



The Lord's Supper

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In the previous lesson we looked at how God offers the forgiveness through the sacrament of Holy Baptism. We saw how God joins ordinary water together with his Word for the purpose of creating or strengthening faith. In this lesson we'll look at yet another way God offers the forgiveness of sins to his people — through the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. In our study we'll need to answer the following questions.

- ◆ What is the Lord's Supper?
- ◆ What does the Lord's Supper do?
- ◆ Who should take the Lord's Supper?
- ◆ What relationships do we celebrate in the Lord's Supper?

WHAT IS THE LORD'S SUPPER?

There are four places where the events of Maunday Thursday evening (the night Christ instituted the Lord's Supper) are described — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and 1 Corinthians. It is beneficial to see these accounts side-by-side. Please read through those portions of Scripture using the special sheet, "The Account of the Lord's Supper." Then use that sheet to answer these questions.

- 1) All of those accounts describe Jesus giving his disciples four distinct things. Look at the underlined portions of Luke 22:19, Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, and 1 Corinthians 11:23. What is one thing Jesus gave to the disciples in the Lord's Supper?
- 2) Now look at the italicized portions of Luke 22:19, Mathew 26:26, Mark 14:22, and 1 Corinthians 11:24. What is another thing Jesus gave to the disciples in the Lord's Supper?
- 3) Look at the underlined portions of Luke 22:20, Matthew 26:27, Mark 14:23, and 1 Corinthians 11:25. What is a third thing Jesus gave to the disciples in the Lord's Supper?
- 4) The contents of that cup is given in the double-underlined portions of Luke 22:18, Matthew 26:29 and Mark 14:25. Those contents would have been fermented, since they had no refrigeration at that time. What would the contents of that cup have been, therefore?
- 5) Now look at the italicized portions of Luke 22:20, Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, and 1 Corinthians 11:25. What is a fourth thing Jesus gave to the disciples in the Lord's Supper?
- 6) Carefully look at all of those portions of Scripture again. Is there anything to indicate that Jesus is speaking figuratively in any of these sections?

- 7) Look closely at 1 Corinthians 11:27. Paul is not talking about just the original Lord’s Supper, but about the way the people would celebrate it in Corinth (and today, for that matter). He says that if you take the Lord’s Supper in an “unworthy manner” you are sinning against something. What?

- 8) Look closely at 1 Corinthians 11:29. Paul says that there is something that you should recognize is present in the Lord’s Supper, lest you “eat and drink judgement” on yourself. What should you recognize?

- 9) Looking again at 1 Corinthians 11:27-29, is there anything to indicate that Paul is writing figuratively when he warns us about “sinning against the body and blood of the Lord”?

On the basis of what we have looked so far, how would you answer that question, “WHAT IS THE LORD’S SUPPER?”

THE LORD’S SUPPER IS A MIRACLE WHEREBY GOD JOINS THE EARTHLY ELEMENTS OF _____ AND _____ TOGETHER WITH THE HEAVENLY ELEMENTS OF CHRIST’S _____ AND _____. THE BIBLE TEACHES WE RECEIVE ALL THESE ELEMENTS, EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY, IN THE MIRACLE OF THE LORD’S SUPPER.

This teaching of God’s Word is commonly referred to as the doctrine of Real Presence. The union of the heavenly and earthly elements is the reason the Lord’s Supper is often called “Holy Communion.”

✓ **DEFINITION: Real Presence** — *The miraculous presence of Jesus’ real body with the bread and of his real blood with the wine in the Lord’s Supper.*

✓ **DEFINITION: Holy Communion** — *The sacrament in which the body and blood of Jesus Christ are given to us “in union with” with bread and wine for the forgiveness of sins.*

Sadly, this is not what all Christian denominations teach. The following chart summarizes the three main different teachings concerning the Lord’s Supper.

<i>Who teaches it:</i>	THE BIBLE	ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH	REFORMED CHURCHES
<i>Name of the doctrine:</i>	Real Presence	Transubstantiation	Representation
<i>Summary of the Doctrine:</i>	Partakers of the Lord’s Supper receive the body and blood of our Lord “in, with, and under” the bread and wine.	Partakers of the Lord’s Supper receive only the body and blood of Christ	Partakers of the Lord’s Supper receive only the bread and wine, which are symbolic of the body and blood of Christ
<i>Reason for belief in the doctrine:</i>	Matthew 26:26-29 Mark 14:22-25 Luke 22:18-20 1 Corinthians 11:23-29	False belief that the Lord’s Supper is not a sacrament, but a sacrifice. Christ is “re-sacrificed” over and over for the forgiveness of sins.	Human reason

For more information about arguments leveled against the doctrine of Real Presence please see Appendix X.

