

Our **1st seminar** established that we are set in the basic relation to Christ as the Church. All this depended on how God had, before the creation of the world, seen us in His eternal Son. This Son having come to us in history as the Christ of Israel, is the person God appointed for us, through Whom, and in Whom God has worked our salvation.

Our **2nd seminar** considered what it means to live in relation to a head. How were we to understand how this shaped our corporate attitudes and approach to the Lord.

In Our **3rd seminar** we saw that He is building us as his people, called out from the world. We also see that, in the light of the Ascension of our Lord, we are drawn into his present rule and that there is a relationship with earth and heaven, based upon the fact that our Head has gone into the heavens and has made provision for another One -like Himself - the Holy Spirit, to come and make His home with us. So, as a corporate body of the Head we understand that our binding and loosing can have a commensurate reciprocal answer in heaven.

In our **4th seminar** we considered how Christ, having taken our flesh, lived in it a godly life by faith in his Father. He did this for us. It involved him in participating in our life so that we might participate in his - by the Spirit. We saw that in his baptism for our sakes, he stood with sinners and embarked on a way of life that lead to the baptism of his death. He taught his disciples on the way to this death that they too would share in his baptism - there was to be a baptism common to us and Christ.

We saw that at his baptism in water at the Jordan, his baptism in blood at his death and the baptism of his Bride in holy Spirit and fire laid the base for our understanding of what it means for us to be baptised. Its meaning centred around the union between Christ and his Church. We were baptised "into Christ Jesus". Our baptism sets forth for us not what we do, - in our responding - or even what the church does to us - in the ritual - but what God has done, does do, and will continue to do for us in and through his risen and ascended Son.

1- Christ, our passover lamb, has been sacrificed for us... [1 Corinthians 5.7].

On the night that He was betrayed, Jesus celebrated the passover with his disciples. In doing that he brought together [1] his suffering and also [2] his inauguration of the new covenant for the remission of sins. When he said "this is my body" as he handed them the broken bread, and said "this is my blood" as he passed them the cup he did two things at once. He constituted himself the mystery of the Supper and he transformed it into the Eucharist [thanksgiving] of the Church.

So any mystery here is not a matter of the supper itself, that is not the subject of the mystery; but it is the paschal mystery of Christ - it is the mystery of his suffering and sacrifice - which he set forth in the eucharist for the participation of any who believe in Him.

2 - The supper is shared with Christ; but in different ways.

In that upper room, where the supper had been prepared for them as they gathered there, Jesus and his disciples shared the same loaf and the drank from the same cup. It was a shared supper, but Jesus ate and drank actively and vicariously as the Redeemer. The disciples shared the loaf and the cup as receivers - their action is receptive and obedient as his redeemed community.

As we saw in the matter of baptism - as his redeemed community, our current participation [sharing] in the sacraments have to be understood as a common life - κοινωνία - or participation, in the mystery of Christ and his Church within the communion of the Holy Spirit.

3 - Baptism and the Lord's Supper both centre around his death and suffering.

Just as Jesus was opening the paschal mystery to them in the Supper. If they were to drink of his cup it would be that they too, in baptism, would participate in his death, burial and resurrected life. They would also eat as bread his broken body and drink of his cup at the supper as forgiven sinners operating within a new covenant of grace.

4 - Christ's intercession is the key to understanding the Eucharist [John 17.9,11,19-23]

We can put our focus on two places.

[1] We can think of the Eucharist in relation to the historical Jesus who appeared at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Jesus who, in his incarnate flesh offered up prayers and supplications to God with strong crying and tears, learning what his obedience meant through what he suffered [Hebrews 2.7-8]. That is we focus on his incarnate life and death.

[2] Or, we can think of the Eucharist in relation to the risen and ascended Jesus who has passed through the heavens, having offered Himself to God, through the eternal Spirit, as a spotless

sacrifice. He now appears in the presence of God for us - in advance of us. There He ever lives to make intercession for us.

