

## 2. THE LORD'S SUPPER: AN ACTUAL SUPPER (A Two-Session Lesson)



**Introduction:** In modern churches, the last supper has become a lost supper. It is obvious from Scripture, from history, and from commentaries that the early church celebrated the Lord's Supper as an actual meal. Today we'll consider what believers today are missing if they don't do the same.

**Premise:** The early church celebrated the Lord's Supper **1)** every week, **2)** as an actual meal, **3)** using a single cup and loaf, **4)** as the main reason for the weekly gathering. Some of the benefits are unity, edification through fellowship, and holiness in view of His return.

— Luke 22:14-16 —

**\*\*\*\* Jesus celebrated the Passover every year His whole life. According to Luke 22:14-16, why was this particular Passover special?** It would be his last supper with them before He suffered, **22:16**. This last supper for Jesus served as the first Lord's supper for the church. It has become a lost supper for modern believers.

**What quantity of food was typically eaten in the Passover?** See *Exodus 12:1-11, 14, Deuteronomy 16:1-8*. As the name suggests, the Passover feast was an actual meal, with lots of food. So too, the Lord's Supper was also originally an actual meal.

**1. What in Luke 22:16 looks to our future?** The forward-looking aspect is that Jesus said he would not eat it again until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.

**What function does the word "until" (22:16) serve in any sentence?** The word "until" has to do with *when* something will happen in the future.

- **"until" (22:16):** From *heos hotou*; it carries the idea of "before" or "up to the time that."<sup>1</sup> It is a forward-looking word and establishes a time frame (a future reference).

**Jesus said that the Passover would be "fulfilled" in the kingdom (Lk 22:16). What do theologians call statements in the Bible that have fulfillments in the future?** The word "fulfilled" (**22:16**) suggests that the Lord's Supper functions as a sort of prophecy, or type, of something that was *yet to come*. The Lord's Supper does not simply look back to the cross.

**When and how might this fulfillment take place (Lk 22:16)?** See *Revelation 19:7-9*. Many think it has to do with Jesus' second appearing, and the subsequent wedding banquet of the Lamb.

NAS **Revelation 19:9** Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.

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<sup>1</sup> Point out in class of the underlying Greek; it will become significant later.

In describing the coming of heaven to earth, the prophet Isaiah wrote:

ESV **Isaiah 25:6-8** ... the LORD ... 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 ... He will swallow up death forever; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces ...

**Both Backwards & Forwards:** Greek Scholar **Fritz Rienecker** wrote, "The Passover celebrated two events, the deliverance from Egypt and the anticipated coming Messianic deliverance."<sup>2</sup> So too, the Lord's Supper celebrates two events, past deliverance from sin through Jesus' death, and His future return. The Passover (turned Lord's Supper) is a foreshadowing of the wedding banquet of the Lamb (**Re 19**). Celebrated as an actual meal, the Lord's Supper is like rehearsal dinner for the marriage banquet of the lamb.

**Example:** Like crossing a busy street, don't forget to look both directions when celebrating the Lord's Supper.

**The Baptist Faith and Message of 2000:** "The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church ... memorialize the death of the Redeemer and *anticipate His second coming*" (italics mine).

**Concept:** *The best way to picture the future marriage banquet of the Lamb is through celebrating the Lords Supper as a meal now.*

2. People today think of heaven as floating on clouds, playing harps. **How did how first-century Jews envision heaven?** *Exodus 19:16-23, 24:9-11, Matthew 8:11, Luke 14:15, Revelation 19:7-9.* In contrast, the Hebrews pictured it as a time of feasting in the Messiah's presence (thus the imagery of the wedding banquet of the Lamb).

**Matthew 8:11** ... many shall come from east and west, and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.

**Luke 14:15** Blessed is everyone who shall eat bread in the kingdom of God!

The Hebrew imagery of heaven may stem from the Sinai experience: thunder, lightning, blaring trumpet, and smoke. Anything that touched the mountain was to be killed (**Ex 19:16-23**). However, in stark contrast:

ESV **Exodus 24:9-11** Moses ... and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel ... And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

**Concept:** *One reason the Lord's Supper should be a meal is because Jesus promised to come back and eat it with us again, and the Biblical imagery for heaven is feasting in the kingdom of God.*

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<sup>2</sup> Fritz Rienecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 207.

**Gordon Fee:** "... from the beginning the *Last Supper* was for Christians not an annual Christian Passover, but a regularly repeated meal in 'honor of the Lord,' hence the *Lord's Supper*."<sup>3</sup>

— Luke 22:17-18 —

\*\*\*\***What reason was given to drink the cup (22:17-18)?** The reason Jesus gave here was because he would not drink of the fruit of the vine until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God. Note that He said nothing at this point about it representing his blood.

- **“for” (22:18):** From *gar*, a conjunction used to express cause or reason.<sup>4</sup>

**3. What in Luke 22:17-18 looks to the future?** Jesus said He would not drink of the cup again until the kingdom of God comes, **22:18**. That's twice Jesus mentioned this prophetic aspect of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper looks both backward and forward.

**Application:** Like the disciples, each week when we drink from the communion cup, we should also remember that Jesus will not drink of it again until the kingdom of God comes, **22:18**.

- **“until” (22:18):** As before (**22:16**), the Greek for “until” is *heos hotou*, and simply indicates when something will happen in the future.<sup>5</sup>

**The Point:** Yet again we see a forward-looking aspect of the Lord's Supper. Jesus wanted them to associate drinking from the cup with the thought that Jesus Himself would partake of it again in the future.

— Luke 22:19 —

\*\*\*\***What symbolism did Jesus give the bread (Lk 22:19)?** The bread represents His body given for us. It obviously looks back to His death on the cross.

**Timing: Matthew 26:26** tells us that Jesus broke the bread while the meal was still in progress. This means that the elements of the Lord's Supper were an integral part of the meal, not separated from it:

NIV **Matthew 26:26** While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples ...

