

The Lord's Supper (Week 1): Meals with God

The meaning and practice of the Lord's Supper is derived not simply from the gospel narratives in which Jesus establishes this sacrament for the church (Matt. 26:26–29; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:14–23; cf. 1 Cor. 11:23–26), but also from the larger biblical context of the many types of sacred meals with God in history that form the interpretive background for the Lord's Supper.

1. Passover

- Textual connections to Lord's Supper:
 - The Last Supper was a Passover meal.
 - Jesus described as paschal lamb: 1 Cor 5:7-8; John 19:6; Exod 12:46 (bones not broken)
- Meaning: Blood for atonement/covering + joyful eating (celebrating liberation).
- Application to the practice of the Lord's Supper: It is our Passover, a celebration of our liberation from sin, condemnation, and death by Jesus' blood/death and a partaking his life in this meal given to us as food.

2. Peace offerings

- Textual connections to Lord's Supper:
 - Passover was one specific type of peace offering.
 - Jesus interprets the Lord's Supper as the "blood of the covenant" (Matt 26:28/Mk 14:24), which is an allusion to the blood sprinkled on the people of Israel at Mt. Sinai in Exodus 24:8. In Exodus 24, the people of God offered peace offerings and some ate a meal with God to seal the covenant relationship, and therefore the the Lord's Supper has the same function.
 - 1 Corinthians 10:18: Paul compares the Lord's Supper to the meals that Israel ate at God's altar, which refers to peace offerings (Passover was eaten in homes, not at the Temple altar).
- Meaning: Joyful celebration of peace and renewed covenant relationship with God.
(cf. Deut 12:6–7, 11–12; 14:22–29; 1 Sam 11:15; 2 Sam. 6; 1 Kgs 3:15; 1 Kgs 8; 2 Chr 29–30)
- Application to the practice of the Lord's Supper:
 - Purpose and tone is joy and festivity, not somber contemplation.
 - Singing is very appropriate: cf. Ps 107:22/Lev. 7:13–15
 - Frequency is more than once per year. It is an intrinsic part of weekly covenant renewal.
 - Leavened bread is just fine: Lev 23:17–19. Unleavened bread was only for Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread that accompanied it, for reasons of rehearsing the conditions of leaving Egypt in haste, which is not what the Lord's Supper is for (Exod 12:39; Deut 16:3).

3. Post-resurrection appearances

- Textual connections to Lord's Supper:
 - Jesus meets with his disciples on the first day of the week (Luke 24; John 20:19–25; 20:26–29); cf. other first-day-of-the-week events: Pentecost (Acts 2; culminating in breaking of bread, v. 42), church's meeting to break bread (Acts 20:7); John's vision of resurrected Christ (Rev. 1; culminating in wedding feast, chp. 19).
 - Jesus eats with his disciples and makes himself known in a rite similar to the Supper (Luke 24)
 - Similarity in title for the day and the meal: The Greek adjective (translated "Lord's") occurs only twice in NT: the Lord's Day (Rev 1:10) and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:20).
- Meaning: The Lord's Day is the day of resurrection, and thus the day we know the resurrected Jesus in the breaking of bread (Luke 24:35).
- Application to the practice of the Lord's Supper:
 - The Lord's Supper is not a mere re-enactment of the Last Supper, but rather a post-resurrection meal with the risen Christ.
 - Jesus' resurrection is as central to the meaning of Lord's Supper as Jesus' death.

- We eat with the resurrected Christ to celebrate his victory over death. We are not merely remembering his death in the past but having communion with the risen Christ in the present.
- We receive the life of the resurrected Christ in and through the meal (1 Cor 10:16–17).

Other relevant biblical meals: Abraham's meals (Gen 14; 18); Manna; Jesus' table fellowship