It is this intercession which is the key to the understanding of the Eucharist. For it causes us to look through the sacrament to the vicarious humanity of Jesus as the priesthood of the incarnate Son. He has made a new and living way into the holy place - the heart of the Father - for us through "the veil of his flesh" [Hebrews 10.20].

5 - Christ's union with us

By sharing in our flesh and blood, He established a complete kinship with us and so He acts as our High-Priest in the matters concerning God; He made propitiation for the sins of the people. He acts this High Priesthood for us both in vicarious receiving and in vicarious offering.

Back of this stands the whole matter of his manhood which he took for our sake. In this manhood he assimilated himself to our actual condition, condemning sin in the flesh and overcoming our corruption by his holy life. In this manhood he assumes all that is ours, and he sanctified what he assumed; so He presented us with himself to the Father through his own self-presentation. We are those who he has redeemed by his blood and consecrated, through the offering of his body.

6 - Our union with Christ

His union with us in body and blood made it possible for Him to become our Mediator and Priest before God. And his union with us demands as its complement our union with Him in his body and blood. We express such a union with Him when we draw near to God and offer our worship with, in, and through Christ. At the same time, we are also living in communion with Christ the incarnate Son.

5 - Union and Communion with Christ

It is this union and communion with Christ, the incarnate Son who represents us to God and God to us that opens up the real meaning of the Eucharist. For by eating his body and drinking his blood we are given participation - a sharing - in his vicarious self-offering to the Father.

As we feed on Christ, the bread of life that comes down from above, eating his flesh and drinking his blood - then we are receiving his eternal life into our actual life. We are living by Christ as He lives by the Father who sent Him.

He, being both Offering and Offerer unites us and our worship with his own self-consecration and so offers us to the Father in identity with Himself.

6 - The Provision of Bread from Heaven: Passover and Manna conflated.

The bread is a Person in whose flesh and blood is life. John 6

The linking together of Passover and bread from heaven.

In John 6.1-14 we have a record of a sign which Jesus performed [6.14]. Significantly, it was the time for Passover [6.4] and Jesus' premeditated intention to perform the sign is evident in his testing of Philip [6.5-7]. The disciples are drawn into this event as well - they are with Him on the mountain [6.3] and the provision for the crowd can be directed to them [6.5] and they share in the gathering up what is left over [6.12-13] when all have eaten to their fill.

The use of the two fish accompanying the five barley loaves also links together the flesh and bread, but in such a way as to make clear that the emphasis here falls on to the Bread. This is clarified by saying that the people had a satisfying amount of fish [6.11] but the bread was in excess and abundant in its supply. The focus, for the original participants and for the readers, falls on the bread here.

A holy meal with a specific and clear purpose.

All were filled [6.12] and the Lord is clear that nothing may be lost of the bread after it had been used for its purpose. It was dedicated bread to the singular use for which it was given - just as we have found for the Passover lamb which was eaten and the inability to preserve the manna beyond the day of eating.

A specific reference for the disciples of Jesus and their readers.

The repetition of the Lord "giving thanks" [6.11,23] will make clear to Christian readers that there is

something here of the Lord's Supper in their understanding.

A salvation experienced by the control of the elements, as in Egypt.

The people try and make Jesus King by force of their own edict, but He eludes them, withdrawing to a place alone. He will not be a King because the people wish it - He will be a King over them only as they have experienced His salvation. And that is not, right now, for the multitude in the desert, but for the disciples He has chosen, as given by Father.

The disciples set out across the lake. It becomes dark and dangerous [6.17-19] and they are afraid when seeing Him walking on the sea [ie in control over those elements which are dangerous to them]. They welcome Him into their boat and they arrive at their destination. They experience his presence as salvation from their danger [danger from elements that are in His hands] and they arrive at their destination - the parallels with the Exodus are clear for those to see.

Food which perishes is transient food, food of immediate gratification. It is not an eternal, lasting food.

