

Supping with the Prince

- ¹ Now the famine was severe in the land.
- ² And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their father said to them, "Go again, buy us a little food."
- ³ But Judah said to him, "The man solemnly warned us, saying, 'You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you.'
- ⁴ If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food.
- ⁵ But if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, 'You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you.'"
- ⁶ Israel said, "Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?"
- ⁷ They replied, "The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, 'Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?' What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, 'Bring your brother down'?"
- ⁸ And Judah said to Israel his father, "Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones.
- ⁹ I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever.
- ¹⁰ If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice."
- ¹¹ Then their father Israel said to them, "If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry a present down to the man, a little balm and a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds.
- ¹² Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight.
- ¹³ Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man.
- ¹⁴ May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin. And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved."
- ¹⁵ So the men took this present, and they took double the money with them, and Benjamin. They arose and went down to Egypt and stood before Joseph.
- ¹⁶ When Joseph saw Benjamin with them, he said to the steward of his house, "Bring the men into the house, and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon."
- ¹⁷ The man did as Joseph told him and brought the men to Joseph's house.
- ¹⁸ And the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph's house, and they said, "It is because of the money, which was replaced in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may assault us and fall upon us to make us servants and seize our donkeys."
- ¹⁹ So they went up to the steward of Joseph's house and spoke with him at the door of the house,
- ²⁰ and said, "Oh, my lord, we came down the first time to buy food.
- ²¹ And when we came to the lodging place we opened our sacks, and there was each man's money in the mouth of his sack, our money in full weight. So we have brought it again with us,
- ²² and we have brought other money down with us to buy food. We do not know who put

- our money in our sacks."
- ²³ He replied, "Peace to you, do not be afraid. Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money." Then he brought Simeon out to them.
- ²⁴ And when the man had brought the men into Joseph's house and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder,
- ²⁵ they prepared the present for Joseph's coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there.
- ²⁶ When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to him the present that they had with them and bowed down to him to the ground.
- ²⁷ And he inquired about their welfare and said, "Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?"
- ²⁸ They said, "Your servant our father is well; he is still alive." And they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves.
- ²⁹ And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, "Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!"
- ³⁰ Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there.
- ³¹ Then he washed his face and came out. And controlling himself he said, "Serve the food."
- ³² They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.
- ³³ And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement.
- ³⁴ Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him.

Genesis 43:1-34

Meals

My favorite book series is by the *Pendragon Cycle* by Stephen Lawhead. He loves to write about food:

She listened intently and would have gone on listening if Rhonwyn had not approached to say that the meal was ready.

Eithne and Rhonwyn lifted the full-laden table and moved it to the center of the room, offering Elphin the seat closest to the fire. He sat down on the household's only chair, while the women sat on three-legged work stools. Rhonwyn served him, filling his wooden plate with roast meat, slabs of yellow cheese, and small loaves of brown bread. Eithne refilled his cup and they began to eat.

"This meat is tender and roasted to perfection," remarked Elphin, licking his greasy fingers. He popped a tidbit of cheese into his mouth and said, "The cheese is smooth as cream, and tasty."

Eithne smiled. "Rhonwyn made it—she had Brigid's own way about her,

as everyone knows hereabouts. You should hear what they say of her.”¹

Later in the book,

Hasty plans were made and the wedding announced to the clan, who at once began preparing for the feast. Fire pits were dug and piled with kindling, caldrons scoured and filled with potatoes and turnips in fresh water, hunters dispatched to bring back wild pigs and deer, cattle slaughtered and dressed, fish hauled from the sea in nets, casks of mead and ale stacked on a long table made of split logs, bread baked in special wedding loaves, and torches lashed to long poles.

Immersed in the festive spirit, the clan soon forgot their differences with Elphin and began considering him in a more kindly light. After all, a king’s son was not married every day. And never was there a more generous lord in all Gwynedd than Gwyddno Garanhir; everyone was assured of a king’s portion and a celebration second to none.

