

# INTRODUCTION



## *What Are the Two Breads?*

There are two kinds of bread in scripture: bread that comes up from the ground by the sweat of man's face and bread that comes down from heaven as a free gift from God. One is a metaphor for the perishable life our flesh craves, the other for the life with God that our spirits crave. Bread in the Bible represents flesh. Who is not, to some degree, obsessed with some aspect of physical life? Day by day we must awaken, wash, dress, feed, inform, employ, entertain, and rest our flesh. How much of a person's attention and fortune is spent on health, food and drink, beauty, fashion, romance, marriage, family, work, play, wealth, security, community, and death? God illustrates the entire drama of our perishable lives with a loaf of bread and our generations with the grain from which it is made.

This is the metaphor: a kernel of grain is a seed, but in the Bible, *seed* often means offspring, either by actual birth or by legal adoption. The flesh of a person dies and

is “planted” in the ground, but a stock can arise from that one seed with a full head of grain in the next generation. A person from a certain “stock” is from that family. A field of grain is a kingdom, ripening for a day of harvest. Harvesters gather and separate the grain from the weeds (adoption). They thresh and winnow it to remove the stalks and chaff (leave father and mother). It is then ground into fine flour, at which point the separate kernels are no longer distinguishable (one body of believers). The Lord adds water (the water of the Word), kneads it into a lump (the Church), and puts it over fire (Holy Spirit) to make bread. The new substance is no longer what it was; it has a new identity and usefulness that is separate from the grain and the stocks it came from. This is how the Bible explains what the Church is.

Two simultaneous stories in the narrative eventually take us to Bethlehem, where God became flesh. The first follows the earthly lineage of the “seed of the woman,” a flesh-and-blood person that would come to save and redeem the world. It passes down the generations from Adam to Noah, Noah to Abraham, Abraham to Boaz, Boaz to David; and from David to Mary, the virgin mother of Jesus. In my mind, this story is a long walk with Abraham’s seed from Ur in Chaldea to Bethlehem (*Bêyth Lechem*), which means “house of bread.” As I have walked along this road, I have been unable to avoid the parallels between their lives and my own. Coming to grips with my depravity in

light of their stories has made a tangible difference in my dependence upon God.

The second story is woven into the fabric of the first, that God desires a fresh, nourishing, intimate relationship with us, just as he wanted it with Abraham or Israel. This relationship comes down from above like manna by God's grace through faith in the promised seed of the first story. Even though our flesh wages war against it, there is redemption, adoption, and a new identity and life for anyone that believes. This new life in him is represented for us every time bread enters the narrative. Every lesser story in the Bible tells the greater story of God's interruption of the famine into which we were born to become our bread of life.

If there is a bread of life, then it follows that there is also a bread of death, but the pattern laid out for us is the natural first, with the spiritual afterward. As a preview, I want to highlight how this pattern appears in each of the stories we will examine in this book. Adam's fall brought about the natural order and, with it, death, but there is another Adam:

There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, "*The first man Adam became a living being.*" The last Adam *became a life-giving spirit*. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. (1 Cor. 15:44–46)

Thus we have Adam and Christ, Cain and Abel, Ishmael and Isaac, Esau and Jacob, Rachel and Leah, Saul and David. In each instance, the man or woman of the flesh is born or chosen first, and the spiritual man or woman comes afterward. At the end of the story, the first becomes last, and the last becomes first. There are two Moses', two Davids, two Elijahs, two laws, two kingdoms, two Jerusalems, antichrist and Christ. We may also recognize two fathers, two births, two natures, two deaths, and in the Garden, two trees.

When we look at the meaning of the first bread, we must think about it in the context of the earth from which it springs. If earth is under the curse of death, then the bread that grows from it is a product of death—*food for the dead*. This bread sustains life for one day but cannot halt the inexorable march back to the dust from which we came. If you leave it out in the air for seven or eight days, it becomes dry and moldy; in as many decades, so do we. Paul considered himself already dead, summing it up this way: “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”<sup>1</sup> The man named Saul was dead. Paul considered himself resurrected as Christ’s flesh, or as he

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1 Galatians 2:20

expressed it in another passage, Christ's wife—being one flesh and body with the Church and with his Lord.<sup>2</sup> We that have died to our former identities and have been raised to life in Christ require spiritual food to sustain us. That food is represented for us in the communion meal.

I have a third story to tell, woven into the others introduced above. I was a Mormon (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, or LDS) from about my twelfth birthday until my late thirties. I write this from the perspective of my midfifties, after a dark and terrible battle for spiritual freedom because of the vows I made. When I began to write the story of the two breads, I soon realized that it is really my story, and possibly yours. We are saints as much as Abraham or Ruth if we believe as they believed. I am a witness, and my story is true, even though it may seem as strange as the Bible stories we are about to open.

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2      Ephesians 5:22–32