

## Westminster Shorter Catechism Study

### Session 44

**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 for 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.**

Luke 22:19 And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

20 Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.

1 Cor. 11:23 For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread;

24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.

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?

17 For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.

1 Cor. 11:27 Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.

28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

29 For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body.

30 For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.

31 For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.

The first recorded celebration of the Lord's Supper was when Christ first instituted it in the upper room (Mat. 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19). In this act of Christ's we have a visible reminder of His incredible love for His sheep, for we must remember that even as He was contemplating the incredible sacrifice He was to make on the Cross, He was appointing this sacrament to be perpetually observed in His Church, until His return, as a means of grace by which His people might have their faith strengthened and grown.

**The purposes of the Lord's Supper are fourfold:**

**Firstly**, by its observance we remember the awesome sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf, willingly laying down His life to make atonement for our sins and establish our righteousness.

**Secondly**, it is a seal of the Covenant of Grace, whereby Christ obliges Himself to fulfill the promise of the covenant to true believers and that by their receiving this seal, they oblige themselves to be the Lord's, and to be true and faithful unto Him.

**Thirdly**, as we have mentioned, it is a means of grace so that just as bread and wine physically nourish our body, the Lord's Supper has been appointed as a means of spiritual nourishment and growth in Christ to those who partake of it in faith.

**Fourthly**, it is bond and pledge of the believers' communion with Jesus, and with each other, as members of His mystical body.

The elements of the Bread and Wine do not physically become the body and blood of Jesus Christ when they are set apart by a minister in the Lord's Supper, and yet, we have the assurance of Christ that He is spiritually present to the faith of believers in the Supper, so that when they outwardly partake of the bread and the wine they also inwardly, by faith, spiritually receive and feed upon Christ crucified, and all of the benefits of His death upon their behalf.

The Supper is only rightly observed when it is celebrated before the congregation and is thus properly described as the communion of the church. It is not rightly observed when the elements are carried to someone who did not participate in the service, or when it is celebrated privately.

This Sacrament is always a blessing to those true believers who receive it in faith, but for those who are outside the body of the Lord, who unworthily come to the table, it is a curse (1 Cor. 11:29). For this reason it is required that those wishing to partake first enter into the visible church of Jesus Christ and be examined and approved by the elders, whose concern is for their spiritual welfare.

### On Whether We Should Use Leavened or Unleavened Bread

There is a common misunderstanding among many churches that the kind of bread we use in communion should be unleavened. The biblical data does not support this position however, and the Old School Presbyterian consensus was always that the common leavened bread of our every-day use was the element we should be using at the Lord's Supper.

Leaven itself is not sinful, even in the Old Testament it was used in the worship of the Lord. In Lev. 7:13 and Lev. 23:16-17 worshippers were commanded to bring sacrifices of leavened bread to the Temple. In the New Testament, leaven was used as an analogy for the gospel and the spread of the kingdom (Matt. 13:33, Luke 13:21) Although the Apostles were instructed by Christ to avoid the leaven of the Pharisees, Herodians, and Saducees, which was a reference to their doctrine and hypocrisy (Matthew 16:11-12, Mark 8:15, Luke 12:1), nowhere in the NT are believers instructed to avoid the leaven of bread or observe the Passover. The ceremonial avoidance of leaven in the Passover was one of the signs and shadows of the Old Testament and a part of the ceremonial law which Jesus fulfilled. It is bread and wine as ordinary elements that have an abiding value on earth and in heaven.

While there are several uses of the word Azumos (unleavened Bread) in the NT none of them refer to the bread used in the Lord's Supper, but rather they are either references to the feast of unleavened bread (Matthew 26:17, Mark 14:1, Mark 14:12, Luke 22:1, Luke 22:7, Acts 12:3, Acts 20:6) or an analogy for a congregation purging out sin from their midst and walking in holiness (1 Corinthians 5:8).

