

The Lord's Supper

1. Introduction - What Is A Sacrament?

- 1.1. Jesus gave two sacraments (or ordinances) to the church: water baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- 1.2. A sacrament is a special symbol given by God to His people that, when received in faith, serves as a sign and seal of His promises to us, functions as a means of grace to strengthen us, and through which we testify of our faith in Him and His promises.
 - 1.2.1. A sacrament is a symbol - something that represents something or someone else.
 - 1.2.1.1. Note that symbols are not the reality itself. If something is a symbol, it points to the reality, but it is not itself that reality.
 - 1.2.1.2. However, symbols are important. They do point to a reality beyond themselves.
 - 1.2.2. A sacrament is a special type of symbol - one that has the power to actually convey the benefits of the thing or person it signifies. It allows the recipient to participate in the thing signified.
 - 1.2.2.1. 1 Corinthians 10:16 ¹⁶ 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?
 - 1.2.2.2. Romans 6:3-4 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? ⁴ We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.
 - 1.2.3. A sacrament is a symbol given to us by God Himself. To be considered a sacrament for Christians, the symbol must have been instituted and commanded by Jesus Himself.
 - 1.2.3.1. Romans 4:11 And **he received the sign of circumcision**, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.
 - 1.2.3.2. Genesis 17:10-11 **This is my covenant with you** and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: **Every male among you shall be circumcised.** ¹¹ You are to undergo circumcision, and **it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you.**
 - 1.2.3.3. 1 Corinthians 11:23 For **I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you**: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread,

- 1.2.4. A sacrament must be received in faith (they do not work *ex opere operato*)
- 1.2.4.1. Romans 4:11–13 And he received the sign of circumcision, **a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith** while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them. ¹² And he is also the father of the circumcised **who not only are circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith** that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised. ¹³ **It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith.**
- 1.2.4.2. Hebrews 4:2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but **the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.**
- 1.2.4.3. Hebrews 11:6 And **without faith it is impossible to please God**, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
- 1.2.5. A sacrament is a sign and seal of God's promises to us. It is primarily about what God promises to do - not a pledge from us.
- 1.2.5.1. Romans 4:11 And **he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith** while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but have not been circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.
- 1.2.5.2. This also means that to be effective Sacraments must always be tied to the Word of God, which explains the sign and gives the promises that are sealed to us in the sign.
- 1.2.6. Sacraments are a means of grace to strengthen believers. Through them we actually participate in the thing signified so that we receive the grace of God.
- 1.2.6.1. 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 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?** ¹⁷Because there is one loaf, we, **who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.**
- 1.2.6.2. Romans 6:3–4 Or don't you know that **all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?** ⁴ We were therefore **buried with him through baptism into death** in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

- 1.2.7. Sacraments allow believers to pledge their faith and desire to walk in God's covenant. This is not the primary purpose of the sacrament, but it does allow us to respond to God's gracious promises and work in this way.
 - 1.2.7.1. 1 Timothy 6:12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when **you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**
 - 1.2.7.2. This is why in the NT water baptism is the first response of an obedient faith. The Sacrament of water baptism gives the new believer the way to pledge themselves to the Lord and to their new found faith of Christianity, and to give a covenant vow that they intend to walk in God's covenant.
 - 1.2.7.3. In fact, when the Latin church Tertullian first used the term sacrament to refer to water baptism and the Lord's Supper, he was borrowing the term that was used to speak of a soldier's vow of obedience. At least some of that meaning clearly remains in the use of the term to refer to our covenant ordinances.
- 1.3. Although water baptism and the Lord's Supper are both sacraments, there is a major difference in how often each is practiced by a Christian.
 - 1.3.1. Water baptism is the rite of initiation into the Christian faith. Like circumcision, to which it is likened, it happens only once at the beginning of our new life in Christ and our entrance into the people of God. It serves as a covenant initiation ceremony.
 - 1.3.1.1. Colossians 2:11–12 **In him you were also circumcised**, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with **the circumcision done by Christ, ¹² having been buried with him in baptism** and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead.
 - 1.3.1.2. Matthew 28:19–20 Therefore go and **make disciples** of all nations, **baptizing them** in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."
 - 1.3.1.3. Acts 2:38 Peter replied, "**Repent and be baptized**, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."
 - 1.3.2. The Lord's Supper, on the other hand is a continuing rite for Christians. Like the Passover meal on which it is based, it is meant to be participated in many times throughout our Christian lives. It serves as a covenant renewal ceremony.

