

Eucharist 2

The Eucharist as a Meal

Meals in the Ancient World

Meals in the Ancient World

- Meals were more than an occasion for eating and drinking: they were a sacred time, a time for thanksgiving to God

Meals in the Ancient World

- Jewish meal began when the father or presiding member of community
 - *took* bread
 - *broke* the bread
 - *blessed* it with the *beraka* (= blessing, thanksgiving)
 - **“Blessed be you, LORD, our God, King of the universe, who brings forth bread from the earth”**
 - and then *distributed* the bread

Meals in the Ancient World

- On holy days, at the end of the meal:
 - Lamp brought in, lit, and blessed
 - Hand washing; water brought first to the father or one presiding by a servant or the youngest at the table
 - The father or one presiding then took a cup of wine mixed with water and said: **“Let us give thanks to the Lord our God”**
 - All: **“Blessed is he whose generosity has given us food and whose kindness has given us life”**

Meals in the Ancient World

- The father or one presiding then recited several *beraka* (= blessings, thanksgivings)

1. “Blessed be You, LORD, our God, King of the universe, who feeds the world with goodness, with grace and mercy, who gives food to all flesh, for You nourish and sustain all beings and provide food for all Your creatures. Blessed be You, LORD, who gives food to all.”

2. We thank You, LORD, our God, for a desirable, good and ample land which You were pleased to give to our fathers, and for Your covenant which You have marked in our flesh, and for the Torah which You have given us, and for life, grace, mercy, and food which You have lent us in every season. And for all this, LORD, our God, we thank You and bless Your name. Blessed be Your name upon us continually and for ever. Blessed be You, LORD, for the land and for the food.

3. “Have mercy, LORD, our God, upon Your people Israel, upon Your city Jerusalem, upon Zion, the abiding place of Your glory, upon the kingdom of the house of David Your anointed, and upon the great and holy house that was called by Your name. Feed us, nourish us, sustain us, provide for us, relieve us speedily from our anxieties, and let us not stand in need of the gifts of mortals, for their gifts are small and their reproach is great, for we have trusted in Your holy, great and fearful name. And may Elijah and the Messiah, the son of David come in our lifetime, and let the kingdom of the house of David return to its place, and You reign over us, You alone, and save us for Your name’s sake, and bring us up in it and gladden us in it and comfort us in Zion Your city. Blessed be You, LORD, who rebuilds Jerusalem.”

Meals in Jesus Ministry

Meals in Jesus' Ministry

- Unlike the acetic John the Baptist, Jesus mingled with the people, eating and drinking and sharing meals with his disciples and others -- including the outcasts of society

Meals in Jesus' Ministry

Food Miracle Stories

- Six miracle stories of Jesus providing food for crowds:
 - Mark 6:34-44 & 8:1-9; Matt. 14:15-21 & 15:32-38; Luke 9:11-17; John 6:1-15
 - Schillebeekx: “the focal point . . . is not so much the miracle as the marvelous abundance that comes into play when Jesus offers his fellowship at table.”

The Last Supper

- Four accounts of the words of institution (earliest to latest):
 - **Paul:** 1 Corinthians 11:23-25
 - **Mark** (20 yrs. after Paul): Mark 14:22-25
 - **Matthew** (20+ yrs. After Mark): Matt. 26:26-29
 - **Luke** (20+ yrs. After Mark): Luke 22:14-20

The Last Supper

Paul

...the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, **‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’** In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying **‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes.” (NRSV)

The Last Supper

Mark

While they were eating, he took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, and gave it to them, and said, **“Take, this is my body.”** Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, and all of them drank from it. He said to them, **“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many. Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God”**
(NRSV)

The Last Supper

Matthew

While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, **“Take, eat; this is my body.”** Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, **“Drink from it, all of you; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you, I will never again drink of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.”** (NRSV)

The Last Supper

Luke

When the hour came, he took his place at the table, and the apostles with him. He said to them, **“I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I tell you, I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.”** Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he said, **“Take this and divide it among yourselves; for I tell you that from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.”**

The Last Supper

Luke

Then he took a loaf of 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.”** And he did the same with cup after supper, saying, **“This cup that is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.”** (NRSV)