The multitude are really puzzled as to how Jesus arrived there, knowing he didn't go with his disciples, and knowing it was a rough night. The multitude don't experience him as the disciples did, but are puzzled.

Jesus returns them to the miracle of the loaves and fishes, but indicates that they filled their bellies but didn't discern the meaning of the sign that it was [6.26].

They are not to work for the food which perishes - does he mean the manna, which went foul of you tried to store it up? OR everyday food which goes off when you store it, or is destroyed in the eating. Either way, the contrast is with food which endures to eternal life which comes from the Son of Man. [6.27]

The multitude do not follow up the issue of the bread itself, but latch onto the matter of "working" such as is the preoccupation of the men who do not know grace [6.28]. Jesus' answer is to believe on the Son of Man.

This is to see the Person as the provision of God.

They look for Him to do a work as a sign that they may believe Him. In this they follow the elders of the slaves in Egypt, who do not know God as YHWH, nor have had the experience of salvation which conveys that knowledge to them. They are unbelievers in this God; that is why they need the sign.

To impress upon Him their need for a sign they mention that their forefathers ate bread in the wilderness and that this bread was given them from heaven.

Not Moses [agent] but God Himself [source and origin]: not Israel only but the whole world.

Jesus makes it clear that

[a] Moses did not give them the bread from heaven but His Father gives the true bread

[b] This bread of heaven = the bread of God [6.33] and it comes down out of heaven and gives life [ie the life of God] to the world. It is not something which is a sign within Israel, as the manna was, it is the true bread which has a universal application to the whole world.

They have received bread from Jesus [the sign 6.26] before, now they ask Him to give them this bread [Himself] for all time. This is a commitment of will, at least to desire that of which He is speaking.

Jesus as the bread of life.

He identifies Himself with the bread of life. It is in "coming" to Him and "believing" on Him that people never hunger and thirst. He does not mean that they will not hunger for bread or water in the real bodily sense - He makes this clear by speaking of the bread "of life".

What He is speaking of is that hunger and thirst, the awareness of not being ever satisfied in life, will be dealt with. That is, He is saying that life itself finds its meaning and satisfaction in coming and believing on the Son of Man. Relating to Him this way is life.

He must speak of Father [17.3], Who sent Him and draws them.

But He will have us know that the life which He is, cannot be allowed to be spoken of without the subjection of His own will to the Father being known as the basis of such a life. For the doing of, or the execution of, the Will of the Father, is not possible except it be by the obedience and subjection of the Son. [6.38]

The receiving of this life, this bread, has to do with having eternal life [6.40] which comes to mean not coming into judgment [5.24b, 1 Thess 1.10] and of being raised up on the last day [5.29, 6.39-40, 44, 11.24]. The living and believing in Christ is the way of such a life [6.40, 11.24-26].

They cannot understand how He can come "down from heaven" and also be Jesus, the son of

Joseph, whose parents they know. [6.42] Jesus makes clear the Father has not spoken to them, and given them revelation concerning the Son as yet - there needs to be a drawing by the Father if anyone is to come to the Son [6.44-45].

Bread and flesh: Passover and Manna: brought together in One Person.

Jesus re-iterates that the one who believes Him as eternal life [6.47] and that He Himself is the bread of life. The contrast between the forefathers who ate the manna in the wilderness is that they ate it and then died, this bread may be eaten and one may not die. The bread which He gives for the life of the world is his flesh [6.51]. Now we have an equation between bread eaten, and flesh.

This picks up the two themes which we have seen connected together in the Passover and also in the manna episode. He is now asking that they think in terms of salvation from [Passover] and salvation to [maintained life - Manna] are seen as coming from the Father through the gift of the One Person provided - Himself.

Flesh and blood of Passover: true Food from God: a Person.

The question "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" is answered by the two themes of Passover night which are brought together - flesh and blood. Jesus is speaking of his death, when his blood shall be separated from the flesh of the body. But He now makes a remarkable implication.

