

The Significance of the Lord's Supper (part 2 of 3)

WSC 96 What is the Lord's supper? A. The Lord's supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine, according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment, and growth in grace.

The Lord's Supper is about our union with Christ and his church (see part 1). This union leads to innumerable benefits, which the LS also seals to us.

III. All his benefits

- Joyful communion with God: the joy of being together with him, of receiving his love while we give ours to him.
 - Jesus wants to eat with us: Rev 3:20 "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me."
 - We are guests of the king: Luke 22:29–30 "I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."
 - To be at God's feast is the greatest joy of all time: Luke 14:15: "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" Many who were originally invited (the old covenant people) will be cast away because they refused to come, while we gentiles, the riffraff of history, will be brought in (Luke 14:16–24)
- Joyful communion with each other
 - Common union with Christ: at a normal meal everyone eats the same dish: in so doing, "they are bound together in a 'one-flesh' relationship" (Leithart). Even more so are we all one in Christ, for we all partake of the same savior (1 Cor 10:17; 12:13)
 - No more enmity between us:
 - The LS is the long-prophesied banquet of peoples from every tribe and tongue (Isa 25:6; Luke 13:29; Matt 8:11–12); an end to the petty rivalries between nations (Gen 43:32)
 - Rather than being a display of relative honor and exclusiveness, the dining of the kingdom is to be open and inclusive: Luke 7:36–50; 14:7–11; Jam 2:1–7.
- Justification: table fellowship is only for those who are reconciled to God
 - To eat with someone is to be in fellowship with them: notice how feasts follow covenants (Gen 26:26–30), and how God throws a feast for his people when they enter the covenant with him (Exod 24:11)
 - To not be in fellowship with God is to not have the proper wedding clothes for the feast and be cast out into the outer darkness (Matt 22:12–14)
 - Those out of covenant with God must also drink, but theirs is the cup of God's wrath (Jer 25:15–17; 51:17, 22)
 - Because Jesus drank the cup of God's wrath for us, we are now reconciled to God and we get to drink the cup of joy (Matt 20:22; 26:39).

- Adoption: children get to eat at the Father's table (Mark 7:27)
 - As the father throws a feast for the prodigal (Luke 15:23), so our heavenly Father welcomes us back to his table
 - Even when we are estranged from our earthly fathers, as David was estranged from the table of Saul his father-in-law, we can always find bread at our heavenly Father's table (1 Sam 21:6)
- Definitive sanctification: God confirms our status as those who are objectively holy
 - Only priests could eat holy food (Lev 6:29; 7:6; 22:10–14). But at the LS God permits us to eat of the most holy food, thereby declaring us to be priests who are most holy (Rom 1:7; Heb 10:22; 1 Pet 2:5, 9).
- Progressive sanctification: power to obey and grow
 - Food gives us life. Jesus is our life. This is why we need his blood, for the life is in the blood (John 6:55; Lev 17:11): “through his blood shed for his own, they can take his life, the life of God, into themselves” (Dictionary of Biblical Imagery).
 - 2 Cor 4:10: we are “always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.”
 - The LS is our manna and water in the wilderness: God's sustenance on our pilgrimage to the promised land (1 Cor 10:3–4)
- At the same time, the LS celebrates our entrance into our inheritance, the ultimate land, where we enjoy the delights of God's goodness
 - When Joshua entered the land, they enjoyed a meal (Josh 5:11)
 - We are those who have long been exiled from the garden. The LS is an end-of-exile feast pictured in Isa 25:6 (“a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined”) and Jer 31:12 (“they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall languish no more”).
 - “Because [Jesus] has endured the curse of exile, we are enabled to return, and celebrate this feast of wine at a heavenly Zion” (Leithart; see Hebrews 12:22).
 - Wine is the drink of rest. The priests were forbidden to drink it on duty as a sign that their work is never done (Lev 10:9; cf. Heb 10:11–14). For the same reason Jesus was reticent to drink it before his hour had come (John 2:4)
 - But now that it has come, we drink and feast with the Lord of the banquet (Luke 22:30), and thereby celebrate his completed work. At the LS we drink with Jesus in the kingdom (Matt 26:29).
- Satisfaction: no more hunger pangs, no more thirst
 - God constantly says, “Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it” (Ps 81:10).
 - This is what creation was meant to be as an outpouring of God's abundance (note how Gen 1 ends with a menu).
 - But the curse made it so that hunger is the norm (Gen 3:17–19).
 - The prosperity of the land pictures the reversal of this curse (for all the people! Note all of the laws about providing food for the hungry in the land, like Lev 19:9–10). This prosperity climaxes in Solomon (1 Kgs 4:25).
 - Mary sings about Jesus: “he has filled the hungry with good things, and the rich he has sent away empty” (Luke 1:53; cf. Ps 146:7).
 - John 6:35: “I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst” (see also John 4:14).