**In English, what does the word “remembrance” mean?** In English, a remembrance is like a memorial. It brings to mind something from the past. It is only backward looking.

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon Fee, “Corinthians”, 532 & 555.

<sup>4</sup> Bauer, *Lexicon*, 151.

<sup>5</sup> Point out in class of the underlying Greek; it will become significant later.

**Example:** “The flowers were given in remembrance of the late Mrs. Smith.” Thus, when we partake of the bread, we naturally think back to Jesus’ death on the cross.

4. The words remembrance and remember are very similar. **What is the difference between a “remembrance” (Lk 22:19) and a “reminder”?** Unlike a remembrance, a reminder can also be forward looking. **Example:** You might tie a string around your finger as a reminder to do something in the future (like to buy milk on the way home).

- **“remembrance” (22:19):** From *anamnēsis* (364); *an* means “not”; *amnēsis* (“amnesia”) means “forget.” A “remembrance” is literally “not amnesia.” Although *anamnēsis* certainly can mean “remembrance”, it can also simply mean “reminder.”<sup>6</sup> Thus, it can refer to something in either the past or the future.

**Concept:** *The bread of the Lord's Supper serves as a remembrance of Jesus' body given for us, but arguably also as a reminder of Jesus' promise to come back and eat it again with us. This is yet another forward-looking aspect of the Lord's Supper.*

**New Premise:** We are accustomed to thinking that the bread is a reminder for us. However, consider the possibility that the reminder is also for Jesus; that it is designed be to remind *Jesus* about something.

**The Issue:** Does Jesus *own* the reminder or is Jesus *in* the reminder?

- **“of me” (22:19):** The standard Greek word for “me” is *mou*; *mou* is grammatically ambiguous; the reminder could be about Jesus or it could belong to Jesus. However, the word *mou* is not used here. Instead, the more emphatic Greek word *emos* is used. The possessive pronoun (*emos*) was used when emphasis was desired (as any basic Greek grammar will confirm,<sup>7</sup> but moreover, *emos* more specifically denotes possession (“my”).

**Example:** The literal Greek in **Luke 22:19** reads: “my reminder”. Suppose you heard me say, “**That’s my picture!**” If I were pointing to Monet’s painting of water lilies, I would mean that the picture belongs to me. I own it. On the other hand, if I were pointing to a my photograph in a newspaper, I would mean that it was about me, not that I owned the paper. So too, consider that the reminder could BELONG to Jesus, or it could be ABOUT Jesus.

That Jesus said *emos*, not *mou* strongly suggests that the reminder actually belongs to Jesus. He owns it. The word “*emos*” in the Greek is possessive, suggesting that the reminder is not just about Jesus, but that it belongs to Jesus. If *mou* had been used, there would be more ambiguity of meaning. The phrase might then have been translated, “do this to that you (the church) might remember me.” The word *emos*, however, denotes possession (in this case, Christ’s memory, not the church’s, is in view). Thus, the bread of the Lord’s Supper is specifically designed to be a reminder for Jesus.

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<sup>6</sup> Bauer, *Lexicon*, 58.

<sup>7</sup> Such as *Learn to Read New Testament Greek* by David Alan Black, page 158.

5. What can be observed about God and remembering from Genesis 9:12-16, Exodus 2:23-25, and Ezekiel 16:59-60?

ESV **Genesis 9:12b-16** God said, "... I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant ... When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant ..."

According to the text, it is Jehovah God who gets reminded. Notice that this reminder concerns the future. A reminder can remind about a past promise to do something in the future.

ESV **Exodus 2:23-24** ... the people of Israel groaned because of their slavery and cried out for help ... God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham ...

It was God who remembered the promises of the Abrahamic covenant.

ESV **Ezekiel 16:59-60** ... thus says the Lord GOD: "... I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth ..."

The Lord Himself did the remembering about the Sinai covenant.

**The Point:** *God remembers covenant promises.* It is not that God forgets; these are anthropomorphic statements. It is good biblical theology to say God *remembers* His covenant promises.

**Truth:** It is good biblical theology to state that God remembers covenant promises. Just like with the rainbow, Jesus sees us eating the Lord's Supper and He remembers His promise to come back and eat it again with us. Jesus remembers covenant promises. The reminder is forward looking.

**An Acted-Out Prayer:** Most prayers we *say*—the Lord's Supper is a prayer we *do*.

**J. Jeremias** (Professor of Theology, University of Leipzig) understood Jesus to use *anamnesis* in the sense of a reminder for God: "The Lord's Supper would thus be an enacted prayer."<sup>8</sup>

6. What would the Church celebrating the Lord's Supper remind Jesus to do (Lk 22:19)? The bread serves to remind Jesus that He has not yet finished ("eat it again," 22:16) what He started ("body given," 22:19). He still needs to return with His kingdom. Eating the bread serves as an object-lesson prophecy/prayer designed to remind Jesus to fulfill His promise to return so as to eat and drink "again" (22:16,18) of the Passover (i.e., "do this so as to remind me").

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<sup>8</sup> KH Bartels, "Remember/Remnant", *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, ed., Colin Brown, ed., Vol. III (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 244.

— Luke 22:20 —

\*\*\*\* Jesus passed the cup around a second time. In Luke 22:20, what did Jesus say the next time He passed the cup?<sup>9</sup> He said it represents the “new covenant” in His blood. Arguably, the sign of the New Covenant is the Lord’s Supper, because the purpose of a sign is to remind people of their covenant obligations and promises. Thus, Jesus said the Lord’s Supper is “reminder”. It is a sacred, covenant meal.

**7. Why is it significant that Jesus passed the first cup either immediately before or during the meal, the bread while they were eating (Mt 26:26), and the cup again after they had eaten the bread (Lk 22:16, 22:20)?** Timing is everything. The elements of the Lord’s Supper were given in the context of an actual meal, not separated from it.