WHAT DOES THE LORD'S SUPPER DO?

- 10) Please use the special sheet to look at Luke 22:20, Matthew 26:28, Mark 14:24, and 1 Corinthians 11:25. According to the boldface portions of those passages, what are we assured of when we partake of Christ's body and blood?

Let's look closer at what that means. Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

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

Hebrews 9:15 For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance—now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins...

Romans 11:27 And this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

1 John 1:7 The *blood* of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Romans 5:9 Since we have now been justified by *his blood*, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through *his blood*, the forgiveness of sins.

1 Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in *his body* on the tree... by his wounds you have been healed.

1 Peter 3:18 He was put to death in *the body*.

1 Peter 4:1 Therefore, since Christ suffered in *his body*, arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in *his body* is done with sin.

- 11) According to the underlined portions of those passages, what is the message of the "new covenant"?

- 12) According to the italicized portions of those passages, how did Jesus win that for us?

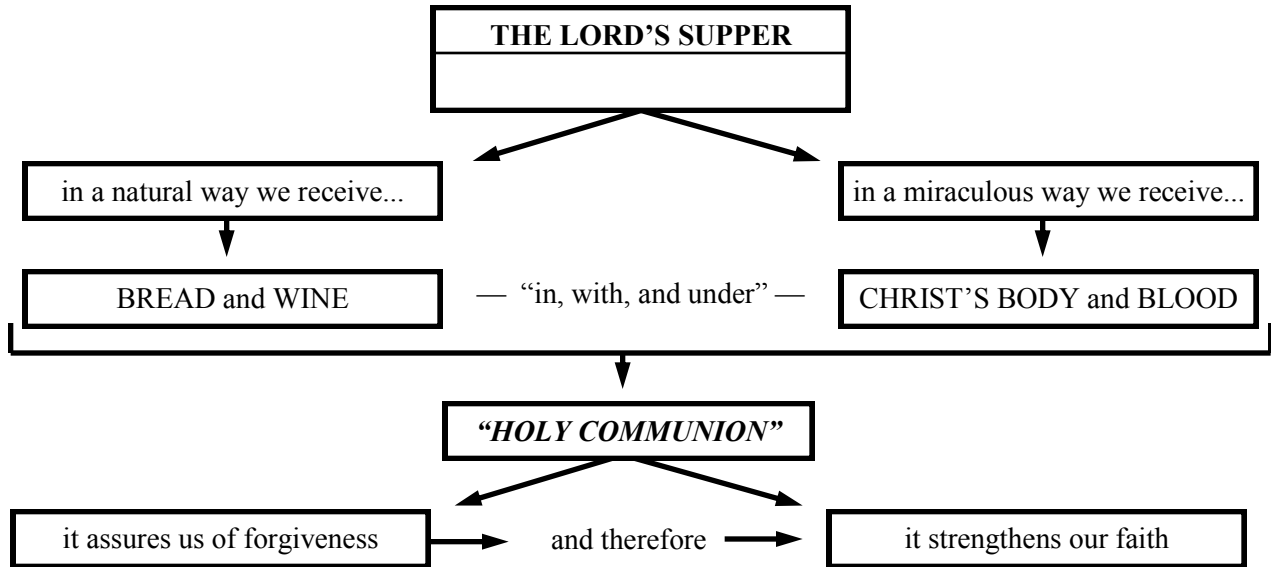
- 13) Therefore, the message of the Lord's Supper is intended to give us awesome comfort by assuring us of something. According to the double-underlined portions of those passages, is forgiveness for sins something that we look forward to, or is it something that is already accomplished?

On the basis of what we have learned in this portion of our Bible study, how would you answer that question, "WHAT DOES THE LORD'S SUPPER DO?"

THE LORD'S SUPPER ASSURES US THAT...

BY ALLOWING US TO PARTAKE OF CHRIST'S...

You could illustrate it this way.



Therefore, the Lord’s Supper is similar to baptism in that: 1) Jesus instituted it, and 2) God connects the promise of forgiveness to something we can touch. But the Bible also teaches that the Lord’s Supper is different from Baptism in some ways. While Baptism is intended for “all nations” (cf. Matthew 28:19), the Bible places limitations on who should take the Lord’s Supper. In the next portion of this Bible study we will look at...

