

Fundamentals of Our Faith from the Beginning

Understanding the Church: The Ordinance of The Lord's Supper (Communion)

1 Corinthians 11:17-34, etc.

1. What we learn from Paul about the Supper:

- a. The Lord's Supper was ordained by Jesus.
 - i. "For I received from the Lord..."
 - ii. "...eat **the Lord's** Supper..."
 - iii. Luke 22:19-20
- b. It is a covenantal meal (i.e. a family meal).
 - i. "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this...in remembrance of Me" (v 25).
 - ii. Remembrance is a term of covenant renewal.
 - iii. Luke 22:13, "...and they prepared the Passover" (a covenant/family meal).
- c. It is a "remembrance" of Jesus body and blood.
 - i. "This is My body...do this in remembrance of Me."
 - ii. "In the same way He took the cup...do this...in remembrance of Me."
 - iii. Remembrance is more than a merely mental exercise, but it does mean memory.
 - iv. The remembrance is of the "covenant in My blood" and its implications.
- d. It is really food for the soul by faith.
 - i. The meal is meant to be eaten (cf. John 6:33f).
 - ii. It is eaten by believers (1 Corinthians 11:27-28).
 - iii. It is a participation or "sharing in the blood of Christ...in the body of Christ".
1 Corinthians 10:16, "Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?"
- e. It was ordained for the *gathered* church.
 - i. "...you come together...when you come together **as a church**..." (v 17-18, i.e. as a whole church).
 - ii. "...when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper..." (v 20)
 - iii. "Or do you despise the church of God..." (v 22, cf. 1:2).
 - iv. "When you come together" is repeated five times (17, 18, 20, 33, 34).
- f. It is a "communion" or a "sharing" or a "fellowship" with a gathered church.
 - i. "...when you come together **as a church**..."
 - ii. It is a *κοινωνία* (*koinōnia*) in the blood and body of Christ (cf. 1 Cor. 10:17, "we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread").
 - iii. Cf. 1 Corinthians 5:3-5, esp. "...when you are assembled".
- g. It is *a church's act* to be shared in the context of the gathered people and overseen by appointed leaders.
 - i. The original supper was among the apostles, the representatives of the church. [Judas "went out" from them (John 13:30, cf. 1 John 2:19; 1 Cor. 5:2, 5, 13).]
 - ii. The cup is "blessed" and is given along with the word (1 Cor. 10:16; 11:23-26, esp. "...**you proclaim** the death of the Lord...").
 - iii. The elders oversee the liturgy of the gathered church (cf. "overseers", 1 Timothy 3:5, 14-15, etc.).

2. What our Reformation forebears and others have said:

- a. BCF, 35: We believe and confess, that our Savior Jesus Christ did ordain and institute the sacrament of the holy supper, to nourish and support those whom he hath already regenerated, and incorporated into his family, which is his Church.¹
- b. WCF, 29.1: Our Lord Jesus, in the night wherein He was betrayed, instituted the sacrament of His body and blood, called the Lord's Supper, **to be observed in His Church**, unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance of the sacrifice of Himself in His death; the sealing all benefits thereof unto true believers, their spiritual nourishment and growth in Him, their further engagement in and to all duties which they owe unto Him; and, **to be a bond and pledge of their communion** with Him, and **with each other**, as members of His mystical body.²
- c. LBC, 30.1: The Supper of the Lord Jesus, was instituted by him, the same night wherein he was betrayed, **to be observed in his Churches** unto the end of the world, for the perpetual remembrance, and shewing forth the sacrifice of himself in his death confirmation of the faith of believers in all the benefits thereof, their spiritual nourishment, and growth in him, their further ingagement in, and to, all duties which they owe unto him; and **to be a bond and pledge of their communion** with him, and **with each other**.³
- d. BFM⁴, VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper:
Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. **Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.**
The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience **whereby members of the church**, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

¹*The Belgic Confession of Faith*, ed. David Lang, [Creeds, Confessions and Catechisms](#). Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, Inc., 2006), paragraph 541.

²*The Westminster Confession of Faith*, ed. David Lang, [Creeds, Confessions and Catechisms](#). Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, Inc., 2006), paragraph 3023.

³*The 1677/1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith*, ed. David Lang, [Creeds, Confessions and Catechisms](#). Altamonte Springs: OakTree Software, Inc., 2006), paragraph 5066.

⁴ Baptist Faith and Message, Southern Baptist Convention.