By midmorning the following day, smoke from the cooking fires was ascending in thick clouds and the aroma of roasting meat permeated the village. The people, free from their work for the occasion, gathered in groups to talk and laugh as the preparations continued. By midday, riders who had been sent out at dawn’s first light to each of the six cantrefs to bid the noble houses and kinsmen to come to the feast began returning with the invited guests.

Each tribe brought with it a substantial contribution to the feast: smoked meat and fish, great white wheels of cheese carried on poles, mounds of sweet barley loaves, skins of honeyed mead and good dark beer, chickens and wild fowl, lambs and kids, eggs, butter and curded milk in crocks. One of Elphin’s kinsmen, an uncle from an eastern cantref who wore a thick gold chain on his chest, brought a wagon full of skins containing wine obtained from the garrison at Caer Legionis.

When the sun began lowering in the west, Gwyddno, seeing that all the guests had arrived, climbed up on the pyramid of stacked casks and blew a long blast on his hunting horn. The people gathered around and he shouted, “Let the wedding celebration of my son begin!”

Good meals. They make our mouths water, especially when we haven’t eaten in a while. They fill our bellies and revive our strength. But there is so much more. They also **fill the spirit** and revive the soul. Not the food itself, of course. As Edith Schaeffer reminds us, “Food cannot take care of spiritual, psychological and emotional problems, but the feeling of being loved and cared for, the actual comfort of the beauty and flavour of food, the increase of blood sugar and physical well-

¹ Stephen Lawhead, *Taliesen*.

being, help one to go on during the next hours better equipped to meet the problems.”²

A good meal is more than food. It is an event. It is **culture**, **fellowship**, and **friendships**. As the *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* puts it, in the ancient world, “A meal was never simply a time to ingest food and quench thirst; at meals people displayed kinship and friendship. Meals themselves—the foods served, the manner in which that was done and by whom—carried socially significant, coded communication. The more formal the meal, the more loaded with messages. The messages had to do with honor, social rank in the family and community, belonging and purity, or holiness. Social status and role were acted out in differentiated tasks and expectations around meals, and the maintenance of balance and harmony at meals was crucial to the sense of overall well-being. Among God’s chosen people, meals became ways of experiencing and enjoying God’s presence and provision.”³

But **what if you were literally starving death**? In that case, all you could think about would be the physical substance. Just get it inside of you. Somehow. Any way. It would be the only thing on your mind, and you would do almost anything to get your hands on some of it.

Do You Want to Starve? (1-14)

This is the situation we find **Jacob** in at the beginning of our story. You may recall in the previous story that his sons had returned to Canaan with **food**. They told him all about a powerful man in Egypt who demanded they bring back his son Benjamin. They did not know that he was their own brother. To ensure the plan would succeed, Joseph had put their money back in their pouches so that they would fear the Egyptian army would come after them for thievery should they did not return soon. As for Jacob, he didn’t care. He told them, “**My son shall not go down with you, for his brother is dead, and he is the only one left. If harm should happen to him on the journey that you are to make, you would bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to Sheol**” (**Gen 42:38**).

Chapter 43 continues the story, by telling of a **second trip** of Jacob’s sons to Egypt. It begins with the first of three sections: “**Now the famine was severe in the land**” (**43:1**). We remember that the reason the men went to Egypt the first time was because of **this same famine** (**41:56-57; 42:5**). Now we see that it has not let up. If anything, it is worse. Blight, heat, and destruction are everywhere. Crops won’t grow. Animals are dying. Starvation is setting in around the world, except with those who were wise enough to go to Egypt and buy some food.

“**And when they had eaten the grain that they had brought from Egypt, their**

² Edith Schaeffer, *The Hidden Art of Homemaking*, 124.

³ Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 544.

father said to them, ‘Go again, buy us a little food’” (43:2). But it appears to us and to at least one of his sons that **the old man has now lost his mind**. Lack of nutrition is creating dementia. “But Judah said to him, ‘The man solemnly warned us, saying, ‘You shall not see my face unless your brother is with you’” (3). Father, don’t you remember? You swore upon your own life that you would never allow Benjamin to go down to Egypt. Have you suddenly changed your mind? “If you will send our brother with us, we will go down and buy you food. But if you will not send him, we will not go down, for the man said to us, ‘You shall not see my face, unless your brother is with you’” (4-5).

