

---

# Banquet in the Wilderness: The Lord's Table

## 1 Corinthians 10:1-22; 11:17-32

*Pastor Chad Bresson*

### Review

Why is it that we celebrate the Lord's Table? Through the month of March on Sunday evenings we have been attempting to answer that question. The first week we considered the Passover. Last week we considered the Last Supper. This week will take a look at the Lord's Table. Next week we will consider the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. And two weeks from today, during the Sunday morning service on Palm Sunday we will celebrate the Lord's Table. As we have stated previously, all four of these meals or table events in scripture are interconnected. Our series is attempting to follow the flow of redemptive history through the pages of scripture.

By way of quick review, before we begin our look at the Lord's Table this evening, let's review briefly some of our conclusions from the Old Covenant Passover which preceded the great Exodus of Israel from Egypt and the Last Supper which preceded Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension.

Among the things that we have learned:

Redemptive history was preceded by the Passover meal and the Last Supper. Both the Passover meal and Last Supper were divine interpretations of the historical event that followed in both the Exodus and the New Exodus, the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension of Christ.

The Passover was God's judgment of Egypt. The crucifixion was God's judgment of His Son on our behalf. In the Last Supper, Christ drank the cup of wrath, beginning the night of sorrows.

The Passover was God's salvation of his people. God single-handedly acted on behalf of his people. The crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension event, of which the Last Supper was the beginning, was Christ's salvation of his people.

The Passover was the beginning of Israel as a people. When Passover night was over, Israel's redemption was its creation as a nation. History had a new calendar. Human history forever became centered around Israel. The resurrection, portended in the Last Supper, was the beginning of the New Creation as a people.

The Passover was an atonement sacrifice. A life was exchanged for a life. The death of the lamb gave life to the firstborn son. The blood on the doorposts spared the inhabitants inside the house from God's wrath. The Last Supper proclaimed the atonement sacrifice in the crucifixion of the Lamb of God. Christ, the Passover lamb, spared the lives of his people in satisfying God's wrath and keeping the death angel at bay with his blood proclaimed on the doorposts of his own body.

The Passover and the Last Supper were a proclamation of the gospel. Both the Passover and Last Supper were not merely an event. They were also word, proclaiming the gospel.

The Last Supper was the last Passover.

Christ, the living bread of the Passover, provides eternal satisfaction and sustenance to the downtrodden.

Both the Passover and the Last Supper were for posterity. Just as the old Passover participants were to pass the meaning of the Passover from generation to generation, so too those participating in the Last Supper were to proclaim the meaning of the Last Supper from generation to generation in remembering Christ's death.

The Last Supper was both an Old Covenant meal (the Passover) and a New Covenant meal (the Lord's Table). The Last Supper looked both backward in history and forward to the future.

Christ is the fulfillment of all that the Passover was ever meant to be.

Before we consider the table, I'd also like us to return to the passage that we read two weeks ago as we started this series. John chapter 6 is not our main passage tonight, nor is it our main passage in this series. But, if we are to answer the question "why do we celebrate the Lord's Table?", then we must begin to find our answer here in the familiar story of the feeding of the five thousand. Remember, Christ fed the five thousand, and on the very next day, the crowd who had been graciously fed in a miracle the previous day, comes again to see another spectacle. Beginning with verse 25, this is what the word of God proclaims to us:

<sup>25</sup> When they found him on the other side of the sea, they said to him, "Rabbi, when did you come here?" <sup>26</sup> Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you are seeking me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate your fill of the loaves. <sup>27</sup> Do not labor for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal." <sup>28</sup> Then they said to him, "What must we do, to be doing the works of God?" <sup>29</sup> Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent." <sup>30</sup> So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?" <sup>31</sup> Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" <sup>32</sup> Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it was not Moses who gave you the bread from heaven, but my Father gives you the true bread from heaven. <sup>33</sup> For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." <sup>34</sup> They said to him, "Sir, give us this bread always." <sup>35</sup> Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.

