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# Banquet in the Wilderness: The Marriage Supper of the Lamb

**Luke 14:15-24; Revelation 19:6-10**

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**Introduction** We have come to the last sermon of our series on the Lord's Table. I trust this has been as rewarding for some of you as it has been for me. Next week, we will spend part of our Palm Sunday celebrating the Lord's Table. My hope and prayer is that our time around that Table will be enriched by our study together.

Over the past few weeks we have been attempting to answer the question: Why do we celebrate the Lord's Table? We have considered the Old Testament backdrop for the Lord's Table in The Passover meal. And we have also considered the Last Supper as the first Lord's Table. We have seen that the Lord's Table is a proclamation of Christ death as a fulfillment of all to which the Passover pointed. We have grounded the Table in the historic. Christ's death, and its subsequent resurrection, has ushered in a new era, the New Covenant of the New Creation. But, again, a question we have asked on a previous occasion: is that all there is to the Lord's Table? Is the Lord's Table *\*nothing more\** than a proclamation of Christ's death? If we were to take all that we have said so far about the Passover, the Last Supper, and the Lord's Table, the entire perspective of the Table would be decidedly one-sided, especially when we study what it is that Christ and Paul are saying about the significance of the Table. Something has been missing from what we've said, and that has been by intention. So much so, that there have been times in this study where I just wanted to jump off of the sermon series and skip right to what we are going to consider tonight.

Tonight as we come full circle, we are going to take more of a survey approach and hopefully glean a few pieces of bread from the Bread of Life on which to feast ourselves along the way.

## The Last Supper

Two weeks ago, in looking at the Last Supper, we noted that Christ understood himself to be the Passover Lamb. Christ feeds his disciples as One who would forever be the Final Passover sacrifice, the Lamb who is a Firstborn Son who lays down his life in order to give life to those of us who have been adopted as firstborn sons. We begin tonight back in the Upper Room with Christ and His disciples in Luke 22. In our search to find the meaning of the Lord's Table we must hear the words of Christ, even as THE WORD become flesh interprets the Table for us. This is what God's Word proclaims to us: Luke 22, beginning with verse 14:

“And when the hour came, he reclined at table, and the apostles with him. <sup>15</sup> And he said to them, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. <sup>16</sup> For I tell you I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.” <sup>17</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, “Take this, and divide it among yourselves. <sup>18</sup> For I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.” <sup>19</sup> And he took bread, and when he had given

thanks, he broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”<sup>20</sup> And likewise the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.

Christ insists on eating Passover with his disciples because this is the Last Passover before the Lamb of God is killed as the Passover sacrifice. Christ impresses on his disciples the significance of the event, a significance that isn’t fully recognized until after his resurrection. Christ tells them and us that this meal symbolizes his work for his sheep on their behalf on the cross, which was just a few hours away. In identifying himself with this meal, Christ interprets it for his disciples by saying: “This is my body broken for you. This is my blood of the New Covenant.” Symbolized by the bread and the fruit of the vine, this Last Passover is a proclamation of Christ’s death.

Yet Christ doesn’t simply set the meal only within the context of his impending sacrifice. Not once, but twice Christ says he will not feast with his disciples with the bread and with the wine until the kingdom of God comes in fulfillment of the Passover. This Last Supper doesn’t just look back at the first Passover in Egypt. It doesn’t merely interpret the entire crucifixion event lying just beyond the door to the Upper Room. This Last Supper is pointing forward to the future. Christ promises His disciples that there will be a day when He will again feast with them, and this day is the coming of the kingdom.

Now, we are not going to go into detail as to just what Christ meant by not eating or drinking until the kingdom comes. There are many different opinions by many scholarly theologians about what the coming of the kingdom means. Luke tells us Jesus certainly ate of the bread with his disciples after the crucifixion, especially with the two confused disciples at Emmaus. There also may be an allusion in Acts 10 of Christ’s drinking of the vine with his disciples after his death. And there’s evidence that the early church believed that Christ kept this forward looking promise every time they observed the Lord’s Table by being present in the assembly. But what cannot be discounted is that the main force of these phrases, “until the kingdom of God comes” and “fulfilled in the kingdom of God” is pushed into a future in which Christ will ultimately and in a very, final and glorious event feast forever with his disciples. The Last Supper is a meal bridging the ages. It looks back to the Passover, looks to Christ’s death, and looks forward to the consummation of God’s kingdom.

