

The “What” and “Why” of the Lord’s Supper (part 1)

1 Corinthians 5: 6-8; 11: 23-32

Historical origin of the Lord's Supper?

- Jesus & disciples celebrating Passover meal before his arrest and crucifixion (Last Supper)
- Described in Matthew 26:26–28 (also Mark 14:22–25 and Luke 22:14–23)
- John's gospel described foot washing and Jesus' teaching during Last Supper (chs 13-17)
- During Passover meal, Jesus gave bread and cup to his disciples
- He then charged them to “do this in remembrance of me” (Luke 22:19)

Other terms associated with the Lord's Supper

- Last Supper: foundation for the Christian ordinance (or sacrament) of taking communion
- Lord's Supper, Holy Communion or Eucharist
- ~ AD 30-33: Early church celebrated it; called "breaking of bread" (Acts 2: 42, 46 - daily; Acts 20:7, 11 – weekly, on 1st day of the week)
- ~ AD 52-55: Corinthian correspondence; Paul called it the "Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. 11: 20); "Lord's table" (1 Cor. 10: 21)

Holy Communion; Eucharist

➤ “Communion” from *koinonea* (meaning participation, sharing) from 1 Cor. 10: 16

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ?

And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? (1 Cor. 10: 16)

➤ Eucharist from *eucharistia* (meaning thanksgiving) from Mark 14: 23

Then [Jesus] took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, and they all drank from it. (Mark 14: 23)

Why is 1 Cor. 11: 23 ff often read before Holy Communion?

- Paul's instructions on how to come before the Lord's Table
- Paul received these instructions directly from our Lord Jesus

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ...

(1 Cor. 11: 23)

Why is 1 Cor. 11: 23 ff often read before Holy Communion?

- 1 Corinthians written ~AD 54-55, before any of the Gospels
 - Mark (~AD 55-70?) – earliest in circulation
 - Luke (AD 59-63?)
 - Matthew (after AD 70?)
- Hence, 1 Cor. 11: 23-34 contains earliest recorded words of Jesus
- Provides earliest glimpse of how Lord's Supper took place in churches

Why did Paul include these instructions on Lord's Supper ?

Correcting an Abuse of the Lord's Supper

17 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, ... 20 So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

(1 Cor. 11: 17-18, 20-22)

What went wrong?

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(1 Cor. 11: 17-18, 20-22)

CASA DE VETTII

(House of the Vettii)

Triclinium. The Roman dining room featured three sloping surfaces around a low table at which diners could recline.

