

CHURCH OF THE REDEEMER

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Series:	The Heidelberg Catechism		Pastor/Teacher
Number:	56		Gary L.W. Johnson
Text:	I Corinthians 10:14-22		
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The Lord's Supper (Part IV)

29. Lord's Day

Question 79. Why then doth Christ call the bread "his body," and the cup "his blood," or "the new covenant in his blood;" and Paul the "communion of body and blood of Christ"?

Answer: Christ speaks thus, not without great reason, namely, not only thereby to teach us, that as bread and wine support this temporal life, so his crucified body and shed blood are the true meat and drink, whereby our souls are fed to eternal life; (a) but more especially by these visible signs and pledges to assure us, that we are as really partakers of his true body and blood by the operation of the Holy Ghost as we receive by the mouths of our bodies these holy signs in remembrance of him; (b) and that all his sufferings and obedience are as certainly ours, as if we had in our own persons suffered and made satisfaction for our sins to God.

(a) John 6:51 I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. John 6:55 For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. (b) 1 Cor. 10:16 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? 1 Cor. 10:17 For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.

30. Lord's Day

Question 80. What difference is there between the Lord's supper and the popish mass?

Answer: the Lord's supper testifies to us, that we have a full pardon of all sin by the only sacrifice of Jesus Christ, which he himself has once accomplished on the cross; (a) and, that we by the Holy Ghost are ingrafted into Christ, (b) who, according to his human nature is now not on earth, but in heaven, at the right hand of God his Father, (c) and will there be worshipped by us. (d) But the mass teaches, that the living and dead have not the pardon of sins through the sufferings of Christ, unless Christ is also daily offered for them by the priests; and further, that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine, and therefore is to be worshipped in them; so that the mass, at bottom, is nothing else than a denial of the one sacrifice and sufferings of Jesus Christ, and an accursed idolatry. (e)

(a) Heb. 7:27 Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. Heb. 9:12 Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. Heb.9:25 Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; Heb.9:26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the

world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Heb.9:27 And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: Heb.9:28 So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. Heb.10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. Heb.10:12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; Heb.10:13 From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. Heb.10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. John 19:30 When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. Matt.26:28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. Luke 22:19 And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Luke 22:20 Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. (b) 1 Cor.6:17 But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. 1 Cor.10:16 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? (c) Heb.1:3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; Heb.8:1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; Heb.8:2 A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. John 20:17 Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God. (d) Matt.6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: Matt.6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. John 4:21 Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. John 4:22 Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. John 4:23 But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. John 4:24 God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. Luke 24:52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: Acts 7:55 But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, Acts 7:56 And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Col.3:1 If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Philip.3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Philip.3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. 1 Thess.1:10 And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come. Heb.9:6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God. Heb.9:7 But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: Heb.9:8 The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: Heb.9:9 Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; Heb.9:10 Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. (e) Heb.9:26 For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. Heb.10:12 But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; Heb.10:14 For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Heb.10:19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, Heb.10:20 By a

new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; Heb.10:21 And having an high priest over the house of God; Heb.10:22 Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Heb.10:23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) Heb.10:24 And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Heb.10:25 Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. Heb.10:26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, Heb.10:27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. Heb.10:28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Heb.10:29 Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? Heb.10:30 For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. Heb.10:31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

I. THE REAL MEANING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

F.W. Bave writes, "The nature of the Lord's Supper is like the nature of Christ, however. The mind of man cannot grasp the simple yet unfathomable truth that as Christ is both human and divine, the Sacrament is both bread and body. The Holy Gospel is at stake here, for if the bread is the body, then Christ is present; and where Christ is present, there is forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. This the devil cannot abide. Nor can human thought abide such apposite mysteries and so tends to engage in extreme interpretations, either adding to Scripture or taking away. Concerning the nature of Christ, Arius took something away in emphasizing His human nature over the divine. Concerning the nature of the Sacrament, Radbertus added something by emphasizing the body over the bread. He claimed that the bread was *changed into* the body of Christ, a doctrine that came to be known as *transubstantiation*. Controversy raged, and able theologians such as Ratramnus defended the traditional, orthodox understanding of the Sacrament. But gradually the views of Radbertus gained acceptance, and the false doctrine was ratified by the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, reaffirmed by the Council of Trent in 1551, and continues to be taught in Rome today. Needless to say, this error opposes the Gospel; in fact, it borders on idolatry. Crowds would worship the consecrated host in the *Corpus Christi* processions. Superstitious people came to steal pieces of consecrated bread and take them home as talismans. Hence the development of individual communion wafers so widely used today. And the controversy concerning the Lord's Supper, once begun, has never been resolved."¹

1. The original meaning of the bread.

- "...take, eat, this is my body..." Does the bread ONLY represents the body of Christ? "J.W. Nevin insisted that 'any theory of the eucharist will be found to accord closely with the view that is taken, at the same time, of the nature of the union generally between Christ and his people.' This is certainly true of Calvin. The same concept of union lies at the heart of both his doctrine of redemption and his understanding of the Lord's Supper. Book 3 of the *Institutes* begins: '[A]s long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us. Therefore, to share with us what he has received from the Father, he had to become ours and to dwell within us.' This emphasis is reflected again in Calvin's discussion of the Lord's Supper in

Book 4: ‘Godly souls can gather great assurance and delight from this Sacrament: in it they have a witness of our growth into one body with Christ such that whatever is his may be called ours.’ For Calvin, the work of Christ was undertaken not simply in his Spirit but in his humanity, and therefore to participate in its benefits the believer has to partake of Christ’s humanity.”²

- “...*which is broken for you...*” Representing the suffering, the injury, the death which the body of Jesus went through as He was the substitute in suffering for the sins of mankind.
- “... *this do in remembrance of me...*” Taking the bread is to REMEMBER all that Christ did for mankind and continues to do.
- The bread is not magical, it does not turn into the actual flesh and body of Jesus, it is to ONLY remind us of what Jesus went through physically for us.