1.3.2.1. 1 Corinthians 11:23–26 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.**

2. The Background of the Lord’s Supper

2.1. The Supper was instituted by Jesus for His followers.

2.1.1. Matthew 26:26–29 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.”

2.1.2. 1 Corinthians 11:23–25 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.”

2.2. The OT background of covenant meals

2.2.1. In the OT meals were sometimes used in covenant ceremonies to ratify the covenant between God and His people.

2.2.1.1. Exodus 24:9–11 Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders of Israel went up¹⁰ and saw the God of Israel. Under his feet was something like a pavement made of sapphire, clear as the sky itself.¹¹ But God did not raise his hand against these leaders of the Israelites; **they saw God, and they ate and drank.**

2.2.1.2. Deuteronomy 14:23, 26 **Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the Lord your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name**, so that you may learn to revere the Lord your God always.²⁶ Use the silver to buy whatever you like: cattle, sheep, wine or other fermented drink, or anything you wish. Then **you and your household shall eat there in the presence of the Lord your God and rejoice.**

- 2.2.1.3. The preeminent example of this is the Passover meal out of which the Lord's Supper is drawn.
- 2.2.1.3.1. Exodus 12:24–27 “Obey these instructions as **a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.** ²⁵ When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, **observe this ceremony.** ²⁶ And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ ²⁷ then tell them, ‘**It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.**’” Then the people bowed down and worshiped.
- 2.2.1.3.2. Exodus 13:6–10 For seven days eat bread made without yeast and on the seventh day hold a festival to the Lord. ⁷ Eat unleavened bread during those seven days; nothing with yeast in it is to be seen among you, nor shall any yeast be seen anywhere within your borders. ⁸ On that day tell your son, ‘**I do this because of what the Lord did for me when I came out of Egypt.**’ ⁹ This observance will be for you like a sign on your hand and a reminder on your forehead that the law of the Lord is to be on your lips. For the Lord brought you out of Egypt with his mighty hand. ¹⁰ **You must keep this ordinance at the appointed time year after year.**
- 2.2.1.3.3. 1 Corinthians 5:7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast — as you really are. **For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.**
- 2.2.1.3.4. Luke 22:13–20 They left and found things just as Jesus had told them. So they prepared the **Passover.** 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.

3. The Names and Meaning of the Lord's Supper

3.1. Names for our covenant meal

3.1.1. The Lord's Supper

- 3.1.1.1. 1 Corinthians 11:20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat...
- 3.1.1.2. This title emphasizes that this meal is related to and belongs to the Lord, and that via this meal we remember Him. It is His meal - and we are graciously invited to join.
- 3.1.1.3. This title also reminds us that we are not free to change this meal. We need to observe it just as it was handed down to us by Christ. Because it is the Lord's Supper - not ours - He determines how it is to be observed.