**Concept:** *The Lord’s Supper grew out of the Passover feast. The Twelve rightly understood that the Lord’s Supper would also be an actual meal. Passover was called a feast because it was a feast, and the Lord’s Supper was called a supper because that’s what it was (a true supper).*

— Luke 22:28-30 —

\*\*\*\* In Luke 22:28-30, what role will food play in Jesus’ coming kingdom? Jesus said the apostles would eat and drink at His table, 22:30.

**8. What is the meaning behind the imagery of eating and drinking at Jesus’ table in the kingdom (Lk 22:29-30)?** Compare Exodus 19:16-23, 24:9-11, Matthew 8:11, Luke 14:15, Revelation 3:20, 19:7-9. It meant you were accepted into the kingdom to enjoy the full fellowship of the host. Eating in the Messiah’s kingdom was the Jewish imagery of heaven.

**Concept:** *The Lord’s Supper has numerous forward-looking aspects to it (Lk 22:16, 18-19, 30). As an actual meal, it prefigures the future feast of the coming Messianic kingdom—the marriage supper of the Lamb. Such feasting was characteristic of Hebrew celebrations:*

ESV **Nehemiah 8:10** Eat the fat and drink sweet wine ... for this day is holy to our Lord. And do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

**Application:** *What better way to typify the coming Messianic banquet than with a banquet?*

**9. Scholarly consensus is that the Lord’s Supper was originally an actual meal. Why does this consensus matter?** The scholarly consensus matters because it leaves little doubt as to how the early church celebrated the holy meal: *as an actual feast.*

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<sup>9</sup> In Jewish tradition, four cups were passed. Only two of the four are referenced in Scripture.

**John Drane:** "The early church observed the Lord's Supper as an exclusive community meal."<sup>10</sup>

**Leon Morris:** "Holy Communion was not simply a token meal as with us, but an actual meal. Moreover, it seems clear that it was a meal to which each of the participants brought food."<sup>11</sup>

**Concept:** *The Lord's Supper should be a banquet today because that is how the New Testament church celebrated it. Who are we to improve on Jesus' design?*

— Acts 2 —

\*\*\*\***How many different activities was the early church devoted to (Acts 2:42)?** On the surface, there *appear* to be four activities (more on this, below).

**10. Why do commentators interpret "the breaking of bread" (Acts 2:42) as a reference to the Lord's Supper?** See *Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19*. It is because all three synoptic Gospels state that Jesus "broke" the bread of the Lord's Supper.<sup>12</sup> "Breaking bread" was not a common idiom in Judaism for eating together (instead, they said "to eat bread").<sup>13</sup> To "break bread" is clearly a technical term for the Lord's Supper:

ESV **1 Corinthians 10:16** 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?

**11. In Acts 2:42, there is an "and" between "teaching" and "fellowship", then between "bread" and "prayer", but not between "fellowship" and "bread" (ESV). How does this indicate that they were devoted to only three activities, and not four?**<sup>14</sup>

ESV **Acts 2:42** ... they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

The words "fellowship" and "breaking of bread" are linked together as simultaneous activities in the Greek (the "and" is missing). They had "fellowship in the breaking of bread." In Jewish thought, to eat together was the perfect picture of fellowship (see also **Revelation 3:20**). It is no accident that communion and community are from the same root word.

**John Gooch:** "In the first century, the Lord's Supper included not only the bread and the cup but an entire meal."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> *The New Lion Encyclopedia*, 173.

<sup>11</sup> Leon Morris, "1 Corinthians", *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1976), 158.

<sup>12</sup> William Hendriksen, *The Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1978), 962.

<sup>13</sup> DA Carson, *From Sabbath to Lord's Day* (Eugene: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1999), 130.

<sup>14</sup> Critical Greek text.

<sup>15</sup> John Gooch, *Christian History & Biography*, Issue 37 (Carol Stream: Christianity Today), 3.

**12. In Acts 2:46-47, what words are associated with the Lord's Supper?** When the early church celebrated the Lord's Supper, it was associated with food (2:46), gladness (2:46) and praise (2:47). It did not seem to carry a funeral atmosphere as do modern observances of the Lord's Supper (due likely to lack of emphasis on its future aspects).

**Concept:** *The Lord's Supper should be a banquet is because it serves as a wonderful time of edification through fellowship. It is a fellowship feast with a future focus. It should be celebrated as a wedding, not a wake; as a marriage rather than a memorial.*

### Acts 20:7

\*\*\*\***13. Based on Acts 20:7, why did the church at Troas gather together?** They gathered "to break bread" (another reference to the Lord's Supper). The phrase "to break bread" is, in Greek, a telic infinitive that denotes a purpose or objective. Their meeting was a meating!

**The Primary Purpose of the Gathering:** *The Lord's Supper.* The main reason the church at Troas met each Lord's Day was to eat the Lord's Supper. *This suggests that it should also be the main reason for church gatherings today.*

**The Secondary Purpose of the Gathering:** *Paul's Teaching.* The church regularly gathered on the first day of the week to eat the Lord's Supper. Paul used that regular gathering as an opportunity to teach to the gathered saints.

- **"the first day of the week" (20:7):** It is noteworthy that the early church met on the first day of the week. **Justin Martyr**, writing about A.D. 160, stated: "on the day called Sunday, all who live in cities or in the country gather together to one place ... when our prayer is ended, bread and wine and water are brought ... and everyone participates in that over which thanks have been given."<sup>16</sup>

### Optional End, Part One

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<sup>16</sup> Alexander Roberts, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1887), 186.



## Part Two

**Premise:** The early church celebrated the Lord's Supper **1)** every week, **2)** as an actual meal, **3)** using a single cup and loaf, **4)** as the main reason for the weekly gathering. Some of the benefits are unity, edification through fellowship, and holiness in view of His return.

