

Genesis 1:26-28

COVENANT RENEWAL

Matthew 28:18-20

Vol. IV, No. 6

©Ray R. Sutton, 1990

June, 1990

Covenantal Supper

by Ray

Transcendence

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was approaching. And Satan entered into Judas who was called Iscariot, belonging to the number of the twelve. And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. . (Luke 22:1-6).

Hierarchy

Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. And He sent Peter and John saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." And they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?" And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters. And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' And he will show you a large, furnished, upper room; prepare it there. And they departed and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover (Luke 22:7-13).

Ethics

And when the hour had come He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom. And when He had taken some bread and 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 in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:14-20).

Oath

But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table. For indeed, the Son of Man is going as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is **betrayed!**" And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing (Luke 22:21-23).

Succession

And there arose a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'benefactors.' But not so with you, but let him who is greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant." . . . And He said to them, "When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack **anything**, did you?" And they said, "No, nothing."

And He said to them, "But now let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one. ." (Luke 22:24-38).

You Are How You Eat

I once read about a businessman who hired people on the basis of their eating habits. He operated on the premise: "You are how you eat." He never made a critical personnel decision until the prospective employee(s) had been taken out to dinner. He watched every move.

The book where I read about this employer's hiring habits did not detail the questions. It only said that the man was extremely successful at hiring; he very rarely made a mistake. His perception about eating was evidently accurate. The book I read, however, did indicate the following kinds of questions.

The employer took note of table manners. He attempted to find out how much the person knew about **responsibility** at the table, or if he (she) even cared. Would the prospect eat **by the rules** or would he eat by his own, making them up as he went? If he hadn't taken the time to learn the rules of eating, maybe he wouldn't take the time to learn other rules, such as the rules of the business. Maybe he would ignore them. And, maybe he would ignore his future employer!

The executive examined the prospect to see if he would wait for others to be seated before sitting? Would he (she) ~~wait for the rest of the party to be served before eating?~~ If he was not good at waiting, maybe he would be the kind of employee who would not wait for others in the business. Maybe he would be the kind who would always be jumping the gun. Maybe he would ruin business opportunities. Maybe his unwillingness to wait indicated selfishness. Maybe he was insensitive to those around him.

Would he pass food with or against the flow? If against, maybe he would work against the grain in the business. Maybe he would be uncooperative.

The businessman observed carefully how the applicant negotiated food and conversation. Would he talk with food in his mouth? Did he eat fast or slow? He watched how **much** the prospect talked: whether he (she) ate first and talked later or talked first and ate later.

The employer listened to the tone and quality of conversation. Did the prospect listen at all? Or, did he monopolize the conversation? Did he treat dinner talk the same as any other talk, or did he seem to view it special? Did he initiate or did he allow others? If he was the kind to initiate, he was probably more suited for "people work." If he waited for others to initiate, he would probably work better in a more technically related position.

Whether you agree or not with this technique, it proved

to be effective for this businessman. It is also commonly used in just about every business venture. It may not be as self consciously done as the man I read about, but notice how often business deals of any kind occur around a meal, especially when hiring a new employee. Many businesses, if it's a big position, simply won't hire until some time has been spent over a **meal** or in a **social** setting. They may not understand completely what's going on, but a good employer will want to watch the prospect around the table.

Man is **how** he eats! His eating habits say volumes. They reflect his whole life, whether he knows it or not. They speak of hurriedness or calmness. They tell about the kind of upbringing a person has had. They bring out ordinary or extraordinary conversation. They lead to over indulgence or in some cases, bulimia and anorexia.

Perhaps most of all, eating habits indicate an attitude toward food itself. There are those who have too great a love for food. Dietitians cite certain patterns: eating too fast, missing breakfast and "munching" all day long instead of eating three square meals a day. They also speak of some unusual characteristics. People who love food too much may eat for the taste and then cause themselves to vomit because they don't want to gain weight. The Romans found that they could eat several large meals at their orgies by eating and gagging again and again.

There are also those who have a hatred for food. People with eating disorders such as anorexia reach a point where they hate food. They starve themselves through various means and eventually have such a dislike for food that their hatred feeds (No pun intended) on itself; they refuse to eat.

Food does not make people fat, no less than guns kill people; they don't. As the saying goes, "Guns don't kill people; people kill people." In the same way, cake and ice cream don't make people fat. People make themselves fat. I can prove this very simply. I've known several health food fanatics in my lifetime who were down right fat. Now please keep in mind that I generally like health food; that is, I recommend healthy eating with the exception of alfalfa brownies, which some wonderful "healthoids" once served me. But just because I think it is a good rule of thumb to eat certain foods and stay away from others does not mean I believe health food will **keep** you slim, trim and away from heart attacks. Health food folks can be fat too (Possibly a great title for a health food diet book).