As we study the Lord's table, let us keep in mind where we must end. The food of the Passover, the food of the Last Supper, and yes, the food of the table, is both symbolic and symptomatic of sustenance and satisfaction, a sustenance and satisfaction that can only be found in Jesus Christ. Man cannot live by bread alone because Jesus Christ is the Bread of Life. If we do not see Christ as sustenance in our study of the Lord's Table we will miss the significance of it.

**Introduction** Our subject this evening is not without much controversy. Christian history has been marked by much church conflict over the meaning and message of the Lord's Table. And for good reason. For most of the last two millennia, the Table has been the centerpiece of Christian worship. One need look no further than the Catholic Mass and Eastern Orthodox Eucharist to get a sense of the centrality of the Table in the oldest of Christian worship traditions. In fact, it is the Mass, what it does and does not do, that was at the heart of the Reformation. Even in the wake of the Reformers recapturing the gospel from the idolatrous Mass, the Reformers themselves could not agree on what transpires or doesn't transpire during the Lord's Table. The two main branches of Christianity that flow out of the Reformation, one from Calvin and one from Luther, are separated precisely because Calvin and Luther could not reconcile their views on the Table.

But we live in a day in which the contemporary evangelicalism that gives us our historical context largely ignores the centrality of the Table, if not ignores the Table altogether. Not far from here, grape juice and crackers are served from hubcaps in the foyer as the church attendees leave the building. One prominent evangelical leader has bragged on Christian radio about serving the table with potato chips and coke on the beach. So neglected is the Lord's Table, one of the fastest growing churches in the United States is the Eastern Orthodox church. Those fueling the renewed interest in the expansion of the Orthodox Church here in the U.S. are coming from the evangelical ranks. Evangelical young people are finding meaning in the Orthodox Eucharist, their version of the Lord's Table.

There are many reasons why the Table has fallen into disuse and we will not pursue that question this evening. But we must conclude that the Table has indeed fallen into disuse if not disrepair and that this is not a good thing. There has been a catastrophic neglect of the Lord's Table. It has been misunderstood, misrepresented, and misinterpreted by much of evangelicalism. Those looking for meaning in the Table have not found it in our churches, and they look to the Orthodox Eucharist and the Catholic Mass for meaning. The problem of course, is that they are trading the truth, even in its neglect, for an error that has eternal consequences. When that happens, our neglect and disuse of the Lord's Table may be complicit in the consequences.

It was not always this way. Last week, when we last saw the disciples, they were participating in the Last Passover, the Last Supper, in which they were fed by the Passover Lamb himself. Luke ends his account of the Last Supper rather abruptly. There is no fairytale ending to the Last Supper. The disciples argue about who will be greatest in the kingdom, they go out into the night, Christ is arrested, the disciples abandon him, and He is crucified just as he had pictured in the Last Supper. They left the Upper Room that night with "Do this is remembrance of me" ringing in their ears. But the sheep were scattered from the Shepherd who had become their Passover Lamb sacrifice. What was to become of that meal? What was to become of Christ's command?

Luke doesn't make us wait long to find out. In Luke 24, two disillusioned disciples on their way to Emmaus are joined by a stranger who, using the Old Testament, interprets the events that had transpired around Christ's crucifixion. This stranger accompanies the 2 disciples to dinner where the text tells us, "when he was at table with them, he took the bread and blessed and broke it and gave it to them. AND THEIR EYES WERE OPENED..." Christ's last act

before the crucifixion was to take bread, bless it, break it, and give it to his disciples. Christ's very first act with his disciples after the resurrection is to take bread, bless it, break it, and give it to his disciples. Christ feeds his disciples before and after his crucifixion and resurrection. At the Last Supper, Christ says "Do this in remembrance" and remember they do, after his resurrection and after this Emmaus event! In Acts 2, the same author Luke says the new church after Pentecost, just weeks after the resurrection and the Emmaus event, are devoting "themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers." We find in Acts that what came to be known as the Lord's Table is central to the worship of the early church. As the gospel spreads from Jerusalem to the end of the earth, so too does the Lord's Table as the proclamation of Christ's death until he comes.

