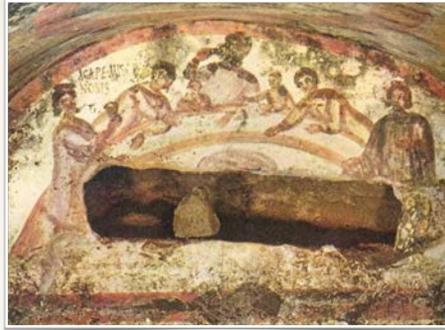


An Invitation to the Table



Fresco of female figure holding the cup at an Agape Feast. Catacomb of Saints Pietro e Marcellino (Saints Marcellinus and Peter), Via Labicana, Rome, Italy. 4th century.

July 6, 2025
Pastor Tyler Williams
Greenfield Community Church

Invitation to the Table

Celebrating the Lord's Supper around a meal was a unifying core feature of the worship of the early Christ followers.



- "Breaking of Bread" (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11).
- The "Lord's Table" (1Cor 10:21); the "Lord's Supper" (1Cor 11:20).
- "Love/Agape Feasts" (Jude 12).

Invitation to the Table

The sad irony is that this meal that was a sign of the unity of the church, quickly became a point of division and disunity.

- Early on you have issues developing (1Corinthians 10; Jude) that eventually led to the discontinuation of it being celebrated with a meal by 300 AD.
- Over time, differences in how often it should be celebrated, who by, in what way, and particularly the nature of Jesus' presence in the bread and wine.

The Lord's Supper

Early Church

- Celebrated around a meal ("love feast").
- Reinterpretation of the Jewish Passover.
- Looked back to Jesus' death and looked forward to his return.
- A meal and practice that represented the unity & diversity of the church body.

The Catholic Church

- Focus became on understanding the nature of Christ's presence in light of Greek philosophy.
- A re-presentation of Christ's sacrifice where during the consecration, the *substance* of the elements *transubstantiate* in the real presence of Christ, while their *accidents* remain.
- The Mass is a means of grace and the highest form of communal worship.

Lutheran (Luther)

Christ is "in, under, over, and around" the elements and have saving power when received in faith.

Reformed (Calvinist)

Christ is truly & spiritually present by the Holy Spirit in the elements.

Anabaptist/Baptist

Memorial where Christ is present symbolically; may be a means of grace if received in faith.

Last Passover – First Communion

The Supper is a reinterpretation of the Jewish Passover (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-38; John 13:1-14:31).

- Passover Meal looked back to God's saving deliverance in the exodus from Egypt (Exodus 12:14, 13:8).
- Jesus reinterpreted it to look ahead to his own sacrificial death on their behalf.

The Lord's Supper

For the early church, the focus of the meal is on **Jesus** (1Cor 11:23-26).

- **Representative:** "This is my body" and "this is my blood" (v. 24).
- **Substitutionary:** "Given for you" (v. 24; Luke 22:19-20).
- **Effectual:** "This cup is the new covenant in my blood" (v. 25; Matt 26:28).
- **Memorial:** "do this in remembrance of me" (v. 24).
- **Anticipatory:** "Until he comes" (v. 26).

Communion

The Meal is a Communal Celebration.

- In the Bread and the Cup, Christ grants communion with himself through the Holy Spirit.
- In addition, "Salvation through Christ's death has created a new community of people who bear his name. We ourselves rather miss the point... if we think of the Table only in terms of our needs and not also in terms of those of others" (Gordon Fee, *1Corinthians*, 558).

The Lord's Table

Jesus' Table illustrates the Hospitality of God.

- Meeting Jesus at **his table**.
- The practice of open communion.