2. The original meaning of the cup.

- “... *this cup is the new testament in my blood...*” The old testament covenant was set aside for the new covenant which Jesus bought based on Christ’s blood, not the blood of animals as was the old testament covenant.
- “... *this do ye, as oft as ye drink it...*” We are to do what Jesus did and for the same reason. We are to set aside a special time, take the cup, bless it, and drink it. *There is no required time, no frequency given, just set aside a time for the cup.
- “... *in remembrance of me...*” There is but ONE purpose for the Lord’s Supper – ONLY ONE and that is to focus attention upon what the Lord Jesus has done for us and the rest of mankind.

3. The original, the real meaning of the Lord’s supper is to show, proclaim, to preach, to declare, to announce the Lord’s death, the Lord’s coming return, what He has done, what He shall do for us and all believers. IT IS A TIME OF REMEMBRANCE.

CONCLUSION: Calvin wrote, “If this power of the sacrament had been investigated as it should have been, we would have every reason to be satisfied, and there would not have arisen the dreadful conflicts which have so greatly plagued the church, both in earlier times and even now in living memory when inquisitive men seek to define *how* Christ’s body is present in the bread. As if this were something worth arguing about, at the cost of so fierce a clash of words and books! That indeed is how the question is normally approached. But those who do so fail to see that we must first inquire how Christ’s body which was given up for us is made ours, and how his blood is made ours having been shed for us. For to know that his body and blood were made ours in this way is to possess the whole of Jesus Christ crucified and to share in all his blessings. As it is now, these things are overlooked or rather scorned and almost buried, though they are of great weight and consequence. One thorny question alone is in dispute: how Christ’s body is swallowed and consumed by us!

“However, since amid so many different opinions God’s sole and certain truth remains to us, let this be our first thought: the sacrament is something spiritual, by which our Lord chose to feed not our bellies but our souls. There let us look for Jesus Christ, not for our body’s sake nor as if our carnal minds could grasp him, but so that the soul might see him immediately given and offered to it. In a word, let us be content to possess him spiritually, for then we will have him as our life, which is to receive all the fruit that we can possibly derive from the sacrament.

“Once we have carefully turned this over in our minds, we will readily understand how the body of Jesus Christ is presented to us in the sacrament. However, to rid ourselves of every scruple which, given the diversity of opinions, easily entangles the minds of the simple, let us first explain in what sense the bread is called Christ’s body and the wine, his blood. After that, let us consider what kind of communion in his body and blood our Lord gives to his people in the Supper.”³

¹ F.W. Bave, *The Spiritual Society: What Lurks Beyond Postmodernism?* (Crossway, 2001), p. 108.

² **Ralph Cunningham**, “Calvin’s Doctrine of the Lord’s Supper: A Blot Upon His Labors as a Public Instructor?” *Westminster Theology Journal*, vol. 73, No. 2, Fall 2011 (p. 215). G.C. Berkouwer points out, “Already in 1887 Bavinck pointed to the characteristic element of Calvin’s doctrine of the Supper, when he said that he was struck by Calvin’s emphasis on the real presence. ‘He can hardly find words powerful enough to show that he adheres to the real, essential, veracious presence of Christ’s body and blood in the Lord’s Supper.’ Bavinck, too, declares that the difference between Calvin and his Lutheran and Roman Catholic opponents lies in the manner of that presence. To be sure, Calvin calls the physical, spatial presence ‘spiritual,’ but his opponents interpret this incorrectly as unreal and imaginary, as a presence that exists only in the believing subject or in man’s imagination. Calvin was not satisfied with Zwingli’s view that the Lord’s Supper provides no other communion with Christ than the benefits obtained for us at the cross. According to Calvin, says Bavinck, there was a still deeper communion, ‘a communion not only of the benefits, but with the person of Christ himself, with his own flesh and blood.’ It is thereby not just a matter of the power that flows from the crucified body to the believers, as Calvin’s opponents have it, but a matter of the communion with Christ’s person, a hidden but very real communion. It is not a matter of his power, but of himself. Calvin rejects the dilemma between physical-spatial presence (Lutherans) and the presence in the ‘spirit’ (Zwingli). He rejects both Roman Catholic realism and Zwinglian spiritualism and reaches far beyond these two. It is a communion with Christ through the efficacy of the Holy Spirit. This communion is not something new, as if it was not given until the Lord’s Supper; but it is signified, confirmed and strengthened in the Lord’s Supper. And thus, says Bavinck, this doctrine has also entered the Reformed confessions.” *Studies in Dogmatics: The Sacraments* (Eerdmans, 1969), p. 275.

³ *Institutes of the Christian Religion: Calvin’s Own ‘Essentials’ Edition*, trans. Robert White (Banner of Truth, 2014), p. 626.