

Reclining At The Table With Jesus

By Mark Hatfield

Many lessons can be taught by examining the occasions when Jesus was reclining at the table with others. At this time we are preparing our minds for the Lord's Supper as we surround this table with Him. It was while Jesus was reclining at the table that he instituted this memorial feast. It is impressive to notice how many times Jesus taught powerful lessons while reclining at a table for a meal.

First, let us point out that Jesus reclined at a table to demonstrate His love for sinners. We read in Matthew 9:10-13, "Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining {at the} table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw {this} they said to His disciples, 'Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?' But when Jesus heard {this} He said, '{It is} not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE, for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" We learn here that Jesus was willing to eat with sinners in order to reach them with His love. Since we all fall short of God's glory by sinning, we should be grateful that we are welcome to come to the table of the Lord and partake of this supper with Him. Let us all be thankful that week after week the Lord is willing to give us a place around His table even though we often are not worthy. While it might be easy to question why the Lord would want certain people at His table (like the Pharisees), just praise the Lord that He welcomes you. When Jesus spoke to the Pharisees, He used a powerful illustration. Jesus told them that He came to call the righteous. The Bible says that there are no righteous people. If there are no righteous people, then they could not be called by the Lord. This showed them that we are all in need of the healing hand of the Great Physician. O' how I love Jesus...because He first loved me. Please consider the love of the Lord today.

Next, take note that Jesus reclined at a table to show our need for humility. Often the Pharisees were the first to accuse or condemn Jesus for breaking the law of God. In every case Jesus would humble them. On one occasion, Jesus taught a Pharisee a valuable lesson, while reclining at the table. He served up some humble pie (if you will). Since all have sinned (Rom. 3:23), there is no room for pride, arrogance or self-righteousness in our hearts. In Luke 7:36-50, it is written, "Now one of the Pharisees was requesting Him to dine with him, and He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined {at the} table. And there was a woman in the city who was a sinner; and when she learned that He was reclining {at the table} in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of perfume, and standing behind {Him} at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and kept wiping them with the hair of her head, and kissing His feet and anointing them with the perfume. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him that she is a sinner.' And Jesus answered him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' And he replied, 'Say it, Teacher.' 'A moneylender had two debtors: one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. When they were unable to repay, he graciously forgave them both. So which of them will love him more?' Simon

answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him, 'You have judged correctly.' Turning toward the woman, He said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.' Then He said to her, 'Your sins have been forgiven.' Those who were reclining {at the table} with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this {man} who even forgives sins?" And He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.' Since we are all sinners, it is obvious that a poor attitude has no place in our hearts while reclining at the table with the Lord. We come in humble service of our Lord remembering Him. If others want to judge us or question our motives, that is not for us to worry about. Jesus knows those who come with a pure heart to serve Him. Don't be a Pharisee when you recline at the table with Jesus. Be a follower. Remember that Jesus told us to take the lowly place when we are invited to the table so that the Master can exalt us (Luke 14:10-11). Learn humility and service to the Lord. It was Jesus who got up from his supper and washed the feet of His disciples to show them how to serve one another. The Bible states in John 13:12-17, "So when He had washed their feet, and taken His garments and reclined {at the} table again, He said to them, 'Do you know what I have done to you?' 'You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for {so} I am.' 'If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.' 'For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.' 'Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor {is} one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.'" Again, let us serve with humility because of these lessons that we learn from our Lord. Jesus has the ability to forgive only those who will humbly recognize their sin and turn to Him.

Lastly, we turn our attention to the Lord's Supper, where Jesus reclined at the table to help us remember His death and to proclaim His return. Jesus instituted a memorial for His death on behalf of the whole world. When we were destined to die in sin and be lost for eternity, Jesus paid the price to redeem us and forgive us. In Matthew 26:20-29, we read, "Now when evening came, Jesus was reclining {at the} table with the twelve disciples. As they were eating, He said, 'Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me.' Being deeply grieved, they each one began to say to Him, 'Surely not I, Lord?' And He answered, 'He who dipped his hand with Me in the bowl is the one who will betray Me. The Son of Man {is to} go, just as it is written of Him; but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.' And Judas, who was betraying Him, said, 'Surely it is not I, Rabbi?' Jesus said to him, 'You have said {it} yourself.' While they were eating, Jesus took {some} bread, and after a blessing, He broke {it} and gave {it} to the disciples, and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave {it} to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.'" Now that we are in the kingdom of God, the Lord is sharing this

meal with His disciples once again. Let us be sure to appreciate all that this supper represents. Do not have betrayal in your heart for the Lord and then try to recline with Him at the table. He knows our hearts. Recline at the table, realizing your faults and seek His forgiveness. Take this bread and drink this cup in a manner that is pleasing to the Lord. Be thankful for this opportunity to recline with Him.

Before we close let me remind you that the Lord's Supper was not the Lord's last meal with His people. We learn that Jesus resurrected from the dead giving us hope that in every one of these memorial feasts we can anticipate His second coming. In Luke 24:30-47, we read, "When He had reclined {at the} table with them, He took the bread and blessed {it} and breaking {it} He {began} giving {it} to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. They said to one another, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us? And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, saying, 'The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon.' They {began} to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst. But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. And He said to them, 'Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.' And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His feet. While they still could not believe {it} because of their joy and amazement, He said to them, 'Have you anything here to eat?' They gave Him a piece of a broiled fish; and He took it and ate {it} before them. Now He said to them, 'These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.' Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and He said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, and that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'" Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures when he died, was buried in a tomb and then resurrected on the third day. Praise God that we serve a risen Savior. It is because He lives that I can face each day with joy. Those of us who will be partaking heard the preaching of repentance and we have humbly obeyed the gospel for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38-39). The table that is spread before us is the Lord's Table, and as we eat, let us anticipate the time when the Lord returns and we are surrounding a much larger table with the heavenly multitude to feast at the table of the Lord in eternity.

While Jesus certainly reclined at other tables, I believe these occasions provide some excellent lessons for us to learn as we partake of the Lord's Supper together. At this time let us focus on Jesus and examine ourselves that we might not take these emblems in an unworthy manner.