

Article 9: Ordinances \ Sacraments

We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ has ordained two sacramental signs or gospel ordinances to be observed by His community of faith until He comes again (Matthew 28:18-20; Luke 22:19; 1 Cor.11:23-26). They are immersion in water of penitent believers in the name of the triune God upon confession of their faith in the person and saving work of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:38; 8:34-39; Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:11-12; 1 Pet. 3:21) and the sacred eating of bread and drinking of the cup (fruit of the vine) in remembrance of his atoning sacrifice for sin. These holy rites are a visible sign of the grace of God in Jesus Christ on behalf of his people and of his pledged word of forgiveness, as well as the ratifying acts of faith by which the believer is publicly identified with Christ in his saving work.

Brief Confession: *We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are two gospel ordinances observed by the believers to signify spiritual union with the Lord Jesus Christ in His saving deeds.*

The Sacraments (Q. 65-68)

Orthodox Catechism (Baptist Heidelberg)

Question 65:

It is by faith alone that we share in Christ and all his blessings: where then does that faith come from?

Answer:

The Holy Spirit produces it in our hearts (a) by the preaching of the holy gospel, (b) and confirms it through our use of the holy sacraments.(c)

(a) John 3:5; 1 Cor. 2:10-14; Eph. 2:8

(b) Rom. 10:17; 1 Pet. 1:23-25

(c) Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 10:16

Question 66:

What are sacraments?

Answer:

Sacraments are holy signs and seals for us to see. They were instituted by God so that by our use of them he might make us understand more clearly the promise of the gospel and might put his seal on that promise. (a) And this is God's gospel promise: to forgive our sins and give us eternal life by grace alone because of Christ's one sacrifice finished on the cross. (b)

(a) Gen. 17:11; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 4:11

(b) Matt. 26:27-28; Acts 2:38; Heb. 10:10

Question 67:

Are both the word and the sacraments then intended to focus our faith on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross as the only ground of our salvation?

Answer:

Right! In the gospel the Holy Spirit teaches us and through the holy sacraments he assures us that our entire salvation rests on Christ's one sacrifice for us on the cross. (a)

(a) Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 11:26; Gal. 3:27

Question 68:

How many sacraments did Christ institute in the New Testament?

Answer:

Two: baptism and the Lord's Supper.(a)

(a) Matt. 28:19-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-26

(b)

Baptist Larger Catechism

Q. 161. How do the sacraments become effective means of salvation?

A. The sacraments become effective means of salvation, not by any power in them or by any inherent potency coming from the devoutness or the intention of whoever administers them, but rather by the working of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of Christ, who established them.¹

1. 1 Pt 3.21, Acts 8.13,23, 1 Cor 3.6-7, 6.11, 12.13.

Q. 162. What is a sacrament?

A. A sacrament is a holy regulation established by Christ in his church¹ as a sign, seal, and outward display² to those within the covenant of grace³ of the benefits they have from Christ's mediation.⁴ It serves to strengthen and increase their faith and all other graces in them;⁵ it obliges them to obey God⁶ and to witness to and cherish their love and fellowship with each other;⁷ and it distinguishes them from those outside the covenant.⁸

1. Gn 17.7,10, Ex 12, Mt 28.19, 26.26-28.

2. Rom 4.11, 1 Cor 11.24-25.

3. Rom 9.8, 15.8, Ex 12.48, Gal 3.27,29, 5.6, 6.15.

4. Acts 2.38, 22.16, 1 Cor 10.16.

5. Rom 4.11, Gal 3.27, 1 Cor 11.24-26.

6. Rom 6.3-4, 1 Cor 10.21.

7. Eph 4.2-5, 1 Cor 10.17, 12.13.

8. Eph 2.11-12, Gn 34.14, 1 Cor 10.21.

Q. 163. What are the parts of the sacrament?

A. There are two parts of the sacrament. One is the external, physical sign used according to Christ's own directions. The other is the internal, spiritual grace signified by the external use.¹

1. Gn 17.10, Mt 3.11, 26.27-28, 1 Pt 3.21, Rom 2.28-29, Ti 3.5.

Q. 164. How many sacraments has Christ established in his church under the New Testament?

A. Under the New Testament, Christ has established in the church only two sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper.¹

1. Mt 28.19, 1 Cor 11.20, 23-26, Mt 26.26-28.

Definitions of Sacraments or Gospel Ordinances

John Calvin wrote that *a sacrament is "an outward sign by which the Lord seals on our consciences the promises of his good will toward us in order to sustain the weakness of our faith; and we in turn attest our piety toward him in the presence of the Lord and of his angels and before men."*

French Confession

We believe that the sacraments are joined to the Word so that it may be more fully confirmed. The sacraments are pledges to us and seals of God's grace, giving needed aid and comfort to our faith because of our weakness and immaturity. We believe that the sacraments are outward signs through which God works in the truth of his Spirit, and we know that what they signify is not in vain. At the same time, we hold that their substance and power are in Jesus Christ alone; apart from him, they are nothing more than shadow and smoke.

New City Catechism Q 43

What are the sacraments or ordinances?

The sacraments or ordinances given by God and instituted by Christ, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper, are visible signs and seals that we are bound together as a community of faith by his death and resurrection. By our use of them the Holy Spirit more fully declares and seals the promises of the gospel to us.