

The Lord's Supper

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The Lord's Supper

- A. What happens in the Supper?
- B. What must not happen?
- C. Who should eat and drink?

Participating in body & blood

1 Cor 10:16 The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?

17 Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. 18 Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?

Table of the Lord, not demons

1 Cor 10:19 What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? 20 No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. 21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons.

Selfish divisions

1 Cor 11:20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. 21 For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. 22 What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

In remembrance of me

1 Cor 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when 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 also he took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

Exalt Christ, examine self

1 Cor 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. 28 Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Eating and drinking judgment

1 Cor 11:29 For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. 30 That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. 31 But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. 32 But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

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What happens in the Supper?

Communion (*koinonia*: sharing, participation, fellowship, togetherness)

- Communion with the crucified body and shed blood of Jesus Christ.
- Communion with the living Christ.
- Communion with fellow members in Christ's earthly body, the church.

Different views of Christ's presence

- 1. Transubstantiation:** The priest re-presents Christ's sacrifice. Bread and wine become actual body and blood of Jesus. (Thomas Aquinas, Roman Catholics)
- 2. Consubstantiation:** Jesus is physically present in, with, and under the bread and wine. (Martin Luther; Lutherans)
- 3. Symbolic presence:** The Supper pictures Christ give for us. (Ulrich Zwingli; some Baptists)
- 4. Spiritual presence:** Christ is present spiritually, not just symbolically. (John Calvin, Reformed)

To support the physical and earthly life, God has prescribed for us an appropriate earthly and material bread, which is as common to all as life itself also is. But to maintain the spiritual and heavenly life that belongs to believers, he has sent a living bread that came down from heaven: namely Jesus Christ, who nourishes and maintains the spiritual life of believers when eaten—that is, when appropriated and received spiritually by faith.

(Belgic Confession Article 35)

To represent to us this spiritual and heavenly bread Christ has instituted an earthly and visible bread as the sacrament of his body and wine as the sacrament of his blood. He did this to testify to us that just as truly as we take and hold the sacraments in our hands and eat and drink it in our mouths, by which our life is then sustained, so truly we receive into our souls, for our spiritual life, the true body and true blood of Christ, our only Savior. We receive these by faith, which is the hand and mouth of our souls. (Belgic Confession Article 35)

Now it is certain that Jesus Christ did not prescribe his sacraments for us in vain, since he works in us all he represents by these holy signs, although the manner in which he does it goes beyond our understanding and is incomprehensible to us, just as the operation of God's Spirit is hidden and incomprehensible.

Yet we do not go wrong when we say that what is eaten is Christ's own natural body and what is drunk is his own blood—but the manner in which we eat it is not by the mouth but by the Spirit, through faith.

(Belgic Confession Article 35)

Are the bread and wine changed into the real body and blood of Christ?

No. Just as the water of baptism is not changed into Christ's blood and does not itself wash away sin but is simply God's sign and assurance, so too the bread of the Lord's Supper is not changed into the actual body of Christ even though it is called the body of Christ in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.

(Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 78)

Why then does Christ call the bread his body and the cup his blood?

A. Christ has good reason for these words. He wants to teach us that as bread and wine nourish our temporal life, so too his crucified body and poured-out blood truly nourish our souls for eternal life. But more important, he wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge, that we, through the Holy Spirit's work, share in his true body and blood as surely as our mouths receive these holy signs in his remembrance, and that all of his suffering and obedience are as definitely ours as if we personally had suffered and paid for our sins. (Heidelberg Catechism Q&A 79)

B. What must not happen?

- 1. Superstition:** acting like the Supper is magic medicine that protects from sin and judgment
- 2. Syncretism:** eating in idol temples and communing at demons' table
- 3. Swinishness:** Factions, favoritism, and piggish violation of communion with fellow Christians

The Lord's Supper is participation in real grace, not cheap grace.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote of cheap grace as “the preaching of forgiveness without repentance ... communion without confession, grace without discipleship ... Christianity without Christ.

C. Who should eat and drink?

All those—and only those—who:

- 1.** Are baptized as the mark of union with Christ and His church
- 2.** Trust Christ and publicly profess faith
- 3.** Know what bread and cup represent
- 4.** Seek separation from evil and pursue unity among believers

We believe and confess that our Savior Jesus Christ has ordained and instituted the sacrament of the Holy Supper to nourish and sustain *those who are already born again and ingrafted into his family*: his church...

Although the sacraments and thing signified are joined together, not all receive both of them. The wicked person certainly takes the sacrament, to his condemnation, but does not receive the truth of the sacrament [namely] Christ... He is communicated only to believers. (Belgic Confession Article 35)

Who are to come to the Lord's table?

Those who are displeased with themselves because of their sins, but who nevertheless trust that their sins are pardoned and that their continuing weakness is covered by the suffering and death of Christ, and who also desire more and more to strengthen their faith and to lead a better life. Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however, eat and drink judgment on themselves.

(Heidelberg Catechism Q & A 81)

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