Before moving on, let’s take notice of **who is talking now**. It is **Judah**, fourth born of Leah. You may recall that in the previous chapter it was **Reuben** who was doing all the talking. Reuben is Jacob’s oldest son. But Reuben had lost a great deal of credibility years earlier when he took Jacob’s concubine and had children with her (35:22). Perhaps for that reason, he is rarely listened to in these stories by anyone. **Simeon** the next born is sitting alone in a dark prison in Egypt at the moment, so he certainly can’t say anything. **Levi** the third born rarely speaks in Genesis, and about the only thing we know of him is that he and Simeon went into Shechem and murdered a whole village of people.

Perhaps it is for these reasons that Judah now speaks. He doesn’t offer his own sons as a ransom for Benjamin as Reuben did (42:37). Instead, he states without a bewildering bargain of grandsons for a son, yet with the confidence of a leader that if Jacob’s lets go, he will return Benjamin safely to him. To insure that Jacob understands that this is the only way, he **reminds his father twice** that there was a threat over them by this ruler of Egypt and that if they starve, it is Jacob’s fault, because he wouldn’t send Benjamin to Egypt. He doesn’t do it in a disrespectful way, but in a way that forces Jacob to see the point. **The tribe of Judah is beginning to assert its dominance** over the others. **Judah, the father of Jesus, intercedes** before his own father in order to save many lives.

But Jacob will not give his son up so easily. Now calling him “Israel” it says, “Israel said, ‘Why did you treat me so badly as to tell the man that you had another brother?’” (43:6). In other words, I don’t understand why you had to go and tell him anything about our family. You were only there to buy food. What were you thinking?

What they were thinking, of course, was that they were standing before the second most powerful man in all of Egypt, the man they had to deal with if they wanted to bring food home to their starving father and brother and mothers. They had no idea who they were talking to. They only knew that if they wanted the food, they had to do or say whatever he asked. And ask he did.

“They replied, ‘The man questioned us carefully about ourselves and our kindred, saying, ‘Is your father still alive? Do you have another brother?’ What we told him was in answer to these questions. Could we in any way know that he would say, ‘Bring your brother down?’” (7). “They.” Do you see that they all answered their father. This was not some kind of a plot against him. They all saw what happened, and together they answered their father so that he would understand just how very strange the whole conversation was.

Wouldn't you think it strange to be asked such questions when all you were doing is buying food? True, Joseph had accused them of being spies, but what proof would he possibly think he would find to demonstrate their innocence by asking them if they had a father and a brother? Joseph's question is a *non sequitur*, it does not follow. What does having a father and brother have to do with being spies. Yet, to this very moment back in Canaan, because Joseph is hidden from their eyes, they have not figured out that his cross examination actually makes no sense with the crime he accused them of committing. Joseph was concerned only with the well being of Jacob and Benjamin, but the brothers were only concerned with food and with appeasing a powerful ruler and getting out of Dodge, so they never bothered to think this through.

We don't know what Jacob is thinking at this point, because Judah asserts himself again. “Judah said to Israel his father, ‘Send the boy with me, and we will arise and go, that we may live and not die, both we and you and also our little ones. I will be a pledge of his safety. From my hand you shall require him. If I do not bring him back to you and set him before you, then let me bear the blame forever. If we had not delayed, we would now have returned twice’” (8-10). Here we see Judah again reminding his father that it is Jacob/Israel who is delaying things. He must make a decision. But we also see something else.