In all other places that the word "bread" occurs in the NT, it is the Greek word Artos meaning a loaf of common leavened bread. While this doesn't necessarily mean that Jesus was using leavened bread after the Last Supper (this is highly unlikely) it means that all the gospel writers didn't regard the use of unleavened bread to be important enough to record, something that they surely would have had it been an essential component like the prayer before the distribution of the elements, especially considering their letters and gospel accounts were being read primarily by Gentiles who normally used leavened bread for all their meals.

Quotes from Reformed Commentators:

**Charles Hodge:** "Took bread. Matthew 26:26 , it is said, " as they were eating, " i.e. during the repast, " Jesus took bread, " that is, he took of the bread lying on the table; and as it was at the time of the Passover, there is no doubt that the bread used was unleavened. It was the thin Passover bread of the Jews. But as no part of the significancy of the rite depends on the kind of bread used, as there is no precept on the subject, and as the apostles subsequently in the celebration of the ordinance used ordinary bread, it is evidently a matter of indifference what kind of bread is used. It was however for a long time a subject of bitter controversy. At first the Latins and Greeks used leavened bread; when the Latins introduced the unleavened wafer from superstitious fear of any of the fragments being dropped, the Greeks retained the

use of fermented bread, and accused the Latins of Judaizing. Romanists and Lutherans use unleavened wafers; Protestants generally ordinary bread.”

**Wilhelmus A’Brakel:** “One is to be neither superstitious nor concerned regarding the kind of bread and wine.”

**A.A. Hodge:** “2nd, from the significancy of the symbol; since bread, as the principal natural nourishment of our bodies, represents his flesh, which, as living bread, he gave for the life of the world.— John 6:51 . But the kind of bread, whether leavened or unleavened, is not specified in the command, nor is it rendered essential by the nature of the service.”

**Morton Smith:** “ It is evident, however, from the apostolic history, that the Apostles used whatever kind of bread was at hand. ... There have been controversies over this matter. The Greek Church uses only leavened bread, as the common bread of the table. The Roman Church, on the other hand, insists on unleavened bread. The Lutheran Church earlier used only unleavened bread, but in their more recent writers, it is considered a matter of indifference. Reformed Churches, together with the Church of England and the Baptist Churches, also consider the type of bread a matter of indifference.”

**R.L. Dabney:** “But it was not Christ’s intention to give ritually a paschal character to the new sacrament; and bread is employed as the material element of nutrition, the one most familiar and universal. Hence, we regard all the disputes as to leaven, and the other minutiae made essential by the Romanist rubric (wheaten, mingled with proper water, not worm–eaten, etc.,) as non–essential. Probably the wine was also mingled with water on the first occasion; but, on the same grounds, we regard it as selected simply as the most common and familiar refreshment of the human race; and the presence of water is therefore non–essential. Indeed, modern chemistry has shown that, in all wine, water is the solvent, and the largest constituent.”

**C.H. Spurgeon:** “there is nothing said in Scripture about the use of leavened or unleavened bread, and therefore it matters not which we use. Where there is no ordinance, there is no obligation; and we are, therefore, left free to use the bread. which it is our custom to eat.”

**Calvin, Institutes:** “whether the bread is leavened or unleavened; the wine red or white - it makes no difference. These things are indifferent, and left at the church’s discretion.”

**A Historical example of how disputes about this matter have damaged churches, from Theodore Beza:**

*“In the mean while Satan, using every exertion to subvert entirely the church erected at Geneva, which had been shaken to its very foundation, found in a short time some idle characters, who, for the purpose of concealing the great iniquity of the decree under the pretext of religion, determined that unleavened bread should be substituted for common, formerly used at the Lord’s table, with a view to afford an opportunity for fomenting new dissensions. And the great enemy of the Church would have succeeded in this plan, had*

*not Calvin seriously admonished some good men, so displeased with the change as to consider it their duty to refrain from taking the Lord's Supper, not to contend about a subject in itself indifferent. The use of unleavened bread commenced in the manner now stated, nor did Calvin on his future restoration think it worth while to make any opposition to the practice, though he did not attempt to conceal his approval of the use of common bread."*

### **On Whether to Use Wine**

The Apostolic Church used **wine** in the Lord's Supper:

**1 Cor. 11:20** Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.

**21** For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk.

#### ***But isn't wine bad in and of itself?***

There is no prohibition in the Bible against the making, selling, and consumption of alcoholic beverages. In fact, wine is spoken of as a good gift from God that makes the hearts of men glad (Psalm 104:15). There are certainly prohibitions against becoming drunk (Eph. 5:18) but here the onus is upon the consumer, not the drink or the seller thereof.

