

# Christian Doctrine

## #1 - Old Testament background for the Lord's Supper

God used ten plagues to convince Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to let his people leave that country after 400 years of slavery.

#2 - On the night before the final plague, each Hebrew family was to sacrifice a one-year-old male lamb, roast it and eat it completely. (They also ate bread made without yeast, because they were to leave Egypt in haste. They also ate bitter herbs as a reminder of their bitter years of slavery.)

#3 - Then the Hebrews were to paint the lamb's blood over the doorposts of their houses. When the angel of death saw the blood, he would "pass over" that house, not killing the firstborn.

#4 - The Passover meal was celebrated annually as a memorial of God's great deliverance of the people of Israel. The annual sacrifice of the lamb also pointed people forward to the Promised Savior whom the Lord would send, the one who would be sacrificed for the sins of all people. When Jesus began his ministry, John the Baptist pointed him out as "the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."

#5 - Making the connection between Jesus and the Passover even more direct, Paul wrote to the Corinthians that "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

#6 - Assembled with his disciples on the evening before his crucifixion, with the Passover meal concluded, Jesus set aside for special use some of the grape wine and unleavened bread from that meal. As with the Passover meal, this new meal which Jesus instituted would be a repeating celebration of a great rescue from the past, the rescue Jesus would perform on the cross the very next day as he paid for the sins of the world. As had been the case with the Passover meal, this new meal would also point forward to the day when Christ would come to deliver his people from this sorrow-filled world to himself in heaven.

## #7 - The Institution of Holy Communion

Taking some of the bread made without yeast, Jesus distributed it to his disciples and said, "Take and eat; this is my body." He similarly distributed the cup of wine and said, "Drink from, it all of you. This is my blood..." In this sacrament we eat bread and drink wine.

Yet, Jesus' words also make it clear that he is giving us a far greater gift. While we can see and taste only bread and wine, Jesus gives us his body and blood in, with and under the bread and wine. The body Jesus offered up on the cross as payment for our sins is truly present in the bread. The blood Jesus shed to forgive our sins is truly present in the wine.

## #8 - Participation

*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 Corinthians 10:16)?*

The Bible teaches the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in this sacrament. The body of Christ participates with the bread. The blood of Christ participates with the wine.

## #9 - THE INSTITUTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*First: What is the sacrament of Holy Communion?*

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ for us Christians to eat and to drink.

*Where is this written?*

The holy Evangelists Matthew, Mark, Luke and the Apostle Paul tell us, “Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

## #10 - The Blessings of Holy Communion

We are not doing something for God by receiving this sacrament. God is doing something for us. That “something” is forgiveness and Jesus clearly states, “This forgiveness is for you.”

*This is my body given for you (Luke 22:19).*

*This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins (Matthew 26:28).*

For centuries, Christian congregations which have followed the historic liturgy as their pattern for regular worship have sung the *Agnus Dei* (Lamb of God) immediately before the distribution of the Lord’s Supper. The lyrics read, “O Christ, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world, have mercy on us and grant us your peace.” The placement of this song immediately before the distribution is to remind worshipers of the primary reason for receiving the Lord’s Supper. Through it Jesus grants us the forgiveness of sins and thus strengthens our faith.

Martin Luther said that the preaching of the gospel is “an open and public proclamation, in which I am addressing myself to no one individually; whoever grasps it, grasps it. When I distribute the sacrament, I designate it for the individual who is receiving it. Although the same thing is present in the sermon as in the sacrament, here there is the advantage that it is directed to definite individuals.” I might wonder whether or not the gospel is really meant for me as I am sitting in the pew listening to a sermon. There is no such doubt as I receive the Lord’s Supper.

“This individualizing goes on also in the Lord’s Supper. During its administration the body of Christ is given to you in particular with the bread and the blood with the wine, while you in particular are told that his body was given for you and his blood was shed for you. This is done so that you do not doubt but appropriate this sacrifice as your very own because it is placed into your mouth and made your own, to eat and to drink for yourself only. In this act of communing, God is certainly not dealing and speaking with any person but you” (Martin Luther).

## #11 - THE BLESSINGS OF HOLY COMMUNION

*Second: What blessing do we receive through this eating and drinking?*

That is shown us by these words, “Given” and “poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

Through these words we receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation in this sacrament.

For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

#12 - As with baptism, the power of Holy Communion is in the words Jesus spoke.

#13 - THE POWER OF HOLY COMMUNION

*Third: How can eating and drinking do such great things?*

It is certainly not the eating and drinking that does such things, but the words, “Given” and “poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins.”

These words are the main thing in the sacrament, along with the eating and drinking.

And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.