### — 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 —

\*\*\*\***Based on 10:16-17, what did the elements of the Lord's Supper look like in the first century? What did the congregation see?** They saw a single cup (or container) and a single loaf ("the cup ... the bread").

- **"participation: (10:16):** From *koinonia*, "fellowship" (KJV: "communion"; NASV: "sharing"; NIV: "participation").
- **"bread" (10:16):** From *artos*, "loaf."

**According to 1 Corinthians 10:17, why should a single loaf be used in the Lord's Supper?** It has something to do with the fact that we are one in Christ (10:17).

**If a single loaf pictures unity, what would a tray of separate, individual wafers picture?** It would picture division, and isolated individualism.

**14.** Think for a moment about cause and effect. **In the the wording of 1 Corinthians 10:17, what is cause and what is effect?** The text states that using one loaf actually *creates* unity. The cause is the one loaf; the effect is one body.

NIV **1 Corinthians 10:17** Because there is one loaf [**<<cause**], we, who are many, are one body [**<<effect**], for [**cause>>**] we all partake of the one loaf.

- **"because" & "for" (10:17):** "Because" is from *hoti*; "for" is from *gar*; both give a reason for something. This is beyond mere imagery. Grace unto unity is somehow conferred.

**Geoffrey Wainwright** (English theologian) wrote that the bread "both *signifies and causes* churchly unity" (emphasis his).<sup>17</sup>

**Gerd Theissen** (University of Heidelberg): "Because all have eaten portions of the same element, they have become a unity in which they have come as close to one another as members of the same body, as if the bodily boundaries between and among people had been transcended."<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Geoffrey Wainwright, *Eucharist and Eschatology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 117.

<sup>18</sup> Gerd Theissen, *The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1982), 165.

**Robertson and Plummer:** “The single loaf is a symbol and an instrument of unity.”<sup>19</sup>

**Gordon Fee** wrote of the “solidarity of the fellowship of believers created by their *all* sharing ‘the one loaf.’”<sup>20</sup>

This view is shared by **C.K. Barrett, F.W. Grosheide, Leon Morris**, and the majority of scholars.<sup>21</sup>

**Concept:** *In the Lord's Supper, the congregation should partake of one cup (vessel) and one loaf. At the very least, it pictures our unity in Christ. Moreover, the grammar indicates that it actually creates unity.*<sup>22</sup>

**Observation:** The Corinthian church celebrated communion using one cup and one loaf every Lord's Day, and yet despite this there were deep divisions among them. This is not magic; it is not beyond abuse. However, it causes more unity than would otherwise exist.

— 1 Corinthians 11:17-22 —

\*\*\*\***According to 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, how had they abused the Lord's Supper (*deipnon*, 11:20) so that it had become merely own supper (*deipnon*, 11:21)?** The root problem is that the church was divided along class lines (rich versus poor, 11:22). Unfettered by employment constraints, the rich conspired to arrive early in order to avoid eating with the poor.

**Note:** This was a similar problem to that dealt with in **James 2:1-7** (the church paid special attention to the rich man and neglected the poor man).

**15. What in 1 Corinthians 11:20-21 indicates that the Lord's Supper was an actual meal?**

a.) That some went away hungry demonstrates that they came to the meeting expecting to satisfy hunger. That others became drunk shows that more than a thimble full of wine was used.

b.) **The same Greek word for “supper” was used for “meal”:**

ESV **1 Corinthians 11:20-21** When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk.

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<sup>19</sup> Alfred Robertson & Archibald Plummer, “1 Corinthians”, *The International Critical Commentary on the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911), 213.

<sup>20</sup> Gordon Fee, “1 Corinthians”, 515.

<sup>21</sup> Eric Svendsen, *The Table of the Lord* (Atlanta: NTRF, 1997), 32.

<sup>22</sup> The Lord's Supper is also a time of “participation” (1Co 10:16, *koinonia*, #2842) with both Christ (1Co 10:14-17) and His people (in Acts 2:42, “fellowship” is also from *koinonia*). The bread of presence in the Old Covenant was not eaten by the people. In contrast, the bread of presence in the New Covenant is to be eaten.

**Observation:** It was a sin that some went home hungry from the Lord's Supper. If people today go home from church hungry, then that church clearly is not observing the Lord's Supper the way the early church did.

- **“supper” (11:20) & “meal” (11:21):** From *deipnon*, “dinner, the main meal toward evening, banquet.”<sup>23</sup> It does not mean snack, appetizer, nor *hors d'oeuvres*. Here are other places *deipnon* is used:

NIV **Luke 14:16** A certain man was preparing a great banquet (*deipnon*) and invited many guests ...

NIV **Revelation 19:9** Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper (*deipnon*) of the Lamb!

**Observation:** Paul wrote to the Corinthian church some twenty years after Jesus turned His Last Supper into the first Lord's Supper. Just as the Last Supper was an actual meal, so also the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper as an actual meal. Modern churches have turned the Lord's Supper into a lost supper.

**J.G. Simpson:** “The name Lord's Supper, though legitimately derived from 1 Cor 11:20, is not there applied to the sacrament itself, but to the Love Feast or Agape, a meal commemorating the Last Supper, and not yet separated from the Eucharist when St. Paul wrote.”<sup>24</sup> (Simpson recognized that the Lord's Supper originally was a meal, but was later replaced by bread and wine services with the name 'the Lord's Supper' when the meal was phased out by the early church fathers.)

**I. Howard Marshall:** “This simple rite was observed by His disciples, at first as part of a communal meal, Sunday by Sunday.”<sup>25</sup>

**16. What in 1 Corinthians 11:17-20 indicates that the Lord's Supper was celebrated weekly?** The context is concerns when they came “together as a church” (11:18a). Paul's criticism (“when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat”, 11:20) reveals that the ostensible reason for their weekly meeting was in order to eat the Lord's Supper.

**Encyclopaedia Britannica** has described the Lord's Supper as “the central rite of Christian worship” and “an indispensable component of the Christian service since the earliest days of the church.”<sup>26</sup> For the early believers, participation in the Lord's Supper was one of the main reasons for their coming together as a church every Lord's Day.

