

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

Class IV

Introduction/Review

1. At our last session we turned the focus in our study in the direction of the Lord's Supper as a *Celebration*.
2. We talked about the Supper as an anticipation of the banquet time when we would celebrate the arrival of the kingdom of God in God's new world.
3. Two images emerge here that were very important for the ancient church: 1) image of the meal or banquet itself; 2) image of sharing this meal with our loved ones at the time of the resurrection of the dead ones.
4. Interestingly enough these two images coalesced in the catacomb art of the ancient church.
 - a. In catacomb art we have the scenes of Christ, his disciples, and the faithful at a final meal. Biblical precedents are widespread.
 - 1) Isa 25:26-28: "The Lord will prepare a banquet of rich food... and he will swallow up death forever."
 - 2) Jesus is at a series of meals with his disciples in Lk. This includes the Passover meal, Emmaus and Jerusalem.
 - 3) Meals in honor of Christ were important in the churches started by Paul (1 Cor 10 and 11).
 - b. Also in the catacombs many of the art scenes with Jesus and the deceased are over the tombs of martyrs. On the anniversary of the martyr's death the faithful would come and have a meal at the burial place. Our closest parallel is at the Table the place where we have celebrated fellowship with many who have gone to their reward.

Question: How do we ritualize appropriately today the idea of the Lord's Supper as an anticipatory celebration of the end time?

The Lord's Supper as a Pledge Not to Betray

Mk 14:22-25

1. The Macro Setting
 - a. Traditionally Mark's Gospel comes from Rome.

- b. We know that in Rome at the time of the Neonian persecution many quit the faith. But after awhile some had second thoughts and wanted to come back to the church. The question often was, “Some in my family died for the faith - but we held firm. Why should we let those turncoats back?”
 - c. Mark answers the question by portraying the latter days of Jesus’ life as a series of abandonments.
 - 1) Abandoned by the leaders of Israel (Mk 12:1-12).
 - 2) Mk 14:51-52 - Abandoned by the young man (angels).
 - 3) He is abandoned by the disciples (Peter).
 - 4) By the Father himself? (Mk 15:34).
 - d. This brings us to the time of the Last Supper.
2. The Micro Setting (The Testing of the Disciples)
- a. Notice that around the Last Supper scene in 14:22-26 are two scenes of betrayal.
 - b. First, after Judas goes to the high priest to betray Jesus (14:10-11), Jesus is at table with the 12 (14:12-21).
 - 1) He announces there is one eating with them who will betray him (14:18).
 - 2) They all ask “Is it I?”
 - 3) Jesus announces that it would be better if that person had never lived.
 - c. Second, after the meal in 14:26-31 Jesus announces the disciples will all fall away. Peter announces boldly that he will not. We know what happened.

Summary: Judas is the model for those who betray Jesus and never come back. Peter betrayed Jesus too. He is a model for those who come back. We know Peter’s accomplishments later. Even if we have betrayed Jesus we too can find forgiveness and reconciliation.

The Supper Itself as the Call to Keep the Pledge

- 1. Mark’s account of Jesus’ last meal is very brief.
- 2. He takes the bread and the cup and he states they are visual images of what is going to happen to him.

3. I think the emphasis in Mark is on the participation of the disciples. They are called upon to:
 - a. Share the benefits of Jesus' death as part of the covenant (Ex 24:8).
 - b. Take the pledge of commitment to follow him.

Question: Each time we come to the Table do we see this as a time to keep our sacred commitments?

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