you are saying I want to be a part of Christ's body today but you are not understanding why his body was crucified and when people do that a number of times you know what happens verse 30, you become sick physically sick, weak and some even die can I die for this reason, which reason they take part in the Lord's table without understanding what they are signing up for I don't know whether you tremble at God's word I have learned through the years to tremble at the word of God and it has changed my life we take the laws in the country very seriously you never drive on the wrong side of the road it will lead you to accidents we do so many things in earthly laws when we come to the things of the Lord even many Christians even in good churches like ours they don't take them seriously we are such forgetful creatures that we need to be reminded of these things I am not trying to condemn anybody because I say I don't blame you, you didn't have good teachers but you understand something now you have no excuse and I will tell you something you may forget again in another 6 months that's why we need to be reminded again and again and again that's why there are 4 gospels that's why there are so many epistles that repeat the same thing again and again so there is a purpose in God repeating we need to hear something repetitive you don't learn, the children don't learn multiplication in one lesson how many lessons they have to go through before they understand multiplication or division or any of the other things in the world same here God is not saying why didn't you understand it we need to hear, we need to hear again but let's begin today and say Lord I want to break bread today in a completely new way taking understanding and here is a wonderful promise, I have taken this promise for myself verse 31 if we judge ourselves rightly we will not be judged in the final day when I stand before the Lord in the final day I want the Lord to look at the record of my life and say I don't have anything to judge you you get 100% in the final examination I want that don't you want your children to get 100% in the final examination I want it for myself this tells you how you can get 100% in the final day if you judge yourself today and we get an opportunity to do that now we will not be judged in the final day so let's take the opportunity and if you take it lightly the Lord will discipline us so that we don't get condemned in the rest of the world but that is in our relationship with God but the cross has got two arms vertical my relationship with God horizontal my relationship with all my fellow believers so breaking a bread also has a symbol in the horizontal direction that is in 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 15 I speak as to wise people you are all wise people please judge what I am saying think about this seriously the cup of blessing which we bless it is a sharing in the blood of Christ it doesn't taste like blood at all it tastes like grape juice some groups in Christianity say it is actual blood I say what does it taste like? it is not blood, it is grape juice it is a fellowship it doesn't say the cup of blessing is the blood of Christ no, no, the Bible is very exact it is a fellowship in the blood of Christ that is what it is like he said his blood to die, I am dying to myself and the bread which we break, it is not the body of Christ I say does it taste like meat or does it taste like bread? be honest it is a fellowship in the body of Christ that is broken his will was broken in that body my will must be broken in his body so here is where the other part of it is very important I told you the two arms of the cross one in my relationship with Christ I am saying I die to myself the horizontal relationship I am saying in verse 17 there is one bread and because we are a large number we had to break it up but essentially there is only one bread when Jesus broke the bread there was only one piece of bread that he broke and distributed among 12 people so symbolically we only have one bread one bread indicates we are all one body so it is not just my vertical relationship with the Lord where I judge myself but I am also testifying when I break bread with others here I am willing to die to myself in my relationship with my brothers and sisters here these are a part of my body that is why we don't invite any Tom, Dick and Harry to break bread with us we have been very careful about that in Bangalore we don't always manage to do it exactly because some people cheat us but we try to tell them if you are not committed to Christ and to this body, not just committed to Christ are you committed to this body of believers here don't break bread, please,

don't play the fool with God don't take part because it is not just a vertical relationship there are two arms on the cross so I am talking about my relationship with Christ is right and my relationship with all the other people breaking bread with me here is also right, if it is not right pass the cup and bread to the next person don't take it because we are many, our one body, verse 17 we partake of one bread so here I am speaking about one bread being symbolizing that we are one body so I hope you understood something of the seriousness of breaking bread I am not trying to frighten anybody or threaten anyone I am saying it is a tremendous privilege and honor to fellowship with Jesus in this way it is like having a meal Jesus said to you, people living today say I want you to come have a meal with me Jesus invited me for a meal, wow that is how it is today, my brothers and sisters Jesus is inviting you to a meal with me one last verse Luke chapter 24 you know the two disciples who walked with Jesus to Emmaus they didn't recognize him, they didn't know who it was they thought it was some man well versed in scriptures because he could explain the scriptures to them finally when they went home they invited him to come home verse 30, when he was sitting at the table Luke 24, 30 he took the bread and blessed it and broke it and they suddenly saw the name prints in his hands when he was breaking the bread wow, this is Jesus risen from the dead and as they broke bread and ate it, it says their eyes were opened, verse 31 they recognized him I have thought of that many times when I break bread I said Lord, I want that to happen to me when I break bread my inner eyes to be opened a little more and I see you I see you here in my midst in our midst pray Lord, like you open the eyes of those people open my eyes too and I recognize you, not just you let me recognize that around me are the members of your body with whom you have made me one I want to treat them like I treat the members of my body let's pray thank you Father for these amazing truths that you have revealed to us from your word I pray you will make it real for everyone of us today so the Holy Spirit pray in Jesus name Amen

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