3.1.2. The Breaking of Bread

- 3.1.2.1. Matthew 26:26 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."
- 3.1.2.2. Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to **the breaking of bread** and to prayer.
- 3.1.2.3. Acts 20:7 **On the first day of the week we came together to break bread**. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight.
- 3.1.2.4. Most scholars agree that in Acts the phrase "breaking of bread" often refers to the Lord's Supper. It is quite clear that this is what is in view in Acts 2:42 and 20:7.
- 3.1.2.5. In fact, this seems to be Luke's favorite title for the Meal. He even alludes to it in the post-resurrection appearance of Jesus in Luke 24:35 "Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when **he broke the bread**."
- 3.1.2.6. This title emphasizes the action of breaking the bread, which symbolizes Jesus' body being broken for us. It also symbolizes that this meal feeds us spiritually, for bread is a universal symbol of the basis sustenance we need to live.
- 3.1.2.7. This title also answers why we use bread - and not something like cake or cotton candy - for this meal. It is bread which is the staff of life. It was bread which God fed Israelites in the wilderness to teach them that they did not live by bread alone, but by the Word of God (Deuteronomy 8:3), and it is bread that we use to remind ourselves that our life comes from Jesus - not just physical food.

3.1.3. The Christian Passover

- 3.1.3.1. 1 Corinthians 5:7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast — as you really are. **For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.**

- 3.1.3.2. As we saw above, our covenant meal is the new covenant version of the Old Covenant Passover meal.
 - 3.1.3.3. This title emphasizes that Christ's death caused God's wrath to pass over us. It reminds us that we are saved because the Passover Lamb was sacrificed in our place, bringing us into God's covenant people and delivering us from death.
 - 3.1.3.4. This title also reminds us that whatever else we may focus on as we celebrate this meal on a given Sunday, the death of Christ is always central. In this meal we celebrate all that His death has accomplished for us.
- 3.1.4. Communion
- 3.1.4.1. 1 Corinthians 10:16 (KJV) The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the **communion** of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the **communion** of the body of Christ?
 - 3.1.4.2. 1 Corinthians 10:16–17 (NIV) 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?
¹⁷Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.
 - 3.1.4.3. The Greek word translated “communion” in the KJV and “participation” in the NIV, ESV, and many other translations, is the word *koinonia*, which means to participate with, share, or fellowship.
 - 3.1.4.4. This name for the meal reminds us that it is a Sacrament and means of grace. Via these symbols we commune and participate with Jesus Himself. By faith we actually participate in and receive the benefits of Christ's body and blood broken and shed for us.
 - 3.1.4.5. Furthermore, as verse 17 shows, in communion we are reminded of our unity with all other Christians. As we partake of the one loaf together, we are reminded of the spiritual communion we have with one another. We are all one body.
 - 3.1.4.6. Consequently, this name also reminds us why this is a communal meal. We celebrate it as a community. “Self-communion” is an oxymoron.
- 3.1.5. The Table of the Lord
- 3.1.5.1. 1 Corinthians 10:21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both **the Lord's table** and the table of demons.
 - 3.1.5.2. This title, like the Lord's Supper, reminds us that this meal belongs to Christ.
 - 3.1.5.3. However, this title also reminds us that we are invited to table fellowship with Jesus. He is the host of the meal, and we have been invited to join in the feast He has prepared for us.

3.1.5.4. Finally, this title reminds us that as those who eat with Jesus, we are not to dine with demons. As His honored guests, we refuse the paltry meals offered by other hosts.

3.1.6. The Eucharist

3.1.6.1. The Greek word εὐχαριστέω (eucharisteo) means “to give thanks.” It is used in Jesus’ institution of the Lord’s Supper in all three Synoptic Gospels.

3.1.6.2. Luke 22:17, 19 After taking the cup, **he gave thanks** and said, “Take this and divide it among you...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.”

3.1.6.3. 1 Corinthians 11:23–24 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.”

3.1.6.4. This title is also used to refer to the Meal in an early Christian writing, the Didache: “Now concerning the Eucharist, give thanks as follows...” (Didache 9:1).

3.1.6.5. This title reminds us that in this meal we give thanks to God. This certainly includes giving thanks for Jesus death, burial, and resurrection for us, but it also includes thanksgiving for every gift we have received from God. Just as we should pray at every meal, so we here give thanks to God for all of our blessings. This has the added benefit of reminding us that we are not Gnostics - spiritual and physical blessing both come from God, and we give thanks to Him for both in a single breath.