And then, there is the church at Corinth. So many problems. So little time to address them all. Paul had founded a church in one of the most prosperous cities of the Roman Empire. The city's economy fostered upward mobility. The church reflected Corinth's socio-economic diversity. But it also apparently reflected the worldly wisdom of Greco-Roman philosophy and idolatry. Rival bible teachers and preachers had challenged Paul's and the other apostles' teaching. Sexual immorality of the worst kind was tolerated among its members. They are suing each other in the city courts. And then there's the matter of eating and drinking at pagan festivals, and the abuse of the Lord's Table. Which brings us to 1 Corinthians chapter 10.

Some of the Corinthians are not only eating meat from the pagan temples, they are participating in festival meals at the pagan temples. Now, keep in mind that Paul has already made 2 arguments in 1 Corinthians regarding the controversial question of eating meat that has been sacrificed to idols: 1) Idols are meaningless (1 Cor. 8:4). They cannot see or hear. They are not alive. They don't exist. There is no god that exists outside of God. The idols are nothing. And Paul has made the case that 2) it's O-K to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 10:9), unless of course, it is a stumbling block to a weaker brother. So, the Corinthians' thinking goes like this: if idols are nothing and it's o-k to eat meat offered to idols, then it must be o-k to go to the pagan temple and enjoy the feast and drinking of the wine even as the pagan deity is worshipped, right? WRONG. Further, apparently they thought that because they had been baptized and are partaking of the Lord's table, they were free to do as they pleased in the pagan temples because they were immune from pagan idols, much less God's judgment. WRONG. Not only does baptism and the Lord's Table apparently make them immune from consequences in the pagan temple, the Corinthians apparently also believed they could observe the Lord's Table on their own terms (1 Cor. 11:17ff). WRONG.

## Israel's history is the church's history

In 1 Corinthians 10 and 11, Paul is going to deal a serious blow to such thinking. Paul sets out to show that eating and drinking at the pagan festivals constitutes an abuse of the Lord's Table as well as their disunity in their "brown-bagging" of their meal and slight of the poor. What the Corinthians do away from the Lord's Table has serious implications for the table itself. Their behavior and attitudes are not without consequence to the Lord Table. Paul begins his argument this way. 1 Corinthians 10, beginning with verse 1. This is what the word of God proclaims to us:

<sup>1</sup> I want you to know, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, <sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, <sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food, <sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ. <sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, with most of them God was not pleased, for they were overthrown in the wilderness.

In tackling the issue of eating and drinking at pagan festivals, Paul appeals to ancient Israel and the Old Testament. Notice the words "our fathers". While some of the converts in the church at Corinth, were Jews, most were Gentiles. What does the Old Testament have to say to Gentiles? Are they well versed in the Old Testament?

Why would Paul say this? Paul says this because the Gentiles are now part of true Israel. Gentiles have been included in the New Covenant. Israel's history is now the Gentiles' history. The Old Testament story about Israel isn't just somebody else's story. It is the Corinthian church's story. Paul is going to show the Corinthians that what happened to Israel can happen to them because the Corinthians and Israel share a common heritage. The Old Testament has something to say to his New Covenant audience.

Paul also appeals to the religious significance of the manna and water. Paul is going to use the food and drink of Israel to indict the food and drink of the church of Corinth. The manna and the water were Israel's "ordinances", if you will. Through the water and through the manna, God sustained his people in the wilderness. The Passover, as it highlighted the same kind of sustenance of the manna and the water, was itself a banquet in the wilderness. They were supposed to be satisfied in God's provision of the manna and the water.

Paul then appeals to the source of Israel's blessings, Christ. All of Israel enjoyed the favor of God. They shared in the gifts from God through Moses. Here Paul links the events of Israel's wilderness experience with Christ himself, especially in the pages of the book of Numbers. The physical manna and drink were supposed to point Israel to the spiritual backdrop of those blessings. The physical benefits enjoyed by Israel were spiritual benefits because they retroactively came from Christ. Christ was the rock from which Israel drank, not just the rock at Horeb or Meribah, but everywhere that Israel had water. Christ was always present, especially through the glory cloud mentioned in verse 2. Wherever Israel went, Paul is saying that Christ went with them supplying their every need. To feed on the manna and to drink from the rock was to feed on Christ and to drink from Christ.