## The Lord’s Table

Paul the Apostle picks up on this and places these future-pointing phrases within the very center of the meaning of the Lord’s Table. In 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, a passage we did not look at last week, Paul almost verbatim quotes the story of the Last Supper from Luke. This is what God’s Word proclaims to us:

“the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread,<sup>24</sup> and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, “This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”<sup>25</sup> In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Here Paul is correcting the abuse of the Table in the Corinthian church. He does so by impressing on them the very liturgy, or the very manner, in which they were to observe the Lord’s Table. Yet Paul gives further interpretation of the Table in a verse meant to explain

the meaning of the Lord's Table in a nutshell. Verse 26: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Paul is reading Matthew, Mark and Luke and saying that the Lord's Table is the proclamation of Christ's death. It is the proclamation of the gospel in picture form. And yet this proclamation of a salvation event for the deliverance of God's people is a proclamation with a gaze to the future. It is forward looking. The question then becomes, to what are Christ and Paul looking forward?

## The Table of the Kingdom

Luke has already given Theophilus and the early church the answer to that question, so that when Christ says I will not eat of the Passover or drink of the vine until the coming of the kingdom they knew precisely what he was talking about. There are 3 feast parables clustered in Luke 13 and 14 that would have colored the way Theophilus and the early church heard Christ speak of the future at the Lord's Supper...Turn to Luke chapter 13. Beginning with verse 22, this is what God's Word proclaims to us:

<sup>22</sup> He went on his way through towns and villages, teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem. <sup>23</sup> And someone said to him, "Lord, will those who are saved be few?" And he said to them, <sup>24</sup> "Strive to enter through the narrow door. For many, I tell you, will seek to enter and will not be able. <sup>25</sup> When once the master of the house has risen and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and to knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, open to us,' then he will answer you, 'I do not know where you come from.' <sup>26</sup> Then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in your presence, and you taught in our streets.' <sup>27</sup> But he will say, 'I tell you, I do not know where you come from. Depart from me, all you workers of evil!' <sup>28</sup> In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God but you yourselves cast out. <sup>29</sup> And people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God. <sup>30</sup> And behold, some are last who will be first, and some are first who will be last."

Verse 29 turns this entire parable into a feast context... Christ begins his teaching talking about a door and a house and ends talking about a table. This door and house are home to a \*table\* or a feast in the kingdom of God, at which sits people from the ends of the earth. This house, door, and table serve as a warning to Christ's audience to repent. The Jews of the Old Covenant are being contrasted with faithful or remnant Jews of the Old Covenant (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the prophets) and Gentiles. The surprise factor is that those who think they should be there are refused entry. And those who end up in fellowship with the Master of the House and the others at the table are those who they would least expect.

This table of the kingdom, while it speaks of Christ's immediate audience, is projected into the future. While there is a present striving to enter the door, the table or feast is set \*after\* the door of the house has been shut. There is a point in the future, where people from every tribe and people group will gather for a feast in the consummate kingdom of God.

## The Table's Etiquette

The second banquet parable (or two parables combined into one as Christ tells it) in this trilogy begins in Luke 14:7; Christ uses etiquette to highlight who will be invited to His banquet. This is what God's word proclaims to us:

<sup>7</sup> Now he told a parable to those who were invited, when he noticed how they chose the places of honor, saying to them, <sup>8</sup> "When you are invited by someone to a wedding feast, do not sit down in a place of honor, lest someone more distinguished than you be invited by him, <sup>9</sup> and he who invited you both will come and say to you, 'Give your place to this person,' and then you will begin with shame to take the lowest place. <sup>10</sup> But when you are invited, go and sit in the lowest place, so that when your host comes he may say to you, 'Friend, move up higher.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all who sit at table with you. <sup>11</sup> For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." <sup>12</sup> He said also to the man who had invited him, "When you give a dinner or a banquet, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors, lest they also invite you in return and you be repaid. <sup>13</sup> But when you give a feast, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, <sup>14</sup> and you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you. You will be repaid at the resurrection of the just."

This parable sets up the next one and is connected to it. I note it for our purposes this evening because Christ is speaking of a wedding feast, giving context to the great supper of the next parable. Notice here in this parable, again, the surprise factor. Those who exalt themselves will be humbled, those who humble themselves will be exalted, and those invited to the meal to begin with are the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, those who have no ability of their own merit to justify their presence at the feast table. Theophilus should be beginning to see a pattern here. There will be a future banquet that represents intimate communion with God. And it's an upside down banquet where that which is expected is unexpectedly spurned. Worldly wisdom and human pride are turned upside down. It is a banquet that is marked by those who do not rely on their own sustenance, but are totally dependent on another, the Master of the House, for their sustenance.