He speaks of eating his flesh and drinking his blood as true food. The picture of eating, and taking in life, as one takes food into oneself draws us into the Last Supper, when the bread and the wine are seen as the body and the blood of the Lord as that which constitutes new covenant. So here we have the clear reference to his death as the true Passover, out of which eternal life for the eater is purchased.

[a] Previous to this the blood was reserved for the atonement of souls on the altar [Leviticus 17.10-12], it would never be eaten. The blood of the animals used was reserved to signify this clear function of atonement. The "true drink" which gives life to the drinker is the blood of Christ as that which turns away the wrath of God and opens life to those who believe. It is now possible, even required, that blood be drunk now because it is the true drink of which the blood of the animals was simply the sign. Now that the thing signified has arrived, it must be taken into oneself as true drink. It satisfies those who have hungered and thirsted for righteousness.

[b] The true bread comes to mean his body, his flesh. That is, the death of Christ brings as a source of life a reconciliation between God and man such that the life of God can be entered upon, He may be known in intimacy. This opens the way to the Father through the Son into their shared life, by the Spirit.

A mirroring of the life of the Trinity.

All this taking into oneself of the Son's life by his death cannot be discussed without reference to the Father [6.57-58]. For that it is a shared life so it is so in the Godhead; the Son lives because of the Father who is the living Father Who sent Him. So the one who "eats Me" shall live "because of Me", says Jesus. There is a mirroring of what takes place in the life of God, as there is a Father who has life in Himself and there is One, the Son, who draws life from the Other, so there is in our relation to Christ and those who believe in Him. We draw from his life - which is given for us in his death.

Cross and Resurrection: "I will raise him up"

Salvation from and salvation to are to be found in the death and the resurrection. Both of these are found in the death and life of the one Man. Jesus' promise is that He is the One who will bring the life through His death and the resurrection.

We not only receive life through His death - we also share His risen life and find that this is the eternal life - to have brought into relationship with the father and the Son which Whom is our fellowship [1 John 1.5].

1. In our language of the Lord's Supper, we are not surprised to see the images of bread as life, and also as eating the body of the Lord. Such language may sound mystical - but it is not. It is the bringing together of the Passover and the Manna. We mustn't be embarrassed by such language.

2. To receive a Person, and to eat to do so, is a sign that the Person is taken as life itself [ingested and lived upon as a source of life].

3. Such language and action is language of faith. It expresses our trust in the Person, for Who He is to us, as His people.

Eating of bread in the context of flesh and blood.

We have seen from Passover [Ex 12] and also from the Bread from heaven [Ex 16] that in both cases there was an eating of flesh and bread.

In the Passover, the blood was separated from the animal and was applied [outside the house] for God to see; it had a Godward purpose. It was a turning away of wrath in His judgement; and it was a sign of a faithful household.

Inside the house the emphasis fell on the flesh that was eaten and the unleavened bread accompanied the meal. In the report of the Manna from heaven the emphasis fell on the bread itself and on the flesh of the quails only incidentally. And the use of bird flesh separates our thinking from the Passover Lamb so that we concentrate on the bread while at the same time linking together flesh and bread.

7 - Keeping exclusively to the Lord's table 1 Corinthians 10.1-22

Following on from the possibility of being disqualified from the race, Paul now opens the door to the issue of idolatry which he thinks the Corinthians are in danger. Their leniency in this matter threatens to offend the Lord over the issue of idolatry.

The argument flow:

[1] He uses the Exodus parallels of the Hebrews experiencing a salvation through judgment by going through water to salvation, and eating of manna and drinking from the rock. This immersion in the sea and the eating and drinking finds its parallel for the Corinthians in the Gospel sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper. He makes clear that what the Hebrews fed on, in those ancient days, was really Christ, just as the people of God – the church of God - do today [1 Corinthians

10.1-5]. The warning for the Corinthians was that these ancient ones, who were blessed in covenant experience, later fell in the wilderness.

