

# 1 Corinthians 10:18

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?

## Analysis

**Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?**—Paul introduces a third example (after Christian communion and pagan temple meals): Jewish sacrificial worship. **Israel after the flesh** (ton Israēl kata sarka, τὸν Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα) distinguishes ethnic Israel from spiritual Israel (the church). Paul appeals to what Corinthians would know about Jewish practice: those who **eat of the sacrifices** become **partakers of the altar** (koinōnoi tou thysiastēriou, κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου).

In Levitical worship, certain sacrifices (peace offerings, thanksgiving offerings) were partially consumed by worshipers (Leviticus 7:15-18). Eating consecrated meat established covenant fellowship with God whose altar sanctified the sacrifice. The altar represents God's presence and acceptance of worship. To eat the sacrifice was to participate in worship of the God of Israel.

Paul's logic builds:

1. The Lord's Supper creates fellowship with Christ.
2. Jewish sacrificial meals create fellowship with God at His altar.
3. Therefore, pagan sacrificial meals create fellowship with whatever spiritual reality stands behind the idol (v. 20).

The principle is consistent: eating consecrated food is never spiritually neutral—it always establishes covenant fellowship with the deity honored. This makes idol-temple dining far more serious than mere social convention.

## Historical Context

The Jerusalem temple (until 70 CE) continued daily sacrifices. Peace offerings allowed worshipers to eat portions of the sacrifice, creating covenant communion between God and His people. Paul's Pharisaic background gave him intimate knowledge of these practices. He uses this shared understanding to demonstrate a universal principle: sacrificial meals establish spiritual fellowship, making Christian participation in pagan meals theologically impossible.

## Related Passages

## **John 15:13 – Greatest form of love**

## 1 Corinthians 13:4 – Characteristics of love

## Study Questions

1. How does understanding the spiritual significance of eating in covenant contexts affect modern Christian dining practices?
  2. What parallels exist between Jewish sacrificial meals and Christian communion in terms of establishing covenant fellowship?
  3. In what ways might modern Christians participate in spiritual fellowship with false gods without recognizing it?

## Interlinear Text

βλέπετε τὸν Ἰσραὴλ κατὰ σάρκα· οὐχὶ οἱ ἐσθίοντες

**Behold** G3588 **Israel** after the flesh not G3588 which eat  
G991 G2474 G2596 G4561 G3780 G2068

τὰς θυσίας κοινωνοὶ τοῦ θυσιαστηρίου εἰσίν

## Additional Cross-References

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**Galatians 6:16** (References Israel): And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

**Leviticus 7:6** (Parallel theme): Every male among the priests shall eat thereof: it shall be eaten in the holy place: it is most holy.

**Leviticus 3:11** (Sacrifice): And the priest shall burn it upon the altar: it is the food of the offering made by fire unto the LORD.

**Romans 4:1** (Parallel theme): What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found?

**Romans 4:12** (Parallel theme): And the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.

**Romans 1:3** (Parallel theme): Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;

**1 Corinthians 9:13** (Sacrifice): Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?

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