3.2. The Meaning of the Lord’s Supper

3.2.1. Christ’s death

3.2.1.1. In this meal we celebrate Christ’s death for us.

3.2.1.2. 1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, **you proclaim the Lord’s death** until he comes.

3.2.1.3. This is also inherent in the titles the breaking of bread and the Christian passover.

3.2.2. Our participation in the benefits of Christ’s death

3.2.2.1. In this meal we receive the benefits of Christ’s death in our behalf.

3.2.2.2. 1 Corinthians 10:16 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?**

3.2.2.3. Matthew 26:26 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.**”

- 3.2.2.4. This is also inherent in the titles communion and the Christian Passover.
- 3.2.3. Spiritual nourishment
 - 3.2.3.1. In this meal we are nourished spiritually, so that we may grow strong and serve God.
 - 3.2.3.2. 1 Corinthians 10:16 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?**
 - 3.2.3.3. Matthew 26:26 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.**”
 - 3.2.3.4. John 6:53–57 Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. ⁵⁴ **Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life,** and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁵⁵ **For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink.** ⁵⁶ **Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him.** ⁵⁷ Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so **the one who feeds on me will live because of me.**”
 - 3.2.3.5. This is inherent in the titles communion and breaking of bread.
- 3.2.4. The unity of believers
 - 3.2.4.1. In this meal we are reminded that we are one with all believers, and the Spirit increases our unity with one another.
 - 3.2.4.2. 1 Corinthians 10:17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.
 - 3.2.4.3. This is inherent in the title communion.
- 3.2.5. Remembrance
 - 3.2.5.1. In this meal we remember Christ’s death for us.
 - 3.2.5.2. 1 Corinthians 11:23–25 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.**” (Also see Luke 22:19).
 - 3.2.5.3. This means that this meal is an affirmation of the actual historical reality of the life and death of Jesus Christ.

- 3.2.5.4. However, it is important to note that in the Scripture “remember” means more than just conjuring up a mental recollection. It really has the idea of re-enacting a historical event and by the re-enactment entering into the reality of the event and receiving its benefits. Notice this is how the Israelites treated the passover: Exodus 12:24–27 “Obey these instructions as **a lasting ordinance for you and your descendants.** ²⁵ When you enter the land that the Lord will give you as he promised, **observe this ceremony.** ²⁶ And when your children ask you, ‘What does this ceremony mean to you?’ ²⁷ then tell them, ‘**It is the Passover sacrifice to the Lord, who passed over the houses of the Israelites in Egypt and spared our homes when he struck down the Egyptians.**’” Note that these questions and answers were used by generations far removed from the actual events. Each Passover was a re-enactment of the original Passover, and a fresh appropriation of all it entailed.
- 3.2.5.5. Thus, when we remember Jesus’ death for us in the Meal, we are re-enacting the breaking of His Body and the pouring out of His Blood and receive a fresh appropriation of all the benefits it entails.
- 3.2.5.6. This does NOT mean that Christ is actually re-sacrificed during the Meal as is taught by the Roman Catholic Mass. Christ is no more re-sacrificed than the original Passover lambs were re-sacrificed. The Meal is a symbol - not the actual event. Furthermore, the Scripture is clear - Christ died ONCE for all (Hebrews 9:27). In fact, Hebrews 9-10 is replete with references to the fact that Christ died only once.
- 3.2.6. Christ’s resurrection and future return
- 3.2.6.1. This meal reminds us that Christ has been raised, and that one day He will return and we will celebrate the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.
- 3.2.6.2. Matthew 26:28–29 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.**”
- 3.2.6.3. 1 Corinthians 11:26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death **until he comes.**
- 3.2.6.4. Revelation 19:7–9 Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For **the wedding of the Lamb has come,** and his bride has made herself ready. ⁸ Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.” (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) ⁹Then the angel said to me, “Write: ‘Blessed are those who are invited to **the wedding supper of the Lamb!**’” And he added, “These are the true words of God.”

