

The Sacraments

The Lord's Supper

What is a sacrament?

“A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, in which by **sensible signs** the grace of God in Christ is represented, *sealed*, and applied to believers, and they, in turn, express their faith and obedience to God”

-- Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Theology*

The Passover Meal

“It was a night of watching by the LORD, to bring them out of the land of Egypt; so this same night is a night of watching kept to the LORD by all the people of Israel throughout their generations. And the LORD said to Moses and Aaron, ‘This is the statute of the Passover: no foreigner shall eat of it,’”

(Ex 12:42-43)

Old Testament Sacrificial Meals

“¹⁵ And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten on the day of his offering. He shall not leave any of it until the morning. ¹⁶ But if the sacrifice of his offering is a vow offering or a freewill offering, it shall be eaten on the day that he offers his sacrifice, and on the next day what remains of it shall be eaten.”

(Lev 7:15-16)

“While Israel lived in Shittim, the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab. ² These invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods”

(Num 25:1-2).

Old Testament Covenant Meals

“Then Laban said to Jacob, “See this heap and the pillar, which I have set between you and me. ⁵² This heap is a witness, and the pillar is a witness, that I will not pass over this heap to you, and you will not pass over this heap and this pillar to me, to do harm. ⁵³ The God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father, judge between us.” So Jacob swore by the Fear of his father Isaac, ⁵⁴ and Jacob offered a sacrifice in the hill country and called his kinsmen to eat bread. They ate bread and spent the night in the hill country.”

(Gen 31:51-54)

“⁵lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, and when they whore after their gods and sacrifice to their gods and you are invited, you eat of his sacrifice..”

(Ex 34:5)

Exodus 24:3-11 [excerpted]

“Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do.”⁴ And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel.⁵ And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD.⁶ And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar.⁷ Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient.”⁸ And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “**Behold the blood of the covenant** that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.” Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up,¹⁰ and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness.¹¹ And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; **they beheld God, and ate and drank.**”

Matthew 26:17-29:

Passover; Sacrificial Meal; Covenant Meal

“Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, ‘Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?’”

“And the disciples did as Jesus had directed them, and they prepared the Passover.”

“Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body.’²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ ***for this is my blood of the covenant,*** which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’”

Meaning of the Lord's Supper: *Remembrance*

“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when 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 also he took the cup, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in **remembrance** of me.’

-- 1 Corinthians 11:23-25

Meaning of the Lord's Supper: *Proclamation*

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you ***proclaim*** the Lord's death until he comes.”

-- 1 Corinthians 11:26

Meaning of the Lord's Supper: *Participation* [‘sharing’; ‘communion’]

“I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶ The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a ***participation*** in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a ***participation*** in the body of Christ? ¹⁷ Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all ***partake*** of the one bread.”

-- 1 Corinthians 10:15-17

Controversy over the Supper

- Who should partake?
- How does it relate to Christ's physical body?

Who Should Partake?

- In the late medieval period in the West, only the *priest* partook.
- Among the radical reformers of Calvin's day, and among some in our own, both *believers* and their *children* partake. (Often called *paedo-communion*.)

“Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. ²⁹ For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. ³⁰ That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died.”

1 Corinthians 11:27-30

Who Should Partake?

Do we wish anything plainer than the apostle's teaching when he exhorts each man to prove and search himself, then to eat of this bread and drink of this cup? A self-examination ought, therefore, to come first, and it is vain to expect this of infants... None of these things is prescribed in baptism. Accordingly, there is a very great difference between these two signs, as we have noted in like signs also under the Old Testament. Circumcision, which is known to correspond to our baptism, had been appointed for infants. But the Passover, the place of which has been taken by the Supper, did not admit all guest indiscriminately guests, but was duly eaten only by those who were old enough to be able to inquire into its meaning. If these men had a particle of sound brain left, would they be blind to a thing so clear and obvious?

-- John Calvin, *Institutes*, IV: XVI, 30

How Does It Relate to Christ's Physical Body?

- The use of metonymy
 - “The lamb is the Passover”
 - “I am the door”
- Christ's words, “This is...” were spoken while he was with them bodily.
- Christ is present in heaven (John 14:12, 28; 16:7)
 - “...that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, ²¹ whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago” (Acts 3:20a-21)
 - “But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself” (Phil 3:20-21).
- It is clearly explained as a “participation”

WSC 96, 97

Q. 96. *What is the Lord's supper?*

A. The Lord's supper is a sacrament, wherein, by giving and receiving bread and wine according to Christ's appointment, his death is showed forth; and the worthy receivers are, not after a corporal and carnal manner, but by faith, made partakers of his body and blood, with all his benefits, to their spiritual nourishment and growth in grace.

Q. 97. *What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's supper?*

A. It is required of them that would worthily partake of the Lord's supper, that they examine themselves of their knowledge to discern the Lord's body, of their faith to feed upon him, of their repentance, love, and new obedience; lest, coming unworthily, they eat and drink judgment to themselves.

“A sacrament is a holy ordinance instituted by Christ, in which by **sensible signs** the grace of God in Christ is represented, *sealed*, and applied to believers, and they, in turn, express their faith and obedience to God”
-- Louis Berkhof, *Manual of Christian Theology*

Sign

- The death of the Lord Jesus Christ
- The believer's participation with Christ
- The union of believers with each other

Seal

- Christ's great love of his people
- Christ's provision for his people
- Christ's return for his people

“So then, let us recognize, when now the Supper is offered to us, that our Lord Jesus wishes that we might find all our goodness in Him, He draws near to us through His goodness. It is true that He does not leave His heavenly glory, He need not descend here below (as the Papists imagine) to communicate to us His body and His blood, but although we are far away from Him, yet He does not cease to feed us with His body and His blood.”

-- John Calvin