We see the bravery of Judah vs. the inappropriateness and perhaps cowardice of Reuben. Reuben offers *his children*. Judah offers *himself*. When something as serious as *the life of your a father's son* is at stake, you can't offer him grandchildren as a sacrifice. Only his a son's life is equivalent to that of another son. *The Father in heaven* offered up his Only Begotten Son Jesus in exchange for the lives of his created offspring (*Acts 17:28*), his adopted sons by election (*Eph 1:5*). Jesus didn't say, “*Hey, I'll have some children and then offer them up, Father.*” No, he willingly went to the cross himself. Son for son. Even if Reuben loved his sons, it was wrong to offer Jacob his grandchildren. This is another reason why Judah, and not Reuben the firstborn, is the precursor to Christ. Judah understands what has to happen if a son is to be saved. How much more did the Lord Jesus when he died for you?

It is Judah's self-sacrifice that convinces his father. Is this not *analogous* to the

covenant transaction in eternity past when the Lord Jesus freely offered to his Father to come as a man to die for our sins? His Father accepted this agreement and the idea of our salvation was guaranteed to come to pass. Thus, “Their father Israel said to them, ‘If it must be so, then do this: take some of the choice fruits of the land in your bags, and carry a present down to the man, a little balm and a little honey, gum, myrrh, pistachio nuts, and almonds. Take double the money with you. Carry back with you the money that was returned in the mouth of your sacks. Perhaps it was an oversight’” (11-12).

Here we find Jacob relenting, accepting Judah’s offer of a life for a life. But because he does not know who awaits them in Egypt, he wants his sons to take presents to this “man.” He has no idea it is Joseph. How could he? So he simply does what you do for rulers. You give them presents, even as the wise men came to Jesus with gifts from the east. He offers three presents.

The first would have been a very sacrificial gesture, for here we have Israel starving to death, yet he sends the best foods he has on reserve. To give away your remaining food, he is thinking, should at least help his sons convince the man that they are sincere, and hopefully allow them to return home with Simeon. To this he adds money. I wouldn’t think of this as a bribe, because Jacob says “perhaps it was an oversight.” So if they return with twice the money, perhaps the Egyptian will see that it was an honest mistake and will not seek to take revenge for them stealing the food the first time around. At any rate, he really has no other options, as he has to send them or else they die.

Finally, he adds his most prized possession. “Take also your brother, and arise, go again to the man.” He gives up Benjamin. Jacob has little hope that he will ever see Benjamin again, but what else can he do? Yet, he still has some hope for he blesses his sons in a precursor to the Aaronic blessing (Num 6:24-26). “May God Almighty grant you mercy before the man, and may he send back your other brother and Benjamin.” God Almighty—El Shaddai—the God of the Mountain whom he met so many years earlier is his only hope. He knows this God. He trusts this God.

Yet it wasn’t easy, “And as for me, if I am bereaved of my children, I am bereaved” (13-14). Even in the midst of his hope, his faith still wanes, and what a strange condition this is. Doubt residing with faith. Hopelessness in the midst of hope. It is the confusing reality of living in the flesh but being made alive by the Spirit, of knowing something with your mind and believing something with your heart, of looking with your eyes and seeing by faith. Both are present in this age for any believing person. And because of it, many woes that should not come to us.

Did not Jacob know Joseph’s dreams? Did he not “keep the saying in mind”

(Gen 37:11)? Did he not know that the dreams were from God? The answer is **yes, yes, and yes**. But he thinks Joseph is dead. **That is all his eyes can tell him**. There is no human reason to think that Joseph could still be alive. It has been 20 years after all. And though even the circumstances of this strange man asking so many personal but irrelevant questions could have made him begin to wonder if Joseph was in fact still alive, at the end of the day Jacob is a man, a man like you and I. He is a man whom God has kept in the dark on this particular occasion. And so Jacob lets the hopelessness get the better of him. He has to prepare himself for the worst, for it he does not, then the worse will be the best of him. So he thinks. “God Almighty, please do not let that future be the one for me! Bless the boys on the journey, and bring them back to me alive.” It is a good, but sad prayer. Sad, because it reflects Jacob’s hopelessness. Good, because it also recognizes God’s sovereignty. Maybe God will do something Jacob has not dreamed or imagined.

