

## 23. The Lord's Supper

### WCF chapters 29 *Modern Language version – 1993 – OPC*

1. Our Lord Jesus, on the night when he was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of his body and blood, called the Lord's supper. It is to be observed in his church until the end of the age for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of himself in his death, for the sealing of all the benefits of that death unto true believers, for their spiritual nourishment and growth in him, for their increased commitment to perform all the duties which they owe to him, and for a bond and pledge of their fellowship with him and with each other as members of his mystical body.

2. In this sacrament Christ is not offered up to his Father, nor is any real sacrifice made at all for the forgiveness of the sins of the living or the dead. Instead, this sacrament is only a commemoration of that one sacrifice by which Christ offered himself on the cross once for all. The sacrament is a spiritual offering of the highest praise to God for that sacrifice. So, the Roman Catholic sacrifice of the mass (as they call it) is a detestable insult to Christ's one and only sacrifice, which is the only propitiation for all the sins of his elect.

3. In this ordinance the Lord Jesus has appointed his ministers to declare his word of institution to the people; to pray and consecrate the elements of bread and wine, and so set them apart from a common to a holy use; and to take and break the bread, take the cup, and give both to the communicants, and to partake with the congregation. But they are not to give the elements to any who are not then present in the congregation.

4. Private masses—or receiving this sacrament from a priest or anyone else, alone—are contrary to the nature of the sacrament and to the institution of Christ. For the same reasons it is forbidden to deny the cup to the members of the congregation, to worship the elements, to lift them up or carry them around for adoration, or to reserve them for any supposedly religious use.

Matthew 26:26-29, 1 Corinthians 10:14-22, 11:17-34

#### Basics...

Instituted *by* Jesus... the supper of *the Lord* – observe the meal as he requires

The sacrament of his body and blood: Jesus' words emphasise not the elements but the reality

In his church... until he returns

In order to:

- (i) a "seal" of redemption (e.g. cup of "blessing")
- (ii) spiritual nourishment
- (iii) strengthen our thankfulness and service
- (iv) fellowship with Christ... and with each other

#### Not an offering, not a sacrifice

Finished work of Christ on the Cross, Hebrews 9:25-26  
A commemoration – not sacrifice or offering of Christ  
We offer... praise and thanksgiving

#### Practically, how are we to celebrate the Lord's Supper?

Word... prayer... take... give and eat

False religion:

5. The visible elements in this sacrament, when they are properly set apart for the uses ordained by Christ, have such a relationship to Christ crucified that they are sometimes called—truly, but only sacramentally—by the name of the things they represent, namely, the body and blood of Christ. This is true even though in substance and nature they still remain truly and only bread and wine, as they were before.

6. The doctrine which teaches that the substance of the bread and wine is changed into the substance of Christ's body and blood (commonly called transubstantiation) by the consecration of a priest, or in any other way, is repugnant not only to Scripture but even to common sense and reason. It overthrows the nature of the sacrament and has been and is the cause of many superstitions and gross idolatries.

7. Worthy receivers of this sacrament, outwardly partaking of its visible elements, also inwardly by faith—really and indeed, yet not physically but spiritually—receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death. The body and blood of Christ are not physically in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet in this ordinance the body and blood of Christ are present to the faith of believers in as real a spiritual sense as the bread and wine are to their physical senses.

8. Even if ignorant and wicked men receive the outward elements in this sacrament, yet they do not receive that which is signified by the elements. Rather, by their unworthy coming to the sacrament, they are guilty of the body and blood of the Lord, to their own damnation. Therefore, all ignorant and ungodly people, because they are unfit to enjoy fellowship with the Lord, are also unworthy to participate in the Lord's supper. As long as they remain unworthy, they cannot be admitted to the Lord's table or partake of the holy mysteries without great sin against Christ.

### **What is “happening” in the Lord’s Supper?**

There *is* a spiritual relation between Christ and the sacraments:

Bread and wine:

“This is my body... this is my blood of the covenant”

But no change in the “substance” of the bread and wine

### **How should we receive the Lord’s Supper?**

Outwardly... and inwardly by faith → feed upon Christ crucified

How?

Christ is not present physically  
Christ *is present* by the Holy Spirit... really

[e.g. Calvin, Cranmer, etc]

### **A warning...**

You can eat the elements... and not receive Christ

... and bring judgement (1 Cor. 10:21, 11:27-30)

Warning: to non-believers... to Christians who receive without “discerning the body”

Church discipline: see chapter 30...

**Personal response: for what should we give thanks... confess... pray?**

**Next week: Church discipline and Church government**