- 3.2.6.5. Note that Jesus stated He will drink the cup with us in the future kingdom. This presupposes the resurrection.
- 3.2.6.6. Furthermore, note that Paul says we will celebrate the Supper “until He comes.” This also anticipates the return of Christ to establish the kingdom and celebrate the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, as is prophesied in Revelation 19.
- 3.2.6.7. Thus every time we come to the Table we not only look back to Christ’s life and death for us - we also look forward to His return and the completion of our salvation.
- 3.2.6.8. This aspect of the Lord’s Supper gives a real note of joy and celebration to the Meal. He was dead because of our sins, but He is alive! And He will return to deliver us once and for all!

4. How is Christ Present in the Lord’s Supper?

4.1. Transubstantiation (the Roman Catholic view)

- 4.1.1. In this view the bread is miraculously transformed into the *actual* physical body of Jesus and the juice/wine is miraculously transformed into the *actual* physical blood of Jesus. This happens at the moment the priest declares “This is my body.”
- 4.1.2. This belief, which was codified during the Late Middle Ages and became official dogma at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215 and was further defined and ratified at the Council of Trent during the Reformation, is intricately tied with other Roman Catholic dogma. In particular, it is tied with the belief that the Mass is an actual re-sacrifice of Jesus on the cross each time it is celebrated. As noted above (in section 3.2.5.6 - Remembrance), this view is false, and it therefore undermines transubstantiation. Christ is NOT actually sacrificed during the Mass, and therefore it is not necessary for the elements to physically be transformed into His Body and Blood.
- 4.1.3. It should be noted that this belief is built on the Aristotelian dichotomy between the substantial (essence) and accidental (non-essential externalities) of a thing. This explains why even after transformation, the bread (and wine) still looks, feels, smells, and tastes like bread (and wine). The substance has been transformed, but the mere accidents of taste and feel remain the same.
- 4.1.4. The problem with this view is that it ignores the symbolic nature of sacraments. Even Roman Catholics do not argue that water baptism is the actual death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, or that the water is transformed into the actual tomb of Jesus. In water baptism, they recognize the essential distinction between the symbol (water) and the reality to which the symbol points (the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus from His tomb). This view confuses the symbol (bread and wine) with the reality to which the symbol points (body and blood of Jesus).

- 4.1.5. This view misunderstands Jesus words of institution, which were clearly meant to be understood symbolically. When Jesus told the disciples “This is my body” they clearly knew that the bread he was holding and the wine inside the cup were not LITERALLY the body and blood of Jesus - which they could still see sitting in front of them!
- 4.1.6. Another major problem with this view is that it undermines the real humanity of Jesus. If Jesus was really human, how did His body occupy two places at once? A real human body can not do this. Yet, according to this theory, His body did this on the night He instituted the Meal, and it does so every time the Eucharist is celebrated. Thus, this view actually undermines the real humanity of Christ.
- 4.1.7. Finally, in its relation to the Mass, this view focuses on what we do rather than what God offers. In the Mass, Christ is again offered to the Father by priest acting in behalf of the congregation. Thus, we offer Christ to God in our place. This utterly misses the true point of the Meal in which God offers Christ to us.
- 4.2. Consubstantiation (the Lutheran view)
 - 4.2.1. In this view, the bread and wine remain bread and wine, but Jesus’ actual body and blood come “in, with, and under” the elements. The elements do not get transformed into the body and blood of Christ, but the body and blood of Christ come to the elements and the sign (bread, wine) and the signified (body, blood) are coupled to one another.
 - 4.2.2. It should be noted that many Lutheran theologians reject the term “consubstantiation” because they think it suggest a local (circumscribed) presence of Christ’s body - which leads to a physical (even cannibalistic) eating of Christ which their official writings reject as “gross” and “carnal.” However, they do continue to maintain at the same time that Christ is not only fed upon spiritually but also “orally.” How “orally” is different than “physically” is not clear and is not defined further.
 - 4.2.3. Against the Roman Catholic view, the Lutheran view posits that the most important feature of the Supper is that God is giving to us. It is not a sacrifice we offer to God, but a gift He gives to us. The direction is from God to us - not from us to God.
 - 4.2.4. However, the same problems that undermine the Roman Catholic view of Christ’s physical presence in the elements really remains for the Lutheran view. If Christ has a real human body, how can it be present at all Christian churches observing communion at the same time? The answer usually given (divine omnipotence - Christ can do whatever He wants with His human body) does not satisfy, because it still undermines the real humanity of Christ that continues even in His exalted, ascended state.

