

~MEAL (420)

• **During The Time Of Jesus' Earthly Ministry**

• **Proper View Of Meals**

• **Figurative Use**

• Often occasions of happy fellowship and spiritual benefit among the ancient Hebrews and, later, the early Christians. Meals also afforded opportunities for showing love and extending hospitality to others. It appears that the Hebrews and early Christians customarily offered prayers in connection with meals.

• As soon as you men come into the city, you will directly find him before he goes up to the high place to eat, because the people may not eat until his coming, for he is the one that blesses the sacrifice. First after that those who are invited may eat. And now go up, because him, just now you will find him. (1 Samuel 9:13)

• After he said this, he also took a loaf, gave thanks to God before them all and broke it and started eating. (Acts of Apostles 27:35)

• However, the inspired utterance says definitely that in later periods of time some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to misleading inspired utterances and teachings of demons. (1 Timothy 4:1)

• Forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be partaken of with thanksgiving by those who have faith and accurately know the truth. (1 Timothy 4:3)

See Also HOSPITALITY

See Also LORD'S EVENING MEAL

See Also LOVE FEASTS

• The Israelites appear to have had two main meals each day, one in the morning and the other in the evening at the close of the workday.

• And now, is not Boaz, with whose young women you have continued, our kinsman? Look! He is winnowing barley at the threshing floor tonight. (Ruth 3:2)

- **And you must wash and rub yourself with oil and put your mantles upon you and go down to the threshing floor. Do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking. (Ruth 3:3)**
- **Meantime Boaz ate and drank, and his heart was feeling good. Then he went to lie down at the extremity of the grain heap. After that she came stealthily and uncovered him at his feet and lay down. (Ruth 3:7)**
- **And the ravens themselves were bringing him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and from the torrent valley he kept drinking. (1 Kings 17:6)**
- **While many ate their breakfasts at home, others, including fishermen who toiled all night, apparently made it a practice to take some food along when going to work. Fishermen could also prepare some of their catch for breakfast.**
- **As it was, they forgot to take loaves along, and except for one loaf they had nothing with them in the boat. (Mark 8:14)**
- **Jesus said to them; Come, take your breakfast. Not one of the disciples had the courage to inquire of him; Who are you? Because they knew it was the Lord. (John 21:12)**
- **When, now, they had breakfasted, Jesus said to Simon Peter; Simon son of John, do you love me more than these? He said to him; Yes, Lord, you know I have affection for you. He said to him; Feed my lambs. (John 21:15)**
- **There is evidence, however, that a meal, perhaps usually a lighter one, was served about noon.**
- **The next day as they were pursuing their journey and were approaching the city, Peter went up to the housetop about the sixth hour to pray. (Acts of Apostles 10:9)**
- **But he became very hungry and wanted to eat. While they were preparing, he fell into a trance (Acts of Apostles 10:10)**
- **Probably at this time persons working in the field stopped to rest and ate some food.**

- And Boaz proceeded to say to her at **mealttime**; Approach here, and you must eat some of the bread and dip your piece in the vinegar. So she sat down beside the harvesters, and he would hold out roasted grain to her and she would eat, so that she was satisfied and yet had something left over. (**Ruth 2:14**)
- **Women customarily served the food.**
- Accordingly Jesus, six days before the Passover, arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus was whom Jesus had raised up from the dead. (**John 12:1**)
- Therefore they spread an evening **meal** for him there, and Martha was ministering, but Lazarus was one of those **reclining at the table** with him. (**John 12:2**)
- Mary, therefore, took a pound of perfumed oil, genuine nard, very costly, and she greased the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet dry with her hair. The house became filled with the scent of the perfumed oil. (**John 12:3**)
- **But at times they ate their meals in company with men.**
- And there came to be a day when Elkanah proceeded to sacrifice, and he gave to Peninnah his wife and to all her sons and her daughters portions. (**1 Samuel 1:4**)
- But to Hannah he gave one portion. Nonetheless it was Hannah that he loved, and, as for Yehowah, he had closed up her womb. (**1 Samuel 1:5**)
- And his sons went and held a banquet at the house of each one on his own day, and they sent and invited their three sisters to eat and drink with them. (**Job 1:4**)
- **In well-to-do, particularly royal, households servants waited on the tables. King Solomon's table was served by waiters having special attire.**
- When the queen of Sheba got to see all the wisdom of Solomon and the house that he had built. (**1 Kings 10:4**)
- And the food of his table and the sitting of his servants and the table service of his waiters and their attire and his drinks and his

burnt sacrifices that he regularly offered up at the house of Yehowah, then there proved to be no more spirit in her. (**1 Kings 10:5**)