## The parable of the Great Banquet

And then there's the parable of the Great Banquet beginning in verse 15; this is what God's word proclaims to us:

<sup>15</sup> When one of those who reclined at table (notice the language here; Luke uses it later to describe the Last Supper) with him heard these things, he said to him, "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!" <sup>16</sup> But he said to him, "A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. <sup>17</sup> And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, 'Come, for everything is now ready.' <sup>18</sup> But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, 'I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused.' <sup>19</sup> And another said, 'I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused.' <sup>20</sup> And another said, 'I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.' <sup>21</sup> So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry and said to his servant, 'Go out quickly to the streets

and lanes of the city, and bring in the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’<sup>22</sup> And the servant said, ‘Sir, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.’<sup>23</sup> And the master said to the servant, ‘Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.’<sup>24</sup> For I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.’”

Again, here is a banquet set in the context of God’s kingdom. And the main course for this feast, set up by the guy asking the question, is bread. And just as Israel grumbled and complained about their manna, so too those who would have been expected to be at this feast, a wedding feast, are grumbling. They are inventing excuses as to why they can’t be there. They are not satisfied with bread. They are finding their satisfaction in the cares of this world.

If the previous parable is an indication, this Master of the house will soon shut his door at which point those with excuses will suddenly begin pounding on the door wanting to know why they aren’t allowed in. But before he shuts the door, who does he go find, Oh Theophilus? He finds those who don’t deserve to be at the feast, those who don’t even know there’s a feast to be had... the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame. The Master of the house fills his Messianic table with the unlovely, the destitute, the downtrodden.

The point of these 3 feast parables has been made: pay no heed to The Messiah and his gospel message, and you will be replaced by the despised, the ungodly, the Gentiles who will enjoy the sweet communion and fellowship at the banquet table of the restored garden of God, his kingdom.

So when Christ says there will be a day when I will again eat of the bread and drink of the vine when the kingdom of God is fulfilled, he not only is speaking of fellowship with his disciples and the early church after his resurrection, Theophilus knows he is speaking of a day in which there will be a banquet for every tongue, tribe, and people group. It is Christ who is the ultimate Master of the House. It is Christ who is the host of the table, inviting those who are weak and heavy laden to the feast where they will find eternal sustenance for their weary souls and satisfaction in Him.

## **The Marriage Supper of the Lamb**

When will this Great Banquet occur? John tells us in Revelation 19. There are clues in this passage that John has been reading Isaiah and Luke, which we will note along the way. Beginning with verse 1; this is what God’s word proclaims to us:

<sup>1</sup> After this [John is describing events at the very end of the ages, the very end of time, after the great enemy, Babylon, has been defeated] I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying out, “Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God,<sup>2</sup> for his judgments are true and just; for he has judged the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her immorality, and has avenged on her the blood of his servants.”<sup>3</sup> Once more they cried out, “Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up forever and ever.”<sup>4</sup> And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God who was seated on the throne, saying, “Amen. Hallelujah!”<sup>5</sup> And from the throne came a voice saying, “Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great.”<sup>6</sup> Then I heard what

seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns.”<sup>7</sup> Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;<sup>8</sup> it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure”— for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints.<sup>9</sup> And the angel said to me, “Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.” And he said to me, “These are the true words of God.”<sup>10</sup> Then I fell down at his feet to worship him, but he said to me, “You must not do that! I am a fellow servant with you and your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God.” For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

These paragraphs are set at the end of time itself. The end of the ages, in which we and the readers of John’s Revelation, has run its course. The already has given way to the not yet. This is the end goal of redemptive history. Genesis 3:15 has been fulfilled in its most complete sense. The Garden of Eden, the shadow of what God had intended for man, is no longer a hologram, but has been completed in its fullest and richest sense. Just as the Passover and Last Supper interpret their surrounding events, so too this Marriage Supper is an interpretation of the entirety of redemptive history. God has redeemed for himself a people through the work of Christ on the cross and in the Last Adam (Revelation 5), mankind fulfills that for which he was intended: unending eternal bliss in communion and dominion with His Creator.