Garden

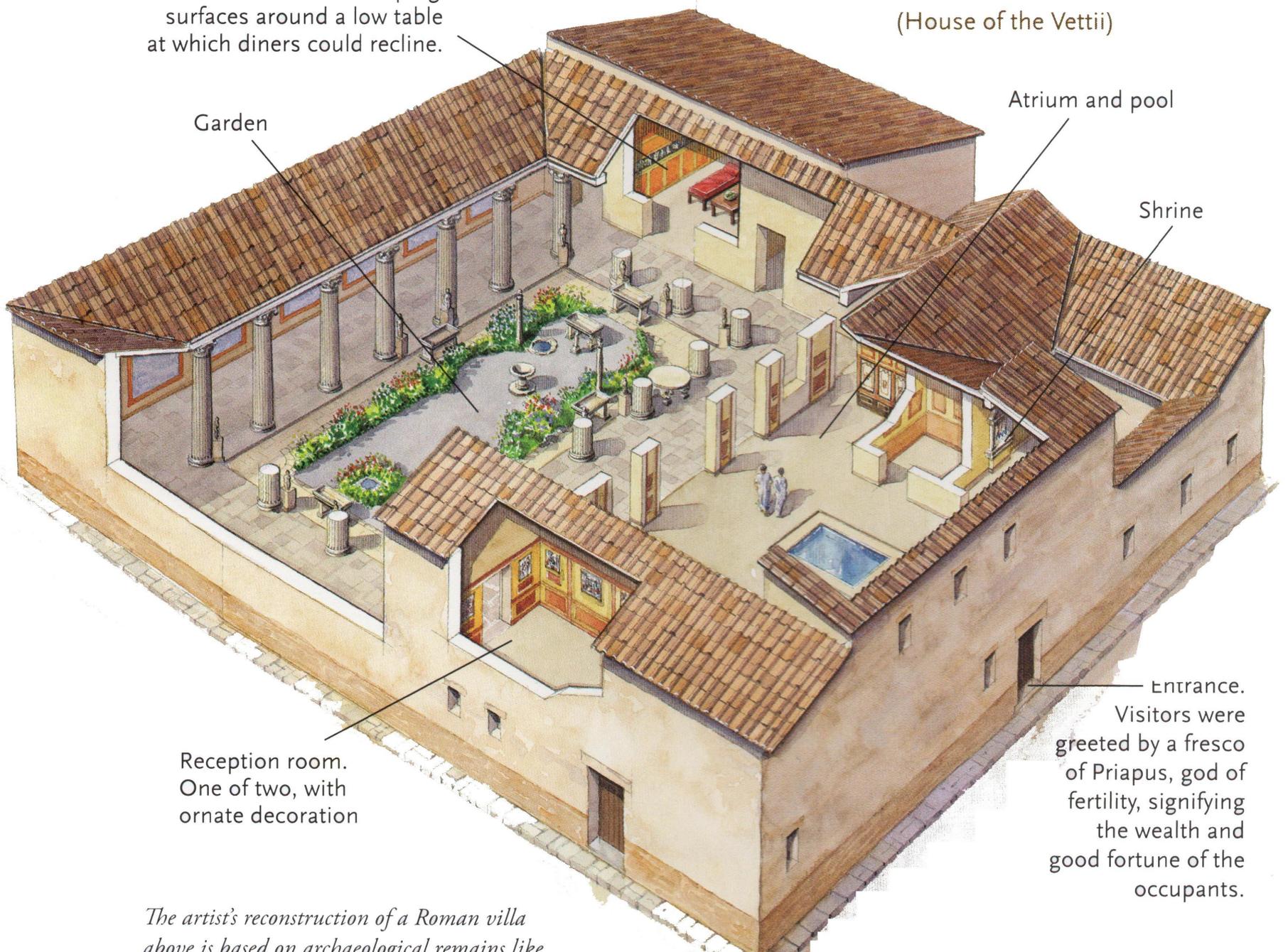
Atrium and pool

Shrine

Reception room. One of two, with ornate decoration

Entrance. Visitors were greeted by a fresco of Priapus, god of fertility, signifying the wealth and good fortune of the occupants.

The artist's reconstruction of a Roman villa above is based on archaeological remains like