What does this mean for Israel to have fed from and drank from Christ? It means that those who by faith rested in God's provision of the manna and the water were united to Christ. They enjoyed their benefits from Him. Christ was the source of their blessings. These were

the blessings of Canaan, a land flowing with milk and honey, brought forward into the desert. This, for the Israelites, was their banquet in the wilderness.

But notice verse 5. Just because some enjoyed the blessings does not mean that God's favor rested on all of Israel. And herein begins the warning, via Israel's history, for the Corinthians. God does not take lightly the abuse of his providential blessings. Instead of recognizing that Christ was sustaining them in the wilderness experience through the manna and the water (and the Passover, for that matter), Israel rebelled and complained. They attacked Moses. They offered strange fire in worship. They engaged in sexual immorality with pagans. They worshiped the golden calf. **THEY DIED IN THE DESERT.** Not everyone belonged to Christ.

## **Israel's history is a warning to the church**

<sup>6</sup> Now these things took place as examples for us, that we might not desire evil as they did. <sup>7</sup> Do not be idolaters as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play." <sup>8</sup> We must not indulge in sexual immorality as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in a single day. <sup>9</sup> We must not put Christ to the test, as some of them did and were destroyed by serpents, <sup>10</sup> nor grumble, as some of them did and were destroyed by the Destroyer.

Paul now explains why he is bringing the Old Testament Israelites into the matter of eating at pagan festivals in Corinth. Paul's warning is that Israel's history and Israel's story are examples. That word in English is weak when it comes to conveying what Paul means here. The Greek word is the word for "type". Paul doesn't mean "moral example". Paul means there is a vital connection between Israel and the Corinthians, so that what happens to Israel is what the Corinthians can expect to happen to them. Paul is making a close correlation with Old Testament Israel that serves as a warning to the Corinthians. What was at stake for Israel is at stake for the Corinthian church. And he implies that already, the Corinthians are making the same mistake as the Israelites. Eating the food at the temples within the context of worshipping a pagan deity is idolatry. Paul says this because the Corinthians are doing precisely what Israel did in their history. This is how Israel worshiped the golden calf. They ate. They drank. They partied. And the Corinthians are doing the same thing.

Paul faults Israel not only for abusing the manna and the water in the desert, but also for abusing food and water in the presence of idols. Their eating and drinking was considered participation in the worship of the golden calf. Some of them engaged in sexuality immorality. All of this served to put Christ to the test, again a retroactive reality in the desert. Israel's disobedience was so grievous that the very Destroyer they had escaped in Egypt (Exodus 12:23) came looking for them in the wilderness. The destroyer that passed over the Israelites in Egypt taking the lives of the Egyptian firstborn did not pass over the second time. Why? Even as Israel partakes of the manna and the water in the desert, they are eating and drinking in the presence of idols and complaining against God along the way. The point should be obvious by now to the Corinthians. These historical events have real meaning for their generation. Israel's history is being brought to bear on their present because Israel's history is their own. Even now, chapter 11 tells us, the Destroyer has already visited the Corinthian church because of their abuse of the Lord's Table. Some church members have already died.

## A warning and a comfort

<sup>11</sup> Now these things happened to them as an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. <sup>12</sup> Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall. <sup>13</sup> No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. <sup>14</sup> Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

Paul appeals to the scriptures. Paul wants the Corinthians to see themselves in the pages of the Old Testament so that they don't make the same mistake as the Israelites. The Old Testament for Paul helps explain and inform the end of the ages, just as the end of the ages interprets the Old. Israel's age has come to its conclusion in Christ, it is at its end. Now, the end of the ages is upon the church at Corinth. The cross has brought an end to the old order, the old way of doing things. There is now a new order in Christ, and the church community is a sign of that new order.

This warning from Israel's history, then, is for the Corinthians. Not everyone gathering at the table are really partaking of the blessings, just as not everyone who was eating the manna and drinking the water were of true Israel. There are always some who think they are part of the people of God, but are not. They believe themselves to be immune to the warnings, but they are not. There are external benefits to belonging to the outward expression of God's people in the church, but the blessings had better be real on the inside for those benefits to have any effect.