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<sup>23</sup> The word supper is not in the ESV for Luke 22:20 (It is found in the KJV and the NIV). This is because the verb form (*deipneo*) was used by Luke, which means “eat, dine” (Bauer, *Lexicon*, 173).

<sup>24</sup> James Hastings, ed., *The Dictionary of the Bible* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1909), 244.

<sup>25</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Christian Beliefs: An Introductory Study Guide* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity, 1972), 80.

<sup>26</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, “Eucharist,” *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, ed. Warren Preece, Vol. 8 (Chicago: William Benton, Publisher, 1973), 807.

## Further evidence for weekly communion:

- a) The Lord's Supper (11:20) & The Lord's Day:** Another evidence of weekly communion is grammatical. The word "Lord's" (11:20) is from *kuriakon*, "belonging to the Lord." It is unusual, unique, technical, Greek wording: *kuriakon deipnon*, "the supper belonging to the Lord." The only other place this usual wording is used is in **Revelation 1:10** with respect to the "Lord's Day", the day Jesus rose from the dead (*kuriakon hémeran*; "the day belonging to the Lord").<sup>27</sup> The connection between these two unusual but identical ways in which these words are used must not be overlooked. The *supper* belonging to the Lord was eaten every week on the *day* belonging to the Lord. The Lord's Day and the Lord's Supper are a weekly package deal.<sup>28</sup>
- b) "when you come together to eat" (11:33):** Looking ahead in our text, yet another explicitly stated reason for assembly is found in **1 Corinthians 11:33**, "When you come together *to eat*, wait for each other" (italics mine). As before, the verse indicates that they came together to eat. The Scriptures give no other reason for weekly church meetings. It is clear that there were times for prayer, praise, and teaching each Sunday; however, the central focus was communion.
- c) "we came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7):** More evidence for the weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper is found in the only clear reason given in Scripture for regular church meetings: *to eat the Lord's Supper*. In **Acts 20:7**, Luke stated: "On the first day of the week we came together to break bread." The words "to break bread" are a telic infinitive, denoting a purpose or an objective. They met for the purpose of breaking bread (the Lord's Supper).

**Early Testimony:** The *Didache* (late first century), and **Justin Martyr's First Apology**, (middle of the second century) both indicate the Lord's Supper was celebrated weekly. Around A.D. 200, **Hippolytus** wrote of the typical church meeting in Rome—it included the Lord's Supper.

**Interesting:** Protestant Reformer **John Calvin** was convinced of the importance of weekly communion.<sup>29</sup>

**Karl Deddens** wrote: "If the Lord's Supper were celebrated more often, we should not view such a change as an accommodation to 'sacramentalists' who wish to place less emphasis on the service of the Word; rather, we should view it as an execution of Christ's command...."<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> The Greek behind the "Lord's day" is different from the Greek behind the eschatological "day of the Lord".

<sup>28</sup> Eric Svendsen, *Table*, 140.

<sup>29</sup> David Koyzis, "The Lord's Supper: How Often?" ReformedWorship.org, accessed September 1, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Karl Deddens, *Where Everything Points to Him*, trans. Theodore Plantinga (Neerlandia: Inheritance Publications, 1993), 93.

**Application:** The fellowship and encouragement that each member enjoys in such a weekly gathering is significant. This aspect of the Church's Sunday meeting should not be rushed or replaced. Although it is also important that the meeting be devoted to prayer and the apostle's teachings (**Acts 2:42**), these should not be at the expense of the weekly Lord's Supper. The weekly communion adds an unparalleled dynamic to church meetings.

**Poor Results:** Imagine someone going to a weight trainer to put on muscle. The trainer prescribes a certain regimen five times a week. A few months later, however, there was no difference. Upon inquiry, the trainer learned that rather than doing the sets five times per week, the man only did them once a month. To get the results Jesus intended, a church needs to not only celebrate the Lord's Supper as an actual meal, but every week.

— 1 Corinthians 11:22-26 —

**11:22-25** contains the same last supper material we covered back in **Luke 22**. *Read.*

**Concept:** *The Lord's Supper also serves as a weekly proclamation of the gospel in church meetings.*

**\*\*\*\*What future aspect of the Lord's Supper is referenced in 1 Corinthians 11:26?**

The words, "until he comes" are a clear reference to the second coming.

**17. Exactly to whom do we "proclaim" (1Co 11:26) the Lord's death? See Luke 22:16.** It may be to Jesus Himself that we are proclaiming His death ("unto my reminder", **Lk 22:16**). The Lord's Supper is a reminder to Jesus how His death on the cross initiated the new covenant and reminds Him to fulfill (**Lk 22:16**) His promise to return ("until he comes," **1Co 11:26**).

**18. Based purely on 1 Corinthians 11:26, why do we proclaim the Lord's death (for what purpose)?** Though not be obvious in English, the wording of the Greek text suggests that we are to do it so that the Lord will come back (purpose). This is another prophetic aspect of the Lord's Supper:

- **"until" (11:26):** Previously in this study, the Greek for "until" was *heos hotou*, which simply indicates *how long* a condition will last. It is a time frame. For example, "until" in **Luke 22:16** ("I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."); this means that Jesus will not eat the Lord's Supper again before the kingdom of God comes. Similarly, in English, I might say that I used an umbrella "until" it stopped raining (denoting a mere time frame); the umbrella had nothing to do with causing the rain to stop. However, the Greek for "until" in **1 Corinthians 11:26** is different. It is *achri hou*. When used with an aorist subjunctive verb, it can denote a goal. Much more than a mere time frame, it refers to an objective ("until the goal is reached").<sup>31</sup> The purpose for proclaiming His death through the elements is in order to persuade Jesus to come back!

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<sup>31</sup> Rienecker, *Linguistic Key*, 427.

