

taste³

let's eat

preparation: Prepare a meal, this can be as complicated or as simple as you like, but it must seem more like a meal than a snack.

action: Have a meal together

comment: I hope everyone has enjoyed our meal together.

Eating together is so important, not only is it life sustaining, it's life enhancing. We can enjoy sitting down and sharing a meal. It doesn't have to be the huge Christmas dinner or Sunday lunch, it can just be family and friends with take-away and lots of laughter.

Jesus enjoyed eating and drinking. In fact his critics suggested not only did he do it too often, he did it with all the wrong sort of people (at least as far as they were concerned). His first miracle was at a wedding feast, changing water into wine – Jesus loved a good wedding.

bible: *'The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet' Matt 22.1*

Question: Why do you think Jesus chose a wedding banquet as a picture of Heaven

When we think of a banquet we think perhaps of a King munching on a turkey leg and throwing it over his shoulder into the mouths of his hungry dogs. When we think of the kingdom of heaven we might think of clouds, pearly gates and chubby cherubs with golden harps. So what is this all about, and why does Jesus say this?

Let's think about the last two weeks. The first week we thought about Bread, that Jesus was both man and God, his act of deep humility and how he sustains Christians in their daily lives. Last week we thought about why Jesus came and what Christians believe he achieved. This week we are thinking about the great Christian hope. True life now and life continuing beyond death.

It's a big question. What happens when we die? Is there nothing, or is there something? Christians say that there *is* something, and Jesus shows us. But it's not puffy clouds, sparkly angels, transparent souls and an

eternity of boredom. It's a party! A wonderful celebration meal with lots of laughter. But Jesus is not really suggesting that we will be eating for all eternity (though for some of us that would possibly be 'heaven!'), it's picture language. All that said though, heaven is not the final resting place for a Christian. That may sound odd or shocking, but let me explain.

Jesus tells us and so do other books from the New Testament, that Jesus, who died and went to heaven will return one day and raise those who are dead to a *new* heaven and a *new* earth. Heaven and earth will finally be reunited, just as in him, Jesus, God and man already are.

That is a Christian's final place to be, a solid and ultra-real future. It's a place of true fulfilment, deep joy, close relationship and reunion, just like a big party. Christians are preparing for that banquet by living like it's about to happen, living in God's way and inviting people to come and hear the Good News that Jesus gave to us in person. Everyone is invited but it's an invitation that needs to be RSVP'd.

personal experience: about your sense of a future hope.

reflection: What do we think happens when we die? And what do we base that belief upon?

How has this week challenged our own views on the 'after life'.

If it were true, what difference might it make? What might Jesus have come to do?

- For the world
- For others
- For ourselves

space: Time to feedback and talk

summary statement: And finally, as you may have noticed, that bread, wine and a meal are an important picture for Christians.

We share a meal variously called, The Lord's Supper, Holy Communion, the Mass or the Eucharist. It involves Bread, wine and a meal. Many Christians believe it looks back at what Jesus did, acknowledges that Jesus is with us now and points us towards future hope. It's summed up in the ancient words used in the ceremony, 'Christ has died, Christ has Risen, Christ will come again'. We hope this short series has given you a taste for what Christians believe. In the past, in the present and on into the future.



taste³

extra bite



'Then some re-adjustment of the mind or some focussing of my eyes took place, and I saw the whole phenomenon the other way round. The men were as they had always been; as all the men I had known had been, perhaps. It was the light, the grass, the trees that were different; made of some different substance, so much solidier than things in our country that men were ghosts by comparison. Moved by a sudden thought, I bent down and tried to pluck a daisy which was growing at my feet. The stalk wouldn't break. I tried to twist it, but it wouldn't twist. I tugged till the sweat stood out on my forehead and I had lost most of the skin off my hands. The little flower was hard, not like wood or even like iron, but like diamond. There was a leaf, a young tender beech-leaf, lying in the grass

beside it. I tried to pick the leaf up: my heart almost cracked with the effort, and I believe I did just raise it. But I had to let it go at once; it was heavier than a sack of coal. As I stood, recovering my breath with great gasps and looking down at the daisy, I noticed that I could see the grass not only between my feet but through them. I also was a phantom. Who will give me words to express the terror of that discovery?

'Golly!' thought I, 'I'm in for it this time.' **The Great Divorce by C S Lewis**

- The great Divorce is a fable by CS Lewis, he is making the point that heaven and the new world is far more 'real' in comparison to this world. What do you make of that?
- Does that make you re think things?
- If, as Celtic Christianity suggests, God can be met in 'Thin Spaces' places where the space between earth and heaven is very thin, where might such places be?

Want more? Here are some related Bible Verses:

Isaiah 65:17 "See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.

Romans 8:19–21 For the creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God.

Philippians 3.20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.