

# SACRAMENTS: LORD'S SUPPER

## I. SACRAMENTS:

### A. Sign & Seal

- i. "Holy **signs** and **seals** of the covenant of grace" (WCF 27.1;<sup>1</sup> Rom. 4:11).
- ii. "A visible **sign** of a sacred thing" (St. Augustine).
- iii. "An outward **sign** by which the Lord **seals** on our consciences the promises of His good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety [faithfulness] toward Him in the presence of the Lord" (John Calvin, *Institutes* 4.14.1).

### B. Sign & Thing Signified

- i. Distinguished but not Disjoined
  - ✗ sign = thing (Problem of transubstantiation, *see* V.A.i)
  - ✗ sign | thing (Problem of "mere remembrance," *see* V.A.iii)
  - ✓ (sign&thing)

## II. TERMINOLOGY

- A. Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:25)
- B. Table of the Lord (1 Cor. 10:21)
- C. Communion (idea in 1 Cor. 10:16)
- D. Eucharist: "When he had given thanks [*εὐχαριστέω, eucharisteō*], he broke it, and said, 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me'" (1 Cor. 11:24).

## III. COMPARISON OF SACRAMENTS

BAPTISM	LORD'S SUPPER
Partake only once	Partake frequently
Through water	Through bread & wine
Signifies our ingrafting into Christ	Signifies our growing union in and with Christ
Given even to infants of believers	Given only to professing believers ( <i>see</i> VIII.B.iii)
Authored by God	
Instituted by Christ	
To be continued in the church until Christ returns	
Signify Christ and His benefits	
Seal of the New Covenant (in replacing the Old Covenant)	

## IV. CONTINUITY:

### A. Covenants Seals:

Old Testament		New Testament
Circumcision	→	Baptism (Col. 2:11-12)
Passover	→	Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 5:7)

<sup>1</sup> "WCF": Westminster Confession of Faith. "WSC": Westminster Shorter Catechism. "WLC": Westminster Larger Catechism.

## B. Old/New Passovers




Exodus 12:1-20		Matthew 26:17-29	
:1-2	New Calendar/Beginning	"The time is at hand"	:17-18
:3-4	House/Communal Ceremony	"With the twelve"	:19-20
:5-6	Perfect Lamb	"This is My body"	:21-26
:7-11	Blood Sign	"My blood of the covenant"	:27-28
:12-13	Judgment Averted	"For forgiveness of sins"	:28b
:14-20	Perpetual Memorial	"Until that day"	:29

## C. Passover Liturgy<sup>2</sup>

- i. Old: "Take, eat. This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate when they came from the land of Egypt."
- ii. New: "Take, eat. This is my body, which is for you."

## V. PRESENCE: "This IS my body/blood"

### A. Question: How exactly is Christ ( $\chi$ ) with us?

- i. TRANSUBSTANTIATION (Catholic view)
  1. Christ is bodily present in the elements.
  2. <sup>3</sup> Analogy: "I am the door" (Jn. 10:9), "I am the vine" (Jn. 15:5), etc.
- ii. CONSUBSTANTIATION / "Sacramental Union" (Lutheran view)
  1. Christ is bodily "in, with, and under" the elements.
  2.  Christ is physically in Heaven at the Father's right hand (Heb. 8:1)
- iii. ZWINGLIAN / "Mere Remembrance" / "Nonsubstantiation" (some Baptist view)
  1. Christ is not actually present.
  2.  "participation in ... Christ" (1 Cor. 10:16)
- iv. SPIRITUAL PRESENCE / "Suprasubstantiation" (Presbyterian view)
  1. Christ is not bodily but specially spiritually present.
  2. (Bread/Wine are still bread/wine, only as representative signs.)
  3. "The body and blood of Christ are not present in bodily or physical form... They are, however, spiritually present to the faith of the recipient just as truly as the external elements are obvious to the senses" (WLC 170)

## VI. EFFECT (WCF 29.1)

### A. The Supper DOES (cf. WCF 29.2, WLC 168)

- i. Commemorate Christ's offering ("in remembrance") (Luke 22:19)
- ii. Give spiritual nourishment ("take, eat") (Matt. 26:26)
- iii. Bring us to faithfully proclaim Christ's death (1 Cor. 11:26)
- iv. Affirm vows and devotion to Christ (1 Cor. 10:21)
- v. Bond us in communion ("common union") with Christ (1 Cor. 10:16)
- vi. Bond us in communion ("common union") with believers (1 Cor. 10:17)
- vii. Solemnly seal the blessings of the New Covenant (1 Cor. 11:25)

<sup>2</sup> Mathison, Keith A., *Given For You* (2002), pp. 210f

<sup>3</sup>  Indicates a counterargument to the given view

- B. The Supper does NOT
  - i. Save us
  - ii. Re-sacrifice Christ over and over
    - a. Christ's sacrifice was already "once for all" (Heb. 7:27; 9:26)

## VII. METHOD

- A. Bread & "Fruit of the vine" (Mark 14:22,25), sometimes called "the elements"
  - i. Bread: Unleavened or Leavened (either one)
    - 1. The unleavened Passover bread (Exd. 12:11,33-34) signified the hastiness of the Exodus, which is not present in the Lord's Supper.
  - ii. Drink: Wine or Juice (either one)
    - 1. Christ makes no special point of the drink's fermentation state.
- B. Prayer: Thanks & Set aside as holy
- C. "Words of Institution"



[T]he Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 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.*" 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.*" For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (1Cor. 11:23-26)

