

EATING SUPPER WITH GOD

In Bible times they did not always eat three times a day. The morning meal was light and included bread, olives, cheese; and fruit and onion in season. If there was a midday meal it would be eaten in the fields, by the roadside, in the city square or at home and then the daily activities would be quickly resumed. The evening meal was the main one, but included much more than food. It was a pleasant unhurried time of good fellowship and relaxation with friends or family in the cooler part of the day.

American culture has many drive thru eating places where one can grab a quick meal. When I was growing up, families ate meals together at the table, especially in the evening. However, this is not the case today where people in America often eat on the go or in front of the TV. Continental Europeans and especially those in the Mediterranean areas, know what it means to linger for hours over a several course meal accompanied with wine and good spirited conversations. The Middle Eastern culture that Jesus lived in was quite similar. Imagine the amount of time that he spent eating with his closest friends and disciples over the course of more than three years. In John 13- 17 we see one example of how Jesus used a meal time to share his innermost feelings and desires with them before he went to the cross. The Passover meal had special meaning as Jesus himself would become the reality behind the bread and wine that they partook of. His body would be broken so that we could become whole. His blood would be poured out so that we could be purchased by God and forgiven of all our sins.

In June of 1986 I moved to England to serve in a Baptist church as a missionary to the nearly 40,000 Indian and Pakistani population of Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims in the suburb of Southall (a.k.a. Little India) in West London. The Pastor had been a missionary in Brazil for a few years and was very open to the workings of the Holy Spirit. Over the next several years he occasionally gave me opportunity to preach, but my first opportunity to speak briefly was when he spontaneously asked me in the service to come forward to serve the bread and the juice. The Communion bread was not little wafers but a large loaf of bread. As I began to break the bread and proclaim that Jesus was broken to make us whole and to make us one with Him and one another, the bread would not break. It seemed to be almost as hard as a rock! After much effort and twisting, I finally broke it in half. (I think I may have blushed a bit). As the communion service continued, I spoke of the blood of Jesus that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel (which spoke the word 'guilty' over Cain for killing his brother). **The blood of Jesus speaks to God on our behalf..... Not guilty but forgiven and made righteous!** - Hebrews 12:22-24.

Well before his last supper meal, Jesus had brought consternation to the Jews in John 6:53 when he proclaimed that a person must eat his flesh and drink his blood in order to have life in him. They missed some of its meaning because they did not digest his words from John 6:35.

I am the bread of life. He who **comes to me** will never go hungry, and he who **believes in me** will never go thirsty.

The Jewish leaders had their rules, but they did not have a relationship with God. They would not come to Jesus nor believe in Him as the king of a new kingdom. They would later affirm this with these words before Pilate, the Roman governor: 'We have no king but Caesar.'

They had not only missed their opportunity to come to Jesus for eternal life but also the joy of fellowship with Him in this life and in his eternal kingdom. Thankfully, we still have that choice before us. Jesus uttered these words to a church in Laodicea whose love for him had become lukewarm. Prosperity had made them proud, self-satisfied, worldly and less hungry for God. Jesus called upon them to invite him in so they could dine together in spiritual communion.

*Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come into him and **dine with him, and he with me.***

- Rev. 3:20 NKJV

The apostle John seemed to be Jesus' closest disciple and John referred to himself as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' - John 20:2. John knew the importance of fellowship with God and wrote about it.

.....truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ and these things we write to you that your joy may be full. This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. - 1 John 3 - 7 NKJV

Recently I spent part of a day and the whole night at a quiet vacant house surrounded by woods that I have access to during most of the time I am here in rural western New York state.

It is an ideal place to get alone with God as there is no TV or Internet access. It was an emotional experience for me as I entered into renewed fellowship with God. It was a time of 'remembering' the good things He has done in and through my life in the past. Tears were prevalent as God seemed to say to me.....welcome home! How precious it is to know a God who desires to spend quality time with us and for us to know his friendship. God knows that the best atmosphere for our spirit, mind and body is to dwell in His presence. However, sometimes we allow the cares of this world and its busyness to distract us.

During the last supper with his disciples, Jesus made these comments which referenced a special meal that will take place when all of his followers throughout all of history will gather for a great feast to celebrate the marriage of Jesus and his glorious bride.

I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom. - Matthew 26:29

The apostle John wrote about the greatest supper of all to occur when Jesus returns.

*Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and **his bride has made herself ready**. Fine linen, bright and clean was given her to wear (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints). Then the angel said to me, 'Write: Blessed are those who are invited to the **wedding supper** of the Lamb!' - Revelation 19:7-9*

It will be a wonderful time of celebration for the bridegroom and his bride. Jesus has taken on many roles throughout time: creator, sustainer of all things, missionary to earth, prophet, shepherd, teacher, healer, preacher, liberator, disciple maker, evangelist, servant, Savior, risen Lord and Judge. Jesus is now involved with two roles as intercessor and wedding planner. As intercessor, he is helping to prepare his bride for the wedding. As wedding planner, he is making all the arrangements for the great banquet. The following passage may give us a glimpse of what is on the menu for that day.

On this mountain the Lord Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine - the best of meats and the finest of wines. - Isaiah 25:6

Jesus expects his bride to prepare herself for the wedding by keeping herself pure and fully devoted alone to Him. - 2 Corinthians 11:2-3. A primary way to facilitate this is to stay in close intimate communication with Jesus himself. He speaks to us through the written Word and also through His Spirit that lives in us. It is okay to have spiritual snacks but God also wants to have longer times of fellowship with us where we feast on Him and His Word. May all of us enjoy more times of 'eating supper with God'.

Let us remember that the great wedding is not about us, it is about Jesus Christ, who will finally receive the reward for his sufferinga holy and pure bridal family to love and enjoy forever.

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