

Part II: The Sacraments: The Lord's Supper: LORD'S DAY 28

Q & A 75: How does the Lord's Supper remind you and assure you that you share in Christ's one sacrifice on the cross and in all his gifts?

In this way:

Christ has commanded me and all believers
to eat this broken bread and to drink this cup.
With this command he gave this promise:¹

First,

as surely as I see with my eyes
the bread of the Lord broken for me
and the cup given to me,
so surely
his body was offered and broken for me
and his blood poured out for me
on the cross.

Second,

as surely as
I receive from the hand of the one who serves,
and taste with my mouth
the bread and cup of the Lord,
given me as sure signs of Christ's body and blood,
so surely
he nourishes and refreshes my soul for eternal life
with his crucified body and poured-out blood.

¹ Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25

The Heidelberg Catechism

Q & A 075-085



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Q & A 76: What does it mean to eat the crucified body of Christ and to drink his poured-out blood?

It means

to accept with a believing heart
the entire suffering and death of Christ
and by believing
to receive forgiveness of sins and eternal life.¹

But it means more.

Through the Holy Spirit, who lives both in Christ and in us,
we are united more and more to Christ's blessed body.²
And so, although he is in heaven³ and we are on earth,
we are flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone.⁴
And we forever live on and are governed by one Spirit,
as members of our body are by one soul.⁵

¹ John 6:35, 40, 50-54

² John 6:55-56; 1 Cor. 12:13

³ Acts 1:9-11; 1 Cor. 11:26; Col. 3:1

⁴ 1 Cor. 6:15-17; Eph. 5:29-30; 1 John 4:13

⁵ John 6:56-58; 15:1-6; Eph. 4:15-16; 1 John 3:24

Q & A 77: Where does Christ promise to nourish and refresh believers with his body and blood as surely as they eat this broken bread and drink this cup?

In the institution of the Lord's Supper:

"The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 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.'

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.'

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."¹

This promise is repeated by Paul in these words:

"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?

Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf."²

¹ 1 Cor. 11:23-26

² 1 Cor. 10:16-17

Part II: The Sacraments: The Lord's Supper: LORD'S DAY 29

Q & A 78: Are the bread and wine changed into the real body and blood of Christ?

No.

Just as the water of baptism

is not changed into Christ's blood
and does not itself wash away sins
but is simply God's sign and assurance,¹

so too the bread of the Lord's Supper

is not changed into the actual body of Christ²
even though it is called the body of Christ³

in keeping with the nature and language of sacraments.⁴

¹ Eph. 5:26; Tit. 3:5

² Matt. 26:26-29

³ 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26-28

⁴ Gen. 17:10-11; Ex. 12:11, 13; 1 Cor. 10:1-4

Q & A 79: Why then does Christ call the bread his body and the cup his blood, or the new covenant in his blood? (Paul uses the words, a participation in Christ's body and blood.)

Christ has good reason for these words.

He wants to teach us that

as bread and wine nourish our temporal life,
so too his crucified body and poured-out blood
truly nourish our souls for eternal life.¹

But more important,

he wants to assure us, by this visible sign and pledge,

that we, through the Holy Spirit's work,
share in his true body and blood
as surely as our mouths
receive these holy signs in his remembrance,²

and that all of his suffering and obedience
are as definitely ours
as if we personally
had suffered and paid for our sins.³

¹ John 6:51, 55

² 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:26

³ Rom. 6:5-11

Part II: The Sacraments: The Lord's Supper: LORD'S DAY 30

*** Q & A 80 Q. How does the Lord's Supper differ from the Roman Catholic Mass?**

The Lord's Supper declares to us
that our sins have been completely forgiven
through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ
which he himself finished on the cross once for all.¹

It also declares to us
that the Holy Spirit grafts us into Christ,²
who with his very body
is now in heaven at the right hand of the Father³
where he wants us to worship him.⁴

But the Mass teaches
that the living and the dead
do not have their sins forgiven
through the suffering of Christ
unless Christ is still offered for them daily by the priests.

It also teaches
that Christ is bodily present
in the form of bread and wine
where Christ is therefore to be worshiped.

Thus the Mass is basically
nothing but a denial
of the one sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ
and a condemnable idolatry.

¹ John 19:30; Heb. 7:27; 9:12, 25-26; 10:10-18

² 1 Cor. 6:17; 10:16-17

³ Acts 7:55-56; Heb. 1:3; 8:1

⁴ Matt. 6:20-21; John 4:21-24; Phil. 3:20; Col. 3:1-3

*Question and answer 80 were altogether absent from the first edition of the catechism but were present in a shorter form in the second edition. The translation here given is of the expanded text of the third edition.

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Q & A 81: Who are to come to the Lord's table?

Those who are displeased with themselves
because of their sins,
but who nevertheless trust
that their sins are pardoned
and that their continuing weakness is covered
by the suffering and death of Christ,
and who also desire more and more
to strengthen their faith
and to lead a better life.

Hypocrites and those who are unrepentant, however,
eat and drink judgment on themselves.¹

¹ 1 Cor. 10:19-22; 11:26-32

Q & A 82: Are those to be admitted to the Lord's Supper who show by what they say and do that they are unbelieving and ungodly?

No, that would dishonor God's covenant
and bring down God's anger upon the entire congregation.¹
Therefore, according to the instruction of Christ
and his apostles,
the Christian church is duty-bound to exclude such people,
by the official use of the keys of the kingdom,
until they reform their lives.

¹ 1 Cor. 11:17-32; Ps. 50:14-16; Isa. 1:11-17

Part II: The Sacraments: The Lord's Supper: LORD'S DAY 31

Q & A 83: What are the keys of the kingdom?

The preaching of the holy gospel
and Christian discipline toward repentance.
Both preaching and discipline
open the kingdom of heaven to believers
and close it to unbelievers.¹

¹ Matt. 16:19; John 20:22-23

Q & A 84: How does preaching the gospel open and close the kingdom of heaven?

According to the command of Christ:

The kingdom of heaven is opened
by proclaiming and publicly declaring
to all believers, each and every one, that,
as often as they accept the gospel promise in true faith,
God, because of what Christ has done,
truly forgives all their sins.

The kingdom of heaven is closed, however,
by proclaiming and publicly declaring
to unbelievers and hypocrites that,
as long as they do not repent,
the anger of God and eternal condemnation
rest on them.

God's judgment, both in this life and in the life to come,
is based on this gospel testimony.¹

¹ Matt. 16:19; John 3:31-36; 20:21-23

Q & A 85: How is the kingdom of heaven closed and opened by Christian discipline?

According to the command of Christ:

Those who, though called Christians,
 profess unchristian teachings or live unchristian lives,
and after repeated and loving counsel
 refuse to abandon their errors and wickedness,
and after being reported to the church, that is, to its officers,
 fail to respond also to their admonition –
such persons the officers exclude
 from the Christian fellowship
 by withholding the sacraments from them,
and God himself excludes them from the kingdom of Christ.¹

Such persons,
 when promising and demonstrating genuine reform,
are received again
 as members of Christ
 and of his church.²

¹ Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:3-5, 11-13; 2 Thess. 3:14-15

² Luke 15:20-24; 2 Cor. 2:6-11