[2] What caused them to do so was that they became idolatrous, indulged in immorality and were destroyed by serpents [Numbers 21.5-6]. They also grumbled at the Lord in the wilderness and were also destroyed following the rebellion that Korah provoked [Numbers 16.41,49]. Paul warns the Corinthians about the common matter of temptation and that God enables us to endure through it.

[3] Paul exhorts them that they must shun the worship of idols. Showing that the Lord's supper is a participation in the body and blood of the Lord. He says that the people of Israel, in eating the sacrifices were partners at the altar. He does not mean that the food offered is anything, nor that the idols to which it is offered are either; but he does make clear that behind the pagan sacrificial meals is an offering to demons [Deut 32.17].

It would be impossible for the Christians to consider they could fellowship in a meal with the demons while they also eat at the Lord's table. This would provoke the Lord to jealousy [1 Corinthians 10.14-22]. And if they did that, they must surely take into account that He is stronger than they are - He is dangerous to them, as He was to Israel in the wilderness!

**8 - When the Church forgets who she is:
it spoils the Lord's Supper and brings our Head's Discipline
1 Corinthians 11.17-34**

Paul continues with the theme of the Corinthian worship as they assemble together. Having made clear his reasons for the need for distinguishing gender in the assembly as it prays and prophesies, he now turns to the Lord's Supper.

The argument flow:

[1] He returns to the factions [divisions] which exist among them, having dealt with them as a matter of first order in his letter [1 Cor.1-4]. He has heard that there are factions, and his reason for believing it is that there would never have been a preference for Paul, Apollos, Peter etc in the first place if that were not so.

[2] Factions have implications for their eating of the Lord's Supper. They manifest themselves in looking after 'number one' - ie the factions destroy the ability to care for each other so as to prefer each other and wait for one another at the supper. If they are ravenous and need to drink they should do that at home - the Lord's Supper is not for satisfying their needs but to express their worship in eating at the Lord's table.

Further, there were those who had not enough to bring to the Supper, and those who had plenty; the differences, under the impact of the factions, was emphasised. This shamed some and elevated others.

[3] Paul now recites what he received of the Lord about that Last Supper. He will recite it to go on to

show that the meaning of it is precious, and that they, by their divisive and self-serving behaviour, are violating that meaning. 11.1-16, 17-34

The Lord's actions and words at the Last Supper

[a] on the night He was betrayed the Lord Jesus took bread

[b] when he had given thanks

[c] He broke it

[d] He said, referring to the bread, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

[e] He took the cup after the supper

[f] He said, referring to the cup, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Paul adds, As often as you eat the bread and drink the cup you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes. So the act of eating and drinking is a proclamation of the death of Christ which should go on until his return.

[4] To eat and drink in an unworthy manner, he has already said what this is [verse 20-21, 33-34], is to be guilty of the body and blood = to eat and drink it in a way that belies the meaning of what they are doing as instructed by the Lord. This has arisen for them in forgetting who they were, as the Church and acting out of simple selfishness.

They must judge [examine and pronounce a verdict on] themselves for, in their failure to judge the body [= the assembly's collected life together] they have opened themselves to the judgment of the Lord. He has caused sickness among them and a few deaths as a result. He disciplines us accordingly as our Head.

[5] Paul insists that if they had judged themselves about his matter they would not have been judged. However, they are to see this as a discipline of the Lord so that they would not be condemned with the world.

[6] Paul wants them to eat at home, so that they will not come to the supper to get a meal for their stomach. This will incur judgment. Rather they are to discern the body - to recognise what the Church is and how it ought to function with such care for one another. To bring this poor care for each other before the Lord in the Supper implies that they don't know who they are nor know what they are doing in the Supper.

Central to the eating of the Lord's Supper is the view of the Church. If, as they came together to eat together as the Church, they didn't wait for each other, but made divisions on the basis of that some were eating well and others were not at all, others were drinking too much.