Brother’s Fears (15-22)

With that, the second section begins. The men head back down to Egypt. They took the presents of food, money, and Benjamin and stood before Joseph (15). At the site of his brothers, Joseph looked for and found Benjamin. So he said, **“Bring the men into the house, and slaughter an animal and make ready, for the men are to dine with me at noon”** (16). Joseph’s servant obeyed, and the sons of Israel were brought into Joseph’s house (17).

But **why were they taken to his house?** We have seen that the house of Potiphar was extensive and included a prison (39:1; 40:3). Ordinarily, business is done outside in the market. This powerful ruler hasn’t even seen the gifts yet, so he must think they stole the food and yet have come groveling back for more. **“And the men were afraid because they were brought to Joseph’s house, and they said, ‘It is because of the money, which was replaced in our sacks the first time, that we are brought in, so that he may assault us and fall upon us to make us servants and seize our donkeys’”** (43:18).

Because of their fears, as they approached the door of the house (19) they **explain themselves** to the steward before ever seeing Joseph. Perhaps he can smooth things over before they come face to face with the prince. They tell him they had been here before (20), but the somehow all their money had been put back in their sacks (21). So they brought the money, all of it, back along with other money to buy food (22).

At just that moment, **Gospel comes to these first sons** of the nation of Israel. **“Peace to you.”** Now, it isn’t quite the NT Gospel of Christ. But it certainly foreshadows it which we will see as we continue. Let me show you how.

We have seen peace between people before in Genesis, but never someone

using the word as a blessing from God. Notice that it is **not Joseph** who is speaking here, but the steward. “**Your God and the God of your father has put treasure in your sacks for you. I received your money**” (23). This isn’t a statement of faith by the steward, but neither is it a denial of God’s existence. Rather, in his worldview, various gods were over various nations. But because he tells them that he actually received their money, he uses the excuse that their God must have given them even more of it. Of course, we know that Joseph told him to put the money back (42:25). So the man is simply keeping a secret for Joseph so that he does not get himself into trouble.

To show his goodwill, he brings **Simeon** out to them (43:23). What a relief it must have been to see their brother whom they had left to rot for not a few months be returned safely to them. Perhaps they should stand at ease after all? But just in case, “**When the man had brought the men into Joseph’s house and given them water, and they had washed their feet, and when he had given their donkeys fodder, they prepared the present for Joseph’s coming at noon, for they heard that they should eat bread there**” (24-25).

Out must come the presents. Quick, get the money ready. Hurry, get those spices, the honey, and those pistachios. Don’t forget, put Benjamin at the front of the line. Then pray to God that peace really will prevail. Otherwise, we are undone. When a person hears about peace but do not truly believe it, this is the necessary response, when confronted with a powerful superior. Appease him yourself. Butter him up. Do what he says. Hope for the best. It is a pitiable condition to be in, because it is one thing to not have a word of peace given to you and to then do these things. It is another to be given the good news and not believe it.

Supping with the Prince (26-34)

We now enter the third and final scene of the story. “**When Joseph came home, they brought into the house to the him the present that they had with them and bowed to him to the ground**” (26). The gift is there. What will this nosey man do with it? Before they get an answer, we are told that they **bowed down to him to the ground**. In fact, it says it twice. After bowing, Joseph asks, “**Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?**” They said, “**Your servant our father is well; he is still alive.**” **And they bowed their heads and prostrated themselves**” (27-28). Prostrated is an intensification of “bowed.” It conveys the same idea more powerfully.

This vital set of verses recall their same posture from the previous chapter (42:6). When we came to that verse, we noticed that this was the initial fulfillment of Joseph’s dreams, and Joseph seen came to realize it as such. But at that moment, there were only 10 bowing. His dream called for “**eleven stars**” to bow (37:9). Now,

there are eleven. The dream is closer to being fulfilled, and this verse stands here begging you to see that **God is not done** with this whole dream sequence fulfillment thing. It began to be fulfilled in the previous chapter. Now, there is greater fulfillment. Yet, still, there is **no sun or moon** bowing down to Joseph. That's why he asks about Jacob. We won't see the completion of this tapestry today. Instead, the story takes us in another direction.