- D. "Fencing the table" (See VIII.B)
  - i. 1 Cor. 11:27-32
- E. Ways of partaking
  - i. Take each element separately or both simultaneously ("intinction")
  - ii. Take elements individually or everyone together at once (1 Cor. 11:33)
  - iii. Take wine from one common cup or from individual cups (1 Cor. 10:16-17)
  - iv. Gather together at table or distribute from table (1 Cor. 11:18)

## VIII. RECEIVERS

- A. YES:
  - i. Baptized believers who partake by faith (WCF 29.8)
  - ii. Sinners who repent of their sin
  - iii. All Christian denominations invited
  - iv. True Christians who struggle with doubt
    - 1. "bewail unbelief, labor to have doubts resolved... [and] come to the Lord's Supper, that he may be further strengthened" (WLC 172)
- B. NO:
  - i. Not Unbelievers
  - ii. Not ones professing faith but eat/drink "in an unworthy manner" (1 Cor. 11:27)
    - 1. "Without discerning the body" (1 Cor. 11:29)
      - a. Body of Christ (1 Cor. 11:24)
      - b. Body of believers (1 Cor. 11:17-22,33)
    - 2. Unrepentance of sin ("examine himself" 1 Cor. 11:28)
    - 3. "[Ones] found to be ignorant or scandalous" (WLC 173)

iii. Not young children



1. <sup>4</sup> Credo-communion (only for believers)
  - a. “only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves” (WLC 177, 1 Cor. 11:28)
  - b. “Baptized children may be admitted to the Lord’s Supper provided they have appeared before the Session and professed their faith in a manner acceptable to the Session. At its discretion, the Session may admit such persons to full membership” (EPC Book of Worship 3-3.J).
  - c. “This permission [of children receiving the Lord’s Supper] was indeed commonly given in the ancient church, as is clear from Cyprian and Augustine, but the custom has deservedly fallen into disuse.” —John Calvin, *Institutes*, 4.16.30
2.  Paedocommunion (also for children old enough to eat)
  - a. “When your children say to you, ‘What do you mean?’” (Exd. 12:26)
  - b. Passover “Ma Nishtana” (4 Questions), sung by youngest able child
  - c. Argument from silence, children never forbidden in Scripture
  - d. Application to those with mental disability (handicap or old age)?

*Pas aux bébés!  
(not to infants!)*



## IX. PRACTICE

A. BEFORE (WLC 171)	B. DURING (WLC 174)	C. AFTER (WLC 175)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine one’s being in Christ</li> <li>• examine of sins and wants;</li> <li>• examine the truth and measure of knowledge, faith, repentance;</li> <li>• examine love to God</li> <li>• examine love to the brethren, charity to all men,</li> <li>• forgiving those that have done one wrong;</li> <li>• examine desires after Christ,</li> <li>• examine new obedience;</li> <li>• renewing the exercise of these graces, by serious meditation and fervent prayer.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holy reverence and attention</li> <li>• wait upon God</li> <li>• heedfully discern the Lord’s body,</li> <li>• affectionately meditate on his death and sufferings,</li> <li>• stir up a vigorous exercise of graces;</li> <li>• judge oneself</li> <li>• sorrow for sin</li> <li>• seek earnest hungering and thirsting after Christ,</li> <li>• feed on him by faith,</li> <li>• receive of his fullness,</li> <li>• trust in his merits</li> <li>• rejoice in his love,</li> <li>• give thanks for his grace;</li> <li>• renew covenant with God,</li> <li>• renew love to all the saints.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bless God for any quickening and comfort</li> <li>• beg God for the continuance of it,</li> <li>• watch against relapses,</li> <li>• fulfill vows,</li> <li>• encourage self to a frequent attendance on that ordinance.</li> <li>• review preparation, and carriage at, the sacrament;</li> <li>• wait for the fruit of its benefit in due time</li> <li>• if failure in preparation or participation, be humbled</li> <li>• attend upon it afterwards with more care and diligence.</li> </ul>

<sup>4</sup>  indicates a main viewpoint;  indicates a counterpoint

## X. FREQUENCY

- A. "As often as you eat this bread and drink the cup" (1 Cor. 11:26)
- B. "On the first day of the week" (Ac. 20:7)
- C. "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers" (Ac. 2:42)
- D. Didache (early Christian document c.70-100 A.D.):

But on the Lord's day, after that you have assembled together, break bread and give thanks, having in addition confessed your sins, that your sacrifice may be pure. *(Didache 14.1)*

- E. EPC: "The Session is responsible for determining the frequency of celebration of the Lord's Supper. It is proper to observe it as often as each Lord's Day, but it should be observed at least quarterly. The Session should exercise care that the sacrament be not neglected" (EPC Book of Worship 3-3.E).

## XI. QUESTIONS

- A. If I doubt my faith or have unrepentant sin in my heart, should I take communion?
  - i. **Probably yes.** But repent of your sin and lack of belief as you partake! Submit to Jesus and let Him strengthen you through His spiritual food.
- B. Should I take communion in private?
  - i. **No.** Communion marks our "common union" with Jesus but also with other believers, so we typically receive it with other believers in worship. We make exceptions for those who are ill or homebound, but Elders stand on behalf of the larger church body in these cases.
- C. Should we serve communion at a wedding or funeral?
  - i. **Not typically** (though you may receive it if it is offered). Weddings and funerals are worship services, but the audience there is often a more blended mix of believers and unbelievers so wisdom must be applied. Communion is only to be received by professing believers.
- D. If I've never been to a communicants' class, can I still take communion?
  - i. **Yes.** Communion is received by faith, not by passing a test. Classes are sometimes wise for training especially young believers, but they are nowhere required by Scripture.