- 4.3. Memorial/symbolism (the Zwinglian view)
 - 4.3.1. Ulrich Zwingli, a Protestant leader in Switzerland parted with both Roman Catholicism over the matter of Christ's Presence in the Lord's Supper. Zwingli did not want to link Christ's actual Presence to material object like bread and wine. For Zwingli, Christ was present only in His divinity and power - and the Supper did not offer any real feeding upon Christ.
 - 4.3.2. This view has become dominant in many branches of Protestantism, especially Baptists and Pentecostals.
 - 4.3.3. As usually happens, the position of Zwingli has undergone a change, and in many ways a radicalization, in the hands of his followers through the centuries. Some scholars even argue that Zwingli himself would not be consider a Zwinglian today!
 - 4.3.4. As it is practiced in many churches today, this position is so set against any doctrine of the real Presence of Christ in the Sacrament that some have quipped they have developed a doctrine of the real Absence - Christ is present everywhere EXCEPT in the sacrament! This is an obvious over-reaction to Roman Catholicism, and it fails to do justice to Paul's statement that the bread and cup are a "participation" in the body and blood of Christ. To reduce this to mere symbolism is to drain the words of all power and meaning.
 - 4.3.5. Furthermore, this view has developed to center the Supper around what the believer is doing, rather than what God is doing. Instead of Communion being primarily about God's covenant offer to us, in this view it is primarily about the believers mentally remembering the death of Christ and pledging to be faithful to Jesus. This ignores the fact that the words are about what is given for us and to us - not what we give.
- 4.4. Real Presence through the Holy Spirit (the Reformed view)
 - 4.4.1. Most of the Protestant Reformers did not follow Zwingli. Rather, they argued that Christ was present in a real way in the Sacrament. However, this Presence was not via transubstantiation or consubstantiation. Because of Christ's real humanity, His body could not come to many places at once - this would violate the Biblical teaching on Christ and also the ancient creeds. Instead, He was present via the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Rather than Christ coming down and filling the bread and wine, the Spirit, working through the bread and wine, carries believers to the exalted Christ.
 - 4.4.2. In this position, the meal is not simply a memorial or remembrance. Believers actually participate in Christ. And, like in Luther's view, the active agent is God, not the believer. That is, the primary feature of the meal is God's sealing of His covenant of grace, and His feeding of believers spiritually. It is about God making and keeping His promise, rather than about what believers are promising. This is more in line with the general purpose of a sacrament in the first place, and specifically more in line with the actual purpose of the Meal and Jesus' words - "given for you."

- 4.4.3. This view has the advantage of acknowledging the Real presence of Christ - without engaging in extra-biblical speculation about exactly how the believer feeds on Christ, which has inevitably led to unbiblical ideas like transubstantiation. And it has the advantage of not undermining the real humanity of Christ, yet teaching that Christ is truly present to the believer in a special way through the Sacramental Meal.
- 4.4.4. As you may have guessed, this is the view I hold.

The table below, adapted from Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith - A Systematic Theology for Pilgrims on the Way*, gives a helpful summary of the major positions on how Christ is present in the Meal (if at all) and who is the active agent in the Supper.