Against the backdrop of Israel's disobedience, the warning of verses 12 and 13 take on a whole new meaning. To stand or to fall has eternal consequences. This is a warning to Corinthians who believe themselves to be OK as the people of God when in reality they are not OK and they are potentially not the people of God. The reason he believes this to be true is found later in this chapter.

While verse 12 is a warning, verse 13 serves as a comfort. God is continually acting on behalf of his people, even when he providentially allows his people to be tempted by Satan, and in this instance, even when they are being seduced by pagan idolatry. Even as unfaithfulness creeps at the door, God is faithful. He will not allow them to be tempted above what they are able to bear.

So, what is this escape? What is the antidote for eating and drinking in the presence of pagan idols? \*How\* does one flee idolatry? The antidote is found in what should have been Israel's antidote. And the answer, by the way, is not the typical answer we're used to hearing for verse 13. The following verses provide the answer.

## The antidote for idolatry: The Lord's Table

<sup>15</sup> I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. <sup>16</sup> The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? <sup>17</sup> Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. <sup>18</sup> Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? <sup>19</sup> What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? <sup>20</sup> No, I imply

that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons.<sup>21</sup> You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.<sup>22</sup> Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Paul's answer for the idolatry that was to be found in the pagan festivals and the eating and drinking at the festivals is in The Table. We get a sense of the put off – put on way of thinking that we're used to seeing from Paul in his other writings. Put off the pagan festivals and their meals. Put on the Lord's Table. His way of escape is participation in the Lord's Table. Over against the pagan meals at the idolatrous temple feasts Paul sets the Lord's Table. The Lord's Table for the Corinthians is an apologetic against false gods. In fact, to take what Paul is saying over the course of the past few chapters of 1 Corinthians, the Lord's Table is incompatible with the false gods and their feasts. How so?

1. Because the Table represents their union to Christ and his death. Just as the Israelites in the Old Testament ate food from Christ and drank water from Christ, so too the Corinthians are eating bread and drinking wine from Christ. This is Paul's argument in this passage. In bringing Israel's history to bear on the Corinthians, Paul is telling the Corinthians something about the Lord's Table. No longer is there manna. No longer is there water from the Rock. Christ is their manna. Christ is their water. When they eat of the bread and drink of the cup, they are eating and drinking spiritual food and spiritual drink from Christ, just as the Israelites had done in the Old Testament. Christ is the source of all spiritual blessings represented at the Corinthians banquet in the wilderness. They are to find their sustenance and satisfaction in Christ, and over against Christ and the feeding he offers at His Table, the pagan festivals should pale in comparison.

The Table proclaims, "when Christ died, the Corinthians died". Those pagan feasts are something to which the Corinthians have died. To be united to Christ is to reject the idols. Further, when they participate in the blood and body of Christ at the Table, they are participating together in the benefits of Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension, which are encapsulated in the gospel proclamation of the Table. The Corinthians have an interest in and a share in death of Christ through the cup and through the bread. For the Corinthians, there is a very real fellowship with Christ at their Table. That cup that is the New Covenant has been applied on the Corinthians behalf and when they come to the Table Christ proclaims His blood as their atonement sacrifice. This cannot be compatible with the eating and drinking at the pagan festivals.

The Table is incompatible with the pagan festivals and their false Gods 2. Because the Table unites the Corinthians to each other. Verse 17: "because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread". There are echoes here of Paul's statements elsewhere about the body having many members, yet one body. Here, Paul places the unity in the context of the Lord's Table. For the Corinthians to share in the bread is for them to share in each other. Just as Christ on their behalf has been broken, so in the sharing of this broken bread the Corinthians are to be broken for each other. The Lord's Table unifies God's people, creating a bond through union with Christ.

Just as Christ broke the bread and gave it to His disciples, so also the bread is broken at the table and fed to His people. Through the Table the church, collectively, feeds on Christ. It is an outward manifestation of the inner satisfaction in Christ, who is the church's sustenance.

You can also see Paul here anticipating the objection he was going to get because he had already said that idols are nothing. He reaffirms that here. But he grounds his argument in the spiritual. There is a Satanic, spirituality at work in the idolatrous feast that poses a threat to the professing Corinthians. One cannot participate in the Lord's Table and then participate in the pagan temple feasts because to do so gives honor to and gives in to demons. One can hear Christ's assertion in the background: no man can serve two masters, it is impossible, it is incompatible.