In this issue those who disapprove of alcohol are what Paul called the weaker brother (Romans 14:21), as they happen to believe that something that is not implicitly sinful is. Now it would be sinful for them to go against their own consciences and drink, and it also would be an abuse of one's own Christian liberty to flaunt it by say, insisting on drinking at the dinner table of a weaker brother or sister, but it would also be sinful for them to attempt to command you either not to drink or not to sell alcohol – this in fact is the critical dividing line between weaker party and the legalist. Here we should be guided by the Bible and our Confessional Standards. Here is what the Westminster Confession of Faith says on the issue of Christian Liberty:

***"II. God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are, in anything, contrary to his Word; or beside it, if matters of faith, or worship. So that, to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commands, out of conscience, is to betray true liberty of conscience: and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience, and reason also."***

***[Westminster Confession, Chapter 20, section 2]***

The Bible is literally full of references that make it clear that Christ and the early Christians drank (or in the case of the wedding feast at Cana in John 2 made) wine:

Here a contrast is drawn between Christ and John the Baptist:

"For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine, and you say, 'He has a demon.' The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and you say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and "sinners.'""

(Luke 7:33-34)

The Pharisees are shown to be hypocrites because they refuse to accept the man who didn't drink alcohol (John) and the man who did (Christ) – the analogy would have broken down if Christ didn't actually drink.

"Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain." (1 Tim 3:8) Note the word "much" (*Grk: polus – many, much, large quantities*) Paul could clearly have said "any" if he had wanted to.

"Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses." (1 Tim 5:23) Do we really believe that Paul would have encouraged Timothy to sin merely for the sake of a stronger constitution?

Many Christians have attempted to assert that these are references to "Grape juice". This is patently impossible.

1) Grape Juice either spoils or ferments. In the heat of Palestine this process didn't take long. Beverage grape juice wasn't commonly available until T.B. Welch produced his famous pasteurized grape juice in 1869.

2) The word used in the Greek is Oinos meaning "wine" (i.e. fermented) there is a word implying just the newly squeezed juice, but it isn't used.

3) How odd that we would never be instructed that this "sin" is a sin.

4) "Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved." (Matthew 9:17) Why do the wineskins burst? Because of the gasses produced because the new wine is fermenting.

"And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for he says, 'The old is better.'" (Luke 5:39) Old "Juice"? No. Only wine gets better with age. The church must be concerned with the abuse of alcohol and speak out against drunkenness, but to attempt to enforce a blanket prohibition against alcoholic beverages is actually to take a position in which one is in effect saying, "My standard needs to be higher than that of Paul and Jesus."

### ***How did the common evangelical practice of using grape juice originate?***

Although prohibitionists in American society were already opposed to any use of beverage alcohol, the church did not have an alternative to wine until Thomas Bramwell Welch – (December 31, 1825 – 1903) a member of the Wesleyan Methodist Conexion and staunch prohibitionist, invented the pasteurization

process to prevent the fermentation of grape juice. In 1869 Welch invented a method of pasteurizing grape juice so that fermentation was stopped, and the drink was non-alcoholic. He persuaded local churches to adopt this non-alcoholic "wine" for communion services, calling it "Dr. Welch's Unfermented Wine." His son Charles went on to launch the famous Welch's Grape Juice Company.

### **ADDENDUM – The Two Issues That Came Up Last Week –**

1) *How Many Times Should We Pray During the Celebration of the Lord's Supper?*

2) *Paedocommunion*

**1) How Many Times Should We Pray During the Celebration of the Lord's Supper?** My typical practice when celebrating the Lord's supper (and indeed the one in the PCA book of church order) is to pray ONCE in setting apart both the bread and the wine. However, it was pointed out that in scripture Christ blessed the bread (Matt. 26:26, Mark 14:22) and distributed it and then gave thanks for the wine and distributed that (Matt. 26:27, Mark 14:23) indicating that there were two separate prayers.