And this consummation of history as John tells it, has its revelation in the Old Testament. John has his copy of Isaiah 25 laid out before him, even as he pens the words of his vision:

<sup>6</sup> On this mountain the LORD of hosts [that’s temple language] will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-aged wine, of rich food full of marrow, of aged wine well refined.<sup>7</sup> And he will swallow up on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations.<sup>8</sup> He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth, for the LORD has spoken.<sup>9</sup> It will be said on that day, “Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

The praise of God’s people comes from the lips of those who have feasted on rich food and have drunk from the well-aged wine. God’s ultimate salvation in Christ is cause for merriment, gladness, and rejoicing, and feasting. At the marriage supper of the Lamb, all of the nations of the world will find their sustenance and satisfaction in the God of their salvation, the God who covers those who have suffered the reproach of human depravity with a new robe, or a new veil, of a righteousness that is not their own.

In the process, death is defeated and all cause for sadness is wiped away. Not only is death defeated, but all of God’s enemies are destroyed. In Revelation, Babylon, the symbol of every thought and every word and every deed that rose up in opposition to Jesus Christ throughout the course of history has been defeated. Just as the Passover meal was eaten in the context of Egypt being defeated, so too this Marriage Supper is eaten in the context of Babylon being crushed and destroyed. The Bride’s preparation for this marriage and feast

has been throughout the book of Revelation is in the context of suffering. Babylon doesn't just have to be defeated for the feast to occur. The existence of Babylon itself has served as the oppressive means to the adornment of the Bride in suffering. Martyrdom precedes entry into the blessed state. And when that Bride has been refined like gold in the fire, Babylon is defeated, and the church's tears are wiped away.

## The meal to end all meals

Yet, there is a difference between previous meals and this one. The Passover, The Last Supper, and the Lord's Table are meals that are observed prior to and as part of the beginning of a great act of God in redemption. The Passover was observed just as the Exodus is beginning. The Last Supper is observed as Christ is on his way to his crucifixion. We enjoy the Lord's Table even as we that great act of salvation in Christ's return.

But the Marriage Supper is not so. The last great act of God in judging his enemies and vindicating his people has already taken place. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb occurs after God's enemies have been defeated. In fact, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is on hold until God's enemies have been defeated. This Marriage Supper is the meal to end all meals, a forever feast coram deo or before the face of the Master of the House. It will be eaten in his presence. There will be no need for any more food, for He will be our sustenance.

And this meal is the ultimate celebration. We saw this in Isaiah 25. This meal is cause of joy and rejoicing. "Let us rejoice and be glad", that great refrain that courses through the whole of the Old Testament, now comes to fulfillment in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. This is no banquet in the wilderness. This is the consummate feast in a New Jerusalem overflowing with milk and honey (Rev. 22:1,2) where the river of the water of life and the tree of life from the Lamb give abundant life, sustenance and satisfaction to the Bride. There is no need of anything because the Lamb is everything.

The language of the supper in verse 9 is couched in the language of a beatitude, a beatitude that, interestingly enough, closely parallels Luke 14:15, the words that were on the lips of the man asking making the statement to Christ: "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God". The man thought he was making a good theological point, and Christ, as he does so often, adjusts his thinking. Certainly John sees Christ's banquet in Luke 14 as being primarily about the ultimate banquet that consummates fellowship between God and His people. So, in reading Luke 14:15, John now says in Revelation 19, "Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb". The phrase here is not on the lips of a scoffing Pharisee as it is in Luke, but comes from the mouth of God himself. The only ones who will be eating bread at this marriage supper are those who have been invited by the Master of the House. These "blessed", as is the case with the Sermon on the Mount, are those upon whom God has chosen to bestow His favor. Blessed in the Man who hungers and thirsts after righteousness.

Another change from the Passover, the Last Supper, and Lord's Table, is that the celebration of the table is now at full throttle. While Christ's death continues to be a theme as it will forever, the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is unadulterated celebration. It is bedlam at the Banquet. Notice the language of "the roar of many waters." We see this language used across the rest of the Scriptures most often regarding angels in the presence of God on His throne. There they are saying "holy, holy, holy is the Lord God almighty", and as they do, it

sounds like thunder and they shake the doorposts of the heavenly temple. Here in Revelation 19, we have the roar coming from the saints themselves and they themselves are shouting Hallelujah, for our Lord God Almighty reigns.