The Last Supper

The Four Accounts

- Different traditions:
 - Mark and Matthew
 - Paul and Luke

The Last Supper

The Four Accounts

- Words over the bread:
 - All four agree **“This is my body”**
 - only Matthew has an explicit command to eat
- Words over the wine
 - Mark and Matthew: **“this is my blood of the covenant”**
 - Paul and Luke: **“this cup is the new covenant in my blood.”**
 - More likely the original language

The Last Supper

The Four Accounts

- Paul and Luke:
 - **“Do this in remembrance of me.”**
- Mark and Matthew
 - Jesus says he will not drink wine again until he drinks it in the heavenly banquet to come of the Kingdom of God
 - No command given to “do this” in the future

The Last Supper

John

- Last gospel written, perhaps 10-20 years after Matthew and Luke
- Does not describe the Last Supper
- After the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (John 6:1-15), John's gospel does contain a passage of "eucharistic theology"

“I am the bread of life. Your ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died. This is the bread that comes down from heaven, so that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats of this bread will live forever; and the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.”

The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

So Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day; for my flesh is true food and my blood true drink. Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood abide in me, and I in them. Just as the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever eats me will live because of me. This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like that which your ancestors ate, and they died. But the one who eats this bread will live forever.” (John 6:48-58 NRSV)

The Eucharist in the Early Church

Eucharist in the Early Church

- Eucharist from Greek *eucharista* = thanksgiving
- “virtually from the beginning of the church, the eucharist was part of its life” (Macquarrie)
 - Termed the “breaking of the bread”: at first, wine used only on festival days; most people too poor to afford it

Eucharist in the Early Church

Eucharist and the Community Meal

- Originally the Eucharist was part of a community meal
 - typically in the evening
 - the breaking of the bread *before* the meal
 - the blessing over the wine *after* the meal
- The breaking of the bread was soon moved to the end of the community meal

Eucharist in the Early Church

Eucharist and the Community Meal

- There were problems with the Community meal:
“when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. . . . When you come together, it is not really to eat the Lord’s supper. For when the time comes to eat, each of you goes ahead with your own supper, and one goes hungry and another becomes drunk. What! Do you not have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you show contempt for the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing?” (1 Cor. 11:17, 20-22 NRSV)

Eucharist in the Early Church

Eucharist and the Community Meal

- Custom at meals was to eat in groups, one group to a table, each with a common dish and a common cup
 - Size of a “table group” limited by need for each diner to be within an arm’s length to the common dish and cup
 - Table groups probably sorted themselves out by social status or common interests
 - Well-off may have eaten at home (the community food not sufficiently to their taste) and instead may have spent the meal drinking (too much) wine rather than eating

Eucharist in the Early Church

Eucharist and the Community Meal

- Teaching took place during these community meals (Act 20:7-8):
 - **On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight. There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were meeting. A young man named Eutychus who was sitting in the window, began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer.**

Eucharist in the Early Church

Eucharist and the Community Meal

- Teaching took place during these community meals (Act 20:7-8):
 - **Overcome by sleep, he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead. But Paul went down, bending over him took him in his arms, and said, “Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him.” Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn. (NRSV)**

Eucharist in the Early Church

Eucharist and the Community Meal

- Eucharist soon became separated from community meal
 - Roman Governor Pliny the Younger in a letter to Emperor Trajan (111-113 AD) described Christians as gathering before dawn for worship, then meeting later in the day for an ordinary meal

Eucharist in the Early Church

Eucharist and the Community Meal

- Eucharist soon became separated from community meal
 - Time of Eucharist moved to the morning
 - The many tables of the table groups became one table (altar) about which the community gathered as one group
 - A “service of the word” added
 - Based on the liturgy of the synagogue worship service

Eucharist in the Early Church

Structure of the Early Liturgy

Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (about 150 AD):

■ Readings

- “on the day called Sunday an assembly is held in one place of all who live in town or country, and the records of the apostles or the writings of the prophets are read as time allows”

■ Sermon

- “Then, when the reader has finished, the president in a discourse admonishes and exhorts [us] to imitate these good things”

Eucharist in the Early Church

Structure of the Early Liturgy

- After the Sermon: Prayers, Greeting
 - “Then we all stand up together and send up prayers”
 - “When we have ended the prayers, we greet one another with a kiss”

Eucharist in the Early Church

Structure of the Early Liturgy

- Eucharist:

- “Then bread and cup of water and [a cup] of mixed wine are brought to the one who presides over the brethren, and [the presider] takes them and sends up praise and glory to the Father of all in the name of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and gives thanks at some length that we have been deemed worthy of these things from him. When he has finished the prayers and thanksgiving (*eucharistia*), all the people give their assent by saying ‘Amen.’