Is there any reason why we shouldn't pray BEFORE the distribution of the bread and then also pray again before the distribution of the wine? Having examined the scriptures and speaking with other ministers, I can find none. Therefore as a believer in that when it comes to worship, scripture is prescriptive, my practice is going to change on this point.

In answering the potential question, "aren't you being unnecessarily precise on this point?" I would answer, that while I agree that we will never be able to obey God perfectly and get everything "right" when it comes to worship, that doesn't mean that we shouldn't still be striving to get it right. Indeed we ourselves expect our children to aim for "right" in their obedience to our commands, not "close" or "ballpark". While grace and love cover their failures and sins in that respect, I sense we'd be both angry and concerned about the state of their heart if they never showed any desire to actually do exactly what we told them to. In fact, we usually get upset when they arbitrarily deviate from our commands because they didn't think doing it the way we wanted was important. There is nothing in the bible to indicate that God views His children's obedience to His commands more laxly than we do.

In that respect, I'm reminded of what Packer wrote regarding the genius of Puritanism at this point:

"Richard Rogers, the Puritan pastor of Wethersfield, Essex, at the turn of the sixteenth century, was riding one day with the local lord of the manor, who, after twitting him for some time about his "precisian" ways, asked him what it was that made him so precise. "O sir," replied Rogers, "I serve a precise God." If there were such a thing as a Puritan crest, this would be its proper motto. A precise God—a God, that is, who has made precise disclosure of His mind and will in Scripture, and who expects from His servants a corresponding preciseness of belief and behavior—it was this view of God that created and controlled the historic Puritan outlook. The Bible itself led them to it. And we who share the Puritan estimate of Holy Scripture cannot excuse ourselves if we fail to show a diligence and conscientiousness equal to theirs in

ordering our going according to God's written Word." (Puritan Papers Volume 2, 246-47)

## 2) **Paedocommunion** – Why shouldn't we bring the infant children of believers to the table?

We remember that the table is designed to be the covenant meal of the professing members of the church. It is not like Baptism, which, like the Old Testament sacrament of circumcision, is to be applied to the infant children of all believers. There are certain requirements for coming to the table:

1) The party coming to the table must be a Baptized member of the visible church in good standing. This is the communion meal of the members of the Church (1 Cor. 11:18ff), and we do not admit people into the church without baptizing them. Neither do we admit those who have been suspended from the sacraments or excommunicated to the table.

*The infant children of the church meet this requirement*

2) The person must be personally trusting in Jesus Christ alone for their salvation. They must also be able to profess their faith (1 Cor. 11:26).

*The infant children of the church do not meet this requirement*

3) The person must be capable of self-control in coming to the table (1 Cor. 11:21-22).

*The infant children of the church do not meet this requirement*

4) The person must be able to "discern the Lord's body" in the elements (1 Cor. 11:29). The elements should be more than an ordinary snack of bread and wine, rather the person should be capable of understanding that they represent the body and blood of the Lord and that they who partake of the Lord's Supper in faith spiritually feed on Christ.

*The infant children of the church do not meet this requirement*

5) The person must be capable of self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28). They must be able to analyze themselves and determine that they are true believers in Christ and thus worthy partakers.

*The infant children of the church do not meet this requirement*

As Dr. Joseph Nally points out, "The intent of Matthew 26:26-27 is not to force-feed the elements to infants without any understanding; but for the partakers to understand the significance of Christ and his Cross - our Cross "in him." Communion is worship; intimate worship meant for those who discern the Lord's body (1 Cor. 11:29). Communion is more than a covenantal sign, it is also an acknowledging sign - conscious



remembering of Christ and the discernment of what his sacrifice means individually so one may more completely commune with all.

As Thomas Watson says concerning 1 Corinthians 11:28, "It is not enough that others think we are fit to come, but we must examine ourselves before we come to the Lord's table, we are to make a curious and critical trial of ourselves by the word" (The Lord's Supper, p. 41)."