#14 - The Reception of Holy Communion

*Therefore, 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. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).*

The value of the Lord’s Supper is the forgiveness of sins. Taking this sacrament “unworthily” or not according to its value could include:

- Not recognizing Christ’s body and blood
- Receiving the sacrament mindlessly
- Receiving the sacrament while in a state of impenitence
- Receiving the sacrament for any reason other than the forgiveness of sins

#15 - Examining oneself prior to receiving the Lord’s Supper:

- God’s law shows me that I am a sinner.
- God’s Word tells me that God should punish me severely and eternally.
- God’s Word tells me that God punished Jesus instead of me and has forgiven me.
- In the Lord’s Supper God assures me that my sins are forgiven.

#16 - Examining Oneself

- I am a sinner in need of God’s forgiveness.
- For my sins I ought to be condemned to hell.
- Although a sinner, I am forgiven through Christ.
- In this sacrament I receive Christ’s true body and blood.
- In this sacrament Jesus comes to me personally and individually and forgives my sins.

#17 - Examining Oneself

Prayer	Christian Questions
The Ten Commandments	Thanksgiving
Psalm 51	Lord’s Prayer
John 3:16	Sleep

#18 - More references for examining oneself prior to receiving the Lord’s Supper:

- Christian Worship, p. 156
- Christian Questions – Luther’s Small Catechism

#19 - Wherever the sacrament is rightly administered, all communicants receive the true body and blood of Christ for the forgiveness of sins, whether they believe them to be truly present or not. Consequently, Paul warned against receiving this sacrament unworthily, i.e., in an improper manner, lest it do more harm than good. Jesus' clear words indicating that this sacrament grants forgiveness of sins and Paul's words concerning prior self-examination and the necessity of recognizing the body and blood of Christ preclude certain people from receiving this sacrament. This would include...

- the insane, the unconscious and those with severe developmental disabilities (since they are incapable of examining themselves).
- the openly impenitent (since Jesus' word of forgiveness is intended only for those who confess their sins and look to God for mercy, not for those who reject what God says about their sins).
- a professing unbeliever (since Holy Communion was instituted to nurture Christian faith, not to create it).
- the uninstructed (since without a grasp of the essential elements of the Christian faith, including those connected with Holy Communion, it would impossible for a person to examine himself).

#20 - Am I worthy? I never deserve the forgiveness which the Lord's Supper gives, but as far as receiving it in the proper way, worthy reception of the Lord's Supper can be boiled down to one word – faith.

- I believe that I am a sinner.
- I believe that I can hide no sin from God nor deny any sin before God.
- I believe that Jesus paid for my sins and that they have been forgiven.
- I believe that in the Lord's Supper Jesus makes his own body and blood present in a miraculous way with the bread and wine and thereby grants me forgiveness.

Where there is such faith, there is worthy reception.

#### THE RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION

*Fourth: Who, then, is properly prepared to receive this sacrament?*

Fasting and other outward preparations may serve a good purpose, but he is properly prepared who believes these words, "Given" and "poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins."

But whoever does not believe these words or doubts them is not prepared, because the words "for you" require nothing but hearts that believe.

#21 - By way of comparison...

Roman Catholic teaching ..... two elements

Reformed teaching..... two elements

WELS teaching..... four elements

## #22 - Close Communion

Immediately after speaking about the closeness which exists and the participation which goes on between bread and body, wine and blood, Paul drew an analogy from the one loaf used in his era's celebration of the sacrament to express the closeness which exists between communicants.

*Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf (1 Corinthians 10:17).*

*Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body (Ephesians 4:25).*

*Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful (Colossians 3:15).*

*I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought (1 Corinthians 1:10).*

Holy Communion is one of the ways in which the members of a congregation or denomination express the unity of faith which exists among them. Since we can't see into the heart of every person who would participate in Holy Communion, the only humanly possible way we have to establish unity of faith among communicants is by listening to what they say they believe. True "closeness" exists among believers only when there is agreement in their outward confession.

## #23 - What if we practiced "open communion," offering the sacrament to any professing Christian?

Those who do not believe or realize that Christ's true body and blood are present with the bread and wine would nonetheless be receiving it, but to their judgment.

*For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself (1 Corinthians 11:29).*

Would this be showing any concern for the welfare of people?

## #24 - What if we practiced "open communion," offering the sacrament to any professing Christian?

Those who receive it for any other reason than to be assured of the forgiveness of their sins would be receiving it unworthily and thus sinning.

*Therefore, 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 (1 Corinthians 11:27).*

Would this be showing any concern for the welfare of people?

## #25 - What if we practiced "open communion," offering the sacrament to any professing Christian?

We would be disregarding the Lord's clear words that receiving the sacrament together is a way of expressing unity of faith.

*Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf (1 Corinthians 10:17).*

Would this be showing concern for or living according to the truth of God's word?