Eucharist in the Early Church

Structure of the Early Liturgy

- Eucharist (*continued*):
 - ‘Amen’ is the Hebrew for ‘So be it.’ And when the president has given thanks and all the people have assented, those whom we call deacons give to each of those present a portion of the bread and wine and water over which thanks have been given, and take them to those who are not present.”

Eucharist in the Early Church

Structure of the Early Liturgy

Hippolytus, *Apostolic Traditions*, 225 AD

Eucharistic Prayer:

- *Bishop*: The Lord be with you.
- *All*: And with your spirit
- *Bishop*: Up with your hearts
- *All*: We have [them] with the Lord
- *Bishop*: Let us give thanks to the Lord
- *All*: It is fitting and right

Eucharist in the Early Church

Structure of the Early Liturgy

- *Bishop:* We render thanks to you, O God, through your beloved child Jesus Christ, whom in the last times you sent to us as a savior and redeemer and angel of your will; who is your inseparable Word, through whom you made all things; and in whom you were well pleased; whom you sent from heaven into a virgin's womb; and who, being conceived in the womb, was made flesh and was manifested as your Son, being born of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin; who, fulfilling your will and gaining for you a holy people,

Eucharist in the Early Church

Structure of the Early Liturgy

- *Bishop*: stretched out his hands when he should suffer; that he might release from suffering those who have believed in you; who, when he was betrayed to voluntary suffering that he might destroy death, and break the bonds of the devil, and tread down hell, and shine upon the righteous, and fix a term, and manifest the resurrection, took bread and gave thanks to you, saying, “Take, eat; this is my body, which shall be broken for you;”

Eucharist in the Early Church

Structure of the Early Liturgy

- *Bishop*: who also [took] the cup, saying, “This is my blood, which is shed for you; when you do this, you make my remembrance.”
Remembering therefore his death and resurrection, we offer to you the bread and the cup, giving you thanks because you have held us worthy to stand before you and minister to you.

Eucharist in the Early Church

Structure of the Early Liturgy

- *Bishop:* And we ask that you would send your Holy Spirit upon the offering of your holy church; that, gathering her into one, you would grant to all who receive the holy things [to receive] for the fullness of the Holy Spirit for the strengthening of faith in truth; that we may praise and glorify you through your child Jesus Christ; through whom be glory and honor to you, to the Father and the Son, with the Holy Spirit, in your holy Church, both now and to the ages of ages.
- *All:* Amen.

The Eucharist as a Meal Today

Eucharist as a Meal Today

- The bonding among participants sharing a meal into a group is present in the Eucharist. Two facets:
 - Horizontal Bonding among the participants
 - Includes the entire Church, for all the many separate Eucharists are really one Eucharist
 - Vertical Bonding
 - Jesus Christ and so to God, who presides over the one Eucharist

Eucharist as a Meal Today

- Both the horizontal bonding and the vertical bonding aspects of the Eucharistic meal are inseparable
 - Create a challenge in creating liturgies, planning Church spaces

Eucharist as a Meal Today

- Vertical Bonding = the mutual indwelling of Christ and the faithful as a benefit of the Eucharistic meal derives from John's gospel (John 6:48-58)
 - Expressed in Prayer of Humble Access of the BCP: "Grant us, therefore, gracious Lord, so to eat the flesh of thy dear Son Jesus Christ, and to drink his blood, that we may evermore dwell in him and he in us, that our sinful bodies may be made clean by his body, and our souls washed through his most precious blood"

References

- **A Guide to the Sacraments**, John Macquarrie, Chapters 10 and 11. Continuum Publishing, New York, 1997
- **The Eucharist, Essence, Form, Celebration**, 1992 edition. Johannes H Emminghaus, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1992
- **Eucharist. Theology and Spirituality of the Eucharistic Prayer**. Louis Bouyer of the Oratory. University of Notre Dame Press, 1968