I'm thinking of one health freak who was one of the most obese women I've ever known. She would correct all of your unhealthy food and scold you for eating that great New Covenant food, pork. She wouldn't touch ham or anything not purchased at the local health food store. She was of purer intestines than to put such "poison in her body," as she liked to say regularly. Yet, she was a very large lady. Dare I say the pig who wouldn't eat pig was a pig herself.

Anyway, she was a Pharisee, and a large one at that. One time she was on one of her many diets, when she and her husband went to a movie. She begged him to buy her some chocolates. He wouldn't and she pitched a fit. She finally bought them herself and then wouldn't speak to him all night.

Was the problem with the chocolate candy, one of the great foods God has given man? No! Was the chocolate the culprit? Did the chocolate make her do it? No! Did the chocolate add to the layer of already existent fat on her body? No! People make people fat not food. **She** made herself fat and not the food. Man is **how** he eats not **what** he eats.

What vs. How

It has been said, "Man is what he eats." The idea is

that the food he eats transforms' him into something he is not. But is it? Does man become more violent if he eats red meat? No. Does he become more passive if he doesn't? No. Does he become a deer if he eats deer meat? No. Man simply does not become what he eats.

Beyond food, however, this statement became the basis for the philosophy behind Communism, **dialectical materialism**, which basically says that the material things of the world have greater power over man than the spiritual. The naive and erroneous notion was born that materialism is avoided through the redistribution of wealth: Communism. So, Communism views man as primarily an economic as opposed to a religious (covenantal since the word "religio" means "to bind) man, having an exclusively economic view of history: man is controlled more by wealth than anything else.

The statement, "Man is **what** he eats," has had lethal consequences. Interestingly, Communism has been resisted where Protestantism has reigned. Why? The answer is in an understanding of its origin. It began with a faulty view of the Lord's Supper, the doctrine of **transubstantiation**, that became the official dogma of the Roman Catholic Church. This doctrine says that the elements of bread and wine actually become the Body and Blood of Christ. It came into the church a little over one thousand years ago.

When the **transubstantiation** doctrine entered, it changed the nature of the Church and its clergy. It made the clergy into priests possessing the "**Being**" of God in their person, who transferred this "Being" to the sacraments; the elements, it was taught, were transformed into the literal body and blood. It is not coincidental that the Church was turned from a House of Prayer into a den of thieves, exporting grace and importing money by dispensing forgiveness where the price was right. It became materialistic. It had started with a doctrine of materialism and became what it believed the sacraments to be. Except, it had alleged the sacraments to be the physical body and blood of Jesus, when in reality it had emerged as a carnal body of base passions and practices: anything but the **Spiritual** Body of Christ. It could not resist the later social and gee-political developments that grew out of its dogma. Only true **Augustinian** Protestantism was able.

Man is not **what** he eats. He is **how**he eats. If he eats carnally, he becomes carnal. If he eats covenantally, he becomes Christlike, feeding on the true Humanity of Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. This truly great **covenantal** mystery is taught at the Last Supper of our Lord.

The Covenant and the Last Supper

Transcendence

Now the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which is called Passover, was approaching. . . And Satan entered into Judas who was called **Iscaiot**, belonging to the number of the twelve. And he went away and discussed with the chief priests and officers how he might betray Him to them. (Luke 22:1-6).

The Deuteronomic covenant starts with a declaration of the transcendence and immanence of the Lord. It refers to these attributes of God with two names: Yahweh **Elohim**. It emphasizes both aspects. But often, the covenant, especially in the Old Testament underscores the transcendence or Lordship of God. In the New Testament, however, **immanence** becomes more prominent because of the Incarnation. The **nearness** and **presence** of God are highlighted. The Gospels especially stress the presence of Christ by customarily beginning the covenant sequence with an announcement of the immanence of the Lord.

The covenant pattern of the Lord's Supper in Luke is

unique. Luke's Eucharistic passage begins with a statement about the "approach" of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, another way of saying the Feast was **drawing near** (Luke 22:1). It uses drawing near language often employed to convey the special presence of Christ at the worship of God's people when they take communion (Hebrews 10:19-25). It speaks of a special approach of the Feast. Yet, it is indirectly referring to the approach of the true Feast, the Supper of Christ where He is not an absent guest but present. When the Church gathers to eat at the Table with Christ, it does not eat alone. It eats with Him.

Luke adds a twist, however, to his passage. After mentioning the "approach" of the feast, he describes what is happening to Judas at the same time the feast is drawing near. He says, "Satan entered into Judas" (Luke 22:3). He stresses a false presence in Judas' life. Judas comes to the Feast alone and without the true presence of Christ in his life. Even though he would be with Christ, he would be without Christ. He would have Christ in general proximity but he would not have Christ. He comes filled with a foreign and demonic spirit. He is by himself.