Eucharistic Views		
Eastern Orthodox	A meal in which believers feed on Christ's true body and blood for everlasting life through the work of the Spirit. <i>Primary Actor: the Triune God</i>	Transelementation
Roman Catholic	A sacrifice offered by the church to the Father. The bread and wine are transformed (in their essence/substance) by priestly action into the body and blood of Christ. <i>Primary Actor: the church/priest</i>	Transubstantiation
Lutheran	A meal in which all participants feed on Christ's true body and blood in the bread and in the wine for salvation. <i>Primary Actor: the Triune God</i>	True presence in the elements (often termed consubstantiation)
Reformed	A meal in which God ratifies His covenant of grace by feeding believers with Christ's true body and blood in heaven through the power of the Spirit. <i>Primary Actor: the Triune God</i>	True Presence in the Sacrament
Zwinglian (most non-Reformed, non-Anglican and non-Lutheran Protestants)	A meal in which believers pledge their continuing faith, love, and obedience to Jesus Christ and each other. <i>Primary Actor: the church/believer</i>	Memorial/symbolic (No real Presence of Christ in the Supper)

5. Who should participate in the Lord's Supper
 - 5.1. Only those who profess faith in Christ
 - 5.1.1. 1 Corinthians 11:29–30 ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.
 - 5.1.2. Only a believer can understand and participate in the Supper in faith, so it should be restricted to believers.
 - 5.1.3. This is also apparent from the background and meaning of the Supper as argued above:
 - 5.1.3.1. Since the Supper is the fulfillment of Passover, and since Passover was restricted to God's people (Israelites or those who had converted), then Communion should likewise be restricted.
 - 5.1.3.2. Since the Supper is the continuing rite of the Christian life, only those who are Christians should participate in it.
 - 5.1.3.3. Since the Eucharist is a thanksgiving for our participation in the benefits of Christ, and only Christians can give thanks for this, only Christians should participate.
 - 5.1.3.4. Since Communion is also about the unity of all believers, it is only appropriate for believers, since there is no spiritual unity between believers and unbelievers.
 - 5.1.3.5. Since the Meal looks forward to Christ's return, and only believers look forward to and proclaim this, it is a meal for only believers.
 - 5.2. Believers normally should be baptized and then participate in the Covenant Meal
 - 5.2.1. This arises from the nature of baptism as the initiatory rite of the Christian life and the Supper as the continuing rite of the Christian life. One should obviously get the initiatory rite at the beginning of the Christian life and then participate in communion.
 - 5.2.2. This is also seen from the fact that no uncircumcised male was allowed to eat of the Passover (see Exodus 12:48). They were to get circumcised and then eat. This should be the normal procedure in the church as well.
 - 5.2.3. However, since we do not have a direct command of Scripture regarding this, I would not be dogmatic on the point.
 - 5.2.4. Furthermore, if someone became a believer and there had been no chance for water baptism, I would not deny them the Supper. But I would work to get them baptized as soon as possible.
 - 5.2.5. If the church follows the Biblical pattern of baptizing new believers, this should not even be a real issue.
 - 5.3. Young children (especially those who have not yet been water baptized) should not participate in communion.
 - 5.3.1. 1 Corinthians 11:28–29 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.