- When the queen of Sheba got to see Solomon's wisdom and the house that he had built. (**2 Chronicles 9:3**)
- And the food of his table and the sitting of his servants and the table service of his waiters and their attire and his drinking service and their attire, and his burnt sacrifices that he regularly offered up at the house of Yehowah, then there proved to be no more spirit in her. (**2 Chronicles 9:4**)
- Drinks were usually served in individual cups, but food was often placed in a common dish. Those eating might take food with their fingers or use a piece of bread somewhat like a spoon to partake of certain foods.
- He said to them; It is one of the twelve, who is dipping with me into the common bowl. (**Mark 14:20**)
- So the latter leaned back upon the breast of Jesus and said to him; Lord, who is it? (**John 13:25**)
- Therefore Jesus answered; It is that one to whom I shall give the morsel that I dip. And so, having dipped the morsel, he took and gave it to Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot. (**John 13:26**)
- The lazy one has hidden his hand in the banquet bowl, he has become too weary to bring it back to his mouth. (**Proverbs 26:15**)
- The postures assumed by persons at **meals** included reclining and sitting.
- Let a little water be taken, please, and you must have your feet washed. Then recline under the tree. (**Genesis 18:4**)
- And Jacob went on to say to his father; I am Esau your firstborn. I have done just as you have spoken to me. Raise yourself up, please. Sit down and eat some of my game, in order, that your soul may bless me. (**Genesis 27:19**)
- So they sat down, and both of them began to eat and to drink together, after which the father of the young woman said to the

man; Come on, please, and stay overnight, and let your heart feel good. (**Judges 19:6**)

- They were, in fact, about five thousand men. But he said to his disciples; Have them recline as at **meals**, in groups of about fifty each. (**Luke 9:14**)
- A relief from the palace of Assyrian King Ashurbanipal depicts him as reclining on a couch and his queen as seated on an elevated chair while feasting. Reclining on couches at **meals** was apparently also a practice among the Persians.
- And the king himself returned from the garden of the palace to the house of the wine banquet, and Haman was fallen upon the couch on which Esther was. Consequently the king said; Is there also to be a raping of the queen, with me in the house? The word itself went out of the king's mouth, and Haman's face they covered. (**Esther 7:8**)
- Tables and couches were used at least by some Israelites in Ezekiel's time.
- And you sat down upon a glorious couch, with a table set in order before it, and my incense and my oil you put upon it. (**Ezekiel 23:41**)

• During The Time Of Jesus Earthly Ministry

- The general Hebrew custom in the **First Century C.E.** was for persons to wash their hands before eating a **meal**. This was a ritualistic practice among the scribes and Pharisees.
- Now the Pharisees and some of the scribes that had come from Jerusalem gathered about him. (**Mark 7:1**)
- And when they saw some of his disciples eat their **meal** with defiled hands, that is, unwashed ones. (**Mark 7:2**)
- For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not **eat** unless they wash their hands up to the elbow, holding fast the tradition of the men of former times. (**Mark 7:3**)
- And, when back from market, they do not **eat** unless they cleanse themselves by sprinkling, and there are many other traditions

that they have received to hold fast, baptisms of cups and pitchers and copper vessels. (Mark 7:4)

- So these Pharisees and scribes asked him; Why is it your disciples do not conduct themselves according to the tradition of the men of former times, but they take their meal with defiled hands? (Mark 7:5)
- He said to them; Isaiah aptly prophesied about you hypocrites, as it is written: This people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far removed from me. (Mark 7:6)
- It is in vain that they keep worshiping me, because they teach as doctrines commands of men. (Mark 7:7)
- Letting go the commandment of God, you hold fast the tradition of men. (Mark 7:8)

See Also WASHING OF HANDS

- At banquets or large feasts in the time of Jesus earthly ministry, couches were placed around three sides of a table. This left the fourth side free so that those serving the food could gain access to the table. At times four or five persons occupied one couch, but usually the number was three.
- Those partaking of the meal usually rested on the left elbow, probably on a cushion, with their heads toward the table. Food was normally taken with the right hand.
- The place of highest importance on a couch was that occupied by the person having no one behind him. To be in the bosom position in relation to someone else reclining at a meal meant being in front of him and would also signify having his favor.
- There was reclining in front of Jesus bosom one of his disciples, and Jesus loved him. (John 13:23)
- The individual having a person in the bosom position could easily carry on a confidential conversation with him.
- The customary three positions on each couch indicated that a person had the high, middle, or low position on the couch. One having

the low position on the third or lowest couch had the lowest position at the meal.

