

What are you Expecting to Happen at the Lord's Supper?

Class I

Intro

1. Some years ago I was in a seminar defending the worship of the church.
2. A rather sharp accountant was there. He was having none of it. He grouched about the sermon, prayer, singing. I think he just didn't think the people in his congregation were spiritual.
3. I humored him for a while. "Yes, some of the prayers are banal, the songs often trite - but we always have the Lord's Supper."
4. He exploded. "The Lord's Supper? Why that is simply just meeting a requirement."
5. It is in this context that my book *Preparing for The Lord's Supper* was born.
6. What do we expect to happen at the Lord's Supper?
 - a. The Lord's Supper was very important in the ancient church.
 - 1) Not only just as a fellowship meal.
 - 2) But there were some who were saying that they were not interested in the fact that the Son of God came among us in flesh-and-blood as a human.
 - 3) It didn't make that much of a difference in the world that the supposed coming of the Son of God took place in history!
 - 4) To which the response is -- look at the Table! That is material bread/wine. It is the token (visible expression) that the flesh-and-blood Son of God died for our sins.

And it is our belief that this same Jesus who once took on flesh and blood is present before us offering words of forgiveness and life.
 - 5) Now he is not with us -- as the next person on the pew, but we grasp him in reciting his words--deeds.
 - 6) And somehow in this encounter with him the material food is transcended by the spiritual food of his words--deeds and his presence in spirit.
 - 7) Ancients believed rites did things. On the table is bread and a cup. They are pledges and guarantees of the presence of Christ with us.

Question: How important is it to see the bread and the cup on the table?

The Lord's Supper

b. Biblical Materials

- 1) The phrase "Lord's Supper" occurs only once in the NT (1 Cor 11:20)
- 2) In Greek it is *kuriakon deipnon* ("A meal that exists under the proprietorship of the Lord of the Church.")
- 3) Sometimes called communion (a questionable translation of 1 Cor 10:16); Eucharist is not in the NT. It is the popular term in the ancient church.
- 4) Noticeable in that its corollary, "Lord" is found in Rev 1:10 when it is understood to refer to (on Jewish reckoning) the first day of the week. (Lk 24; Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 16:2) -- clearly the recognizable time when people in the ancient church participated.
- 5) Idea of the meal is transferred over to "love feast" in Jude 12 and 2 Pet 2:13 (in some manuscripts). The idea of the Lord's meal was widespread in the ancient church.
- 6) Information on the Lord's Supper really connects with 4 bodies of material in the NT:
 - Paul
 - Matt/Mk
 - Lk (utilizes elements of Matt/Mk and Paul)
 - Jn
- 7) Paul (1 Cor 11:17-34; 1 Cor 10:14-22)
 - a) Both passages deal with problems in the house churches at meals.
 - b) 1 Cor 11 - a sociological issue -- some are marginalized and shamed -- for Paul this is not right; one ought to recall the purpose of the meal is to remember the Lord's death and has implications for our behavior! Jesus' words, "This is my body," and "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" bestows benefits on the recipients as a result of a servant-marked sacrificial life. We who are the recipients of these benefits ought to honor the servanthood of Jesus adopting similar attitudes to one another.
 - c) Similarly in 1 Cor 10 the point is that we are beneficiaries of the death of Jesus and this exercises an exclusive claim of Christ's Lordship. Therefore, you cannot eat the Lord's Supper and eat a pagan meal in honor of their gods.
- 8) Matt/Mk -- Lord's Supper comes as a segment of the narrative of Jesus' life -- last meal.

- a) (Matt 26:26-29) Connects with the Passover tradition.
 - b) Features words of institutional bestowal.
 - c) Bracketed around it is the theme of betrayal.
- 9) Lk (22:14-34)
- a) Like other Synoptics, is in the context of a Passover meal.
 - b) But also has the Pauline admonition, “Do this is my remembrance.”
- 10) Jn
- a) Highlighted in Jn 6:53-58 at the end of the discourse on the bread of life. It features a midrash on manna.
 - b) Here Jesus claims that the deeper meaning is that those who feast on him have eternal life.

Question: In what sense do you understand Jesus is with us at the Table?