

1. THE THREE MAJOR APPROACHES TO THE LORD’S SUPPER.

AFTER CONSECRATION, after the joining of the Word and promise of Christ to the earthly elements of bread and wine...

<i>ROMAN CATHOLIC</i>	<i>LUTHERAN</i>	<i>REFORMED</i>
No Bread, No Wine	Bread & Wine	Bread & Wine
“Changed Into”	“Is”	“Represents or Symbolizes”

- a. Roman Catholics believe that the substance of bread and wine are changed into the substance of body and blood of Christ, while the appearance of bread and wine remain. This doctrine is known as transubstantiation. *The substance has changed underneath.*
 - i. The Roman Catholic position says too much.
 - ii. Transubstantiation was not promulgated as doctrine in the Roman Catholic Church until 1215 A.D. at the Fourth Lateran Council.
 - iii. Transubstantiation led to avoidance of the Lord’s Supper by the people due to fear of committing sacrilege by spillage.
 - iv. Roman Catholic theologians reasoned that every body has blood in it and withdrew the cup—easily spilled—from the people.

- b. The Reformed or Protestant position maintains that bread and wine are present in the sacrament, but not the body or blood. The word used to describe this position is “symbolizes” or “represents.”
 - i. “Symbols” stand for something not present. It is said, “The body and blood are as close to us as heaven is from earth.” But if Christ is not really present, how can He convey the forgiveness of sins through this sacrament?
 - ii. When the forgiveness of sins is not the center of the sacrament any longer, then remembrance becomes the main emphasis in the Lord’s Supper.
 - iii. “Remember” in English implies mental recapturing of events long past and is used by the Reformed that way to refer to the Lord’s Supper, BUT the Old Testament word for “remember” – *zachar* —and the New Testament word—*anamnesis*—imply much more than mental activity.
 - 1. The Old Testament people were exhorted continually to remember the Exodus as God’s great act of salvation. *Zachar (Hebrew): Remember the Exodus. The event back there is why you are free now!*
 - 2. Both words imply the presence of the God (Christ) who wrought our salvation and the distributing of the benefits of that salvation now, in the present moment, as He is present in our midst.
 - 3. Christ said, “Do this in remembrance of Me.”
 - 4. What happened long ago impacts me in the here and now and not just by way of my intellect or emotions.
 - iv. If the Lord’s Supper is nothing more than a mental remembering of Christ

death for us, it need not be celebrated frequently.

- c. Christ said, “This is My Body,” not, “This symbolizes or represents or changes into My Body.”
 - i. The word “is” means exactly that—essential presence.
 - ii. “Symbolize” or “represents” destroys the Gospel in the Lord’s Supper because there is no promise left which we are summoned to believe.
 - iii. “Changes into” goes too far. If Christ had meant that, he could have said it directly. In practice, Christ’s word of promise can be disconnected from the elements.

- d. St. Paul’s account of the Lord’s Supper indicates the actual presence of Christ in the supper (1 Cor. 11:20ff).
 - i. The Lord’s Supper had been turned into an orgy of eating and drinking to excess in Corinth, neglecting the others in the body of Christ, particularly the poor.
 - ii. Paul reminds the Corinthians of what he had received and had taught them about the Lord’s Supper.
 - iii. 1 Cor. 11:27 — Paul refers to the consecrated bread and wine as “bread” and “wine.” They have not disappeared or been “changed into” (Roman Catholic position) something else.
 - iv. Paul also says abuse of the Supper means a “profaning of the body and blood of the Lord.” How do you profane something that is not present?
 - v. 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 — Christ is not present “in our minds” versus tangible reality, since Paul here talks about “sharing in the body and blood of Christ.”

- e. What makes Christ present in the sacrament? His Word and promise make Him present.
 - i. 1 Corinthians 11:28 indicates that Christ’s Real Presence is the issue in the Lord’s Supper, since failure to discern His Presence involves one in condemnation.
 - ii. In 1 Corinthians 11:30 Paul asserts that some are ill and some have died as a result of failing to discern Christ’s Presence and promise in the Supper.
 - iii. The offer of Christ’s Presence and forgiveness now incites faith in Him as our Savior. Mental remembering of past events does not necessarily imply our connection to the benefits of those events.
 - iv. The words “This is My Body” and “This is My Blood” are clear and simple as they stand.
 - v. Christ is present with us always as His people. The issue in the Lord’s Supper is what kind of presence, for what promised purpose He is present.