Not only does Paul point to the dark spiritual reality behind the idol feasts, he also reminds the Corinthians of God's jealousy. God demands total allegiance and these temple feasts are a violation of that allegiance and an arousal of His holy jealousy. If the Lord's Table is participation with Christ in His death and suffering, and if the Lord's Table is union to each other, then Paul says, think about what this means at the idol feast. The pagan festival unites the Corinthians to the pagans and the demons just as the Table unites them to Christ and to each other. The Corinthians are uniting themselves to that which has set itself up in opposition to the one true God. Their eating is an act of high treason. Yes, the food is nothing. Yes, the idol is nothing. But no, to participate in the idol feast is to participate in the same kind of idolatry that the Israelites perpetrated with the golden calf. Worship that is for God and God alone is directed elsewhere in the idol feast, robbing God of the glory due Him. To paraphrase what Paul already has told the Corinthians, should they take The Table that unites them to Christ and to each other and unite it to the prostitution of a pagan feast? And the answer for the Corinthians should be an obvious and resounding "NO". Paul is saying that what the Corinthians do at the pagan festivals away from the Lord's Table has serious implications for their own participation in the Lord's Table. Just as God exacted judgment on the Israelites who prostituted their manna and their water from the rock in their eating and drinking in idolatry, so too the destroyer is already in the midst of the Corinthian church exacting judgment (11:30).

## Conclusion

Israel's history is now the Gentiles' history. The Old Testament story about Israel isn't just somebody else's story.

To feed on the manna and to drink from the rock was to feed on Christ and to drink from Christ.

God does not take lightly the abuse of his providential blessings. What was at stake for Israel is at stake for the Corinthians.

Paul appeals to the scriptures. Paul wants the Corinthians to see themselves in the pages of the Old Testament.

To stand or to fall has eternal consequences. The Corinthians are to guard against their confidence in themselves and thinking they are immune to God's judgment in the eating and drinking of pagan festivals.

God is continually acting on behalf of his people, even when he providentially allows his people to be tempted by Satan.

The Lord's Table for the Corinthians is an apologetic against false gods.

The Table represents their union to Christ and his death.

The Lord's Table unites the Corinthians to each other.

There is a Satanic, spirituality at work in the idolatrous feast.

God demands total allegiance. The church cannot serve two masters. It cannot eat at both the pagan festivals and the Lord's Table without the Lord's Table suffering desecration.

What are we to learn from this? We live in the same age as the Corinthians. The end of the ages has not only come to the Corinthians, but also us who also live in the wake of Christ's death, resurrection and ascension.

## Lessons

The Lord's Table is Israel's history as our history. The Old Testament story is our story. The Old Testament is our typological-example that not only informs our understanding of what Christ has done on our behalf, but also who we are as a people. We cannot simply jettison the Old Testament because we are in the New Covenant. We must see ourselves in every page of this text because it is here we find Christ. We search the scriptures because in them we \*know\* we have eternal life in Christ the subject and the object of these scriptures, even as the New Testament interprets the Old Testament.

The Table places us not only in Israel's story, through the Passover backdrop of the Table, but the Table places us in Christ's story. Christ's story is our story. When Christ died, we died. When Christ arose, we arose. This Table for us is a celebration of the New Creation born of Christ's resurrection. It points forward to a day when that story will continue and have its final consummation in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. That's next week. But we are not there yet. While we wait for Christ to return for His bride, we proclaim His atonement sacrifice on our behalf through The Lord's Table.

Christ feeds us in the proclamation of the Lord's Table. It is in the Table that Christ sustains His people. The physical manna and drink were supposed to point Israel to the spiritual backdrop of those blessings and they missed it. Let's not miss it. Christ is our rock from whom we

drink. To feed on the bread and to drink from the cup is to feed on Christ and to drink from him. It is by faith that we rest in God's provision of His Son on our behalf. When we come to the Table, we cannot add one iota to the Lord's Table and its significance. The meaning of the Lord's table is not subjective, but objective. It is in Christ that we find all of our spiritual blessings, including salvation. The Lord's Table represents all that we have in Christ and our eating of the bread and drinking of the wine is our visible manifestation of those spiritual blessings. These are the heavenly blessings, brought forward from eternity as a taste of what is to come. The Lord's Table is our banquet in the wilderness, even as we await the arrival of our Passover Lamb.