- 5.3.2. A prerequisite to partaking of Communion is self-examination and an ability to understand the basics of communion. These things are beyond the capability of most young children.
- 5.3.3. Furthermore, since the meal is for professing believers, until a child has understood the Gospel, repented of sin and embrace Christ in faith they should not participate in the meal.
- 5.3.4. However, once a child has understood and responded to the Gospel, they should be water baptized and then begin participating in the Lord's Supper. For most kids raised in a Christian home, there is no reason to think this will not have happened by middle school. And a middle school aged child is able to meet the requirements for self-examination, confession, and to understand the basics of the Supper.
- 5.4. Those under church discipline should not participate
 - 5.4.1. If a Christian is placed under discipline by the elders of their church and they are told to not participate in communion, they should not eat the meal until the issue is resolved.
 - 5.4.2. If the believer thinks that the elders are discipling them unbiblically, they should make appeals in a biblical manner. If the issue can not be resolved, the believer will not be able to remain in that local church.
 - 5.4.3. However, believers must be very careful about ignoring such warnings and make sure that they are correct biblically, and elders should only use church discipline in rare, clear cases.
- 5.5. Does one have to be a member of a particular church to participate in communion at that church?
 - 5.5.1. Those who argue that only members in good standing in a particular local church should participate in that church say that it is impossible for elders to "guard" the Table from people taking in an unworthy manner if they do not know that the person is a believer. This is necessary to protect the purity of the church, to not allow the Sacrament to be profaned, and to protect those who would eat in an unworthy manner.
 - 5.5.2. However, this line of reasoning is unpersuasive to me for the following reasons:
 - 5.5.2.1. Elders are nowhere commanded to "guard" the Table.
 - 5.5.2.2. Individuals are told to examine themselves. We are never told to examine others and determine if they are worthy to eat.
 - 5.5.2.3. Elders should proclaim the biblical warnings, and tell people that the meal is only for Christians. If they have done this, it is up to the individual to heed the warnings.
 - 5.5.2.4. Since the meal is meant to display the unity of all believers, to restrict those who are not members of our local church is to undermine a key purpose of the meal.

- 5.5.2.5. The meal does not belong to the Church but to the Lord. If He has accepted someone as His child, why would the church refuse them the right to come eat at the Table where Christ has invited them?
- 5.5.2.6. The only exception is if it is known that an individual is not a believer, if they are known to be under valid church discipline, or if the individual is known to be engaging in ongoing, blatant, unrepentant sin for which they should be under church discipline.

6. Who can officiate over the Lord's Supper?

- 6.1. In many traditions, only ordained members of the clergy may officiate over the Lord's Supper. This is done either because only ordained clergy can transform the elements into the Body and blood of the Lord (Catholicism) or in order to protect the good practice of the Sacraments of the church.
- 6.2. However, Scripture does not restrict the administering of Sacraments to church officers. In fact, nothing is said about this regarding the Lord's Supper, and water baptism indicates that Paul rarely did baptisms, nor did Jesus, since each preferred to delegate this to others. Thus one should not be dogmatic about this point.
- 6.3. Furthermore, since there is no "clergy/laity" distinction in Scripture, maintaining such things may perpetuate unbiblical ideas. There is no reason to restrict leading communion to just the elders of the church.
- 6.4. However, we should also guard against the typical American anti-institutional, anti-authority, "no one can tell me what to do" mentality as well. Communion is for the church - not a lone individual. Any attitude that rejects this is unbiblical.

7. How often should we have Communion?

- 7.1. The Scripture does not prescribe a frequency, so one should not be dogmatic here.
- 7.2. However, given the immense benefits and promises see above, it would seem that a church should practice communion quite often.
- 7.3. Some churches, in order to focus the entire meeting around communion, only do it once a quarter. This does allow all of the elements to be given focus, and to give a lot of time to celebrating the Meal.
- 7.4. However, others do it more frequently - some even do it weekly. Although they do not go over all of the elements outlined above, each time they can focus on a different aspect, and given their greater frequency, all of the aspects will be covered over time. This method also has the advantage of causing the teaching to include Gospel and not just be a proclamation of Law. It is a real disjuncture to proclaim law and then come to the Table of Grace and Thanksgiving!
- 7.5. Personally, I prefer great frequency. I love coming to the Table! Some feel that this will make it a routine that loses its force, but this could be true of every part of worship - singing, prayer, teaching the Scripture. If those can be done weekly without becoming rote, there is no reason the same could not be done with the Lord's Supper.