***Q. What about the analogy with children at the Passover?***

While children were present at the Passover and indeed were expected to ask questions, young children did NOT take part in the Passover meal in the same way as adults:

Only ADULT males were commanded to make the pilgrimage to Jerusalem and partake of the Passover. Note that while Jesus and his apostles had families, there were no women or children present at the Last Supper Passover meal. The first time we read that Jesus was taken by his parents to Jerusalem for the Passover was when he was 12 years old (and thus considered a Jewish *man*) in John 6.

Morton Smith also points out that "Exodus 12:26 does not give evidence that the child himself partook of the Passover. The question, "What mean ye by this service?" would seem to indicate that the child was not one of the partakers. He does not know what the service was intended for, and so the father is to instruct the child. (Page 687)."

Further evidence *against* the participation of children in the Passover is that Jews in Jesus' time and in our time partake of 4 cups of wine during the Passover meal:

The first at the start of the Seder, following Kiddush; the second before the meal, after reciting the Haggadah story; the third following the Grace after the Meal; and the last after completing Psalms of Praise (Hallel). The Four Cups represent the four expressions of deliverance promised by God (Ex. 6:6-7), "I will bring out," "I will deliver," "I will redeem," and "I will take."

No infant can be expected to do this, and the results would be disastrous if they did.

The PCA's official report on Paedocommunion (17<sup>th</sup> GA) which condemns paedocommunion, makes much the same point:

*"Children participating in the first Passover would need further maturation beyond the nursing stage. The Passover meal consisted not simply of liquids and semiliquids, but of roast meat, unleavened bread, and bitter herbs. It is highly unlikely that an Israelite father would feel constrained to force such a diet on an infant that was newly weaned. The same would apply to the meat of the sacrificial meals such as the peaceofferings.*

*The point is simple enough. The Passover differed from circumcision in that children had to be older to participate in it. The nursing child, drinking milk rather than eating meat, could not at that state participate in the Passover. The point of the distinction is clearly expressed by the author of Hebrews: '[you] are become such as have need of milk, not of solid food. Everyone that partaketh of milk is inexperienced in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil' (Heb. 5:12-14)."*

Finally regarding the difference between Baptist and the Lord's Supper, Calvin on this Subject is Particularly Good:

"For if we attend to the peculiar nature of baptism, it is a kind of entrance, and as it were initiation into the Church, by which we are ranked among the people of God, a sign of our spiritual regeneration, by which we are again born to be children of God; whereas, on the contrary, the Supper is intended for those of riper years, who, having passed the tender period of infancy, are fit to bear solid food. This distinction is very clearly pointed out in Scripture. For there, as far as regards baptism, the Lord makes no selection of age, whereas he does not admit all to partake of the Supper, but confines it to those who are fit to discern the body and blood of the Lord, to examine their own conscience, to show forth the Lord's death, and understand its power. Can we wish anything clearer than what the apostle says, when he thus exhorts, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup"? (1 Cor. 11:28.)

Examination, therefore, must precede, and this it were vain to expect from infants. Again, "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord's body." If they cannot partake worthily without being able duly to discern the sanctity of the Lord's body, why should we stretch out poison to our young children instead of vivifying food? Then what is our Lord's injunction? "Do this in remembrance of me." And what the inference which the apostle draws from this? "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till he come." How, pray, can we require infants to commemorate any event of which they have no understanding; how require them "to show forth the Lord's death," of the nature and benefit of which they have no idea? Nothing of the kind is prescribed by baptism. Wherefore, there is the greatest difference between the two signs. This also we observe in similar signs under the old dispensation. Circumcision, which, as is well known, corresponds to our baptism, was intended for infants, but the passover, for which the Supper is substituted, did not admit all kinds of guests promiscuously, but was duly eaten only by those who were of an age sufficient to ask the meaning of it (Exod. 12:26). Had these men the least particle of soundness in their brain, would they be thus blind as to a matter so very clear and obvious? (Institutes IV: xvi: 30).