2. THE LUTHERAN UNDERSTANDING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

- a. The bread and wine remain, but at the same time we receive Christ's true body and blood with the mouth. Christ said, "Take, eat; Take, drink." How can you eat or drink a symbol?
- b. Lutherans describe Christ's Presence in the sacrament with the prepositions "in, with, and under." This is not scriptural, but drawn by inference.
 - i. "In the bread and wine" denies the Roman Catholic idea of transubstantiation.
 - ii. "Under" is intended to refute the Reformed denial of Real Presence.
 - iii. "With" states the Lutheran position of both bread and wine as well as Christ's body and blood being present in the sacrament.
- c. "Take, eat....take, drink" affirm that we really receive Christ through the mouth. God chose to work through this means of grace.
- d. What's the difference between the forgiveness spoken at the beginning of a worship service in confession and absolution and the forgiveness conveyed in the Lord's Supper?
 - i. In confession and absolution, general forgiveness is announced.
 - ii. The Lord's Supper seals that acceptance by God and forgiveness from Him to use personally.
 - iii. Praying for forgiveness brings forgiveness, but the Lord's Supper gives us a tangible sign of the reality of that forgiveness.
- e. Does the person receiving the Lord's Supper without believing the Christ's promise of His Real Presence still receive Christ's body and blood?
 - i. Yes, s/he does. Christ is present by Christ's Word and promise to be present. Our faith does not make Him present.
 - ii. The question here is whether we receive Him for our benefit or harm. St. Paul asserts the reception by all who attend (1 Cor. 11), but also asserts that Christ can be received in such a way as to profane Christ's body and blood.
 - iii. If Christ's being present depends on our understanding that Presence, we could also question whether Christ's cross atoned for us. That is not "reasonable" either. The cross itself is not reasonable. If we doubt, then we question His word to us.
- f. St. Paul's treatment of the abuses connected with the Lord's Supper in Corinth sheds light on many important points (1 Cor. 11:20ff).
 - i. 1 Corinthians 11:20 — It is possible to celebrate something we call the Lord's Supper that really isn't the Supper.
 - ii. The Corinthian abuse ignored the fellowship of the Body and its unity.
 - iii. 1 Corinthians 11:27 — Paul speaks of "unworthy" reception of the Lord's

- Supper.
- iv. Unworthy reception results in the “eating and drinking of judgment” on oneself.
 - v. “Unworthy” reception is the failure “to discern the body”; i.e., it is the failure to discern the real presence of Christ’s body and blood and also the failure to discern the spiritual reality of the fellowship of the Body of Christ.
- g. Unworthy reception is unbelief, rejecting Christ’s promise.
- i. Does sin, per se, make us “unworthy”? No; otherwise, no one could receive the Supper. Unrepented sin makes one unworthy.
 - ii. Unworthy reception results in “eating and drinking judgment” on one’s own head because it is a rejection of the promise.
 - iii. Any rejection of the Gospel promise results in judgment, whether in preaching, or the Lord’s Supper, or in any other setting. This is because the Gospel is God’s gift that brings relief from judgment.
- h. What does Paul mean by “examine himself”?
- i. This is not the inexorable self-searching for every conceivable sin and the attempt to enumerate them all. Sins grow up like weeds in the cracks in the sidewalk.
 - ii. Genuine repentance has two parts: the acknowledgment of sin and the grasping in faith of the promised forgiveness. Judas had the first, but never took the second.
 - iii. “Examine himself,” then, implies that we need to be aware of the need for forgiveness because of our sin and of Christ’s presence as the promise that we are forgiven and accepted.

3. THE BENEFITS OF THE LORD’S SUPPER AND PROPER PREPARATION FOR RECEPTION.

- a. Christ’s own words spell out the chief benefit: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.”
- b. Forgiveness of sins is a continuing relationship with God, not an event of the moment. The Lord’s Supper is the ongoing assurance that Christ continues to accept and cleanse us. ...Unlike the guy who tells his wife, “I told you I loved you once. That should be enough.”
- c. Christ in the supper not only gives us forgiveness of sins but also life and salvation. He gives us His eternal life and reaffirms that we are no longer under God’s wrath (salvation). Three benefits come in this meal: Forgiveness from our Lord’s mouth; Strengthening of faith; and Strengthening of love for one another.
- d. The Lord’s Supper strengthens our faith in God’s promises, our Christian living,

and our love for one another.

- e. It is the celebration of our unity and community. We should commune every time it is offered and we are present unless there is some grave reason not to partake.
- f. The eating and drinking do not convey the benefits of the Supper, per se. The word of promise conveys the benefits.
- g. We are properly prepared when we believe the promise. Rationalization leads to age requirements that are unusually high.
 - i. Fasting is an outward preparation, not spiritual preparation.
 - ii. To be properly prepared we need to be aware that we are frail human beings, sinful, need forgiveness, and have Christ's promise to be gracious and forgiving.
 - iii. The words "given and shed for you" both promise forgiveness and summon us to believe.

4. THE VARIOUS NAMES OF THE SACRAMENT.

- a. The Sacrament of the Altar is a name given by the Church to the Lord's Supper.
 - i. It stresses location. Baptism is not done "at the altar."
 - ii. The name conveys the insight that the Lord's Supper is for Christians; we do not allow the unbaptized and those who are not Christians to commune. "Holy things for holy people" is the Church's position from the Scriptures.
 - iii. The Lord's Supper's intended use is not to initiate faith but to strengthen existing faith.
 - iv. The altar is the focal point of worship. The Lord's Supper is our sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise, not a sacrifice for sin.
- b. The Lord's Supper or the Lord's Table emphasizes that this meal is not just any meal but was instituted and commanded by our Lord, Jesus Christ.
- c. Holy Communion stresses the holiness of this fellowship or community gathered around Jesus Christ by His word and command.
- d. Eucharist (Greek) describes the action of this Supper as a thanksgiving to God.
 - i. The penitential aspects should not be allowed to dominate the celebration of the Lord's Supper.
 - ii. In the eastern part of the world, table fellowship is the sign of open and free fellowship between those at table. Thus, Jesus Christ is the Host at this meal and freely accepts us into His fellowship. Eating with you is the highest compliment an "easterner" could give you. "He receives sinners and eats with them." (Luke 15)