

The Lord's Table — Solomon, David, Mephibosheth, and Matthew 18:20

Ministry · June 7, 2009

1 Corinthians 10:21 — A Table Unlike Other Tables

First Corinthians 10:21 states a moral impossibility: ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils. Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord's table and of the table of devils. At an ordinary table, a person may eat at any number of tables — yours, mine, your neighbour's, one after another. They are all just tables. But the Lord's table is categorically different. You cannot be at the Lord's table and also at the table of demons. The impossibility itself teaches something about the character of the Lord's table: it is not merely a piece of furniture with a flat surface. It is a moral and spiritual reality that cannot co-exist with its opposite.

Solomon's Table — Richly Supplied

First Kings 4:22–23 describes Solomon's daily provision: thirty measures of fine flour, sixty measures of meal, ten fat oxen, twenty oxen from the pastures, a hundred sheep, besides deer, roebucks, fallow deer, and fatted fowl. When the Queen of Sheba came, she was impressed by his wisdom first, then by his house, then by the food of his table. That is the order: wisdom, house, table. The food was extraordinary. No one who sat at Solomon's table went hungry.

The Lord's table is like Solomon's table in this: it is richly supplied. The bread and the cup are symbols — the body given for us, the blood shed for us — but what they represent nourishes the soul beyond anything ten fat oxen could nourish the body. The service of the Lord Jesus, the ox of service in all its fulness, is there at the Lord's table. More than Solomon's, and inexhaustible.

David's Table — Bread and the Kindness of God

Second Samuel 9 gives a different table. David asked: is there any that is left of the house of Saul that I might show him kindness for Jonathan's sake? Mephibosheth the son of Jonathan was found — lame on both his feet, living at Lo-debar, a place whose name means no pasture. David brought him to Jerusalem and said: thou shalt eat bread at my table continually. And Mephibosheth sat at David's table as one of the king's sons — and the table covered his feet, both of them lame.

David's table is less spectacular than Solomon's but has something Solomon's does not: it is the place where dead dogs who are lame on both feet find the kindness of God. The Lord's table is that place — not only richly supplied, but a place where the most unlikely souls, the lame and the poor, come to find kindness and to be covered. It is where the warmth of the Father's heart meets those who have nothing of their own to commend them.

Mephibosheth's Hungry Season — and the False Substitutes

When Absalom rebelled and David fled Jerusalem, Mephibosheth's table was gone. Absalom had no table — the Bible does not mention one. What he had was kisses for everyone, and a Judas kiss is no substitute for the kindness of God. Ziba, Mephibosheth's servant, went out to meet David in the wilderness with two hundred loaves of bread and one bottle of wine and a hundred bunches of raisins and a hundred cakes of summer fruits — but no table. The bread and wine were there, but unbalanced (two hundred loaves, one bottle), with things stuffed in between the bread and the wine, no table to set them on, and slander on Ziba's lips. That describes much of Christendom: something resembling the elements, but lopsided, supplemented with novelties, disconnected from the table that gives them their character, with the sovereignty of the Lord not acknowledged.

When David came back and three men met him in the wilderness with beds and basins and wheat and barley and honey and cheese — but no bread, no wine, no table — it was real provision, real nourishment, better than Absalom and better than Ziba. But it was not David's table. Mephibosheth, lame on both feet, would have asked: where is the table? Where is the bread? Those who find rest in faithful preaching and sound teaching across Christendom are truly nourished, and we do not despise that. But it is not the Lord's table.

Mephibosheth Restored — Do What Is Good in Thine Eyes

When David came back to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth came down to meet him. He had not dressed his feet, nor trimmed his beard, nor washed his clothes from the day David left until the day he returned in peace. He had mourned throughout the absence. And when David offered to settle the question of Ziba and the land between them, Mephibosheth's answer was: let him take all, forasmuch as my lord the king is come again in peace unto his own house. Do therefore what is good in thine eyes.

He did not say: fix this my way. He did not say: I have suffered for you, now reward me. He said: you are back at your own table. That is enough. Let Ziba have the land. Do what is good in your eyes. The table — David's sovereignty over what was done at his table — mattered more than any personal vindication. And so it is with the Lord's table. We may go through seasons when the table seems absent, when Absalom's influence has displaced what is right, when the best provision is in the wilderness without bread or wine. But when the Lord comes back to His own house, the question is only one: is He acknowledged as the one whose table it is, whose eyes govern what is done there? Mephibosheth found his way back. The table was there. Let him take all. My lord the king is come again in peace.

For where two or three are gathered together unto my name, there am I in the midst of them. — Matthew 18:20

Matthew 18:20 does not mention a table. But it is there. Two or three — not a great crowd. Gathered together, in the passive voice — not coming together by their own initiative but gathered by the Spirit of God. Unto my name — not just in His name but directed to His name alone, gathered to the exclusion of every other name. There am I in the midst of them. David is in his own house. The table is set. The kindness of God is there. The sovereign head of the assembly governs what is done. That is the Lord's table, and no substitute can replace it.

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