The Lamb slain from the foundation of the world is still the prominent figure in the feast. It is the Lamb's final Passover sacrifice that ultimately dooms Babylon and God's enemies. But the merriment, joy, and rejoicing of God's people results in a sound that is deafening... the roar of many waters and the mighty peals of thunder. A throng that covers the entire earth joins in praise and song prompted by the crushing of God's enemies forever. Like we see in Revelation 5, this is the language of pandemonium. Such will be the gladness and merriment of a people saved from the jaws of Babylon. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is characterized by a joy, a joy that sounds like pandemonium and bedlam, that comes from gratitude for what the Lamb has done on the bride's behalf.

And what the Lamb has done is, not only defeat of Babylon, but also provide the Bride with her wedding garment, fine linen – bright and pure. One cannot show up at the banquet without the right clothing. This spotless robe is accounted to many times throughout the Bible. Here in Revelation 19 we are told that this pure bright linen has been given to the bride and yet it consists of her righteous deeds. This is an allusion to the righteousness without which no one can see God being imputed to the sinner while at the same time it consists of the righteous deeds of the saints. Here is Christ's righteousness having been lived out through His saints and it's all becoming part of that pure, white linen garment.

The irony is that Matthew 25 tells us that those good deeds of the saints consist of clothing Christ when he was cold, giving Him food when he was hungry, and giving Him drink when He was thirsty. Yet, here we find out that it is the Bride who was hungry and He has fed her and will continue to feed her throughout eternity. It is the Bride who had need of drink and she will drink from the river of life forever. It is the Bride who had need of clothing, and she will be adorned in the righteousness of Christ forever. If we were to look under the pure, white linen with which the bridegroom has lavished on His bride, there we would find the "poor and crippled and blind and lame". We would see the downtrodden, the destitute, those who are not expected to be there and do not deserve to be there. Yet the bridegroom has sent his gospel into the highways and streets and has invited to His Table the despised and unloved who have been given a pure white linen garment and who will feast in his presence forever because he has become their sustenance and satisfaction. He is their bread. He is their wine, forever.

There's one other aspect to this banquet that we must consider if we are to be faithful to the text. Just as we have seen in the Passover and the Last Supper, this feast is not without a reminder that just as God's love and faithfulness have been poured out on his people, God's justice is also at work. This mention of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is bookended, or sandwiched in between by God's justice on his enemies. Babylon is defeated, pandemonium erupts, the Lamb is married to his bride, and God finishes off his enemies. And this justice is also couched in the language of a meal. This heavenly announcement of a wedding feast is given contrast by, in verse 17, another invitation, this one to the birds to feast on the corpses of Babylon which has been defeated by God. The ultimate wedding banquet is pictured against the backdrop of the destruction of God's enemies who are being devoured by wild beasts even as the saints feed on Christ. Not only is this a reminder to the church of what happens to those who mistakenly presume in their pride that they deserve to be in the

Master's House at the Table, it is also a reminder that it is this kind of judgment that has been poured out on the Lamb Himself without which there would be no Marriage Supper of the Lamb. The glory of the Lamb and the merriment of the feast is all that much greater because God's justice has been satisfied.

**Conclusion** So, what are these passages telling us about this Great Banquet to come? While we could spend a lot of time going over the ground we covered, here are some highlights:

There will be a meal that Christ will share with his disciples and His people in the future. This meal will be a marriage feast.

Christ points forward to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb in his parables and at the Last Supper.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb represents the end goal of redemptive history. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is the consummation of the communion originally held out to Adam in the Tree of Life

God's ultimate salvation in Christ is cause for merriment, gladness, and rejoicing. There will be pandemonium and bedlam over what Christ has done for His people.

The Bridegroom has provided the Bride with her garment which consists of righteous deeds.

The guests of The Marriage Supper of the Lamb will be those who are least expected, the despised and the downtrodden.

The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is most brilliant because God's justice will have been exacted on his enemies.

**Lessons** What does the Marriage Supper of the Lamb have to do with us? More importantly, what does the Marriage Supper of the Lamb have to do with the Lord's Table? And as we finish this series, in light of the Passover, the Last Supper, and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb, what is the meaning of the Lord's Table? Hopefully, by now, many of these lessons are obvious.