“**And he lifted up his eyes and saw his brother Benjamin, his mother's son, and said, 'Is this your youngest brother, of whom you spoke to me? God be gracious to you, my son!'**” (29). Joseph can't reveal his secret even to Benjamin. He has other plans. He has to get his father here too. But for now, **he blesses his brother**. He does so as a **superior to an inferior**, but knowing that they are in reality equals, the only two sons of their mother Rachel. What must Joseph have felt at that moment?

We do not have to guess. “**Then Joseph hurried out, for his compassion grew warm for his brother, and he sought a place to weep. And he entered his chamber and wept there**” (30). This is **another point of comparison** with the previous story. Again, Joseph loses control, because he can't believe his eyes. His brother is actually there before them.

“**Then he washed his face and came out. And controlling himself he said, 'Serve the food'**” (31). We come then to the climax of the journey of Benjamin coming to Egypt. Supping with the Prince. Before we think about this, let's finish the story. “**They served him by himself, and them by themselves, and the Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, because the Egyptians could not eat with the Hebrews, for that is an abomination to the Egyptians**” (32). We know from all kinds of ancient sources, including the Egyptians themselves, that they pretty much believed they were the top of the food chain, the greatest of the gods' creations. These intelligent, cultured people were also about as smug as it gets. No one was good enough for them. Joseph, of course, isn't an Egyptian, but he has to keep up the ruse, and so he separates them all.

As he does it, however, he astonishes the men. “**And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright and the youngest according to his youth. And the men looked at one another in amazement**” (33). How could he possibly know the order of their birth? They weren't boys with different heights. They were full grown men. What they saw was against all odds. It was impossible. Then, “**Portions were taken to them from Joseph's table, but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs. And they drank and were merry with him**” (34).⁴ Why was

⁴ **Going Deeper:** No one knows what the “five times” was about. It is literally “five hands” or five handfuls. “The most honoured guest was given the largest and finest pieces (1 Sam. 9:23 f.; *Iliad*, 7:321, 8:162, 12:310; *Odyssey*, iv. 65 f., xiv. 437; Diod. v. 28). Among the Spartans the king had a double portion (Herod. vi. 57; Xenoph.

this man so favorable toward Benjamin? The brothers do not get an answer, but we do see that they don't particularly seem to care, because they were merry with Joseph from the wine and the peace they was now with them.

That leads me to consider the final few verses and the meal that Joseph gives them. Following our dictionary again, in the Bible, meals teach us a few things. They show us “**Social and Religious Boundaries.**” Jews would draw the line between insiders and outsiders. Gentiles and strangers would be excluded or had to undergo ritual cleansing to participate even in the most ordinary meal with them. It was all about holiness and cleanliness and defilement. Obviously, the same was believed among the Egyptians. As such, for Joseph to do this for his brothers is a **foreshadowing of the work of Christ** and NT church which will now share meals together throughout the NT, especially the Lord's Supper (**1 Cor 11:25**) and Love Feasts (**Jude 12**).

Destroying the oneness in Christ that breaks down such racial barriers was so offensive to Paul that he chastised the first Pope Peter (tongue in cheek). “**For before certain men came from James, he was eating with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing the circumcision party. And the rest of the Jews acted hypocritically along with him, so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that their conduct was not in step with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, ‘If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you force the Gentiles to live like Jews?’”** (**Gal 2:12-14**). It is a most blessed thing that you probably take for granted that together you eat as Christians. Even the sons of Jacob with Joseph did not know that kind of gospel. **But here, today, we have it**, and it is proof that Christ has torn down the walls of division. Therefore, let none of you act even as Joseph did here simply for the sake of keeping up his ruse. But my you act as he must have in his heart, knowing that he was dining with his family. For now the fullness of what Joseph otherwise pointed to has come. In Christ, there is no Jew or Gentile.