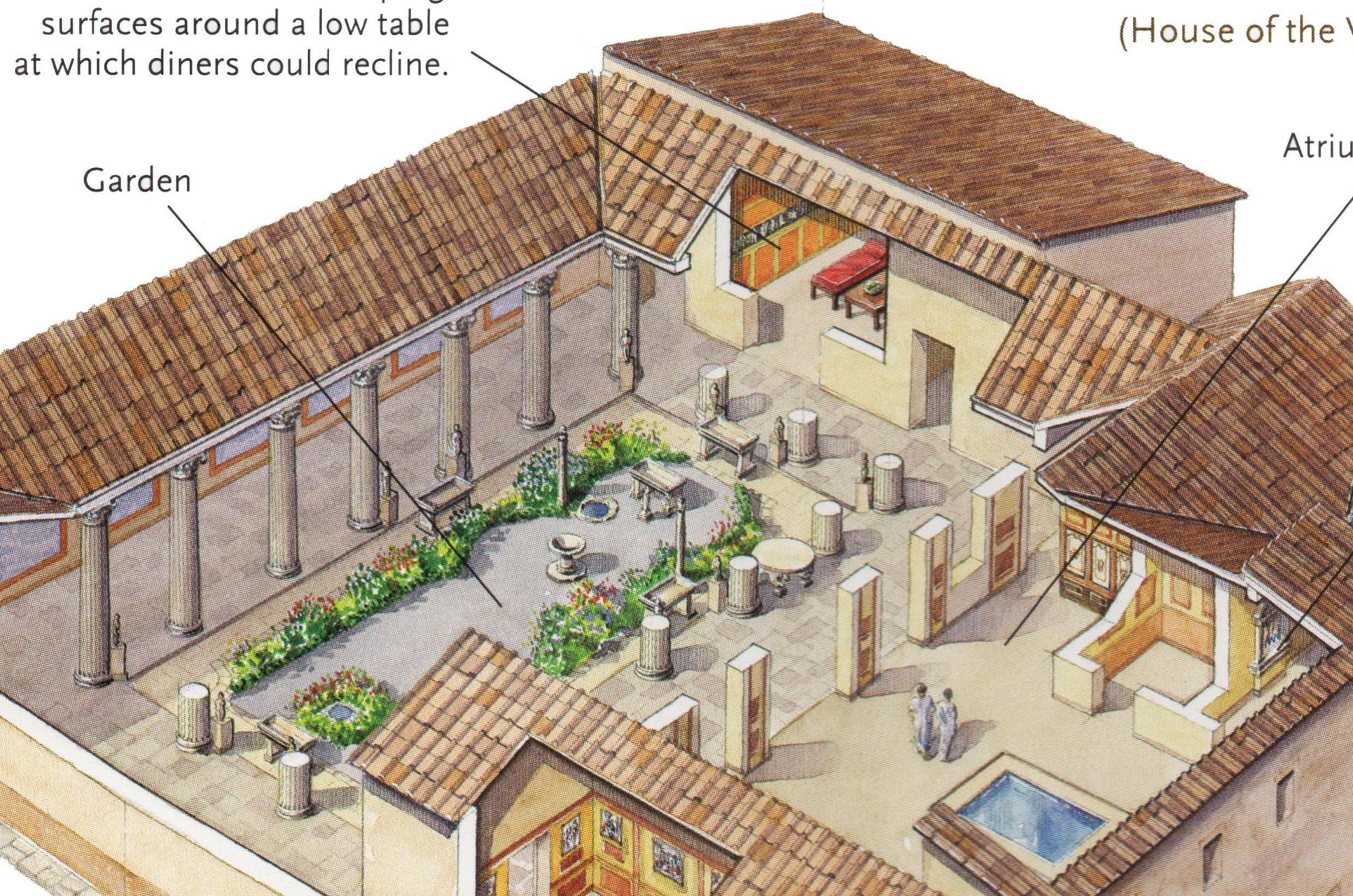
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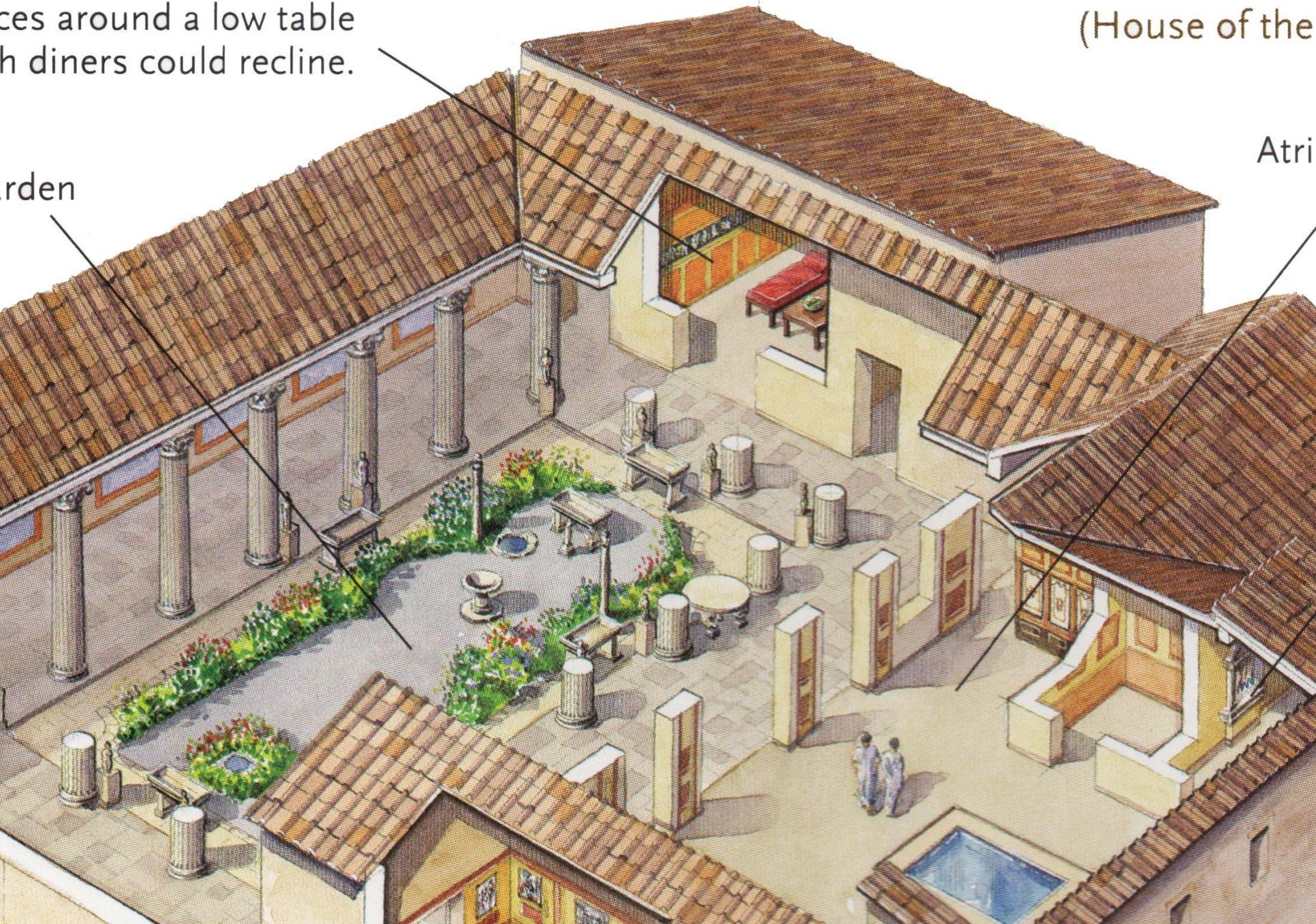
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How serious was this?

