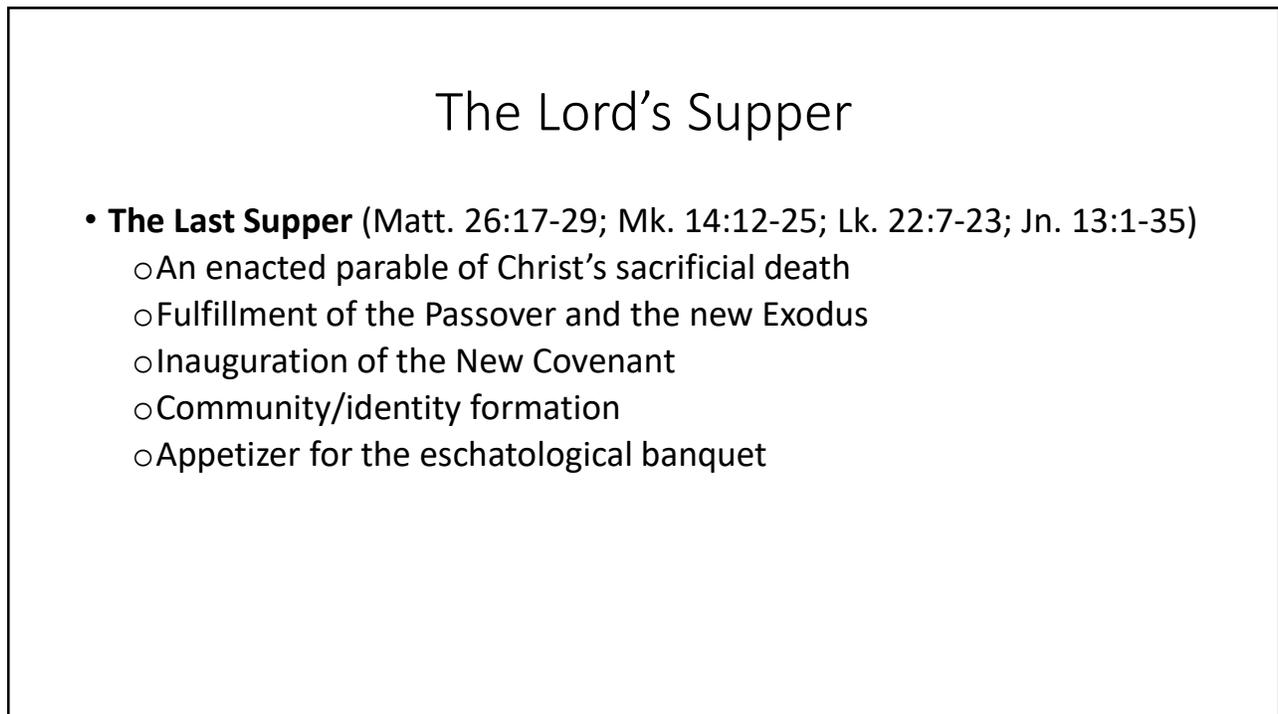




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## Four Views of the Supper

### Roman Catholic/Eastern Orthodox

- Real, physical presence through transubstantiation\*\*\*
  - “[I]n the Eucharist Christ gives us the very body which he gave up for us on the cross, the very blood which he ‘poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” *Catechism*, 1365.
  - “... by the consecration of the bread and wine there takes place a change of the whole substance of the bread into the substance of the body of Christ our Lord and of the whole substance of the wine into the substance of his blood. This change the holy Catholic Church has fittingly and properly called transubstantiation.” Council of Trent, 1551
- Real sacrifice affecting forgiveness of sin
  - “The Eucharist is thus a sacrifice because it re-presents [makes present] the sacrifice of the cross, because it is a memorial, and because it applies its fruits.” *Catechism*, 1366

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## Four Views of the Supper

### Lutheran View

- Real, physical presence along with the elements
  - “Now, here stands the text, stating clearly and lucidly that Christ gives his body to eat when he distributes the bread. On this we take our stand, and we also believe and teach that in the Supper we eat and take to ourselves Christ’s body truly and physically. But how this takes place or how he is in the bread, we do not know and are not meant to know. God’s word we should believe. Without setting bounds or measure to it. The bread we see with our eyes, but we hear with our ears that Christ’s body is present.” Luther, *That These Words of Christ Still Stand Firm*
- No sacrifice, but forgiveness of sins “communicated”
  - “We know that God has died for us once, and that he distributes this death through preaching, baptizing, the Spirit, reading, believing, eating and in whatever way he wishes, where he is, and whatever he does.” Luther, *Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper*

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## The Lord's Supper

### The "Reformed" View (at least Calvin's view)

- Real spiritual presence
  - "We say Christ descends to us both by the outward symbol and by his Spirit, that he may truly quicken our souls by the substance of his flesh and of his blood... For nothing is more beyond the natural than that souls should borrow spiritual and heavenly life from a flesh that had its origins from earth, and underwent death. There is nothing more incredible than that things severed and removed from one another by the whole space between heaven and earth should not only be connected across such a great distance but also be united, so that souls may receive nourishment from Christ's flesh." Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.24
  - "If it is true that a visible sign is given us to seal the gift of a thing invisible, when we have received the symbol of the body, let us no less surely trust that the body itself is also given to us." Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.17.10

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## Reformed View Cont.

- "Although communion is a spiritual act, it involves an actual sharing in Christ's flesh and blood, and although his body has now ascended physically into heaven, we are none the less able to make contact with it through the Spirit." G.S.M. Walker, "The Lord's Supper in the Theology and Practice of Calvin"
- "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of his death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses." *WCF 29.7*

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## The Lord's Supper

### Zwinglian View

- Standard “metaphysical” presence, symbols memorial
  - “We therefore now understand from the very name what the Eucharist, that is, the Lord's Supper, is: namely, the thanksgiving and common rejoicing of those who declare the death of Christ, that is, trumpet, praise, confess, and exalt his name above all others.” Zwingli, *Commentary on True and False Religion*
  - “By this commemoration all the benefits which God has displayed in his Son are called to mind. And by the signs themselves, the bread and wine, Christ himself is as it were set before our eyes, so that not merely with the ear, but with eye and palate we see and taste that Christ whom the soul bears within itself and in whom it rejoices.” Zwingli, *Exposition to the Christian Faith to the King Francis I of France*
- No sacrifice or forgiveness of sins “communicated”

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## Evaluation

- Nowhere does the New Testament speak of the Lord's Supper as a sign, seal or as a means of grace, despite the conceptual presence of such elements properly understood.
- As much as a great deal of the tradition—coming out of Roman Catholicism—has desperately sought to find a “heightened” metaphysical presence of Jesus in the Supper, the textual evidence for such a conclusion is sorely lacking. Christ is present with his gathered body, the context of the meal, and thus is “really present” but not in a way that requires us being taken to heavenly places.
- The New Testament nowhere calls us to look to the Lord's Supper directly for our hope—it calls us to look to Christ as our great high priest who has died, risen and is reigning. The Supper serves to bring these elements of Christ to mind.
- The only “sacrifice” and “forgiveness of sins” present in the Lord's Supper are the past sacrifice of Christ and his present disposition of intercession towards repentant believers looking to him in faith.

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## Celebrating the Supper

### **Celebrating the Supper—a Quadruplicate Perspective**

- Looking backward—Christ's sacrifice
- Looking within—partaking worthily (1 Cor. 11:28)
- Looking around—community/identity
- Looking ahead—the marriage Supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19)