The principle of **nearness** has a practical side to it. Man seeks presence at his meals. He usually finds food more appealing if eaten with someone else. He wants more than simply food, for the joy of eating is in more than the food itself. The issue is not the **what** but the **how**. Man does not like to eat alone. He will turn on the television or the radio. He will put some kind of sound around himself because he doesn't want the emptiness around to manifest itself. He will even go to the park to find some kind of presence with which to surround himself. He will do anything to capture a sense of presence at meals.

William Willimon writes in *Sunday Dinner* the following account from his own personal ministry.

As usual, I was busy. There were letters to be written and next Sunday's bulletin to be done and another hospital to visit.

"I can make a quick call before lunch," I thought to myself. So I turned the car down the street where Mrs. Smith lives. Mrs. Smith has lived alone "since the war" when her husband died. Her little white house sits surrounded by trees, two bird feeders, and a vintage-era, black Dodge.

My quick visit to Mrs. Smith was not to be. Once in her living room, seated in a rose-colored armchair, I was told by this tiny woman, "You'll be staying for lunch." I protested, listing all the things I HAD TO DO. "You are too busy," she responded. "Everyone has to eat- I'll get the table ready." And that was that.

"Please don't go to any trouble for me," I said, settling back in the chair, realizing that I was here for the duration of lunch, busy or not. Out of an oak buffet came an ancient linen tablecloth, looking as if it had been folded there since time began.

"Be sure not to go to any trouble for me," I asked.

Mrs. Smith continued, oblivious to my protests. The ritual of preparation had begun, and she was not to be diverted by my irrelevant chatter. Her attention was fixed now upon the china cabinet. Crystal glasses were lovingly taken in hand; rich, Irish, cut glass - gifts of her wedding day, I thought. The plates, platters, butter dish, and vessel were ready.

"I really wish you wouldn't bother yourself. I'm on my way back to the office anyway and I . . ."

"You'll have to stop talking," she said, "I'm going to be in the kitchen for a few minutes. You amuse yourself in here. And don't follow me into the kitchen. I don't like people staring at me when I'm cooking gravy."

Again, I settled back in the rose-colored chair as she disappeared into the holy of holies to concoct the meal. I would not witness those mysteries today. But I could

smell the biscuits rising to a golden brown, the ham sizzling in the pan. I could hear the ice cubes tinkling into the glasses. And I waited, contenting myself by looking around her living room of faded pastels and browning pictures of "Mr. Smith," as she called him; a tattered, old Bible rested on the coffee table, not for show but for daily use.

The priestess burst forth from the kitchen with dishes steaming like incense and announced, "Come to the table."

I was seated in a large oak chair with arms - "Mr. Smith's chair," she said. I was then told to "give thanks." I did and we began. After a few wonderful mouthfuls of food and a few inane comments by me about how good everything was, she said to me, "Preacher, perhaps you forgot how difficult it is to eat alone. I never feel alone in my house, except at meal times. Mr. Smith said when we invited company for dinner - which we did nearly every other night - 'The Lord never intended us to eat by ourselves.'"¹

Dear Mrs. Smith was right. Man seeks presence at his meals because they are inherently serving another purpose besides nurture for **our** bodies. They represent **a corporate effort** since a number of people were involved in the actual production of the food. They are a joint effort. In a similar way, they provide companionship. And this companionship of Christ and His body is what Judas forfeited when he sought a false presence in his life.

Hierarchy

Then came the first day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. And He sent Peter and John saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." And they said to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare it?" And He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house that he enters. And you shall say to the owner of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?"' And he will show you a large, furnished, upper room; prepare it there. And they departed and found everything just as He had told them; and they prepared the Passover (Luke 22:7-13).

The second part of the Deuteronomical covenant presents the hierarchical structure of the royal priesthood (Deuteronomy 1:9ff.). It speaks of the responsibilities of the "captains" within the hierarchy.

In a similar way, the second phase of the **covenant** supper sequence describes the responsibilities of the new hierarchy of the New Israel, the Church. The Apostles are given specific details in the preparation of the Passover meal. They are to look for a man with a "pitcher of water" on his shoulder, a man who symbolizes Christ, the true Man with water **from above** ("on the shoulder"). They are told to find an "upper room," the "upper room" emphasizing that Supper with Christ draws near to the **heavenlies**. They are instructed, in other words, to prepare for the meal.