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ... ³³ So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together.

³⁴ Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

(1 Cor. 11: 27, 33-34)

What is the Lord's Supper?

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, ²⁴ and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." ²⁵ In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Cor. 11: 23-26)

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What is the Lord's Supper ?

- Simple 2-course meal: eating Bread and drinking from cup containing “fruit of the vine” (Matt. 26: 29; cf. Mark 14: 25; Luke 22: 18); part of the “love feast”
- ... for the “gathered” family of Jesus Christ – the “church”
- Participants are believers of Jesus Christ

What is the Lord's Supper ?

- Believers of Jesus Christ gathered together to eat bread and drink from the cup
- Mentally: to remember the events surrounding Good Friday and Easter Sunday
- Spiritually: to reach out, embrace, receive by faith what Christ had accomplished for us on the cross

Why are we doing this?

“you” - all in plural forms

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What do gathered believers do ?

- Physical Action: eat some bread; drink from the cup
- Mental Action: remember events surrounding Good Friday and Easter (historical events)
- Spiritual Focus: Jesus, who suffered and died for our sins on the cross, and all the spiritual blessings he obtained for us

Why remember regularly something so important?

- What's central becomes that which is assumed
- Jesus' sacrificial death taken for granted
- "Senior moments" happen to everyone
- Caused by "interference" which negatively affects our ability to focus
- What can we do about this?
 - Try to limit interference
 - Train brain to recall information by practicing

What does “This is my body, which is for you” mean?

- the bread and wine actually become Christ’s physical blood and body
- the bread and wine remain unchanged, but Christ is spiritually present with the bread and wine
- the bread and wine symbolize (points to) Christ’s body and blood

“Body” - symbolic or literal?

