



Lesson 6

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' 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 but real presence of Jesus’ body with the bread and of his 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>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	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?

THE LORD'S SUPPER ASSURES US THAT...

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

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 unwaveringly 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.

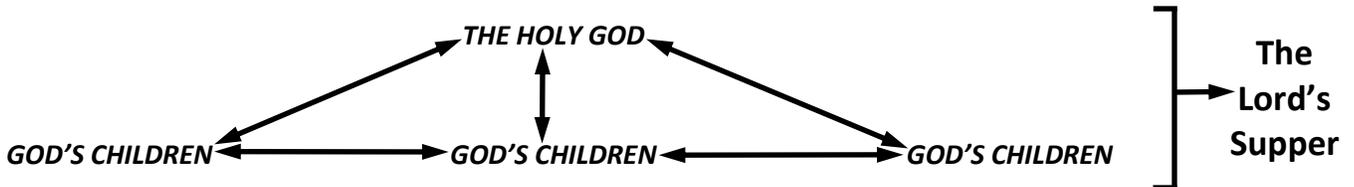
24) According to the italicized portions of those passages, what is another relationship we celebrate in the Lord's Supper?

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.

The “TAKING IT DEEPER” section is found on the next page.

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.

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.

Appendix X — Arguments Against the Doctrine of Real Presence

The following arguments are the ones most commonly leveled against the doctrine of Real Presence.

ARGUMENT — The doctrine of Real Presence is unnecessary for the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins. God offers forgiveness through his Word.

RESPONSE — That is true. The Old Testament believers are proof that we don't "need" the Lord's Supper at all. Even the Bible limits who should partake of the Lord's Supper. However, it is not logical to assume that because God offers forgiveness one way (through the Word) that he would not/could not offer it in other ways as well (through Baptism and the Lord's Supper). In his love God desired to connect forgiveness to something we can touch in order to make the message of forgiveness even more clear and vivid. It would not be absolutely "necessary," but he chose to do it none-the-less.

ARGUMENT — Jesus was speaking figuratively when he said, "This is my body. This is my blood."

RESPONSE — Jesus makes no mention of doing so. This is a dangerous road to go down. For if we can say that Jesus was speaking figuratively at the Lord's Supper, how can we be sure he isn't speaking figuratively when he makes statements such as "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies" (John 11:25). Good principles of Biblical interpretation say that we let the text itself tell us if it is meant to be taken figuratively. The Bible loses all sense and meaning if we abandon this principle.

ARGUMENT — Jesus indicated he was speaking figuratively when he said, "This do in remembrance of me."

RESPONSE — That statement is not an indicator of figurative speech. Reversing the words of institution demonstrates this. Imagine Jesus had said, "Take and eat, this is bread... This do in remembrance of me." Would we then assume that Jesus was distributing something other than bread? Of course not.

The statement "This do in remembrance of me" in no way hints at figurative speaking. The recollection and remembrance of Christ's redemptive work is not hindered by the doctrine of Real Presence, but only enhanced.

ARGUMENT — It is repulsive to think of eating Jesus' body and blood.

RESPONSE — This is not an argument but an emotion, and one that is born from a misunderstanding of the doctrine of Real Presence. The bread does not become a piece of Christ's flesh. Nor does the wine turn into a quart of blood like you might give at a blood bank. This error has sometimes been called "Capernaite Eating." The Bible teaches that the body and blood of Christ are truly there, but in a miraculous way — "in, with, and under" the bread and wine.

ARGUMENT — Jesus body and blood couldn't be present in the Lord's Supper. With the millions of people who have taken the Lord's supper throughout the years, Christ's body and blood would have been used up long ago.

RESPONSE — This is an attempt to rationalize a doctrine of God's Word that proclaims the miraculous. Similar to the previous argument, it approaches the Lord's Supper with a strictly physical understanding. The miracle of the Real Presence cannot be rationally comprehended any more than the Trinity, the union of Christ's human and divine natures, the six-day creation, etc. It is simply believed by faith (cf. Hebrews 11:1).

ARGUMENT — The Lutheran teaching of the Sacraments is inconsistent. For Baptism they teach that it is open to anyone, including children. Yet for the Lord's Supper they teach it is limited.

RESPONSE — This is not Lutheran teaching, but Biblical teaching. Christ's command to baptize "all nations" (Matthew 28:19) is all-inclusive. Unless a different passage can be found limiting "all nations," it would be un-Scriptural to do so. Yet in 1 Corinthians 11:27,28 we read, "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."

It is presumptive to assume that God would apply identical principles of practice to the two different Sacraments. Scriptures show that both Baptism and the Lord's Supper are intended for faithful use, but at different points in a person's life.

SUMMARY

It would be unfair to say that the doctrine of Real Presence is simple. It is fair, however, to say that the doctrine of Real Presence is clear. When reading the accounts of that first celebration of the Lord's Supper in all the synoptic Gospels, we must ask ourselves, "What does Christ clearly say?" "This is my body." "This is my blood." He makes no indication that he is speaking in a figurative, metaphorical sense. Not one of the Gospel writers indicate that Christ is speaking figuratively. At the time he speaks the words, he has but a few hours before he will be taken away from his disciples and crucified. It is not a time to speak in riddles.

Then there is the parallel account that Paul gives us in 1 Corinthians 11. He warns about "sinning against the body and blood of the Lord." Again, there is nothing to indicate Paul is writing figuratively.

The attacks that are leveled against the doctrine of Real Presence are extremely dangerous, not just because they destroy the celebration of the Lord's Supper, but because they destroy the clarity of the Scriptures. If we can arbitrarily chose when Jesus and the apostles are speaking / writing figuratively, then there can be no such thing as absolute truth in the Scriptures. Their interpretation is open to subjective whim. They lose all sense. They lose all meaning. They lose all value.

Appendix XI — Martin Luther on the Lord's Supper

The following paragraphs are taken from Martin Luther's *Small Catechism* and are a summary of the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Martin Luther would explain doctrines by utilizing a series of questions and answers.

HOLY COMMUNION IS A SACRAMENT

What is the sacrament of Holy Communion?

It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ together with 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: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it, gave it to his disciples and said, "Take and eat. This is my body, which is given for you; do this in remembrance of me."

In the same way, after supper he took the cup, gave thanks, gave it to them and said, "Drink from it, all of you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

THE BLESSINGS OF HOLY COMMUNION

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.

THE POWER OF HOLY COMMUNION

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 this sacrament, along with the eating and drinking. And whoever believes these words has what they plainly say, the forgiveness of sins.

RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION

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.