

THE LARGER AND SHORTER CATECHISMS.

HAVING SEEN WHAT THE SCRIPTURES PRINCIPALLY TEACH US CONCERNING GOD, IT
FOLLOWS TO CONSIDER WHAT THEY REQUIRE AS THE DUTY OF MAN

QUESTION # 177.

(Larger Catechism)

Q #177. *Wherein do the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ?*

A. The sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper differ, in that baptism is to be administered but once, with water, to be a sign and seal of our regeneration and ingrafting into Christ,¹ and that even to infants;² whereas the Lord's supper is to be administered often, in the elements of bread and wine, to represent and exhibit Christ as spiritual nourishment to the soul,³ and to confirm our continuance and growth in him,⁴ and that only to such as are of years and ability to examine themselves.⁵

Question 1—*What is the difference in the frequency that both sacraments are administered?*

Answer—The sacraments differ in their frequency—the *first*, baptism, being the sacrament of initiation, Matt. 28:19; it is to be administered but once to any individual, Acts 10:48. Its singular administration holds forth both the unity of the church and the singleness of her confession of faith, Eph. 4:4, 5. It's once for all administration also points to the unilateral imposition of the covenant of grace upon the people of God, Jer. 31:33; 32:38-40. It represents the singular administration of this covenant of grace over the people of God, Ezek. 34:23-25, 30, 31; 36:25-28. Furthermore, contrary to the conceits of the Anabaptists, baptism is not only administered once but it is unlawful knowingly to administer it more than once to any person, Acts 19:3-5. Though the Bible knows of various kinds of baptisms, Heb. 6:2; 9:10; yet, Christian baptism is of one kind and administered once, 1 Cor. 1:13.

The *second*, the Lord's supper, being the sacrament of continued fellowship, Acts 20:7, 11; it is to be administered frequently, Acts 2:42, 46. Its frequent administration holds forth the duty of the body of Christ to meditate often upon His suffering and death, 1 Cor. 11:26. It's frequent administration, together with its requirement for self-examination, points to the bilateral nature of living in that covenant of grace, John 15:6. It represents the responsibility inherent in the covenant of grace for the people of God, 1 Cor. 11:27; Heb. 6:4-6.

Question 2—*What difference is there in the elements used in the sacraments?*

Answer—The sacrament of baptism utilizes water, John 3:5; more particularly clean water, Ps. 51:7; and water that is in motion, Lev. 14:5-7. For this sacrament of initiation, water calls forth both the creation, Gen. 1:2; and the cleansing nature of this element, Num. 8:7. Water, in its own character, is both creative and refreshing to the creature, Ps.

¹ Matt. 3:11; Tit. 3:5; Gal. 3:27.

² Gen. 17:7, 9; Acts 2:38, 39; 1 Cor. 7:14.

³ 1 Cor. 11:23-26.

⁴ 1 Cor. 10:16.

⁵ 1 Cor. 11:28, 29.

68:9. Perhaps, most importantly, water is an element that makes visible the power of God in creating and sustaining the earth without the help of man or any other being, Job 38:26-28; Jer. 14:22. Water is the beginning of the great chain of God's providential preservation of His creation, Ps. 104:10-14. By water, God separated His people from the unbelieving world, Gen. 6:17, 18; Ex. 15:1.

The sacrament of the Lord's supper utilizes bread and wine, Matt. 26:26-29; particularly common leavened bread, Lev. 23:17; and red wine, Ps. 75:8. For this sacrament of continued fellowship, this bread and wine calls forth the thanksgiving and gladness required of the people of God, Lev. 7:13; Ps. 104:15. Under the Gospel, the spread of the kingdom of God is likened unto yeast, or leaven, Luke 13:20, 21. Both bread and wine are the result of the cooperative cultivation of men, Prov. 28:19; Gen. 9:20, 21. By these elements, men have their common sustenance, Luke 11:3; Eccl. 10:19. By these things God signifies the presence of His blessing amongst His people, Gen. 27:28. They are amongst the elements of the redeemed of the Lord, Jer. 31:11, 12. Most importantly, they represent the consecrated humanity of Jesus as the Christ, John 2:10, 11; 6:32, 33.

Question 3—*What different things are signified and sealed by both sacraments?*

Answer—Baptism with water, being the sacrament of initiation, signifies that baptism of the Spirit of God whereby men are spiritually sealed in their first solemn dedication to Christ, Matt. 3:11. It signifies and seals both our regeneration, Tit. 3:5; as well as our first ingrafting, or putting into Christ, Gal. 3:27.

The Lord's supper signifies our feeding and living upon Christ as a spiritual nourishment to our souls, 1 Cor. 11:23-26. It holds forth, by its frequent observance, our need to confirm our continuance and growth in him, 1 Cor. 10:16; as we seek daily supplies of grace as needed, Matt. 6:11.

Question 4—*To whom are the sacraments to be administered?*

Answer—Baptism is not only to be applied to adults, if they have not believed before, Acts 8:38; but is suitable also for the infants of such as have believed, Acts 2:38, 39. Baptism, being the sacrament of initiation into the covenant, may be applied to both because there are two ways in which men enter the covenant with God: 1.) Men enter into this covenant with God by and through their own credible profession of faith, Acts 8:37. This profession, or confession, of faith forms the very bedrock foundation upon which Christ is said to build His church, Matt. 16:16-18. This profession involves the great question upon which the salvation of mankind revolves, John 9:35-38. This profession turns a house into a church, Philem. 2; Rom 16:5. 2.) Men are brought into this covenant relation through the previous covenant relation of the head of the household, Gen. 17:7, 9; or, upon the faith of a single believing parent, 1 Cor. 7:14. This profession of a leader of the house brings salvation to the house, Acts 16:30-32; and that, in turn, makes all present in that house eligible for baptism, Acts 16:33; 1 Cor. 1:16.

The Lord's supper, on the other hand, is to be given, and none ought to receive it, but those who have such a degree of knowledge that they are able to discern the Lord's body, and are capable of performing that necessary duty recommended by the apostle, 1 Cor. 11:28, 29. Unlike baptism, which represents regeneration, in which the will of man is passive, John 1:12, 13; the Lord's supper, which represents sanctification, contemplates the will of man as active, Heb. 12:4.