**Prophecy Passages:** *achri hou*, used in conjunction with an aorist subjunctive verb, and that denotes a goal or objective, is used in several eschatological passages:

NAS **Luke 21:24** ... Jerusalem will be trampled under foot by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.

NAS **Romans 11:25** ... a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

**19. In the Lord's model prayer of Luke 11:2-3, what link might exist between the coming kingdom and our daily bread?** The banquet that is associated with the coming of Christ's kingdom may be reflected in Jesus' model prayer. In reference to the kingdom, Jesus taught us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done" (KJV, **Lk 11:2**). The very next request is "Give us each day our daily bread" (NIV, **Lk 11:3**). The Greek underlying **Luke 11:3** is difficult to translate. Literally, it reads something akin to, "the bread of us belonging to the coming day give us today." Thus, the NASV marginal notes read, "bread for the coming day." Linking together both **11:2** and **11:3**, Jesus may have been teaching us to ask that the bread of the coming Messianic banquet be given to us today: "Let your kingdom come—Let the feast begin today!"

**Athanasius** explained it as "the bread of the world to come."<sup>32</sup>

In the *Didaché*, an early Christian document, the Lord's Supper was connected to the second coming, as reflected in their practice of praying *maranatha* ("Come, Lord") when observing communion.

### 1 Corinthians 11:27-32

**\*\*\*\*What in 1 Corinthians 11:27-32 reveals the seriousness of the Lord's Supper?** 11:27b, 29b, 30. They were coming under judgement for taking it in an unworthy manner.

**20. What was the "unworthy manner" (11:27) that made them guilty? See 1 Corinthians 11:17-22.** It was their "manner" that was unworthy: eating the Lord's Supper with divisions so extreme that the rich connived to eat apart from the poor, with the result that the poor went home hungry. Furthermore, the rich were so insensitive to the sacred nature of the meal that they had become drunk from the wine.<sup>33</sup>

**How might believers commit this same sin today (11:27)?** Modern parallels might be Chinese Christians refusing communion with Japanese Christians, white believers avoiding the Lord's Supper with black Christians, or an upper-class Christian in India not eating the sacred meal with a brother from a lower class.

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<sup>32</sup> Frederic Godet, *Commentary on Luke*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1981), 314.

<sup>33</sup> The KJV has "unworthily" (1Co 11:27). The Greek is *anaxios*, "an unworthy manner." Thus, the ESV, NASV, and NIV have "unworthy manner."

**21. How did eating in a “unworthy manner”, make the rich guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord (1Co 11:27)? Compare 1 Corinthians 10:14-17.** Jesus gave His body and shed His blood to buy us forgiveness, and to make us one body of believers. The divisions and selfishness of the Corinthians ran directly contrary to everything Jesus died to accomplish. Such division is almost blasphemous.

**22. According to 1 Corinthians 11:28-29, for what specific sin should a man examine himself to avoid judgement?** It is not to search his soul for unconfessed sin in general, but to be sure he realizes both what the Supper is all about, and that it is his brothers who constitute the “body of the Lord” on earth. The Lord’s Supper is not just another meal. It is a holy, sacred, covenant meal.

**Application:** In a modern church that observes the Lord’s Supper as an actual meal every week, be sure not to simply sit with those in the church to whom you can relate to easily. Seek out those you are uncomfortable with, those who are not like you.

— 1 Corinthians 11:33-34 —

**\*\*\*\*23. What, in 1 Corinthians 11:33-34, was the inspired solution to avoid judgement (11:17-22)?** The solution was not to jettison the meal, but simply to wait for each other (see 11:21). Those who felt they could not wait for the others to arrive were instructed to “eat at home.”

**C.K. Barrett:** “Paul’s point is that, if the rich wish to eat and drink on their own, enjoying better food than their poorer brothers, they should do this at home; if they cannot wait for others (verse 33), if they must indulge to excess, they can at least keep the church’s common meal free from practices that can only bring discredit upon it ... those who are so hungry that they cannot wait for their brothers should satisfy their hunger before they leave home, in order that decency and order may prevail in the assembly”<sup>34</sup> (underling mine).

**24. Based on 1 Corinthians 11:33, why did the church come together each week?** They came together as a church in order “to eat” (another telic infinitive).

**Donald Guthrie:** [Paul] “sets the Lord’s supper in the context of the fellowship meal.”<sup>35</sup>

**Review:** The Lord’s Supper is the only reason ever given in the New Testament as to why the early church came together each Lord’s Day. See also **Acts 20:7a, 1 Corinthians 11:20**. Doubtless they did other things when met besides eat, but the driving purpose behind their gatherings was to celebrate the holy meal.

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<sup>34</sup> C. K. Barrett, “The First Epistle to the Corinthians”, *Black’s New Testament Commentary*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1968), 263 & 277.

<sup>35</sup> Donald Guthrie, *New Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1981), 758.

## Holy Living

**25. Based on 1 John 3:2 & Titus 2:11-13, what additional benefit comes from remembering the prophetic aspects of the Lord's Supper? It generates second-coming holy living:**

ESV **1 John 3:2** ... when he appears we will be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

ESV **Titus 2:11-13** ... the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ ...

## Tradition's Role in Church Practice

**\*\*\*\*What praise did Paul have for the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 11:2?**

NAS **1 Corinthians 11:2** ... I praise you because you ... hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.

Paul praised them for holding to the traditions just as he passed them on to them.

- **“traditions” (11:2):** From *paradosis*, “that which is handed down” (be it custom or information).<sup>36</sup> It is an inherited pattern of action or thought. It is a different Greek word than that for “teachings.” In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, **Gordon Fee** pointed out that it refers to “the ‘traditions’ that have to do with worship.”<sup>37</sup>

**26. The word “traditions” in 1 Corinthians 11:2 is plural. What bearing does this have on celebrating the Lord's Supper weekly as a meal?** Paul had in mind all the church practice traditions he passed on to the church. Arguably, he would be pleased if we followed them, too.