“Cup” - symbolic or literal?

- “This is my body, which is for you; do this (give thanks, break the bread, distribute, eat) in remembrance of me.” (1 Cor. 11: 24)
- “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this (give thanks, pass it), whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.” (1 Cor. 11: 25)
- Cup is the new covenant in Jesus’ blood – symbolic or literal?

Old covenant vs. New covenant

➤ Old covenant

Then [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the Lord has said; we will obey.” Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.” (Exod. 24: 7-8)

Old covenant vs. New covenant

➤ New covenant

31 “The days are coming,” declares the Lord,
“when I will make a new covenant with the
people of Israel ... 32 It will not be like the
covenant I made with their ancestors ... because
they broke my covenant, ...” declares the Lord.

33 “This is the covenant I will make with the people of
Israel after that time, ... I will put my law in their
minds and write it on their hearts.

I will be their God, and they will be my people.
... they will all know me, from the least of them to the
greatest, ... For I will forgive their wickedness
and will remember their sins no more.”

(Jeremiah 31: 31-33)

What is similar for both covenants?

- Every covenant was confirmed by the sprinkling of blood from a sacrificial lamb

For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. (1 Cor. 5: 7b)

- because of Jesus' death on the cross, God " ... will forgive our wickedness and remember our sins no more" (Jeremiah 31: 33)

What is the Lord's Supper ?

- Believers of Jesus Christ gathered together to eat bread and drink from the cup
- Mentally: to remember the events surrounding Good Friday and Easter Sunday
- Spiritually: to reach out, embrace, receive by faith what Christ had accomplished for us on the cross

What else ?

- a proclamation of our Lord Jesus' death

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1 Cor. 11: 26; NIV)

For every time you eat this bread and drink this cup, you are announcing the Lord's death until he comes again. (1 Cor. 11: 26; NLT)

- a temporary anticipatory ordinance

What is the Lord's Supper ?

- Believers gathered together to eat bread and drink from the cup
- Mentally: to remember the events surrounding Good Friday and Easter Sunday
- Spiritually: to reach out, embrace, receive by faith what Christ had accomplished for us on the cross
- Proclaim our Lord's death
- Anticipate a future Feast for all of God's people (Wedding Feast of the Lamb)

How do we proclaim the Lord's death?

- Share the “good news” with others
- “Come to Jesus ... and you shall live!”
- Staple food: regularly consumed by a certain population; provide at least 25%-35% of caloric requirement
- Staple during Jesus' time: bread and fish
- Where do we get our food?
- What's a Big Mac?

What's the good news we proclaim?

“I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. ... Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.”

(John 6: 51, 54-55)

What's the good news we proclaim?

- “Come to Jesus ... and you shall live!”
- Come to the cross of Jesus ... and receive life
- Jesus died (and rose again) so you can live

What is the Lord's Supper

- A gathering of God's children to
 - Eat bread and drink "wine"
 - Return to the cross on which Jesus died
 - Recall all that Jesus' death accomplished for us
 - Proclaim (announce) good news of Jesus' death
 - Anticipate Jesus' return & Wedding Feast of the Lamb (Rev. 16: 6-9)
 - Examine ourselves before the Lord & renew our commitment to Him

Time of self-examination

²⁷ So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. ²⁹ For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. (1 Cor. 11: 27-29)

What does “unworthy manner” mean ?

➤ “ ... whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty ...”
(11: 27; NIV)

➤ “ ... anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty ...”
(11: 27; NLT)

➤ an adverb; “manner” by which we approach the Lord’s Supper

➤ **Not** “whoever is unworthy will be guilty ...”

➤ Which one of us is “worthy” to come before the Lord’s table?

What then does coming in a “worthy manner” mean ?

- come prepared and aware of what you’re about to celebrate
- characterized by a spirit of humility, repentance, contrition, & willingness to change
- don’t treat it like “magic”; I’m here to get a “blessing” ... that’s all
- I’m here to confess my sins, repent and renew my commitment to the Lord
- I’m here to be renewed by God’s Holy Spirit

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