WHO SHOULD TAKE THE LORD’S SUPPER?

1 Corinthians 11:27-29 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*.

- 14) What did we say was something a person could do when partaking the Lord’s Supper? (Look at the italicized portions of those passages.)

- 15) What is one thing a person could do which would result in taking the Lord’s Supper in an “unworthy manner”? (Look at the underlined portion of those passages.)

- 16) Therefore, what does the Bible say we should do before we take the Lord’s Supper? (Look at the double-underlined portion of those passages.)

It must be emphasized that the phrase “unworthy manner” does not mean “too sinful.” We should never feel that because of our sins we are “unworthy” of taking the Lord’s Supper. The Lord’s Supper is precisely for those who feel burdened by their sins and the guilt of their conscience. Rather, taking the Lord’s Supper in an “unworthy manner” refers to the exact opposite — partaking of Christ’s body and blood without believing you have a need for the forgiveness of sins.

The Scriptures therefore urge us to “examine” ourselves before we take the Lord’s Supper. Some logical questions we would ask ourselves would be...

- ... am I sorry for my sins? ⇒ **Psalm 38:18** I confess my iniquity; I am troubled by my sin.
- ... do I trust in Jesus as my Savior? ⇒ **Acts 15:11** “We believe it is through the grace of our Lord Jesus that we are saved.”
- ... do I believe that Christ’s body and blood are present in the Lord’s Supper to assure me of forgiveness? ⇒ **Matthew 26:28** “This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for the many for the forgiveness of sins.”
- ... do I intend, with God’s help, to live a more God-pleasing life? ⇒ **Romans 6:1,2** What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!

Sometimes people also have questions about how often they should receive the Lord’s Supper. Scripture is silent on this issue. But the following passages might be helpful in giving guidance in this area.

Romans 7:19 For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.

Matthew 11:28 “Come to me, all you who are *weary and burdened*, and I will give you rest.”

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

1 Corinthians 11:25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever [literally: “*as often as*”] you drink it, in remembrance of me.”

- 17) According to Romans 7:19, do I stop committing sins once I know my sins are forgiven?
- 18) According to the italicized portions of Matthew 11:28, what do my sins do to my conscience?
- 19) According to the underlined portion of Matthew 11:28, what does God promise to do for us?
- 20) According to Matthew 26:28, how does God do that for us in the Lord’s Supper?
- 21) According to those passages, in combination with what 1 Corinthians 11:25 says, would the Lord’s Supper be something we would take frequently or infrequently?

On the basis of what we have seen in this portion of our Bible study, how would you answer that question, “WHO SHOULD TAKE THE LORD’S SUPPER?”

The final question for our consideration is...

WHAT RELATIONSHIPS DO WE CELEBRATE IN THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Please read the following passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

Colossians 1:21,22 Once *you were alienated* from God and were *enemies* in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.

Romans 5:10 For if, when we were God's *enemies*, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!

2 Corinthians 5:18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.

Romans 3:25 God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.

- ✓ **DEFINITION:** *to reconcile* — to restore someone to peace and harmony with another
- ✓ **DEFINITION:** *to atone* — to make a payment to remove the guilt of sin so that God and sinner may be "at one"

- 22) On the basis of the italicized portions of those passages, what was our relationship with God before he created faith in our hearts and made us his children?
- 23) We said that the Lord's Supper assures us of the forgiveness of sins. According to the underlined portions of those passages, what has that forgiveness done with our relationship with God?

Here are the passages that will help us determine the second relationship that we celebrate in the Lord's Supper. Please read these passages and then answer the corresponding questions.

1 Corinthians 10:17 *We, who are many, are one body*, for we all partake of one loaf.

Ephesians 4:4 *There is one body* and one Spirit -- just as you were called to one hope when you were called -- one Lord, one faith, one baptism;

Hebrews 10:23-25 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Romans 16:17 I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them.

- 24) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what is another relationship we celebrate in the Lord's Supper?
- 25) According to the underlined portions of those passages, why is it so wonderful that Christians can come together in the Lord's Supper?
- 26) According to Romans 16:17 there would be a group of people with whom it would be inappropriate to partake of the Lord's Supper. Whom does the Bible say would be in this group?