Second, **meals were sacred occasions**. Israel had many feasts that were encoded into law that they were to keep that signified for them **God's protection and intervention** in the past. They were the very heartbeat and rhythm of national existence year by year. They would bring offerings and gifts to celebrate God's

Laced. xv. 4), among the Kretans the archon four times more than others (Heraclides, *Pol.* iii). The number five is specially Egyptian (Ch. 41:34, 45:22, 47:2, 24; Isa. 19:18. Knobel).” Knobel professed to explain this Egyptian preference for five by their assumption that there were five planets (Macrobius, *Somn. Scip.* i. 21; Seneca, *Quæ. nat.* vii. 3; cf. Diod. ii. 30; Eusebius, *Chron. Armen.* i. 26), which is also connected with their designation of the number five by a star (Horapollo, i. 13). But we might equally well refer to their week of ten days (Lepsius, *Chron.* i. 132 f), or still more simply make a connection with the five fingers of the hand. After the meal they drank largely together.” A. Dillmann, *Genesis Critically and Exegetically Expounded*, trans. Wm. B. Stevenson, vol. 2 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1897), 396–397.

present provision for the people. These meals were held “before the Lord” or “in the presence of the Lord,” and the people were to “rejoice before the Lord” (Deut 12:12, 17–18; 14:26; 16:11, 15; Lev 23:40).

For Christians, we have the Lord’s Supper which is exactly the same kind of idea. In the Supper, we remember his past works on our behalf through Christ, but going even father back to the events that set up the Exodus. For God has always been working for our salvation. In the Supper, we have a sacred fellowship with Christ himself, even as the brothers had with Joseph, though they did not know that he was their brother. We, as Christ’s brothers and sisters are allowed at the very same table where he sits. This is therefore not only our fellowship and communion with one another, but with Christ himself.

Third, there were royal meals displaying power and honor. Many of these were in celebration of a king’s coronation (1 Chron 29:22) or to celebrate victories after battle (see Isa 55:1–5 and 61:6). In the case here, we have a very high ruler of Egypt simply eating with these poor Hebrews, thus displaying the superiority of Joseph over the others. In the same way, though we are brothers with Christ, adopted into the family of God, he is nevertheless the king. When we come to table with him, he recognizes that he is our superior in every possible sense. Our fellowship with him displays his glory and power, even as Joseph’s did with his brothers.

Finally, meals have an eschatological intimacy with God poured into their meaning. Eschatology deals with “last things.” “In Revelation the picture of a meal for people of all nations, celebrating God’s final victory and judgment, recalls Isaiah’s vision: ‘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. On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; he will swallow up death forever’ (Isa 25:6–7 NIV). The eschatological meal announces the wideness of God’s mercy and universal scope of God’s salvation (Matt 8:11; Luke 13:29; Isa 61:3) and ultimate blessing (Matt 26:9; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18; Rev 3:20; 19:9; 22:17).”⁵

With Joseph, we have an amazing picture of the great eschatological banquet right before our eyes. It began with Joseph, like Christ, saving his brothers. Like Christ, they could not buy his grace with money. But God has put the treasures in our sacks. “[In Christ are] hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col 2:3). Like Christ, he weeps over his brothers. Like Christ, he gives them peace. “On

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⁵ Leland Ryken et al., *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 544–545. All four of these points come from this entry.

the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, 'Peace be with you.' When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, 'Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you'" (John 20:19-21).⁶

Finally they come to the mean where all the tribes of Israel are sitting together, sharing a meal with the Ruler. Joseph the Father telling his son Benjamin of his love. The Heavenly Father giving his Only Begotten Son the greater portion of all things, while still giving the other sons many great gifts at the royal table. What a great foretaste of the sweet fellowship as have and will have with Jesus as the kingdom is here, but yet will one day come in its fullness. This is the story of Benjamin coming to Egypt. This is the story of Supping with the Prince.

⁶ Thanks to Sean Kielian for some of these connections.