- **They like the most prominent place at evening meals and the front seats in the synagogues. (Matthew 23:6)**
- **He then went on to tell the invited men an illustration, as he marked how they were choosing the most prominent places for themselves, saying to them. (Luke 14:7)**
- **When you are invited by someone to a marriage feast, do not lie down in the most prominent place. Perhaps someone more distinguished than you may at the time have been invited by him. (Luke 14:8)**
- **And he that invited you and him will come and say to you; Let this man have the place. And then you will start off with shame to occupy the lowest place. (Luke 14:9)**
- **But when you are invited, go and recline in the lowest place, that when the man that has invited you comes he will say to you, Friend, go on up higher. Then you will have honor in front of all your fellow guests. (Luke 14:10)**
- **For everyone that exalts himself will be humbled and he that humbles himself will be exalted. (Luke 14:11)**
- **At least on certain festive occasions a large meal or banquet might be under the supervision of a director.**
- **When, now, the director of the feast tasted the water that had been turned into wine but did not know what its source was, although those ministering who had drawn out the water knew, the director of the feast called the bridegroom (John 2:9)**
- **And could feature such entertainment as, a music concert and dancing.**
- **Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and got near the house he heard a music concert and dancing. (Luke 15:25)**

.. Proper View Of Meals

- **It is God's will for man to enjoy food and drink.**

- With a man there is nothing better than that he should eat and indeed drink and cause his soul to see good because of his hard work. This too I have seen, even I, that this is from the hand of the true God. (**Ecclesiastes 2:24**)
- But excesses are detestable to him.
- **Do not come** to be among heavy drinkers of wine, among those who are **gluttonous eaters of flesh**. (**Proverbs 23:20**)
- For a **drunkard and a glutton will come to poverty**, and drowsiness will clothe one with mere rags. (**Proverbs 23:21**)
- Happy are you, O land, when your king is the son of noble ones and your own princes eat at the proper time for mightiness, not for mere drinking. (**Ecclesiastes 10:17**)
- As in the daytime let us walk decently, not in revelries and drunken bouts, not in illicit intercourse and loose conduct, not in strife and jealousy. (**Romans 13:13**)
- For the time that has passed by is sufficient for you to have worked out the will of the nations when you proceeded in deeds of loose conduct, lusts, excesses with wine, revelries, drinking matches, and illegal idolatries. (**1 Peter 4:3**)
- Since partaking of **meals** in moderation can be most delightful, the condition of one who is joyful at heart is comparable to a continuous feast.
- All the days of the afflicted one are bad, but the one that is good at heart has a feast constantly. (**Proverbs 15:15**)
- Also, a loving atmosphere contributes to the enjoyment of a **meal**.
- Better is a dish of vegetables where there is love than a manger-fed bull and hatred along with it. (**Proverbs 15:17**)

See Also **DRUNKENNESS**
See Also **GLUTTON**

.. **Figurative Use**

- To eat a **meal** with someone signified friendship and peace between the persons involved. Therefore one who was privileged to eat regularly at the table of a king was especially favored and enjoyed a very close bond with the monarch.
- And toward the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite you should exercise loving-kindness, and they must prove to be among those eating at your table, for that was the way they drew near to me when I ran away from before Absalom your brother. (**1 Kings 2:7**)
- This relationship Jesus promised his faithful disciples when telling them that they would eat and drink with him in his Kingdom.
- However, you are the ones that have stuck with me in my trials. (**Luke 22:28**)
- And I make a covenant with you, just as my Father has made a covenant with me, for a kingdom. (**Luke 22:29**)
- That you may **eat and drink** at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. (**Luke 22:30**)
- Furthermore, people will come from eastern parts and western, and from north and south, and will recline at the table in the kingdom of God. (**Luke 13:29**)
- And he tells me; Write! Happy are those invited to the evening **meal** of the Lamb's marriage. Also, he tells me; These are the true sayings of God. (**Revelation 19:9**)
- The destruction of those standing in opposition to God provides the occasion for a **great evening meal**. This **meal** is for the birds that will feed on the dead bodies of those slain.
- And out of his mouth there protrudes a sharp long sword, that he may strike the nations with it, and he will shepherd them with a rod of iron. He treads too the winepress of the anger of the wrath of God the Almighty. (**Revelation 19:15**)
- And upon his outer garment, even upon his thigh, he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. (**Revelation 19:16**)
- I saw also an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a

loud voice and said to all the birds that fly in midheaven; Come here, be gathered together to the **great evening meal** of God. (**Revelation 19:17**)

- That you **may eat the fleshy parts of kings and the fleshy parts of military commanders** and the fleshy parts of strong men and the fleshy parts of horses and of those seated upon them, and the fleshy parts of all, of freemen as well as of slaves and of small ones and great. (**Revelation 19:18**)
- A very different **meal** is the great banquet for all the peoples mentioned at
- And Yehowah of armies will certainly make for all the peoples, in this mountain, **a banquet** of well-oiled dishes, a banquet of wine kept on the dregs, of well-oiled dishes filled with marrow, of wine kept on the dregs, filtered. (**Isaiah 25:6**)