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Sacral, communal meals are carried out in connection with ancient temple ritual

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12. “Sacral, communal meals are carried out in connection with temple ritual, often at the conclusion of or during a covenant ceremony”⁹⁷

The symbolism of the sacral meal appears throughout the Book of Mormon, frequently with reference to the fruit of the tree of life and to the waters of life.

However, two major instances of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in the Book of Mormon are especially important because without them, we would not understand what the sacral, covenant meal is all about. They are 3 Nephi chapter 18, chapters 19-20, and a third gives the words of the prayers in Moroni chapters 4 and 5.

In the 3 Nephi 18 account, the disciples brought the bread and wine to the Savior. It was at the end of the first day of the Savior's visit, when he had spent the entire day teaching, by words and example about the meanings of the Nephite temple. The bread and wine served was an appropriate, probably necessary, ritual conclusion to that day's instruction.

The chapter 19-20 account was at the conclusion of a similar experience. Only this time the food and drink of the Israelite temple feast were provided by the Savior himself, as in the eighth and final day of the Israelite temple drama.⁹⁸ In Third Nephi the people were literally partaking of the sacrificial temple feast in the presence of, and as guests of, the God who is himself the Last, Great, and Eternal Sacrifice.

Each of these two accounts of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in Third Nephi is the concluding act of their profound temple experience with the Savior. In each the sacred meal is at or near the end of the day's experiences.

The third major instance in the Book of Mormon of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is in Moroni 4-5, where we find the words of the prayers themselves. The placement of these prayers, in the sequence of the entire Book of Mormon is the same as the placement of the sacred meals in the stories we have just considered. That is, in Moroni 4-5 the prayers are a concluding part of the long temple drama told by the sacral language of the entire Book of Mormon.

Even though all three of the above examples of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper are very beautiful and precisely placed at the end of their respective temple experiences, they are not the ultimate temple feast of the Book of Mormon. There are two reasons why not. First the book invites us to partake of that same sacrament sanctified by those same prayers, so the transfer of the theoretical to the reality is complete.

Second, there is a temple feast of the Book of Mormon that

⁹⁷Lundquist, “Common Temple Ideology,” 59; see Draper and Parry, “Seven Promises,” *Temple in Time and Eternity*, 131-133.

⁹⁸For a discussion of the Israelite temple feast see Baker and Ricks, *Who Shall Ascend into the Hill of the Lord* (2011 edition), 431-41.

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is different from that, but no less real. Here are explanations of that feast given by the Prophets of the Book of Mormon:

Angels speak by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore, they speak the words of Christ. Wherefore, I said unto you, feast upon the words of Christ; for behold, the words of Christ will tell you all things what ye should do (2 Nephi 3:3).

O all ye that are pure in heart, lift up your heads and receive the pleasing word of God, and feast upon his love; for ye may, if your minds are firm, forever (Jacob 3:2).

Yea, and from that time even until now, I have labored without ceasing, that I might bring souls unto repentance; that I might bring them to taste of the exceeding joy of which I did taste; that they might also be born of God, and be filled with the Holy Ghost (Alma 36:24).

And because of your diligence and your faith and your patience with the word in nourishing it, that it may take root in you, behold, by and by ye shall pluck the fruit thereof, which is most precious, which is sweet above all that is sweet, and which is white above all that is white, yea, and pure above all that is pure; and ye shall feast upon this fruit even until ye are filled, that ye hunger not, neither shall ye thirst (Alma 32:42).

As such a feast, the Book of Mormon is without equal, whether read as a missionary tract by one who has encountered it for the first time, or read as a temple text by one who knows its encoded language. For one who will feast upon its words, the Book of Mormon is as pure, and full of light as the gleaming fruit of the tree of life.