- **“delivered” (11:2):** From *paradidomi*, the verb from of *paradosis* (tradition).<sup>38</sup> Paul commended the church because they held to the church practice traditions that he had “traditioned” on to them. This same verb, *paradidomi*, was used by Paul in **11:23** with reference to the practice of Lord's Supper:

NIV **1 Corinthians 11:23** ... I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread ...

That which Paul received from the Lord he “traditioned on” to them.

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<sup>36</sup> Rienecker, *Linguistic Key*, 423, and Bauer, *Lexicon*, 615.

<sup>37</sup> Gordon Fee, “Corinthians”, 499.

<sup>38</sup> “Passing On the Faith”, CatechesisRenewal.com. Accessed January 4, 2024.



Also to be observed is that **1 Corinthians 11-14** arguably constitutes a chiasm on the subject of order in church meetings. A chiasm is reversal of grammatical structures in symmetry of successive phrases or clauses.<sup>39</sup> It could be described as a mirroring of written ideas about a topic: point A, point B, point C, the central idea, then mirror point C', mirror point B', and mirror point A'. **1 Corinthians 11-14** arguably constitutes a chiasm on the subject of order in church meetings:

**Point A (11:2)** → Apostolic Traditions (for Worship)

**Point B (11:3-16)** → Proper Worship for Women: Submission/Heads Covered During Prophecy

**Point C (11:17-34)** → Proper Worship: The Lord's Supper

**Point D (12:1-31)** → Spiritual gifts: In General

**Main Point (13:1-13)** → Love is Paramount

**Mirror D' (14:1-33a)** → Spiritual gifts: In Particular (Tongues & Prophecy)

**Mirror C' (14:26-33a)** → Proper Worship: Tongues and Prophecy

**Mirror B' (14:33b-35)** → Proper Worship, Women: Submission/Silence in Judging Prophecy

**Mirror A' (14:36-40)** → The Lord's Command (for Worship)

In this chiasm, Paul's praise for holding to his traditions is parallel to Paul's statement that his writings are the Lord's command.

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**\*\*\*\*What were the Thessalonians commanded to do (2Th 2:15)?**

ESV **2 Thessalonians 2:15** ... hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

They were commanded to follow apostolic traditions. This constitutes divine direction. Many believers feel that while apostolic traditions are interesting, following them is never commanded. This, however, is not the case.

This is the same Greek word for "traditions", *paradosis*, that was used in 1 Corinthians 11:2. As in 1 Corinthians 11:2, it is plural. The Thessalonians were specifically commanded to follow, to hold to, all the "traditions" of the apostles, whether received by mouth or by letter (whether oral or written).

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<sup>39</sup> "Chiasmus", Wikipedia.com. Accessed July 17, 2021.

**27. What impact should the command of 2 Thessalonians 2:15 have on how we celebrate the Lord's Supper?**

— Summary —

**28. How would you summarize this lesson on the Lord's Supper?**

1. The Lord's Supper is the **primary purpose** for which the church gathers each Lord's Day. Indeed, it is the *only* reason ever given for a church meeting.
2. The Lord's Supper should be **eaten as a full meal** to typify the wedding supper of the Lamb.
3. Typifying the wedding supper, it is thus **forward-looking** and is to be eaten with a **wedding atmosphere**, not a funeral atmosphere.
4. A major benefit of eating the Supper weekly as a meal is the **fellowship and edification** of the church.
5. Within the context of the full meal, there should be **one cup and one loaf** from which all partake so as to **create unity** within the church. These are also **symbolic of Jesus' body and blood**, poured out for the forgiveness of sins.
6. The Lord's Supper serves to **remind Jesus** of His promise to return; it is a prayer that we act out.

**Next Lesson:** E-mail the next set of discussion questions out to the class (or print them up and hand them out at the end of this lesson). Ask them to consider the issues, answer the questions and be prepared to discuss them at the next meeting.

\*\*\*\* = Ask this question before having someone read the text aloud.

**Note:** This lesson will take at least two 45-minute sessions.

**Teacher Preparation:**

- You can view NTRF's video on this topic on NTRF's YouTube channel.
- You can hear an mp3 on this topic at [SermonAudio.com/NTRF](http://SermonAudio.com/NTRF).
- You can read more about this topic at [NTRF.org](http://NTRF.org)

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— Background Material for Depth —

**Jesus said that He would not eat of it again until its future consummation; should the church wait for Jesus to return before eating it again? Why?**

**How can the Lord's Supper be celebrated like a wedding banquet when the threat of death is made (1Co 11:27-30) and when 1 Corinthians 10:20-21 speaks of eating with demons (even more frightening!)?**

**How can the cup and loaf be integrated into the meal so that they are not seen as separate from the rest of the feast?**

**What bearing should the practice of the early church have on how the contemporary church celebrates the Lord's Supper?**

**What blessings is a church missing by not celebrating the Lord's Supper as an actual holy meal?**

**When in history did the church stop celebrating the Lord's Supper as a holy meal?** It appears that from the mid-third century (A.D. 250) onward the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper were separated from the meal. However, even though the two were separated, the church continued to practice both until sometime after Constantine (who died in A.D. 337). Perhaps the love feast would have continued on down to the present had the original apostolic tradition (keeping the two together) not been abandoned.

— Practical Issues —

**Exactly what type of beverage was in the cup (Lk 22:18)?** Jesus simply called it the fruit of the vine.

**What in 1 Corinthians 11 indicated whether the "fruit of the vine" (Lk 22:18) was wine or grape juice? See 1 Corinthians 11:21.**

**What good imagery is wine associated with in the Bible? Genesis 27:28, Isaiah 25:6.**

**What do you think Jesus will be drinking when he finally drinks "again" of the cup at the Wedding Supper of the Lamb?**

**How would Romans 14:21 apply to using wine in the Lord's Supper?**

**Joke:** *What is the difference between Baptists and Presbyterians?* Two Presbyterians would speak if they happen to see each other in a liquor store!