This is the hierarchical principle of preparation. The more important the meal, the more elaborate the preparation. Biblical worship involves several steps before communion should actually be eaten: Psalm of entrance, confession of sin, reading and preaching of the Word, confession of faith, tithing, and coming around or forward to the table. Why not just sit down and have communion? Because preparation should precede the meal to make way for the specialness of the Supper. Man is not just

what he eats; he is **how** he eats. Meals eaten without preparation usually have no meaning and are trivial.

Ethics

And when the hour had come He reclined at the table, and the apostles with Him. And He said to them, "I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I shall never again eat it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom. . . . And when He had taken some bread and 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 in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, "This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:14-20).

The third part of the Deuteronomic covenant stipulates the terms of God's covenant relationship. Specific commandments are given (Deuteronomy 5-26). In particular, commands are given to eat the feasts of Israel (Deuteronomy 16).

The covenant supper also involves commands. Christ instructs His disciples how they are to eat. He tells them to drink of the cup He passes and eat of the loaf from which He eats. There is one cup² and one loaf to symbolize that they all eat of the same food, Christ. Yet, again it is the **how** of eating that conveys the oneness and unity of the Body of Christ.

Word accompanies the Supper. Christ establishes that Word and Sacrament are to stand together. One without the other causes an imbalance: realism on the one hand and nominalism on the other. Man cannot live by bread alone. He must have the Word. Communion was never to be without the Word. Yet, man cannot live without bread either. Life is more than words. If a man eats with Christ's words before him, he will restore his covenant. He will become **how** he eats.

Oath

But behold, the hand of the one betraying Me is with Me on the table. **For indeed, the Son of Man is going** as it has been determined; but woe to that man by whom He is **betrayed!**" And they began to discuss among themselves which one of them it might be who was going to do this thing (Luke 22:21-23).

The fourth part of the Deuteronomic covenant describes the ratification of the covenant. It refers to **oath** and **sanctions** of blessing and cursing (Deuteronomy 27-30).

The next segment of the covenant supper sequence involves **oath** and **sanction**. Christ makes an oath using an oath announcement, "But behold" (Luke 22:21). Then

The disciples practiced **intinction**, demonstrated by the almost universal use of this method for the first centuries of the Church. They dipped their bread into the cup, as is indicated by the way Judas communed (cf. John 13:26). I believe that this is the New Covenant method of taking the cup. Intinction portrays the symbol of a living sacrifice, which was totally foreign to the Old Covenant sacrifices that had to be drained of the blood before eaten. Bread soaked with wine symbolizes a body filled with blood. It is the picture of a living sacrifice being eaten. Intinction is also much more practical. It facilitates common cup and yet solves all the concerns about germs.

He makes a double play on words. He refers to a "hand," that which is often held up to make a solemn oath, as a symbol of one who is about to betray Him. He then adds a sanction word of cursing, woe. So, Christ makes a solemn oath and attaches sanctions, implying that His Supper is not without blessing and cursing. The meal is the new tool of discipline.

Judas had come to the table and eaten the same food, but he had not eaten "worthily." He had Satan in his heart. He had eaten wrongly. He was condemned for this reason, not for what he ate because He ate the right food. He ate the right food the wrong way. He became **how** he ate!

Succession

And there arose a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'benefactors.' **But not so with you, but let him who is greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant. . . . And He said to them, "When I sent you out without purse and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?" And they said, "No, nothing." And He said to them, "But now let him who has a purse take it along, likewise also a bag, and let him who has no sword sell his robe and buy one. . . ."** (Luke 22:24-38)

The final segment of the Deuteronomic covenant mentions the transfer of the inheritance of Moses to the new leader(s) of Israel (Deuteronomy 31-34). Moses calls Joshua to himself and commissions him to take hold of his inheritance.

The final section of the covenant Supper is similar to Deuteronomy. The disciples begin to dispute about their place in heaven, their inheritance. Christ reminds them of the nature of their inheritance as opposed to the "Gentiles'," the pagans' legacy (Luke 22:25). Their inheritance will come through **service**.

Finally, Christ addresses the tools which they will need as they go out. Space does not permit to elaborate on the meaning of these tools, but the principle is that He uses the meal time to prepare them for the future. One of the methods He uses is a comparison of the past to the future. He refers to previous times of being sent out to the present and future.

Meals are often used this way in the home. Families love to get together to tell and share stories about the past. They prepare the young for the future by passing down these stories. By comparing the past to the present, man is prepared for challenges in the future. This is what Jesus did with the disciples.

In conclusion, the disciples became **how** they ate. Judas became **how** he ate. He ate unfaithfully and he died the death of an unfaithful man. He received the sanction of cursing as his inheritance. The other disciples ate faithfully, even though some of them betrayed Christ before His death. Yet, because they ate in faith, the sanction of blessing was applied. They lived and died in faith. Man is **how**he eats!