

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

Class III

Introduction/Review

1. We spent our last session focused upon 1 Cor. 11.
2. We noted two things in particular that need to be accented.
 - a. The problem at Corinth was that some folk were being shamed -- to eat in "an unworthy manner" is to be promoting a conflict situation with a brother or sister; "not discerning the body" means not to "judge correctly" the point of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross -- to give up his self interest for the sake of others.
 - b. The second point has to do with remembrance or in what sense do we consider Jesus as present at the Lord's meal.
3. We noted that this is a real issue for the church in history. It coalesces around this idea of what some call "the real presence of Christ."
4. Liturgical communions (Catholic, certain Episcopalians, Orthodox) want to argue that through the Eucharistic prayer the actual bread and cup *materially* become the body and blood of Christ. Lutherans claim he is actually at the Table.
5. How the church in history got there is a complicated matter. We believe differently. We believe, in keeping with his pledge, Christ is *spiritually* present at the table in the assembly through:
 - a. Recital of the story of Jesus in word and prayer.
 - b. In the visual actions of what takes place at the Table.
 - c. In participation by believers in the bread and the cup and in fellowship together around the Table.

The result is that in these covenantal exercises we receive Christ in the sense that we receive the benefits of his once-for-all sacrifice. (cf. 1 Cor 10:16, 17)

6. Question - In Churches of Christ we do not give a test of a special understanding of the Lord's Supper that you need to pass before you participate. Only that you accept that Jesus is Lord and manifest a manner of life worthy of his Lordship. Is that enough? Who then is the sectarian?

Celebration of The New Life at The Table

1. Read Lk 22:14-17.

2. Notice that here we have another focus - not on his death primarily but of a banquet in the kingdom of God.
3. As early as Isa 25:6-8

On this mountain the Lord will prepare a feast of rich food...
He will swallow up death forever.
4. Here we need to get in focus some of the teaching of Jesus.
 - a. Jesus talks a lot in his ministry about the realm of the kingdom of God.
 - b. Apparently he expected his suffering to be a prelude to the kingdom; and then shortly after the time of testing initiated by his death the faithful would enjoy its benefits at a great banquet (the fulfillment of Isa 25:6-8).
 - c. According to Luke in Lk 24 both at Emmaus and Jerusalem (after his death) Jesus sits down at a meal with his disciples. But this is only a prelude to an even greater meal at the time of the resurrected life.
 - d. Each time we participate in the supper we are under a mandate to affirm our belief in the resurrected life.
 - e. Early Christians used the word Maranatha (Our Lord Come).
 - f. Christ is with us at the meal - but he will be with us in God's new world.
5. The catacombs give us a picture of the end-time banquet. How do we conceive of this today?

Questions to Consider

1. We like the term celebration: How do we incorporate this element into our service?
2. Notice that for many centuries people were given the communion before going into battle. And then they went out to kill people! What kind of behavior should we expect of believers after we participate?
3. Origen talks about the Lord walking with us in a spiritual garden. In what sense is the Supper a demonstration that we are living in the new Eden?
4. Look at Revelation 3:20. Does this echo early Christian participation in the Lord's Supper?