**Should all drink out of the same cup?** The Anglicans have done this for centuries without obvious harm to their health! However, another option is to pour from the same container, or to dip one's bread into a common cup.

**Should the bread be unleavened?** The Jews ate unleavened bread in the Passover meal to symbolize the quickness with which God brought them out of Egypt. Certainly, Jesus used unleavened bread in the original Last Supper. However, nothing is said in the New Testament about Gentile churches using unleavened bread in the Lord's Supper. Though sometimes in the New Testament yeast is associated with evil (**1Co 5:6-8**), it is also used to represent God's kingdom (**Mt 13:33**). It is a matter of freedom.

**Should unbelieving children or adults be allowed to partake of the Lord's Supper?** Many churches practice closed communion and doubtless can make a compelling argument for it. These same churches usually also observe it as a ritual, not a full meal. Celebrating the Lord's Supper as it was celebrated in the New Testament, as a full meal, arguably changes one's perspective on the presence of unbelievers. Certainly, the Lord's Supper, as a sacred, covenant meal, has significance only to believers. Yet to nonbelievers, it is merely another meal. It is clear from 1 Corinthians 14:23-25 that unbelievers will occasionally attend church meetings. Unbelieving adults and our own children too young to believe get hungry just like believers do, so invite them to eat too. Love them to the Lord! The danger in taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner applies only to believers (**1Co 11:27-32**).

If an unbelieving child desires to drink the grape juice just because he likes grape juice—no problem. However, if the parents purposely give it to an unbelieving child as a religious act, then that would be a violation of what the Lord's Supper is all about. It would be closely akin to the error of infant baptism.

**It is necessary for ordained clergy to officiate at the Lord's Supper?** This notion is foreign to the New Testament and perhaps is a holdover from Catholicism. All believers are priests under the New Covenant.

**Should the meal be planned out? Should it be pot luck?** Many churches have found excessive planning to be wearisome. In over twenty years of eating the Lord's Supper as a full meal, one church has been following the "pot luck" (or pot providence) method. It has served them very well. Only once did everyone bring a dessert! Ask folks to bring plenty of something to share with everyone else. Remind them to see this as a giving expense, a ministry, an offering to the Lord.

To help with cleanup, consider using paper plates and plastic cups and forks.

### **Humorous Example**

During the American Civil War Battle of Chickamauga, a chaplain rode out to encourage the soldier. Private Sam Watkins recorded, "He was eloquent and patriotic. He stated that if he only had a gun he too would go along as a private soldier. You could hear his voice echo and re-echo over the hills. He had worked up his patriotism to a pitch of genuine bravery and daring that I had never seen exhibited, when fliff, fluff, fluff, fluff,

FLUFF FLUFF—a whir, a BOOM! a shell screams through the air ... the reverend ... says, 'Remember, boys, that he who is killed will sup tonight in Paradise.' Some soldier hallooed at the top of his voice, 'Well, parson, you come along and take supper with us.' Boom! whir! a bomb burst, and the parson at that moment put spurs to his horse and was seen to limber to the rear, and almost every soldier yelled out, 'The parson isn't hungry, and never eats supper.'<sup>40</sup> Don't be like this parson with respect to the Lord's Supper! It is to be celebrated weekly.

### Structural Summary

1. There are more forward-looking aspects to the Supper than is commonly recognized. **Examples: Luke 22:15-16 &17-18** ("until" and "fulfillment") & **1 Corinthians 11:26** ("until he comes").
2. Eating the Supper as a full meal is important because it pictures the Hebrew idea of heaven and looks forward to the wedding banquet of the Lamb, **Luke 14:15, 22:30 Revelation 3:20 19:7-9**.
3. Eating a sacred meal was already associated with a biblical covenant, **Exodus 24:9-11**.
4. "Reminding" God of His covenant promises is good Hebrew theology, **Genesis 9:12-16, Exodus 2:23-25, Ezekiel 16:59-60**.
5. *Anamnesis* can clearly mean either remembrance (past) or reminder (future).
6. The "my" of **Luke 22:19** denotes possession (*emos*) and suggests that the reminder belongs to Jesus.
7. Paul's solution for Corinthian abuses was that they wait for each other (**1Co 11:21**), not that they abolish the meal. The "eat at home" remedy was second best, for those who felt they could not wait for the others (the best option).
8. The word "until" in **1 Corinthians 11:26** is from two Greek words that (when used with an aorist subjunctive verb) can mean "goal" or "objective."
9. The lack of imperatives about the Lord's Supper weekly as a full meal is dealt with in our chapter on apostolic tradition, which we are commanded to hold to, **2 Thessalonians 2:15**. Virtually no ecclesiology is commanded in the New Testament, but the pattern is clear for many of the things they practiced. Scholarly sources generally agree that the church ate the Supper weekly, as a full meal. I see this as part of the "tradition" the apostles laid down; to neglect it is to miss a blessing!
10. Arguably, the word *deipnon* ("supper") never refers to anything less than a full meal, and is so used throughout the Scriptures.

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### Wording for Announcements to Create Interest:

The Lord's Supper is a growth strategy of the ancient church for supernatural unity, strong community, and seconding-coming purity?

Did you know ...

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<sup>40</sup> Sam Watkins, "*Co. Aytch*" (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 103.

- *The early church ate the Lord's Supper as a fellowship feast that looked both back to Jesus' death but also forward to the wedding supper of the Lamb?*
  - *The Ancient Church's way of observing the Lord's Supper resulted in strong community?*
  - *God confers grace unto unity through the one cup and one loaf?*
  - *The Lord's Supper is a second-coming prayer we enact?*
  - *The main reason the New Testament church met every week was to eat the Lord's Supper?*
  - *Communion is to be more of a celebration than a funeral?*
-