

THE LORD'S SUPPER



Personal Assurance that You are Forgiven.

HOLY COMMUNION, also called the Sacrament of the Altar and the Lord's Supper, shares with Baptism the name *Sacrament*. As we noted in Lesson Twelve, we need to define this word as we shall use it. You may wish to review the first part of that lesson. It ends with the following definition:

"A Sacrament is a holy act which...

- was instituted by Christ*
- uses earthly elements connected with God's Word*
- offers and gives us God's forgiveness"*

The Institution of the Lord's Supper

On Maundy Thursday evening, the same night Jesus was later betrayed and brought to trial, he served His disciples a very special meal. Three of the four writers of the Gospels report the event, and the Apostle Paul speaks about it in detail as well. Before you go any farther, *read these accounts in Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20 and I Corinthians 11:23-25*. All four accounts are put together in "the words of institution," which the pastor reads before giving the Sacrament to his congregation.

Though the following questions may seem simple, it is important to answer them according to the clear Word of God, because many churches have changed and twisted God's Word on this subject.

1. According to the passages you read above, *who first gave communion?*

2. *What "earthly elements" did Jesus serve?*

_____ and _____

ICON KEY

- Introduction
- Important point
- For further reading

"LEARN FROM ME"

3. *What did Jesus say we are supposed to DO with the elements?*

_____ and _____

4. As we eat and drink, *WHAT do we receive in and with the bread and wine?*

_____ and _____

5. From the above Bible accounts, *list as many reasons as you can why we should be eager to take part in the Lord's Supper?*

6. Read I Corinthians 10:16. The word *communion* literally means "sharing with." If that is true, then according to this verse *what are Christians "sharing" in when they take the cup and eat the bread in the Lord's Supper?*

"IS" Means "IS"!

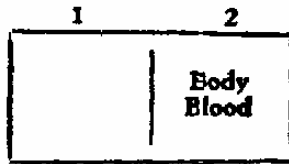
Our faith always rests on Jesus Christ and His holy Word. What Jesus served to His disciples when He offered Communion is exactly explained by the meaning of the simple word "is." Jesus held the bread and said, "This is My body." Jesus held the cup and said, "This is My blood."

What Jesus did *not* say is almost as important, for what some churches teach about the Sacrament is not Scriptural. For example, Jesus did *not* say, "this bread *is changed into* My body," or "This wine *is changed into* My blood." This is what the Roman Catholics teach.

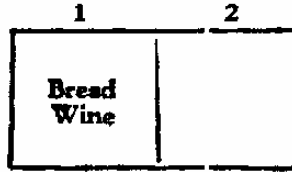
Furthermore, Jesus did *not* say, "This bread *represents* My body," or "This wine *represents* My blood." This is what the "Reformed" churches teach (Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, etc.).

Jesus used the simple word "IS" when instituting the Sacrament, and Martin Luther clung to that simple word, rather than allowing a meaning such as "changed into" or "represents." Luther insisted on the simple, plain Word of God. He often said concerning this Sacrament, "Is is is, and always is is!" The following illustration may help you to understand the teachings about communion among different church groups:

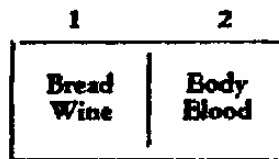
Three Views



The Romanists say, The bread and wine are changed (transubstantiated) into the body and blood of Christ. The bread is no longer bread, the wine is no longer wine. They furthermore teach the Sacrifice of the Mass. Cardinal Gibbons says, "The Sacrifice of the Mass is identical with that of the cross, both having the same victim and High Priest—Jesus Christ. The only difference consists in the manner of the oblation. Christ was offered up on the cross in a bloody manner, and in the Mass He is offered up in an unbloody manner." The Romanists withhold the cup from the communicants. They adore the host.



The Reformed Churches say, This "signifies," "represents," "pictures" my body and blood. They say, When we see the minister break the bread, we think of how Christ's body was broken in death. And when we see the wine or the grape-juice poured from the fagon, we think of how Christ's blood was profusely poured from His veins. To us, they say, the Lord's Supper is nothing more than a memorial feast, a beautiful ceremony of remembrance. We answer: "Is is is, and always is is."