On the basis of those passages, how would you answer that question, “WHAT RELATIONSHIPS DO WE CELEBRATE IN THE LORD’S SUPPER?”

You could illustrate it this way.



In Lord’s Supper we celebrate both the vertical relationship between God and his children and the horizontal relationship between fellow Christians. This relationship between Christians is based on *the confession* of their faith, since only God can see the faith itself. (“For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess...” Romans 10:10.) Therefore it is appropriate and desirable that fellow Christians study God’s Word together before communing together. The study of the Word and subsequent acknowledgement of unity of faith is a practice sometimes called “confirmation.” Celebrating the Lord’s Supper on the basis of this unity is known as “close communion.”

✓ **DEFINITION: confirmation** — a strengthening given in directed Bible study, after which an individual publicly confesses faith in Jesus and unity of faith with a body of believers

✓ **DEFINITION: close communion** — the practice of admitting to the Lord’s Supper only those who have, after a course of directed study, confessed faith in Jesus and unity of faith with the body of believers. The goal of this practice is to ensure that: a) the participant doesn’t take the Lord’s Supper in an “unworthy manner” and thereby damage the vertical relationship celebrated in the Lord’s Supper (cf. 1 Cor. 11:27), and b) the horizontal relationship celebrated in the Lord’s Supper may be maintained (cf. 1 Cor. 10:17).

For the traditional Lutheran confession concerning the Lord’s Supper, please see Martin Luther’s explanation of the Lord’s Supper as it’s found in the the Small Catechism. This is printed in Appendix XI.

TAKING IT DEEPER

- A) Agree or Disagree — The “Lord’s Supper” and “Communion” are two different names for the same thing.
- B) Agree or Disagree — Everyone who goes to the Lord’s Supper receives Jesus’ body and blood.
- C) Agree or Disagree — Everyone who goes to the Lord’s Supper receives the forgiveness of sins.
- D) Agree or Disagree — We should not go to Communion if we have sinned that day.
- E) Agree or Disagree — When we go to Communion we earn the forgiveness of sins.
- F) Agree or Disagree — We should not go to the Lord’s Supper if we don’t feel the need for it.
- G) Question: Look carefully at the different accounts of the Lord’s Supper that are printed on that special sheet. Specifically, look at what Jesus says before he distributes the Lord’s Supper in each of those accounts. How can we tell that those “words of institution” aren’t some magical incantation which we need to repeat exactly in order for the “real presence” to take place?
- H) Question: God offers forgiveness through his Word. Why does he need to offer it in the Lord’s Supper as well?
- I) Explain: Some people might look at the practice of “close communion” and say it is unloving because it prevents some people from taking the Lord’s Supper temporarily. But on the basis of what we have learned in this study, explain how practicing close communion *actually shows love* to God’s Word and to the individual that we ask to wait. Explain how it would be *unloving* not to practice close communion.

The Account of the Lord's Supper

LUKE 22:14-23

¹⁴ When the hour came, Jesus and his apostles reclined at the table. ¹⁵ And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. ¹⁶ For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."

¹⁷ After taking the cup, he gave thanks and said, "Take this and divide it among you. ¹⁸ For I tell you I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes."

¹⁹ And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is *my body* given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

²⁰ In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is **the new covenant** in *my blood*, which is poured out for you."

MATTHEW 26:20-30

²⁰ When evening came, Jesus was reclining at the table with the Twelve. ²¹ And while they were eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me."

²² They were very sad and began to say to him one after the other, "Surely not I, Lord?"

²³ Jesus replied, "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl with me will betray me. ²⁴ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

²⁵ Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?"

Jesus answered, "Yes, it is you."

²⁶ While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is *my body*."

²⁷ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. ²⁸ This is *my blood* of **the covenant**, which is poured out for many for **the forgiveness of sins**. ²⁹ I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

³⁰ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

MARK 14:17-26

¹⁷ When evening came, Jesus arrived with the Twelve. ¹⁸ While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me -- one who is eating with me."

¹⁹ They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?"

²⁰ "It is one of the Twelve," he replied, "one who dips bread into the bowl with me. ²¹ The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born."

²² While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take it; this is *my body*."

²³ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it.

²⁴ "This is *my blood* of **the covenant**, which is poured out for many," he said to them. ²⁵ "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the kingdom of God."

²⁶ When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:23-29

²³ For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night 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, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is **the new covenant** in *my blood*; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

²⁷ 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. ²⁸ A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.