

THE LORD'S SUPPER

SACRAMENT OF REDEMPTION, SIGN OF UNITY

OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND



God's people were sustained by "spiritual" bread and drink in the wilderness

Paul, referring to the Lord's Supper, wrote, "All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ." (1 Cor. 10:3-4)



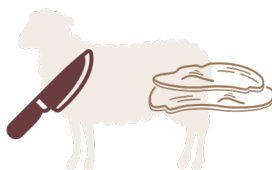
Immortality was given to Adam and Eve through food in the Garden of Eden



The Priest-King Melchizedek brought out bread and wine to Abraham



The peace offering involved a shared communion meal with God



God saved his people from slavery in Egypt through the Passover meal



Moses and the elders ate a meal in God's presence on Mt. Sinai



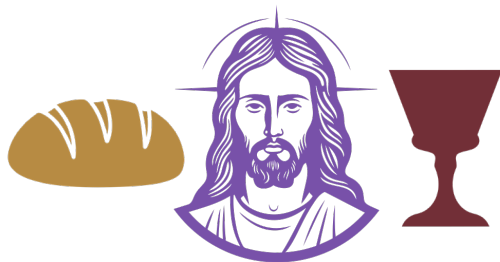
A holy table with holy bread was placed inside the Holy Place of the tabernacle



The prophets foretold a Messianic feast of rich food and well-aged wine

THE INSTITUTION

At a Passover meal—his last supper before the crucifixion—Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper: "Do this in remembrance of me."



"Take, eat; this is my body. ... Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:26-28)

ONE MEAL, MANY NAMES

The meal is referred to in various ways in Scripture and church history, each emphasizing one aspect.

The Lord's Supper — Christ instituted it.

The Breaking of Bread — It reenacts the Last Supper (Lk 22:19; cf. Acts 2:42; 20:7).

Communion — It is a *koinonia* (participation) in Christ's body and blood (1 Cor. 10:16).

Eucharist — It is a Thanksgiving meal (Mt. 26:27, Christ gave thanks [*eucharisteō*]).

Mass — We receive Christ to then go and share him with the world (from the last words of the Latin service of the Western Church, "*Ite, missa est*"—"Go, it is the sending").



"Eucharist" is the most common term in church history for the Lord's Supper and was used by the Protestant Reformers.

FREQUENCY AND CENTRALITY

At least weekly Lord's Supper was the practice of the New Testament churches and of the whole Church for centuries. It was a central and characteristic act of Christian worship throughout church history.

33 AD	c. 54 AD	c. 57 AD	c. 100 AD	c. 110 AD	c. 155 AD	c. 400 AD
Church after Pentecost "devoted" to the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42)	Church at Corinth gathered every Sunday and shared the Lord's Supper when they gathered (1 Cor. 16:2; cf. 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34)	The church gathered on Sunday for the purpose of sharing the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7)	The Didache teaches on the Lord's Supper and includes a prayer for use at the Table (9-10)	Ignatius writes of the Eucharist as a central act of the true Church (Smyrnaeans 7-8)	Justin Martyr reports that all churches in all the world share the Eucharist every Sunday (First Apology, 67)	Augustine writes that all churches in all the world still share the Supper every Sunday, though some prefer daily (Letter 54)

PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Past dimension

A memorial meal. "Do this in remembrance of me" (Lk. 22:19). The church is reminded of the finished work of Christ by visible signs of his body and blood, arousing faith.



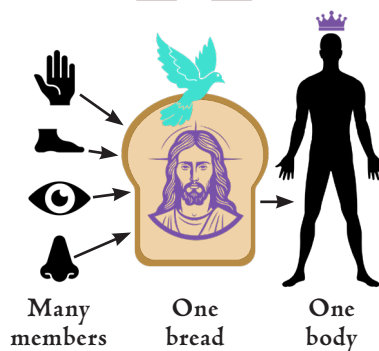
Present dimension

A sacrament/means of grace. The saving and sustaining benefits of Christ's atonement are offered and applied by the Spirit through faith. It is "spiritual food," "spiritual drink," and a "participation" in the reality of Christ's body and blood (1 Cor. 10:3-4, 16).



A sacrifice. Christ is not re-sacrificed, but the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ is sacramentally present before the Father as a central act of worship (1 Cor. 10:18), and believers are offered as living sacrifices in union with Christ (Rom. 12:1).

A bond of unity. The church is united as one body by common participation in Christ in one bread (1 Cor. 10:17).



Future dimension

A foretaste/pledge of future glory. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb is anticipated with hope. "I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom" (Mt. 26:29; cf. 1 Cor. 11:26).



REAL PRESENCE

Christ is not physically present in the Lord's Supper through transubstantiation, but he is really, spiritually present, so that believers eat his flesh and drink his blood in the John 6 sense (union with Christ is enacted or nourished by the Spirit).

"My flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink" (Jn. 6:55).



"Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (Jn. 6:53).

"Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements in this sacrament, do then also inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally, but spiritually, receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death." (WCF 29.7)

"The Body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten, in the Supper, only after an heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the Body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper, is Faith." (39 AOR, 28)