The Lutherans teach the Real Presence, that "I receive with the bread the true body, and with the wine the true blood, of Christ." Reasons:

1. The words of Christ, given four times, say so. Matt. 26:26, 28; Mark 14:22, 24; Luke 22:19, 20; 1 Cor. 11:24, 25.
2. Paul says so in 1 Cor. 10:16; 1 Cor. 11:27.
3. It is a Testament (a will) in which Jesus gave Himself.

All genuine Lutherans teach and practice the Scriptural doctrine of the "Real Presence." In some wonderful way known only to God, Christ's body and blood really are present - in, with and under the bread and wine - as we eat and drink in the Sacrament. Rather than waste time puzzling over this mystery, we can simply thank and praise our God for this extra means of forgiveness, God's own seal on our pardon. Surely we need *every* tool God has given us in our battle against Satan, the world, and our own sinful flesh. Holy Communion is just such an extra assurance of sins forgiven. Read again Matthews 26:28.

Communion is For Those who Need Strength

7. Read Psalm 51:17. *What kind of attitude does God especially favor in those who come to Him?*

8. Some people feel they are not worthy to come to the Lord's Supper because their faith is weak. But look up Isaiah 42:3. In this passage the prophet uses picture language to describe the way Jesus treats those who are weak in faith. *What will the Lord not do to those whose faith is "bruised" or merely smoldering?*

9. Read Mark 9:14-29. It is the account of a man who was weak in faith, but who desperately needed Jesus' help. *What was the man's prayer in verse 24?*

"LEARN FROM ME"

10. Turn to John 6:37. *What does Jesus say here about those who come to Him in faith?*



The idea that a person must feel very strong in faith before coming to Communion is not true. In fact, the Sacrament is especially meant to *strengthen* those Christians who feel weak in faith and burdened by their sins. Be it weak or strong, the only thing you need to be a worthy attendant at the Lord's table - is faith! As Luther says in his Small Catechism: "He is truly worthy and well-prepared who has faith in these words, 'Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.'"

Repentance Bears Fruit

11. John 8:1-11 is the comforting account of what Jesus did in the case of a woman guilty of adultery. Did Jesus forgive the woman's sin or not? *Quote the words with which Jesus pronounced her verdict:*

12. Some people may think that "free forgiveness" means you have a license to sin as much as you want. *But what did Jesus expect the woman to do AFTER He forgave her sin?*

13. Read Luke 7:36-50. All of us need the Lord's forgiveness. *But WHICH PEOPLE are likely to return the most love for the forgiveness God gives them? (verse 47)*

A person who genuinely repents of his sins, and is forgiven by God, will naturally want to avoid committing the same sins in the future. This is called "the fruits of repentance." Bringing forth the proper fruits of repentance is also part of our experience at the Lord's Supper.



There are three simple questions you may ask yourself in order to see whether you are ready to come to Holy Communion:

- Am I sorry for my sins?*
- Do I believe in Jesus for forgiveness?*
- Do I promise to amend my sinful life?*

-If you can answer yes those three questions, you are well-prepared to attend the Sacrament!

The Proper Administration of the Sacrament

14. Read again I Corinthians 11:26-29. One thing we're doing when we attend the Lord's Supper is "proclaiming His death" - that is, we are confessing that we rest our case for eternal life on Jesus' death as our substitute. But there are many who won't make such a confession - such as unbelievers. There are some who *cannot* make such a confession, like very young children or the mentally handicapped. And there are those who do not "discern the Lord's body" - they are willing to come to the Sacrament, but they don't believe that Jesus' body and blood are really present. *What serious warnings does this passage hold for those people?*

15. Confessional Lutherans have historically observed the practice of "Close Communion" (*not* "CLOSED Communion"). In other words, those of us who attend the Lord's table together consider ourselves very "close" - we stand united in teaching and practice. This is important, as you can see from I Corinthians 1:10. *What did the Apostle Paul have to say on the subject of doctrinal unity?*

16. Read Acts 2:42. One of the things the early church continually practiced was "the breaking of bread" - the celebration of Lord's Supper. *But what ELSE did they continue in, which almost no modern churches seem to care about anymore?*

17. There are those who say that differences in doctrine are not important, and that we should join in the Lord's Supper with everyone, regardless of whether their doctrine differs from what the Bible says. But look up Romans 16:17-18. *What is God's clear instruction in this passage?*

Additional Bible Readings



For more Bible reading on this subject, see I John chapters 3-5, Revelation chapters 1-3, and Revelation chapter 22.