The Lord's Table is the New Covenant rite given to the church by Christ which fulfills and replaces the old Jewish Passover and \*already\* is the meal of the kingdom of God. The Lord's Table is a first and partial fulfillment of the promises of the meal of the kingdom that were given by Jesus in his ministry and at the Last Supper. God's kingdom has been ushered in with the New Covenant, but it is not consummate and it is not complete. As the kingdom has been ushered in, the Lord's Table is the New Covenant's \*official\* meal. Yet, The Lord's Table cannot be a complete fulfillment of the previous types or pictures. That kind of fulfillment awaits the church in the new heavens and new earth at the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

The Lord's Table is a proclamation of and participation in Christ's death. Till he comes... we recite the events of Christ's death, even as Israel was to recite the events of Passover and Exodus to each other and to their posterity. "Do this in remembrance of me", the very words of Christ, means that again and again, we will proclaim the gospel in picture and in Word, explaining the meaning of the symbols of the Lord's Table in our proclamation.

As the Lord's Table proclaims Christ's death in picture form, the Table is oriented toward the future. This is the element that we have left out of our discussion until now. The Lord's

Table is anticipation of the heavenly meal to which Jesus looked forward. In the Lord's Table, the church looks forward to Christ's coming. So much so, that historians tell us that the early church ended its Lord's Table observance with the word, Maranatha! In the words of John, as we participate in the meal, we are saying "Come, Lord Jesus!" The Lord's Table is a promise that the future feast will indeed happen as Christ said it would because the Lord's Table anticipates the day when we will see the Bridegroom, as he promised at the Last Supper, finally eat of the bread and drink of the new fruit of the vine with his disciples and His people.

In the Lord's Table, even as the church feeds on the heavenly food from the hand of Christ, the church anticipates the joys of heaven itself in looking forward to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb. That the Marriage Supper of the Lamb is just around the corner leads us to joyfulness and praise to God. The Lord's Table is a celebration. This is not yet bedlam or pandemonium, but the Table is not a funeral. The joy of the Lord's Table flows out of hearts that realize God's faithfulness to them in the cross work of Christ on the Bride's behalf, the garment of righteousness that has been given to her, the destruction of God's enemies, and the promise of a day when the intimate communion between the Savior and the saved will be face to face. This is what we are proclaiming in the Lord's Table.

Because the Lord's Table speaks of what Christ has already done for us in the past and what he will do for us in the future, the meal portrays the incompleteness of salvation. It should leave us with a feeling of wanting to taste more. The supper highlights the tension of living in a world that is passing away yet with its true life in the heavenlies in Christ.

If we were to peak underneath the pure white linen garment provided to the Bride and her guests, we would find that the clothing is covering the downtrodden, the lowlifes, the despised, the unlovely, the poor, the sick, the blind, and the lame. Those who do not deserve to be at the table now fill the table from every tongue, every tribe, and every people group over the face of the earth. There is a unity of God's people at the Table, not merely in our local observance of it, but with all of God's people who observe it over the face of the earth.

And this picture of the lowlifes and the downtrodden being "at table" is precisely who comes to the Lord's Table every time we observe it. Paul David Tripp's words should ring in our ears when we break the bread and drink of the vine: "the church is a hospital".

It's interesting to note that in the Old Testament, almost every instance of Israel's portrayal as God's bride highlights Israel's unfaithfulness and infidelity. But Christ's Bride has been given new garments of righteousness, a new heart, and even faith itself. The former infidel has been invited to the banquet, where the guests find sustenance and satisfaction in the One who has given them life.

Life is hard. Life is a wilderness. Lives are broken and in need of healing. We who have been clothed in Christ's righteousness don't deserve to be gathered at this table feasting from the Bread of Life, yet here we are, the least expected. In the Lord's Table, those who are outcast, hungry, thirsty, and poor in spirit not only find nourishment from the Bread of Life, we are given a glimpse of the day when the Master of the House will wipe every tear from our eyes and we will feast from the Bread of Life forever. In this Banquet in the Wilderness, we who are needy cast our gaze to the Bridegroom and that final banquet, where the wilderness will be no more. As we celebrate the Lord's Table we who are thirsty and hungry anticipate that day when Christ will offer us water from the river of life, and luscious

fruit from the Tree of Life because He himself forever will be our eternal sustenance and satisfaction in the ultimate land flowing with milk and honey.

**Response**

- 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.
- 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 – even as we gather as a “hospital”, on the Passover Lamb who was broken on our behalf.
- We are a pilgrim people, wandering through this desert land, this wilderness, 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 and we will enjoy our Passover Lamb face to face.