

Communion in the Old Testament

Intro

We are what we eat, and if we as Christians spiritually eat the body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper, we become that which we eat – Jesus Christ. The special fruit of the Lord's Supper is union with Christ.

Considering the terminology

The Lord's Supper is a Meal

Supper - δεῖπνον

When you come together, it is not the Lord's **supper** that you eat. (1Co11:20)

The Lord's Supper is a participation in Christ

Communion - κοινωνία

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the **communion** of the blood of Christ?

The bread which we break, is it not the **communion** of the body of Christ? (1Co.10:16)

The Lord's Supper is a thanksgiving/blessing to take part in

Eucharist - εὐχαριστέω

And when he had given **thanks**, he broke it, and said... (1Co11:24a)

Various meals/food events in the Pentateuch

Like what we said in our Baptism class, based on the New Testament passages where the Lord's supper is spoken of, there is no specific linguistic requirements to identify a connection to New Covenant Communion, other than acts of eating and drinking in the context of a special ceremonial or divine acts provided by God for his people. This is demonstrated in Paul's hermeneutic in 1 Corinthians 10:1-4: "For I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, and all ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and the Rock was Christ."

The Garden of Eden and the Trees of Life and Wisdom (Need for Communion)

Gen. 2:15-17, Gen. 3:6-7, Gen 3:17-19

Melchizedek and Abraham (Typological Basic for Bread and Wine)

Gen. 14:17-24, cf. Heb. 7:1-10

Abraham and Yahweh's Visit (The promise of a son is given)

Gen.18:1-8

The Manna in the Wilderness (The word of God, Jesus, is the bread of life)

Exodus 16:1-8, explained in Deut, 8:2-3

Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (The sacrifice and deliverance of Israel)

Ex. 12:14-20, Ex.12:33-34

The reason communion does not have to be unleavened bread: The symbolism of the Last Supper with Jesus and his disciples has a primary meaning of happening during Passover, when the lamb was sacrificed and his blood was spilled for the salvation of Israel's firstborn in Egypt... it did not occur because Jesus wanted us to repeat the feast of unleavened bread every time we share in the Lord's Supper. It occurred because his death would be like the lamb's death, on our behalf, and his body would be sacrificed and his blood spilled out on the cross in our place.

The Covenant Meal on Mt. Sinai (Seeing God and eating/drinking with him)

Ex. 24:1-2,9-11

Concluding Thoughts

In summary of the communal sacramentality in the Pentateuch, Dennis Olson, in the Oxford Handbook of Sacramental Theology, aptly summarizes the background of the Lord's Supper based on the 5 books of Moses:

"The sacrament of the Lord's Supper is also deeply rooted in the Pentateuch's story of God and God's people Israel. Abraham and Sarah extend lavish hospitality and a generous meal to "strangers" and receive a gift of divine promise [a child] in return (Gen. 18). Jesus ate a Passover meal with his disciples on the eve of his death on the cross. He did so in obedience to the Torah's command that all Israelites celebrate the annual Passover meal Ex. 12-13), a meal that includes a story about unleavened bread, the saving blood of the lamb, a connection with the near-sacrifice of the beloved son Isaac (Gen. 22), and the remembrance that the story of being slaves in Egypt rescued by God is the defining story of God's people. God's gift of manna or "bread from heaven" in the wilderness (Ex. 16:4), the people seeing God as "they ate and drank" at Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:1), the maternal images for God's feeding God's people (Num. 11:12; Deut. 32:13-14), and the forgiveness of sins in the blood sacrifices and other rituals of the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:16-31) all provide essential background to the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In Christian sacramentality as also throughout the Torah, tangible and material signs are coupled with intimate and divine words of promise, identity and vocation spoken individually and corporately to God's people. Through such sacramental words and signs, the holy and mysterious presence of a powerful, faithful and loving God comes near to God's people (Deut. 4:7; 30:14) in order that God "might dwell among them" (Ex. 29:46) and so carry God's "blessing to all the families of the earth" (Gen. 12:3)."