The Lord's Table is an antidote to the health, wealth, and prosperity idol that so tempts the church. No, we don't have pagan temples with fine dining at the altar of a false god. But we do have our idols. And we have our altars. There is a consistent drumbeat for the church to prostitute its worship on the altar of relevance and cultural compatibility. There are alternative philosophies and proven methods of success vying for the attention and loyalty of the gathered assembly. And when we come to the Table, we eschew that kind of worldly and idolatrous thinking. We say "no, all we need is Christ and the proclamation of His Word for our sustenance and satisfaction."

Just as the Passover meal gave the church its identity, so to the church, as it is united to Christ who is our identity, finds identity in the Lord's Table. It is the Lord's death proclaimed in the table that gives shape to the community that partakes of the table.

Christ's sacrifice, depicted in the Table, is a pattern for the people who partake in it. Let's not miss this. We have been united to Christ and His suffering. Just as He has been broken on our behalf, so we are to be broken for Him and for each other. Sacrifice is to define the life of the corporate body.

And the meaning of the end of the ages is explained in the Lord's Table. It is in the Table that the gathered church finds Christ invading time and space to meet with and feed his people. Even as we hear Christ proclaimed from the pulpit, we hear Christ proclaimed in the Lord's Table. We share the very same end of the ages as the Corinthians. What Christ proclaims to them in the table is the same thing He proclaims to us. Christ's death and resurrection has ushered in the New Creation. Time itself has its conclusion in Christ's death, resurrection and ascension. And in the Table we have the New Creation in miniature as it proclaims Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension.

I've just come from a Bible conference in Orlando, the annual Ligonier Ministries national conference. The theme for this year's Ligonier conference was "Contending for the Truth" set in the context of answering the postmodern worldview of our culture. And inherent to any philosophical consideration of postmodernity and its incipient relativism, or any other worldview for that matter, is the question: what is the meaning of life? It dawned on me yesterday, that young postmoderns are finding meaning in the Orthodox Eucharist and the Catholic Mass because, despite their grievous errors and heretical views on the Table, these historic churches rightly understand that central to the Table and its symbols is the meaning of life itself. The Eucharist is still central to their worship, albeit a false worship. There is an understanding that all of the answers to life can be found in the Eucharist. And so we have evangelical young people flocking to find meaning in the Orthodox Eucharist, a Eucharist that is false.

Certainly we deny the legitimacy of those Tables, but do we understand that the meaning of life can be found in The Lord's Table? In the Table we find the meaning of life proclaimed to us in Christ's death, resurrection, and ascension. Christ, the only hope for mankind, is to be found in The Lord's Table. In the Table, Christ presents himself to His people as their atoning sacrifice, a life exchanged for a life, offering forgiveness of sins, satisfaction of God's wrath, and eternal life most abundant to those who come to Him by faith. All of life's answers are ultimately found in the Christ of the Table. It is here, in the picture Christ has given us of what he has done for us on our behalf, that mankind's history is explained, even as Christ's death is proclaimed. What the young postmoderns fail to realize, in searching for meaning in the wrong places, is that the meaning of life that they find in The Table isn't what they bring to it. They cannot add one iota to the Table. The Table and its meaning are not subjective. The meaning of life to be found in The Table is what is done to us by Christ on our behalf in his death, resurrection, and ascension for His own glory.

- Let us rejoice in God's Great Act on our behalf in Christ Jesus who spared us from judgment and saved us for His glory. **Response**
- Through the Word proclaimed in sermon and in the Lord's Table, let us feed on Christ, our salvation, our satisfaction, and our sustenance.
- Let us place our hope, in this broken and fallen world, on the Passover Lamb who was broken on our behalf.
- We are a pilgrim people, wandering through this desert land that is not our home. Let us look forward to the day when, in the ultimate land flowing with milk and honey, the New Jerusalem, we will see our Passover Lamb face to face.